

Introduction

A Youth Studies Australia anthology for youth workers

by Rob White

Back in 1995, *Youth Studies Australia* published an article by Richard Eckersley that provoked much discussion over questions relating to young people, culture and values. At the heart of Richard's argument was the notion that contemporary Western culture is characterised by moral confusion and contradiction, including the promotion of inappropriate and antisocial values. The article stimulated

Indeed, there is much to learn from what has gone before, in regard to understanding and interpreting where we are going into the future.

much debate over Western values and where, how and if young people can develop a moral compass to guide them in turbulent times. Such was the relevance and resonance of the piece that it was later translated and reprinted in a Latin American journal of adolescent health. Articles such as this are as important today as they were when they were written. Indeed, there is much to learn from what has gone before, in regard to understanding and interpreting where we are going in the future.

The inspiration and exasperation experienced by youth workers, over the last two decades in particular, has been captured in the many articles published in *Youth Studies Australia* [YSA]. Some of us closely associated with the Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies believe that this wealth of experience and expertise shouldn't be consigned to the role of archival material. We feel that it needs to be actively tapped into in ways that will again bring it to the fore. ACYS Publishing, therefore, is currently in the process of compiling a three-volume series titled *Doing youth work in Australia*,

which will feature the "best of" all *Youth Studies Australia* articles. Youth work in Australia has a long and generally distinguished reputation. It also has a history of innovation, passion and practical relevance as issues, old and new, present themselves to workers and to those with whom they work – young people.

In preparing this three-volume series, we carefully reviewed over 20 years of journal contributions and liaised with youth work lecturers in three different states. From literally hundreds of articles, we selected approximately 120 that we felt would be the most useful and relevant, and of practical significance, to youth workers doing youth work in Australia today. In the three volumes – *Concepts and methods of youth work*, *Youth work and youth issues*, and *Youth work and social diversity* – we cover a comprehensive range of issues. The material in these volumes reflects the experience and thoughtful reflections of people actively engaged in youth work practice, youth affairs policy and youth research generally, as well as the wisdom of those no longer here (having left the field, retired or moved on to something else in their lives). The fact that some of the articles were written over a decade ago testifies to the continuing relevance and importance of certain issues. What becomes clear very quickly in this material is that there is an intrinsic interconnection of issues, and that good youth work demands a holistic approach to the total person.

In the following pages, we republish Richard's article to provide an indication of the standard of material that will be included in the *Doing youth work in Australia* series and, just perhaps, to rekindle the debate over values and visions.