

Young workers and IR

Underpaid and exploited?

Findings from a new, large quantitative study in Queensland suggest that pay-related disputes are a significant issue for young people and, therefore, that the current industrial relations environment has implications for young people, which have been largely ignored.

Underpaid and exploited: Pay-related employment concerns experienced by young workers

by Paula McDonald, Sandra Backstrom & Aaron Allegretto

We know that young people are concentrated in casualised jobs, have low average-weekly earnings and reduced access to collective representation, but little is known about conditions in individual workplaces. This study of nearly 700 inquiries made to the Young Workers Advisory Service in Queensland found empirical evidence of exploitative practices in relation to remuneration and employment conditions in young people's workplaces. Young workers would do well to increase their knowledge of their rights and responsibilities in employment.

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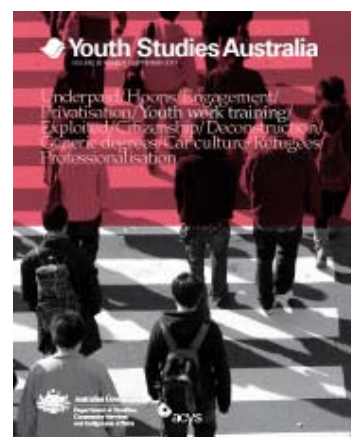
Also in this issue

There is a popular belief that young people are politically and civically disengaged, but new research suggests that they are very well connected through family, friends and sport, although less interested in being involved in political organisations. Perhaps, as Hugh McKay has suggested, in an environment where an increasing number of people may feel powerless in the face of constant and often distressing change, many young people focus on the stability and support offered by 'small picture' aspects of their lives.

There is also a popular belief that 'hoons' are a major danger on our roads; however, we include a theoretical paper that cuts through the hysteria and hypocrisy to provide a sociological perspective on the purposes that hooning and other aspects of car culture play in young people's lives.

We also feature two articles that continue the crucial discussion about the education and training of youth workers in this country. Finally, we feature a paper that suggests a means by which youth workers can deal more effectively with societal changes resulting from both neoliberal and cross-cultural policy.

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Those in non-casual or 'permanent' jobs now face the risk of a punitive response by their employer if they speak up about problems such as those identified in this study.

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Young people and citizenship: An everyday perspective

by Anita Harris, Johanna Wyn & Salem Younes

This new research finds that young people do not fit the stereotype of a self-interested or apathetic generation with no interest in matters beyond their own lives. They do, however, have new and significant pressures upon them to create futures for themselves without predictable pathways or safety nets and this means their personal concerns are very focused.

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The critical importance of family means that young people who are not able to rely on family are especially disadvantaged and disconnected.

Young people, dangerous driving and car culture

by Hannah Graham & Rob White

There is a widespread perception that hoons are a major danger on Australian roads. However, the statistics and the research paint a very different picture. While young people are disproportionately involved in motor vehicle accidents, very few serious crashes involve high performance vehicles. So why are hoons a source of popular concern? This paper looks at the perceptions of danger associated with hooning and other aspects of car culture, and also explores the purposes that these activities play in the lives of young men.

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Cruising, hooning and street machining each have an affirmative social function in the lives of the young people who engage in them.

Youth work training package review: More of the same or radical rationalisation?

by Tim Corney & Robyn Broadbent

A report from a review of Australia's national youth work training package not only confirms the recent trend towards the privatisation and employer domination of the training process, and the subsequent de-professionalisation and multi-vocational skilling of traditional youth work, but also raises serious questions regarding the future of stand-alone youth work training in the VET and TAFE sectors in Australia.

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The values and practices taught in these institutions are often those that are consistent with the training organisation's belief systems rather than those traditionally associated with youth work.

The politics of education: Why stand-alone youth work degrees matter

by Judith Bessant

The demand for youth workers is growing; however, their education in universities is being 'rationalised' because these institutions have been fiscally squeezed by successive federal governments. What are the consequences for youth workers, young people and society as a whole if this move towards 'generic' human service degrees is allowed to continue? Judith Bessant considers these questions while discussing the repercussions of recent developments in youth work education in Australian universities.

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Senior managers now routinely use a range of crude, if not peculiar, quantitative markers of 'quality' to legitimate and sustain their rationalising

Youth work: A deconstructive approach for those who work with young refugees

by Peter Westoby & Ann Ingamells

As the Australian institutional context shifts under the influence of corporate liberalism, social justice loses some of its leverage as a framework for achieving change. This has implications for how we educate and train those who work with young people. In seeking an alternative to a social justice framework to inform a cross-cultural training workshop for diverse workers who engage with young refugees, the paper proposes a deconstructive approach to youth work practice.

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It may surprise but reassure the parents and elders of the settling community to know that parents and young people in the established community share some of their fears and tensions.