

YOUTH AND THE FUTURE

Effective youth services for the year 2015

a report to the
National Youth Affairs Research Scheme

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Executive summary

The youth category in Australia and throughout the industrialised world has been subject to a range of fundamental changes over the past two centuries. This process of change is continuing. While many things in the lives of young people in 15 years time will be similar to what they are now, a fundamental shift in the structure of the youth category is already in the wind.

This report documents key social and economic changes for young people in Australia over the past ten to 20 years, tracking movements in key social indicators like population changes, education, employment/unemployment and the labour market, incomes, family and household structure, health, and crime and justice. Consultations have been held with key youth affairs practitioners, who have been asked to project these trends into the future and to identify key implications for policy and for service delivery to young people in the future.

The study understands youth as a social category, rather than a natural, biological one, in which accreditation as adult is withheld from young people for several years beyond their biological adulthood. In this state, they are excluded from a range of activities, rights and powers, generally on the presumption that they are not ready to be trusted with them. While this is often protective in intent, such exclusion is often arbitrary, inconsistent and unfair, and often works against the interests of young people.

Youth is therefore understood as a category of exclusion. Consequently, the core criterion for evaluating social processes in this report is whether they intensify this exclusion or lead in more inclusive directions.

The study found the following:

Population

The youth population will decrease as a proportion of the population as a whole, but will be maintained in terms of overall numbers. However, more Australians are likely to be seen as “youth”, as the youth category reaches further up the age range, implicating young people into their late twenties. Because Australia has a younger population than Europe, we are unlikely to suffer the difficulties associated with an ageing population and a declining productive labour force. The labour force in Australia will continue to grow.

Birth rate trends are in steep decline at the moment, and if this decline were to be maintained, this would be a cause for concern. Authorities assume that they will level out, but this may need some intervention, especially in defraying the costs of motherhood for young women. Migration trends are stable in terms of overall numbers, but a changing mix means that the population profile will be increasingly multicultural. More young people may emigrate to take advantage of employment opportunities in the ageing nations of the northern hemisphere.

Education

Trends indicate that more young people will be involved in educational institutions, and for longer. Full-time education to the age of 18 will be almost universal, and tertiary education will also continue to grow. A large number of students will also be working part time. Education is likely to use electronic technologies and materials more intensively, but traditional classroom schooling is likely to be maintained. Schools are likely to become more diverse, with private schools increasing in number and market share. Schools will need to be more integrated with their communities, including industry, and the curriculum will need to be geared to the no-job entrepreneurial cultures of the New Economy.

As possession of educational qualifications becomes more essential to young people's life chances, education systems will need to work harder at retaining non-mainstream students, and towards meeting their needs. There is an emerging need to develop better strategies for teaching boys. At the bottom line, we need to avoid the polarisation of student population between those who are able to succeed in well resourced schools in wealthy neighbourhoods, and those who are excluded at an early age from poor schools in blighted neighbourhoods. Attention especially needs to be given to the seriously unequal education outcomes for Indigenous young people. Full-service schools are a proven strategy for achieving these goals, and a role for youth workers in schools is an important component. Full privatisation and marketisation of the education sector, on the other hand, is likely to increase inequality.

Employment

Unemployment, the key youth issue of the past 20 years, is unlikely to become less significant in the immediate future, although probably in the shape of chronic underemployment rather than the absence of work. Full-time permanent jobs are giving way rapidly to temporary, casual and part-time employment, and self-employment is becoming more common. Young people will face a crowded labour market with increasing participation rates. This complexity again makes accreditation as adult more ambiguous. In the future, young people will have to adapt to having a mix of contracts and activities. In this environment, there is again a strong risk of polarisation, with those young people who are well-resourced in education, access to capital, support through lean times, and desirable social characteristics doing well, and less advantaged popula-

tions caught in spirals of poverty and exclusion. Active brokering services will be needed in this environment, with a strong outreach and client-focused approach. Access to capital will need to be equitable.

Income

Youth incomes relative to adults have declined over time, and the degree of protection for young people is also declining. Current approaches to youth incomes, whether youth wages or government income support, is based on a number of assumptions about young people's level of need and levels of parental support. Where these assumptions do not hold, young people can be subjected to severe poverty.

Incomes and wages policy is frequently designed to pressure young people into approved forms of activity. Youth incomes are therefore currently seriously discounted, and are not consistent with independent living.

Increasing work force participation rates and a declining youth population will mean that the state will be able to afford to redress this in the future, both in government allowances and income supplements, if the will is there. Young people should also be included in equal opportunity legislation, and the principle of equal pay for equal work should be extended to them.

Family and household

Families are becoming smaller, more diverse, and more mobile. Single parent families are more common, blended families are on the rise. Young people are marrying later, now well into their late 20s, and most couples will have an extended period of cohabitation before marriage. Teenage pregnancies are less common – the birth of a first child is most often now in the late 20s or early 30s – but more children are being born outside of marriage.

Young people are leaving home on average later than they used to, largely through economic necessity and the requirements of extended education, though a majority of 20- to 24-year-olds and an increasing number of 15- to 19-year-olds are living independently. Those people who have moved out of home are mostly living in rented accommodation. They spend a high proportion of their income on housing, which is often substandard. Trends in government housing policy away from public housing are likely to exacerbate these problems, and may contribute to what is already a worrying level of youth homelessness.

Adequate provision is needed for those young people who are living independently, both in terms of

adequate housing stock, income and other supports. We have also recommended increased support for families, including a renewed emphasis on community development processes which alleviate the need for direct professional intervention in families by increasing supports within the social environment.

Health

Young people have and will continue to enjoy good physical health, with declining rates of death and disease as road safety, preventative medicine and general medical technologies improve. Broader measures of health show a more complex picture. The transmission of sexually transmitted diseases is generally under control, teenage pregnancies are down. Trends in youth suicide are reasonably stable and suicide rates are not significantly higher than for other groups of adults. Trends in drug use show a stable or declining trend in the use of the legal recreational drugs, but an increase in the variety and uptake of illegal ones. Illegal drugs are being used younger, and tend increasingly to be a part of mainstream youth culture rather than specific drug subcultures. The continued focus on enforcement as the key to drug control runs counter to health priorities, and this is likely to become more problematic in the future as the variety and availability of recreational drugs increases.

There is evidence that life is more stressful for young people, and reported rates of depression are increasing. Uncertainty, loss of faith in authorities of all kinds, and a more fragmented life present young people with challenges to hope and integrity that are not well supported culturally. Young people vary in their ability to develop responses, which are essentially spiritual responses, to these challenges. In the future, services will need to be available for information, referral, and other linkage and brokerage services. Schools will need to take an increasing role in maintaining health outcomes.

Crime and justice

Young people are heavily implicated in the justice system both as offenders and victims of crime, though well over 90% of young people stay clear of the law in any one year. Here again, evidence of a polarising trend exists, in which general rates of offending are declining, but a small core of offenders are implicated in more offences and more serious and violent offences. The decision to deal with recreational drug use primarily through the criminal justice system implicates young people more than other groups.

The trend in justice systems is inconsistent across and within jurisdictions in Australia, with trends towards restorative justice principles, but also increasingly punitive and retaliatory responses, including curfews, mandatory sentencing, increasing penalties and initiatives such as boot camps. Prison populations are increasing rapidly, with Indigenous young people most affected, and overcrowding a major issue. The trend towards private prisons will tend to cement incarceration as a standard response, and decrease the already limited capacity for rehabilitation in prison. Continuing the focus on inclusion, we advocate strongly for a more consistent application of restorative justice principles, which will decrease prison populations and, the evidence shows, also decrease offending behaviour.

As an overall picture, the data points consistently towards people spending a longer time in the youth category, and their graduation into adulthood and full citizenship becoming more complex, indeterminate and ambiguous. Services will therefore need to refocus in order to cater for young people in their 20s, as well as younger.

Eisenstadt argued half a century ago (1956) that in order for the youth category to be a positive and functional structure, young people needed a clear role and a clear and unambiguous pathway to accreditation as adult. Action is needed to remove the inconsistencies and arbitrariness of young people's status. Hence, we have recommended formal recognition of the status of youth, and serious consideration of the age at which various powers might be conferred on young people.

Within the youth category itself, unless policy and practice is able to reshape current social trends, we expect a growing gap between young people who are well-resourced, in favourable family settings, with a range of social, cultural and educational advantages, and young people for whom family has not been able to supply the necessary supports, who were unable to stay or succeed at school, and for whom poverty is a present reality with an extended future. Indigenous young people, already severely disadvantaged across all the indicators we have looked at, must be a priority in this. Across the various policy areas we have studied, consistent attention needs to be given to creating policies that increase levels of equality and inclusion. Effective services across these areas will have a focus on linkage, flexibility, and capacity-building in common.

A range of policy recommendations are implicit or explicit in the report, many with implications for services. This section outlines major recommendations for services which are important to produce an envi-

ronment closer to the optimum. In this section, we would highlight a number of key areas that should provide a focus for youth service development over the next 15 years.

General recommendations

- That State and Federal Governments establish the status of youth in legal and policy terms, with clear and consistent rights and responsibilities, and which balance obligations and privileges, benefits and penalties for young people.
- That State and Federal governments consider the primary paradigm for understanding youth contained within the Report – i.e. as a social category defined in terms of processes of exclusion and accreditation – for use in developing, implementing and evaluating policy and programs concerning young people.
- That vigilance is maintained over the equity impacts of policy and services to avoid a widening gap between rich and poor, including among young people.
- That State and Commonwealth Governments support the development of professional youth work practice, including effective training, and its recognition and utilisation within service delivery to young people, as well as training for other professions to work within a more flexible and diverse environment.

1: Education

1.1 Youth workers in schools

Schools will need to engage support staff skilled in dealing with students subject to homelessness, family conflict, drug use and other circumstances which raise barriers to their successful enrolment. The assessment, information, referral and advocacy skills of youth workers make them appropriate for this role. Improved training for youth workers is indicated towards this end.

1.2 Full service schools

Create an integrated environment on school campuses with a range of services available, including:

- health services;
- dental services;
- counselling;
- various welfare services, including food clubs and financial counselling;
- accommodation or accommodation brokerage;

- recreation;
- employment services, including job placement and job creation services; and
- after-hours education, including vocational, secondary and leisure-based education.

1.3 Integration with community and business enterprises

Relationships need to be developed between the school and outside agencies. This needs to be a critical and educative experience in which fundamental questions for the enterprise are raised and problems addressed.

1.4 Training for entrepreneurship/New Economy

Teaching and learning needs to be tuned to an environment which is increasingly diverse, unregulated, fragmentary and volatile. Students need to be trained for self-employment and autonomous work practices.

1.5 Alternatives

Secondary schooling needs to move beyond a “one size fits all” approach to embrace alternatives which may include:

- school employing different educational philosophies;
- schools allowing Indigenous students to study together;
- bicultural schools;
- small private schools of 12 to 15 students; and
- workplace-based schools.

1.6 Continued free, universal education

Moves towards reconstructing the education sector as a commercial market is likely to increase inequity among young people, with long-term effects for their futures. Continued State responsibility for education is recommended.

1.7 Access to technology

Students must have equitable access to information and communications technology in their communities, including after-hours access.

1.8 Boys

Measures need to be put in place to develop teaching and learning processes which are effective in helping young men learn, including those which improve their communication and linguistic skills.

1.9 Relentless opportunity for success

Failure at education must not be allowed to become a permanent deficit. Second-chance access, access to

alternative forms of schooling, and other strategies must be employed to ensure the possibility for success, particularly for educationally disadvantaged groups.

2: Work and unemployment

2.1 Employment discrimination

Young people should be included in equal opportunity provisions, and a concerted public education campaign about the productivity and value of young workers needs to be undertaken.

2.2 Access to advocacy

The demise of unions indicates the need for mechanisms which are able to protect young workers from exploitation, underpayment, breach of contract, or unsafe working conditions.

2.3 Access to venture capital

Young people need equitable access to low-interest start-up capital for enterprise initiatives.

2.4 Brokerage services

Services are required which connect young people with work opportunities as they emerge, especially where profitable brokerage is improbable. Such services need also to broker non-work opportunities including voluntary work, structured recreation, artistic endeavour, and other cultural and community-building activities.

3: Incomes

3.1 Living wage

Young people need access to an income consistent with the Harvester Judgement minimum standard of "living in frugal comfort". The more chaotic work/education/non-work mix requires a more intelligent and flexible income support structure that encourages endeavour and initiative but avoids poverty. A Guaranteed Minimum Income for young people should be considered.

3.2 Anti-discrimination policy for legal adults

Young people who are legally adult should not be subject to discounted wages or income support. Wages for young people should follow the principle of equal pay for equal work.

3.3 Statutory claim on parental income

For young people who are not legally adult, and are therefore presumed to be dependent on their parents, there should be avenues for claiming support.

3.4 Claim on state support

Young people who are not legally adult should have a claim for state-provided income support if parental support cannot be made good.

4: Families and households

4.1 Public housing

Given the dependence of young people on the private rental housing market, and the particular exposure of Indigenous families, the trend to sell off public housing should be reversed. A significant reinvestment in public housing, in a variety of forms including group and community housing is required.

4.2 Support for families

Many families are unlikely to be completely self-sufficient without state and community support. Prevention of destructive forms of conflict and damaging forms of communication, interaction and patterns of behaviour is critical. Early intervention, and open access to counselling, conflict management and mediation are important, particularly as they struggle to adjust to longer-term enforced dependency of young adult members.

4.3 Community development

A reinvestment in community development was seen as essential to effective family support so that families, whatever their size and form, are less isolated, better connected and have access to lines of release or healing that do not involve formal, state-mandated intervention by professionals. This should include attention both to the built environment through better town planning, transport policy and environmental management and to the social environment through active processes which rebuild and sustain community life.

4.4 Family formation

The collapse in Australia's birth rate indicates that policies are needed which compensate young women for the costs of bearing children. This may involve strategies for limiting the career setback effects of parenthood, income support strategies and access to free or at least affordable child care.

5: Health

5.1 Provision within a school environment

Health services should be included as part of a strategy for full-service schools. The role of youth workers in

health promotion, including providing information and effective referral, should not be ignored, and their wider employment in schools is recommended. Roles would include availability to young people who are facing difficulties either within school or outside, providing appropriate referral, and to provide personal, social development and leisure activities for young people out of school hours.

5.2 Brokerage services within existing community service settings

These brokering roles extend to a range of contexts within which youth health outcomes are being pursued, including local government, where linkage and referral roles would be paramount. This includes linking young people to safe accommodation, running youth accommodation services and providing primary information and advice services to young people. Such services are especially indicated for hard-to-reach young people, and need a strong outreach component.

5.3 Partnership in Aboriginal reconciliation

These roles should involve partnership between various professionals working with young people and local Aboriginal representatives to support community-based reconciliation initiatives. Locally-based reconciliation is an essential part of a broad-based approach to improving Aboriginal health and well-being.

5.4 Group work with young people to address common health determinants

Processes need to be in place to deal with key health factors such as exclusion on the basis of race, gender, sexual preference, and bullying and other violence. Assistance needs to be available for self-help and support groups, including incest survivor groups, Aboriginal support groups, young women's groups, young men's groups, and gay and lesbian support groups for young people. Youth counselling needs to be readily accessible to young people, both in terms of location, mode of delivery and cost.

5.5 Assisted peer education

Young people need to be engaged as active partners in health promotion. Youth workers have a role, in partnership with other agencies, to encourage peer education programs, and to support young people to become peer educators. Services need to be available to enable young people to become involved in primary health care training, for example, first aid training (as

in the 'Save a Mate' scheme offered by the Red Cross) run as part of a youth health program.

5.6 Basic needs

Young people who do not have a safe place to live must have access to a safe environment. Youth refuges and women's refuges remain important in this respect.

5.7 Advocacy

Youth advocates (including youth peak bodies) have a role in relation to youth health issues which may need government support: for example, in the domain of safety issues where legislation, research, or other intervention is required; or where enforcement may not be adequate: for example, workplace safety. Such services are needed even when criticism of current government policy is the outcome.

5.8 Brokerage roles in hospital settings

Youth workers should be linked to hospital-based services to improve service delivery to young people, to encourage a holistic view of the young person and, in conjunction with other professionals, to provide youth work services to young people who are hospitalised for long periods.

Multi-disciplinary services should address youth sexual health issues and drug and alcohol treatment and these services should include youth workers and community health workers. These services should plan locally how services can be best delivered to young people in ways that maximise accessibility and confidentiality.

5.9 Harm minimisation

Approaches to young people's health that deal with problems primarily in categories of deviance, whether moral or criminal, should be rethought. Such approaches deny young people access to effective means of health, in the fear of condoning the behaviour in question. Rather, we need to equip young people to make good choices on reliable information, and to have access to ameliorative or rehabilitative services when problems emerge.

6: Crime and punishment

6.1 Restorative justice

Youth justice systems should be reconfigured on restorative justice principles.

6.2 Prison as last resort

Prison should not be used to achieve “community protection” objectives early in a young person’s offending career. Given the destructiveness and counter-productivity of prison as punishment, it should be avoided wherever possible. Alternative punishments, using electronic technologies, should be expanded.

6.3 Private prisons

Authorities should avoid the establishment of a private profit-making prison industry, or other systems with a vested interest in increasing the rate and duration of imprisonment and in minimising the cost of services to people in prison without regard to costs on the state or the community on release.

6.4 Victim supports

Services should be in place for the healing and restoration of young people who are victims of crime and who are facing loss, grief, humiliation and post-traumatic stress

6.5 Youth courts

A specific youth court, separate from children’s and adult courts, should be established for young people below adult age under the jurisdiction of a single cabinet level youth justice agency.

6.6 Judicial discretion

Mandatory sentencing should be avoided to maintain the principle of prison as the last resort and to ensure that punishment is able to be appropriate to the seriousness of the offence.

1

PART ONE:

APPROACHES

1 ONE: INTRODUCTION

The economic and social position of young people has been affected by extensive change throughout the Western world over the past 200 years. Indeed, the modern understanding of youth in terms of “adolescence” is a comparatively recent phenomenon, emerging only at the beginning of this century (Bessant, Sercombe & Watts 1998). Changes in the conception of youth have gone hand in hand with changes in their legal status, in the extent and nature of their economic engagement, and in provisions for their institutional education.

The rate of change continues to accelerate. Young people have borne the brunt of the structural adjustments of the industrial expansion during and following World War II, then the long recession of the 1970s and the galloping changes associated with the new technologies of the information and communications revolution. In tandem with these economic transformations, there have been far-reaching social transformations involving the changing roles of women, the changing structure of the family, and realignment of power between major cultural institutions such as the church, schools and the media. In the midst of this change, the position of young people has become increasingly uncertain and contradictory. Conceptions that assumed a linear transition to adulthood are rapidly becoming obsolete. The pace of change shows no sign of abating.

It is in this environment that this report was

written. The brief for the project was to explore conditions for young people in the new millennium, in the year 2015, and to suggest what services they might need. More specifically, the report aims to provide an understanding of the services required by young people in 15 years time, based on a thorough analysis of recent trends and expert projections of those trends to the year 2015. How these trends affect and/or translate into appropriate rites of passage for young people will be a major focus. This analysis will form a strategic base for articulating “what is to be done” in relation to types of future-oriented responses to the needs of young people.

The research process involved gathering as much statistical data on the position of young people in society as we could, across a range of important social indicators, to try and determine where the trends were heading. We have worked comprehensively with the literature on the position of young people in societies like ours. And we have consulted across the country with a range of advocates, including youth representatives, who have been identified by the youth affairs field as people worth listening to on the future of young people in this country.

Studying the future: the year 2015

The year 2015 is an interesting year to choose. Fifteen years into the future is not a distant future: the report

is not a piece of science fiction, dreaming worlds that do not exist except in imagination, with ways of living and technologies that bear no relation to the way of life today. People who are young now will still be reasonably young. Anybody older than 25 will be able to remember the late 1990s and the turn of the millennium. The relationship between now and 2015 would be like the relationship between 1985 (remember International Youth Year?) and now. Most of the seeds of 2015 are already in the ground and growing. Australia in 2015 will still be very recognisably *this* society.

But 15 years takes us way beyond the capacity of accurate projection from the statistics (Little, G., ABS, personal communication). Even with sophisticated computer modelling, we can't say accurately what unemployment rates will look like in 2015. Or rates of suicide, or crime, or age of leaving home. The limit for reliable statistical forecasting on these kinds of indicators is about two to three years, and for many areas of inquiry the statistics are already three or four or five years old. For many of them, like suicide or specific crime rates, *no* positive forecasting is possible. Either the numbers are too small, or the variables affecting what happens are too unpredictable. Add to that the idiosyncrasies of government policy decisions (remember that in 1985 the Priority One youth policy was in place) and any attempt at strict projection becomes impossible.

This does not mean that we can't say *anything* sensible about how the world will be for young people in the year 2015. The data that we do have gives us a good idea about what kinds of things are likely to be significant in the lives of young people. We know the movements in youth unemployment and labour force participation rates for young people over the past few years. We know what institutions have been most influential for young people, and we know some things about how they have been changing and, perhaps, the likely direction of change in the next ten years or so. We know, for example, that change in secondary schools will be pivotal to what happens for young people, and that the conditions under which young people leave home will also be important. Planning and policy is already shaping change within peoples' lives, and we can make some well-founded guesses about the impact of decisions like the common Youth Allowance and the trend towards user-pays approaches for tertiary education. Working with people who have useful things to say about the direction that things are taking strengthens this approach.

Given this context, this research project has to be *interpretive*. The figures cannot speak for themselves, because the events are over the horizon. They *can* indicate a particular direction, a tendency to increase or decrease or change into something else. They can establish the current extent of something (like drug use, for example) and invite us to imagine what will happen with it in years to come. But they cannot tell us what will happen. The process of projecting conditions for young people in the year 2015 requires us to look at the state of affairs for young people now, to see where the trends have gone in recent years, and to do the active, creative work of interpreting those trends for a largely unknown future. We do so acknowledging that many of the forces shaping these trends are currently unimagined.

Because of the active, creative, interpretive nature of this task, we cannot pretend that the picture we give of life for young people in the year 2015, or the recommendations that we would make for services, are "objective". Indeed, we do not believe that such a position is either possible or desirable. The study *is* firmly grounded in what data is available, and we have consulted a wide range of youth advocates in coming to our conclusions, but our perceptions are strongly based in our own histories of working with young people, and in the theoretical perspectives and world views that we hold.

At a fundamental level, this research will always say more about our understanding of the present than the future. Any picture we paint now of life for young people in the year 2015 will have built into it assumptions about what we think is good about the way we deal with young people now, and what we think is bad. It will carry our beliefs, and the beliefs of the people we have talked to and whose work we have read, about the key institutions and social processes that affect young people in the present.

Consequently, we make no claim that the world in 2015 will be as we describe it. We might get it right, and we might not. Futures study is a graveyard of wrong predictions, even from the most celebrated of futurologists. The results of the study are based on a large amount of data about young people, and a great deal of collective wisdom about what is important in shaping young people's lives. But the world is a complex place, and things can change very quickly indeed. Alternatively, changes that seem to be imminent can sit on the shelf for 30 years.

It would be a mistake to judge this study on how many of its predictions are proved right over the next

15 years. The report should be read primarily as an account of what the research indicates we need to do about young people *now*, and the kinds of directions that policy-making and service-provision should take. As time goes on, we will obviously have to change and adapt as the world changes in unexpected ways before our eyes. In a sense, it is like going on a road trip with very old maps, and through some country where the roads aren't marked at all. But, in the words of a phrase now so widely quoted that its origins have been lost, *the best way to predict the future is to create it.*

Theoretical framework: inclusion/exclusion

There are generally two approaches to dealing with the question of values in social research. One is to attempt to "bracket out" the values of the researchers, and present the data as "objectively" as possible. As we have indicated, this study is expressly evaluative in its intent, so this approach would seem not to be very useful. The second is to declare the value base on which the research is based, and to work with the data in a disciplined and rigorous but engaged fashion. This is the approach we have chosen.

This report grows out of a firm belief in human equality, and that all competent members of a society have an *a priori* claim for inclusion in its cultural, political and economic processes (what we rather loosely call the "common wealth"), with all their obligations and benefits. We do not deny that there are often legitimate grounds for excluding some people from certain parts of these processes, but believe that the onus is on decision-makers to justify such exclusion, rather than on people to prove that they have a right to be involved. Australia is, or claims to be, a liberal democratic society. Often, even the most basic rights promoted by liberal democratic theory have not consistently been extended to young people.

This belief bears directly on the way that we intend dealing with the question of what things will be like for young people in 2015 and what kinds of services will be effective. In particular, it informs (and flows out of) our core conceptual definition of "youth", and it provides a central criterion for measuring "effectiveness". It establishes which issues and which areas of intervention are most critical.

The study works with a conception of youth that understands the relationship of young people to the broader society in these terms: in terms of exclusion.

The degree of exclusion varies with a range of factors, but there are for all young people sets of practices in law, in social policy, and in everyday custom which exclude them from full participation. While some of these are protective in intent, many of them create a range of difficulties for young people, especially in combination with other factors which may add to their alienation.

Youth, as it has often been noted, is not a homogenous category. The lives of working-class young people are different to those from wealthy backgrounds. The same can be said for the lives of Indigenous young people, or young people living in remote areas, or young men and young women, young people from non-English-speaking backgrounds, young people with disabilities. Understanding the world in 2015 also surely means understanding the different worlds of different groups of young people. Maybe it means collating and cross referencing all the data across all the social indicators we have looked at for all these different populations.

Just to make things more interesting, the way we classify young people, and the kinds of risk or disadvantage they are subject to, will itself change. For example, it is already becoming rare to hear reports and commentators talk of "working-class young people". Fifteen years ago, the language of class was at centre stage. Maleness is increasingly emerging as a risk factor, especially with regard to access to education, risk of suicide and other causes of death and injury. Fifteen years ago, maleness could only have been thought of in terms of advantage. Over the next 15 years, new kinds of classifications will emerge for understanding young people, and we will see things through them that are currently invisible to us.

It quickly becomes clear that the task of thinking about how the world will change for young people over the next 15 years is impossible if you try to cover all the different groups of young people and all the different social issues and movements in which they are implicated. Perhaps it is better to try and understand the core of the relationship between young people and the wider society, and to work with what is likely to happen with that core dynamic over time. Then, it may be possible to suggest how changes in the core dynamic will work out differently for different groups of young people. Anyway, many of the fundamentals will apply across populations: if all young people have to go to school, changes in schooling will impact on all young people. They may impact differently on different populations, and we can talk about

that, but understanding the core dynamic seems to be the key. So, rather than describe the whole range of situations within which young people will have to live, we have tried to develop an idea of the core dynamic in the relationship between young people and society, and the social forces and institutions which will bear most directly on that.

Youth: a social construction

There is now a strong body of literature which indicates that “Youth” is not a “natural” category but a socially defined and constructed one. This is indicated by the fact that some societies don’t seem to feel the need to define anybody as “youth” or “adolescent” (Seig 1976), by the incontestable evidence that even in societies which have always had a “youth” category, it has not always meant the same thing as it does now (Dyhouse 1981; Gillis 1974; Kett 1977). The age range covering youth has changed, the traits attributed to young people have changed, the nature of their position and function within society has changed. Even in the current environment, different professional groups have strikingly different conceptions of what “youth” is about, and different languages and theories with which to describe them (Sercombe 1996).

What follows in this report is an analysis of the nature of the youth *category*, especially the core dynamics which shape the youth category. In other words, we have focused on the way that young people are *understood*, the kinds of beliefs that are held about what they are like and what their capacities and capabilities are, and the key institutions (school, family, media, work, welfare, the justice system) which govern them. Change in young people’s lives over the next 15 years will substantially be a function of changes in these core institutions and the understanding of youth from which they operate.

Defining “youth”

There is a broad range of psychological and anthropological evidence to demonstrate that once puberty has settled down (usually by the age of about 14 to 16) young people are biologically adult. In fact, there is no substantial evidence to indicate that the inherent capacities of young people, including cognitive and moral capacities, are different to those of other adults, as Melton’s exhaustive review of the literature (Melton 1983) indicates. Inexperience is an issue, of course, but this is only incidentally age-related, and in many areas

young people may be more experienced than their elders, particularly in an environment of rapid social change (cf. Benedict 1935).

This raises an important question. If “youth” is a social construction, what kind of construction is it? How is it constructed, and why? Why do we have a youth category?

Consistent with the overall approach of this report, the youth category may be effectively defined as a product of the practice of *excluding* certain biologically adult members of a society (Bessant et al. 1998; Seig 1976; Springhall 1984) from full participation in society, basically because they are judged to be “too young”. What “too young” generally means is that it is presumed that they have not yet assimilated the dominant social codes, and are therefore deemed to be “unsafe”. Our society deems young people to be unsafe drivers, drinkers, tenants, financial managers, voters, and marriage partners. This is not because of any inherent lack of capacity: Young people have both the physical and mental abilities necessary to make perfectly competent drivers or financial planners, and in many parts of the world, 14-year-olds are doing all of these things. Inexperience may be an issue, but that is not the logic of their exclusion. Young people are excluded from engaging in these roles or practices because it is *assumed* that they don’t yet have the right “attitudes” on these things.

From this perspective, becoming an adult is a process of accreditation. Youth is not fundamentally a stage that people grow out of. It is a status that they are promoted out of. There are things that they can do to facilitate this process of promotion or accreditation, ways in which young people can signal to the society at large that they are ready for recognition as adult. But it is up to the society to recognise their status.

Conversely, adulthood, in this sense, is a status, not a biological state. Adulthood is conferred, a social state, which carries with it the presumption of autonomy and rationality, of individual sovereignty, and of citizenship.

One of the things that is happening in the current environment is that accreditation or recognition as adult is becoming more difficult. Many of the indicators which might once have guaranteed accreditation as adult – marriage, job, leaving home, parenthood – are now unavailable, temporary, unreliable, or no longer pay off in terms of conferring adult status. Accreditation as adult appears to be something that emerges vaguely and unevenly across a range of contexts in which the individual lives, rather

than the product of a predictable and reliable set of developmental tasks. It is influenced by strategic choices made by the individual, but is also limited by circumstances that are beyond his or her control. Our findings indicate that this uncertainty is increasing, not decreasing.

The brief provided for this research asks for comment on the question of rites of passage for young people. The ambiguity and indeterminacy of accreditation as adult certainly sets up an environment for young people where their status, and therefore their rights and responsibilities are also ambiguous and indeterminate.

The suspension of adulthood, and the practices of exclusion that go along with it, cash out differently for different groups of young people. Exclusion from employment for young people from upper-middle class families, for example, may mean enforced retention in education through to university level. For young people from poor families, it may mean extended periods of unemployment, accompanied maybe by spending a lot of time on the street and frequent contacts with the police.

There are also clearly other categories of exclusion. Women continue to be excluded because of various assumptions about their capacity or role. Certain races of people, notably Indigenous Australians, live daily with practices of exclusion that deeply affect their capacity to participate in the common wealth. Even things like accent, or physical appearance, can translate through to exclusion in various contexts. Poverty itself excludes.

These statuses obviously interact. If you are young, but rich, the impact of your exclusion is significantly reduced. If you are poor, black and young, you have a fight to get in anywhere. Clearly, a focus on exclusion leads us to be especially interested in the impact of social change on young Indigenous people, young women, young people from marginal economic groups or other categories of young people for whom the effects of exclusion are expected to be harsh.

Exclusion may also not be experienced as oppressive, depending on different young people's aspirations. Again, this may be different for different groups. For some young people, exclusion from the right and obligation to vote may be incredibly frustrating, as they watch political events go by without being able to have any say in their outcome (*The West Australian*, 5/11/99, p.1). For others, it might be blessed relief. For some, their inability to get a bank loan because of their age may be a significant inhibition to

their economic ambitions. For others, it may be completely irrelevant. Exclusion from adult prison is probably welcome news to most young people affected by it. Exclusion from military service likewise.

One other implication of this perspective is that there are degrees of exclusion. One can be more or less excluded, and excluded from more or fewer areas of social activity. It follows that if youth is a function of exclusion by age, there are also *degrees of youth*, depending on the relationship between biological adulthood and the degree of exclusion experienced. In other words, one can be very much a youth or only a little bit: it isn't a yes/no, in/out category. If young people are excluded from driving at the age of 16 but not 17, then 16-year-olds are more "youth" than 17-year-olds. Eighteen-year-olds, because of the right to be served alcohol, to vote, and to sign legally binding contracts, are less "youth" than 17-year-olds. Twenty-eight-year-olds are hardly youth at all. Nor are 12-year-olds, not because they are not excluded but because of the "biologically adult" criterion referred to above: their biological adulthood is only just beginning to emerge.¹

We could summarise this with a definition. Conceptually, "youth" is:

- a socially constructed category, in which
- biologically adult members of a society,
- on the basis of their low relative age, are
- deemed to have inadequately assimilated the dominant social codes, and are
- excluded from full participation accordingly.

For the purposes of statistical analysis, we will need to work with age ranges as a convenient shorthand for what is essentially a political and sociological state. Standard United Nations classifications prescribe 12 to 25 as the age range embracing youth. While some 12-year-olds are indeed beginning to experience some aspects of the tension between their emerging adulthood and their continuing social status as children, policy for youth is not well served by including subjects who are still predominantly pre-pubertal. We have followed the practice of other researchers (e.g. Landt & Scott 1998) and the statistical collection practices of the ABS in using 15 to 25 years as the operational definition of youth, largely for pragmatic and heuristic reasons. In doing so, we describe a population which is post-pubertal, developmentally adult, and subject to a range of exclusions on the basis of their age.

¹ For more detailed discussion, see chapter 11.

Inclusion, exclusion and “effectiveness”

The research brief requires us to apply ourselves to the question of “effective youth services for the future”. Proposing “effectiveness” involves making value judgments. Effective in terms of what? What criteria should be used to measure it? What counts as more of it, and what counts as less?

There are obviously quite a few candidates. “Affluence” is an obvious one. A society in which people are richer is better, all things being equal, than one in which they are poorer. “Quality of life” could work. “Equity” would get a few votes: that the benefits and burdens of social life and cooperative living should be shared out fairly. Maybe whether “basic needs” are met. “Security”. “Social cohesion”. “Peace”. Maybe “achieving your full potential”.

As we indicated above, we have also chosen inclusion/exclusion as the core criterion to measure effectiveness. The logic of this choice flows from the definition of youth we developed above.² The value judgment we are making is that all competent members of a society have an *a priori* claim for inclusion in the common wealth, with all their obligations and benefits. It is good for people to be able, if they choose, to be involved in the economic life of their society, in the processes of production and the rewards that work can bring. It is good for people to be able to be involved in decision-making processes, in deciding the direction that their communities will take. It is good for people to be involved in cultural expression, to be a part of shaping the way that a community understands itself and the world in which it lives. The more strongly people are connected, the more links they have in their society, the healthier they and their societies will be, all things being equal (Bronfenbrenner 1979).

Logically, if “youth” as a category is defined by exclusion, as we have argued, then it seems reasonable to say that “effective” youth services are those that decrease the scope and extent of the exclusion that young people experience. The connection to other core criteria for people’s concern about young people in the youth studies literature, like alienation, disaffection or the sense of being “detached”, is obvious.

² For a broader discussion of conceptions of youth such as adolescence, transitions and generations, see Bessant et al. (1998).

Conclusion

Understanding the position of young people in Australian society at any point in history is a complex thing. To try and do it with any kind of detail, recognising the impact of economic factors, cultural difference, gender inequalities and the interplay of these and other variables, is pretty well impossible. To project this kaleidoscope into the future with any kind of reliability...

The approach we have chosen, and outlined in this chapter is to begin the task with a clear sense of the central concepts involved: about youth, about effectiveness, about the kinds of issues and services we are interested in. In other words, we have attempted to address the task *analytically*. Rather than describe the range of young people’s experiences and the issues that embrace them, we have identified the core dynamic involved in the position of young people in society, and to track likely changes in this core dynamic and their implications for effective youth service delivery.

The concept of exclusion has been critical here. It has provided the central dynamic to our understanding of youth, which we have defined in terms of their exclusion from participation in key social roles. It has provided the key evaluative concept for measuring effectiveness and for establishing what would count as an improvement or otherwise in the social conditions of young people. It has enabled us to identify the most pertinent issues and social indicators that needed to be factored into the analysis. It has highlighted the kinds of services that we should be paying most attention to. And it enables us to identify where we should be giving most attention if there are specific groups of young people that need specially targeted provision: that is, to those most excluded.

The disadvantage of taking this approach is that this study will not be capable of giving finely-grained detail on service provision for all those subgroups of young people with particular needs. For example, we have not given a comprehensive survey of current youth policy and provision, and some readers may be frustrated by this lack of detail. The study is, and must be, a broad-brush analysis, going for the broadest trends, the movements in mainstream structures, the situation for the general youth population. The general thrust of a study like this will need to be appended by more specific studies which address young people in the particular case. Hopefully, however, it will provide a foundation upon which further research can be based.

2 TWO: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The overarching methodology for the research was based on the Social Impact Assessment (SIA) framework, which is designed for systematically assessing and predicting the social and economic consequences of projects, programs and policies on people. Craig (1988, p.60), for example, defined Social Impact Assessment as “an attempt to predict the future effects of policy decisions upon people, their physical and psychological health, well-being and welfare, their traditions, lifestyles, institutions and interpersonal relationships”.

The first social impact assessments were conducted as an adjunct to more formal Environmental Impacts Assessments in the 1970s. Adoption of the methodology became more widespread, and they are now a statutory requirement in most Environmental Protection legislation (Burdge 1995). Over time, the methodology has spread beyond environmental assessment issues to a wide variety of settings including policy analysis (Craig 1988), where it has provided a comprehensive and systematic approach to policy development, assessment, implementation and evaluation.

A number of general frameworks have been proposed to embrace the SIA process (e.g. Burdge 1995; Finsterbusch 1985; Wolf 1980, 1983). However, the process described by Taylor, Bryan and Goodrich (1990) has been the most extensively adopted in Australia, and incorporates the best features of most available approaches.

It proposes six stages.

- *Scoping*: A preliminary investigation to identify key issues and stakeholders.
- *Profiling*: A form of baseline study which describes the initial conditions of a social impact scenario.
- *Formulation of alternatives*: Based on data collected in the first two stages, identifies a number of potential scenarios (or alternatives).
- *Projection and estimation of effects*: Identifies and estimates the effects of each proposed alternative.
- *Monitoring, mitigation and management*: Monitors the effects of any change, mitigates (where possible) the negative consequences (including unanticipated effects) and manages the process of change.
- *Evaluation*: Evaluates the process and outcomes of both the policy and the SIA process.

These stages are not necessarily implemented in a linear fashion. In SIA research, techniques and processes may serve more than one stage concurrently, and a stage may be revisited at another time using a different data gathering process. This was the case with this research. We incorporated three core data-gathering techniques: statistical analysis, literature search and expert forums, which we will discuss in more detail below.

As we indicated above, consensus opinion suggests that data cannot be projected with any degree of mathematical certainty to anywhere near 2015. Most

researchers in the area accept that statistical data cannot be projected beyond around three to five years, and most of the data is already three to five years old. This is a core problem for researchers attempting to predict the future.

In this research we addressed these difficulties by using a range of different research techniques to explore possible futures for young people. To rely entirely on linear statistical projections would obviously result in conclusions that are inescapably flawed and often ridiculous. Within the SIA process, the use of different techniques gave us a look at the data from several different directions, effectively triangulating our data sources and so strengthening the conclusions we have drawn.

Social Impact Assessment of youth services

The methodological framework for the project followed the first four stages of a Social Impact Assessment approach. These stages are:

Stages 1 and 2: Scoping and profiling

These two stages were implemented concurrently to document the key issues and social and economic changes over the past 15 years. This stage included a review of relevant social indicators, concentrating on the period 1981–1998 but not limited to those years. This was achieved through:

- a thorough survey of available statistical data including that provided by our research partners at the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and
- a survey of the literature including previous statistical analyses. The literature review also included theoretical perspectives which informed our understanding of youth issues, policy and services.

Stage 3: Formulating alternatives

While the assumptions for indicators like demographic changes are well established, there are a range of possible alternative futures for young people based on different sets of assumptions for policy settings and other environmental conditions. In this stage we identified the core indicators necessary for effective projection and clarified the assumptions that formed the basis of Stage 4. Three sets of assumptions were required. These assumptions were cast as scenarios and included:

- a do-nothing scenario
- a worst-case scenario
- a best-case scenario

Expert forums were convened to generate these scenarios. We describe how we convened these groups below.

Stage 4: Projection and estimation effects

Using data provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics National Youth Statistics Unit, and other published and unpublished sources, we projected selected critical social indicators to the year 2015. This provided the basis of the quantitative information required by the brief. While there is a wealth of statistical data available on young people, projection into the future requires statistics to be collected in the same way for a number of years. There are far fewer indicators for which that kind of data is available. In many cases, we had to rely on non-statistical, qualitative factors. Many issues are, of course, intrinsically more open to qualitative assessment.

For these indices the expert forums were used to make projections based on available data, other factors not anticipated by the data, as well as the expertise of forum participants. The expertise and experience of the groups was used to:

- analyse the data;
- evaluate the assumptions on which the projection options are based;
- project youth needs to 2015; and
- indicate the kinds of services and policies that they will require.

Given that the situation of young people in 2015 is partly a function of policy settings now, the expert forums were also asked to suggest immediate and realistic policy directions which will minimise negative social impact into the next millennium.

The position of young people is also a function of their own adaptation to changing circumstances. The expert groups were asked to suggest ways in which young people can position themselves to be able to avoid risks and maximise opportunities in the next decade.

Possibilities for future research

The brief for the project required us to address the four stages described above. They are, however, only part of

the SIA process. The final stages of a comprehensive SIA lie outside the scope of this project, but are nevertheless important elements of the process that could be (and, we would argue, should be) implemented in the future. SIA is a reflective/iterative process in which research and action based on the research are played out in a continuing cycle. The outcomes of policy and service delivery are constantly monitored and any unanticipated effects are observed, learned from, and mitigated if necessary. This process is not included within the project, and falls to the hands of others to complete. We do, however, strongly support the need for well-articulated monitoring, mitigation and management plans in this area, as well as evaluation.

Method

As we noted earlier, the data were collected using three core data collection methods.

1: Statistical analysis and projection of data

The Australian Bureau of Statistics National Youth Statistics Unit is currently based in Perth. The Unit entered into a strategic partnership with the research team to provide up-to-date advice, data and projections available from census and other ABS data, published or unpublished. The data formed the basis of the Project's scoping and projection procedures, and informed other data collection processes. The statistical analyses examined differences between the States where relevant. The audit included:

- Demographic changes: including the size of the youth population; the proportion of the total population that it represents; movements in complementary populations such as the aged and the "dominant" age group (45- to 65-year-olds), noting that generational succession is a critical factor in determining services for young people.
- Employment changes: including levels of unemployment and part-time work; changes in the industries in which young people are predominantly employed; and other movements in the youth labour market.
- Education changes: including changes in the average school-leaving age; participation rates in non-compulsory education; qualitative changes in education; and patterns of participation.
- Family changes: including family size and composition; breakdown and recombination of nuclear

families; age of marriage; alternative marriage patterns (de facto/common law); patterns of child-bearing and childrearing.

- Income support and social security changes, including changes in rates of unemployment benefits and changes in conditions of eligibility.
- Changes in crime rates and in the administration of justice: including rates of arrest and conviction; custodial populations; changing patterns of sentencing; changing patterns of conviction; changing policing levels and patterns of policing, including private police services such as security guards.
- Health status changes: including drug use, mental health and suicide.
- Environmental changes: including depletion of non-renewable resources, the acceleration of non-renewable energy use, atmospheric changes, land degradation, and the impact of these factors on the services required for young people.

Of course, time series data was not available for several of these indicators, and indeed for some of them no data was available within the ABS's collection.

Procedure

The ABS partners met with the NYARS Research Team for an initial briefing on the aims and objectives of the research. For the research team this constituted part of the scoping exercise. The initial briefing clarified the nature and extent of available data.

Scoping interviews were also conducted with key informants from the field to determine what data would be required of the research team for participants in the expert forums.

Subsequent meetings with the ABS partners refined the extent and dimensions of the data search.

2: Literature search on young people and social change

As noted in the introduction an important dimension of the theoretical framework for the project was the youth exclusion literature. The notion of youth exclusion is at the heart of the analysis for the project and has formed a continuous theme throughout the report.

As well as surveying the literature which analyses the indicators above, an initial literature search was conducted to document:

- the history of youth, noting that many of the factors affecting young people over the next 15

years are part of longer-run cycles which may not be evident from a statistical survey of the last 30 years;

- youth transitions, including rites of passage; and
- generations and generational succession.

Subsequent literature searches focused on the emerging data. Of particular importance has been the gathering of reports and study data not generally available through conventional library sources. For example, a number of studies have been conducted concurrently with this research. The outcomes of those studies, where appropriate, have been incorporated into this report.

3: Expert forums

Expert forums have been used extensively to project and estimate the effects of a variety of projects, policies and services. They have the distinct advantage of having considerable face validity. Experts are chosen (see below) using a purposive sampling technique, precisely because they have the depth of knowledge and experience from which they can project or predict future outcomes. In this research, another strategic partner, the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia, selected potential participants for the forums using the sampling technique described below. Expert forums were convened in Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

It is critical to understand that there was no attempt to draw a “representative” sample of informants. Expert forum participants were chosen for their *expertise*, not their representativeness: their capacity to offer expert opinion on the issues at hand was needed, not their membership or involvement in any particular population group or institution. Their qualification to comment was established through peer recommendation, in which the researchers had no hand. And while we did in fact get a good spread of comment (a total of 64 people were involved in the forums), all participants could, in principle, have come from one population group or organisation.

Participants

Participants were chosen by a form of snowball sampling adapted for elite studies by Higley, Deacon and Smart (1979), in which experts in a field are identified by their peers. Known leaders in a field are asked for the names of five others who they consider to be leaders in the area. These five are asked for the names of five others. These are also asked for five names. At the end of this

process, the persons who are named several times will be invited to participate. The following question was asked:

We are currently working on research to identify the kinds of youth services which will be needed in the year 2015. Part of the methodology for this project is to bring together forums of knowledgeable, experienced, intelligent and wise persons to interpret and offer commentary on the statistical data and to suggest what kinds of services young people will need in 2015.

We need you to suggest FIVE (5) names of persons in your State/Territory who might bring their intelligence on youth, youth issues and youth services to such a forum. We would like a balance of youth workers, other youth practitioners, academics and policy makers. They need not be high status people, although several probably will be. They probably won't be novices, though some may be. They do need to be creative and critical thinkers with a practical bent and a good sense of what works.

Who do you suggest?

The selection process involved choosing an entry point (in this case the Youth Affairs Council in each State/Territory) and asking the Executive Officer to provide five names of people whom they thought were able to make a positive and authoritative contribution to the project. These five were approached and so on as detailed above. The process continued until a large enough sample (20) had been generated. Participants were selected on the basis of having been named at least three times.

The final sample was an interesting group of people, and in many ways an unexpected group. We expected an “elite” group including high-ranking public servants, leading youth researchers, executive officers of peak bodies, and managers of large youth services organisations.

We did get several of these kinds of people. However, the process also pulled in face-to-face youth workers, students, youth service coordinators, young people who had been in care, Aboriginal people, South East Asian refugees, local government workers, trainers, academics (especially if you include members of the research team who participated), secretariat staff and office bearers from youth, student and migrant peak bodies, police officers, youth accommodation workers, health workers, members of the Youth Roundtable, employment and training workers and private consultants.

There were a number of features of the participants

which made for an interesting profile. There was a good balance of gender and age, with young people strongly represented, especially in Western Australia and South Australia. While there was representation from culturally and linguistically diverse groups, the representation did not include all major ethnic groupings. Aboriginal people were represented, but not widely.

Given that this methodology was not designed to deliver a representative sample, but to draw a Delphi kind of expert group, the actual composition of the total sample is felicitous. We were especially pleased with the numbers of young people who had been selected. The forums were strong in the number of youth work practitioners or people who had been practitioners in the past. They were weak in representation of other professional groups, and in this context, especially school teachers or education department officials, although there was no shortage of educators generally. In the end, we made sure that the absence of school teachers was not a problem by inviting review and comment on the relevant chapter from experts in education within the university.

Procedure

Prior to the Forums each participant received a comprehensive briefing paper outlining the background to the study and providing a summary of relevant theoretical and statistical data. The expert forums were all co-facilitated by members of the research team. Each forum was conducted using a standardised format to ensure consistency.

Limitations and reflections on the methodology

Overall, methodology achieved the stated aims and objectives. The process has good face validity. There was a high degree of consistency in the data gathered from all sources, including the expert forums. Nevertheless, reflection on the methodology of the project yielded a number of insights and potential limitations.

The limitations of the statistical data have already been referred to above. Given the difficulty of predicting from a limited range of time series that are already old, the statistical data can only be seen as indicative of the state of affairs in 2015. Indeed, as we indicate in the Introduction, the choice of 2015 as a point for analysis requires us to move beyond mere mathematical projection.

The sample produced by the selection methodology was not quite what we expected. There was a significant number of practicing youth workers, and fewer partici-

pants (except in Canberra) from the government sector, especially from education departments. Some high profile figures in academia, the bureaucracy or the community sector were not nominated at all, and that was interesting. However, we felt that it was not appropriate to corrupt the methodological process by compensating for these omissions by direct invitation. In the case of the lack of teachers in the selection, we triangulated our analysis by inviting Associate Professor Bill Loudon (School of Education, Edith Cowan University) to review the chapter on Education and to make suggestions, which were incorporated in the final draft. Some individual interviews with Government officials were also undertaken. The findings have also been subject to extensive review by a range of stakeholders involved in the NYARS review process, and many of their suggestions and criticisms have been incorporated in the Report.

Participants did not always understand the significance of their selection, sometimes seeing the process in representative terms, and in two or three cases, where they could not attend, sent a colleague in their place. In one other case, the participant invited a colleague who was not selected. However, this participant, a leading Aboriginal voice on young people, turned out to be a key informant in the process.

Attendance was a problem generally, with many experts being unable to take the time out for the workshops. This was a function partly of how well participants understood the project and their place within it, and was a particular problem in Melbourne.

However, notwithstanding these difficulties, the final list across the states/territories was very useful, and the data generated by the forums was of high quality. While individual forums may not always have been well-balanced, there was a balance across the whole sample which we could not have engineered. Given that the data is presented in a composite fashion, and that differences between the views expressed in different states were not significant, it is probably the makeup of the sample as a whole that is most important.

In future, if we were to run a similar process, we would select multiple entry points, including core government departments, universities and perhaps the major churches. This may need more iterations in order to produce a common number of names. Running the workshops in two sessions, the first to work with the data and the second to project the data into future scenarios and service projections, might have resolved the difficulty for participants finding a whole day to become involved.

2

PART TWO:
TRENDS

3 THREE: DEMOGRAPHICS

Logically, the process of projection into the future for an age-based population group like youth begins with demographics: how many young people there will be, how this relates to other population groups, what kinds of dynamics we can expect as a result. The Australian Bureau of Statistics has done a lot of work in the area of population projections, probably because many other types of forecast, such as economic forecasts, depend on those numbers.

Part of the current situation for young people is that, relatively speaking, there are a lot of them, and have been for a few years. Birth rates increased steadily from the end of the Second World War up until the 1960s (the contraceptive pill was introduced in 1965), and this has produced a bulge in the teenage section of the population which is only now starting to decline. This oversupply of teenagers has been one of the major causes of youth unemployment, and has arguably led to a range of other tensions including competition for university places and overcrowding in schools.

The data on the population demographics and its projections are also among the most comprehensive and reliable of the sets of statistical data available to this research. In the modern world, we don't have to worry so much about the population effects of plague and famine, natural disaster or war, and can make reasonably accurate assumptions on things like the birth and death rates and the rate of immigration and emigration.

Notwithstanding this, the Australian Bureau of Statistics has a range of different population projections based on different combinations of birth and death rates (natural increase) and immigration and emigration (net migration). Generally, however, the bureau works with three core projections:

- Series 1: Immigration 90,000, low internal migration, fertility rate – falls to 1.75 births per woman around 2005–06 and then remains constant.
- Series 2: Immigration 70,000, medium internal migration, fertility rate – falls to 1.75 births per woman around 2005–06 and then remains constant.
- Series 3: Immigration 70,000, high internal migration, fertility rate – falls to 1.6 births per woman around 2005–06 and then remains constant.

Generally we will be working with the moderate immigration, moderate birthrate scenario predicted by the Series 2 data.

In the recent past, about half of Australia's population growth has come from natural increase and about half from immigration. Annual growth has been variable, but generally in the range of 1%–1.5% per annum.

Existing trends in population dynamics

Australia has an interesting demographic profile. Like most other western industrial nations, Australia is a low birthrate nation whose birthrate at any point is below replacement level. Unlike the other nations, however, Australia has a significant capacity for population growth, which we have pursued over the past 50 years through a tightly controlled immigration policy. This has meant that we are not at the mercy of factors like births and deaths for our population profile. Because Australia is and is likely to remain attractive to immigrants, our situation allows us to manage population growth and population profile (including age, gender, skill levels and cultural orientation) by managing the annual inflow of immigrants (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 1999; McLennan 1998). Immigration is not always politically popular. But despite the sometimes fierce level of public debate, the level of migration has stayed remarkably stable over the past 15 years, even though the ethnic profile of migrants has changed substantially.

Like most western industrial nations, Australia's demographic profile is changing. These changes across the West have been widely documented both in the academic literature and in the popular press. The core dynamic for most European countries comes from the "baby boom" immediately after World War II, resulting from deferred childbearing through the war years (and to some extent the Depression preceding it), a sense of urgency about re-populating countries affected by the war, and increasing affluence throughout the post-war years. The baby boom produced a significant bulge in population associated with the generational cohort that is now aged between 45 and 60, the "baby boomers". There were also flow-on effects in the so-called "echo of the baby boom", where there was a corresponding bulge, albeit shallower and more diffuse, in the next generation, the children of the baby boomers.

The general anxiety for population planners in the West is that as the baby boomers move into retirement and old age, they will present an increasing burden on economies both because the elderly are expensive in terms of health care and income support, and because the productive base of the economies will be shrinking. In short, a smaller number of workers in their productive years will have to support, through taxation, a larger number of unproductive members.

The population pyramid will be mushroom-shaped.

It is important to recognise that Australia's profile is quite different to countries in Europe and America (see, for example, McLennan 1999; Young & Day 1995). In Australia, there was a slight baby boom bulge, but it is more accurate to say that birth rates rose pretty much in a linear fashion up until the mid 1960s. After that, they stabilised, and then started to decline quite sharply.³

The bulge in population in the 65- to 77-year-old cohort is perhaps the most significant feature of the postwar situation, and appears to relate to the increase the number of individuals who migrated to Australia as adults immediately postwar. Their children contribute to the immediate postwar peak and to the bulges in the next generation.

The diagram indicates that Australia has had a very young population comparatively speaking, and our elderly populations have always been small. This has given us the classic "pyramid" shape indicated in Figure 3.1. As a result, the ageing of Australia's population is likely to give us a much more "normal" age profile, a "beehive-shaped" population pyramid in which the numbers in each age range are reasonably balanced, albeit with a constriction in the youngest age groups (see Figure 3.2). This "beehive-shaped" profile is the one that demographers prefer, because it is reasonably stable and self-sustaining, and the resources needed to be allocated to each age group are reasonably constant over time. Australia has the luxury of being able to engineer this profile, and to maintain it, through managing immigration. The ageing of the Australian population actually moves us closer towards this ideal (Young & Day 1995).

Figure 3.2 shows the changes in population between 1997 and 2021 for each age group. The graph also makes it possible to compare the size of each age group over time. It indicates pretty clearly that the youth population is not going to change that much, and that while there will be an increase in the older population, the number of people in their productive years will be sustained.

However, this does still mean that Australia's population is ageing. The numbers of older people will increase both numerically and as a proportion of the population.

This larger population will require more resources, and make more demands both economically and politi-

3 Birthrates are dealt with in more detail in Chapter 7.

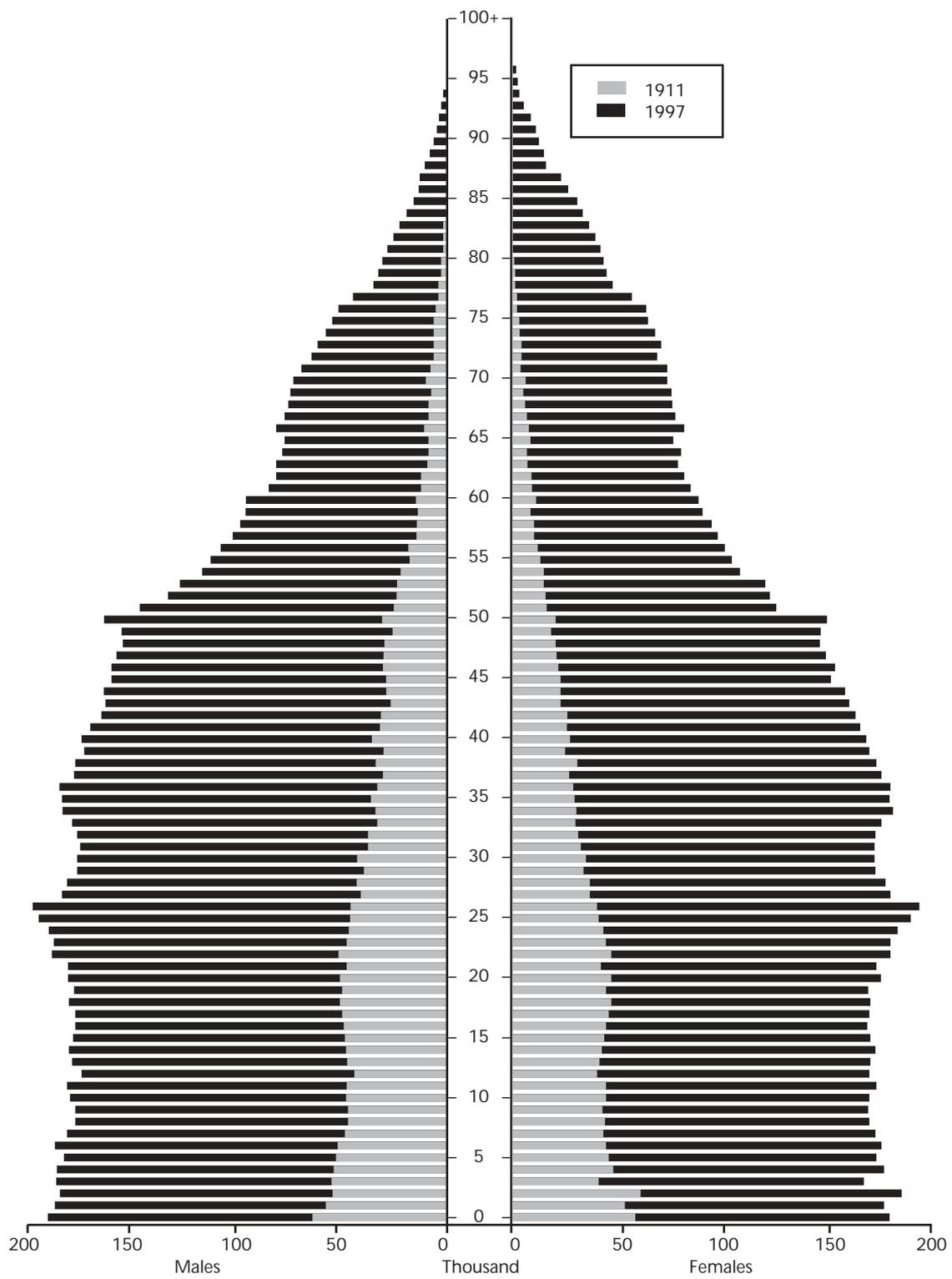


Figure 3.1 Population pyramid, Australia, 1911 and 1997

Source: Australian Demography (a Commonwealth Bureau of Census & Statistics publication); population by age and sex, Australian States and Territories (3201.0)

cally on the public purse. While the numbers of young people are expected to stay relatively constant, the youth population will decline as a proportion of the population – from around 17% at present to around 13% in the year 2015 (Carlton & Mobila 1997) – as the population at large grows.

This decline may have implications for issues like youth unemployment. Because of the declining supply of young workers, it *may* be easier for them to get jobs. But the demographic profile may also mean that the competitive position of young people within society actually declines as young people compete with older

sections of the population for jobs, housing, educational places and political influence.

The relative decline in the youth population also may be compensated for by *changes in the youth category itself*. The relative decline in the proportion of 15- to 25-year-olds in the population may be compensated for by the increasing inclusion of 25- to 30-year-olds in the youth population (see chapter 11). At the other end, the earlier onset of puberty that has been a feature of changes in human development in the West this century may well also move the pointer down the scale. Twelve and 13-year-olds are much more biologi-

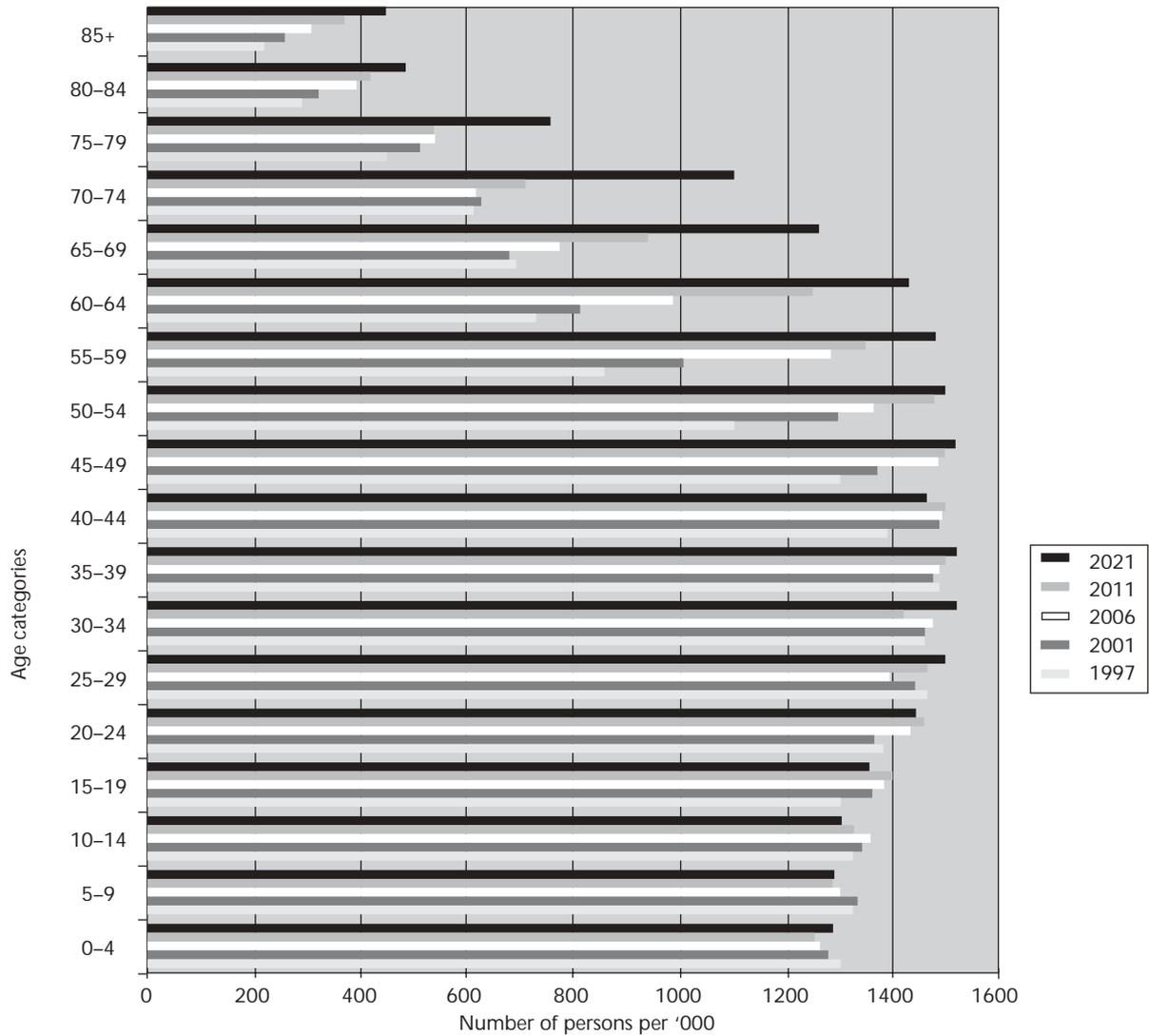


Figure 3.2 Population projections by age, 1997 to 2021

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 1999 #718

cally developed than they have been in the past. They are increasingly seeing themselves, and are seen by others, as “youth”. This downward extension of the youth category may have significant implications for service delivery, in both directions.

Migration

Australia, since colonisation, has been a country founded on immigration. Since that time Australia has assiduously managed immigration policy to achieve social ends. One in five people in Australia was born overseas, many from non-English-speaking origins (Cohen, O’Connor & Bishop, in press) However it has not always been that way. For most of this century, immigrants have been mostly British born. Table 3.1 shows the UK born proportion of the Australian population from 1861 to 1996.

The proportion of British born dropped dramatically from 1861 to around 1947 and since has remained relatively stable at around 7%. On the other hand, since the White Australia policy was abandoned there has been a steady increase in immigration from Asian countries. This is indicated by Table 3.2, which shows the top ten countries from which settlers have arrived.

Clearly, while the trend is for migration levels to be reasonably stable, the composition of the migrant intake has become more and more varied and multi-cultural. Ethnic diversity, on current trends, is a core feature of Australia’s future.

Table 3.1 Australians born in United Kingdom as a percentage of the total Australian population, 1861–1996

Census year	Total Australian population	UK-born	UK-born as % of total Australian population
1861	1145600	630107	54.7
1871	1647800	673517	40.5
1881	2231500	689642	30.6
1891	3151400	826419	26.0
1901	3774000	679159	18.0
1911	4425100	591729	13.3
1921	5411300	674471	12.4
1933	6629839	713422	10.8
1947	7579358	541961	7.2
1954	8986530	635035	7.1
1961	10508186	718345	6.8
1966	11599000	870548	7.5
1971	12755600	1046356	8.2
1976	13548500	1070232	7.9
1981	14926800	1086625	7.5
1986	15788300	1083150	6.9
1991	16852258	1107119	6.6
1996	17892423	1415419	7.9

Reproduced with permission from Cohen et al. (in press)

Table 3.2 Top ten source countries of settler arrivals

Country of birth	1965–66	Country of birth	1975–76	Country of birth	1985–86	Country of birth	1995–96
UK	74749	UK	16687	UK	14709	New Zealand	12265
Greece	15153	New Zealand	2921	New Zealand	13284	UK	11268
Italy	11420	Cyprus	2855	Vietnam	7168	China	11247
Yugoslavia	8081	Chile	1905	Philippines	4128	Hong Kong	4361
Malta	4298	Yugoslavia	1804	China	3138	India	3700
Germany	3751	Lebanon	1519	South Africa	3132	Vietnam	3567
USA	2326	Greece	1489	Hong Kong	3118	Bosnia-Herz.	3405
New Zealand	2200	USA	1432	Lebanon	2757	Philippines	3232
Netherlands	2146	Italy	1365	Malaysia	2284	South Africa	3190
Lebanon	1625	Malaysia	1201	India	2135	Iraq	2617

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1998

The Indigenous population

At the time of colonisation it is estimated that there were some 300,000 to 350,000 Aboriginal people living in Australia. In the period between British settlement and 1900 the population dropped markedly to less than 100,000. Since that time the numbers remained relatively stable until the 1960s when there was a gradual increase.

In 1996 census data reported the number of Indigenous Australians at 386,048, slightly above the

estimates at the time of European settlement. Figure 3.3 provides a breakdown of the Indigenous population by age in 1996.

The chart indicates a population with a much younger profile than the general Australian population. Younger populations also tend to be high-growth, and this is certainly true for the Indigenous population. The growth may well be even higher as more people of Aboriginal descent identify as Indigenous. Plans for youth service delivery will need to be especially

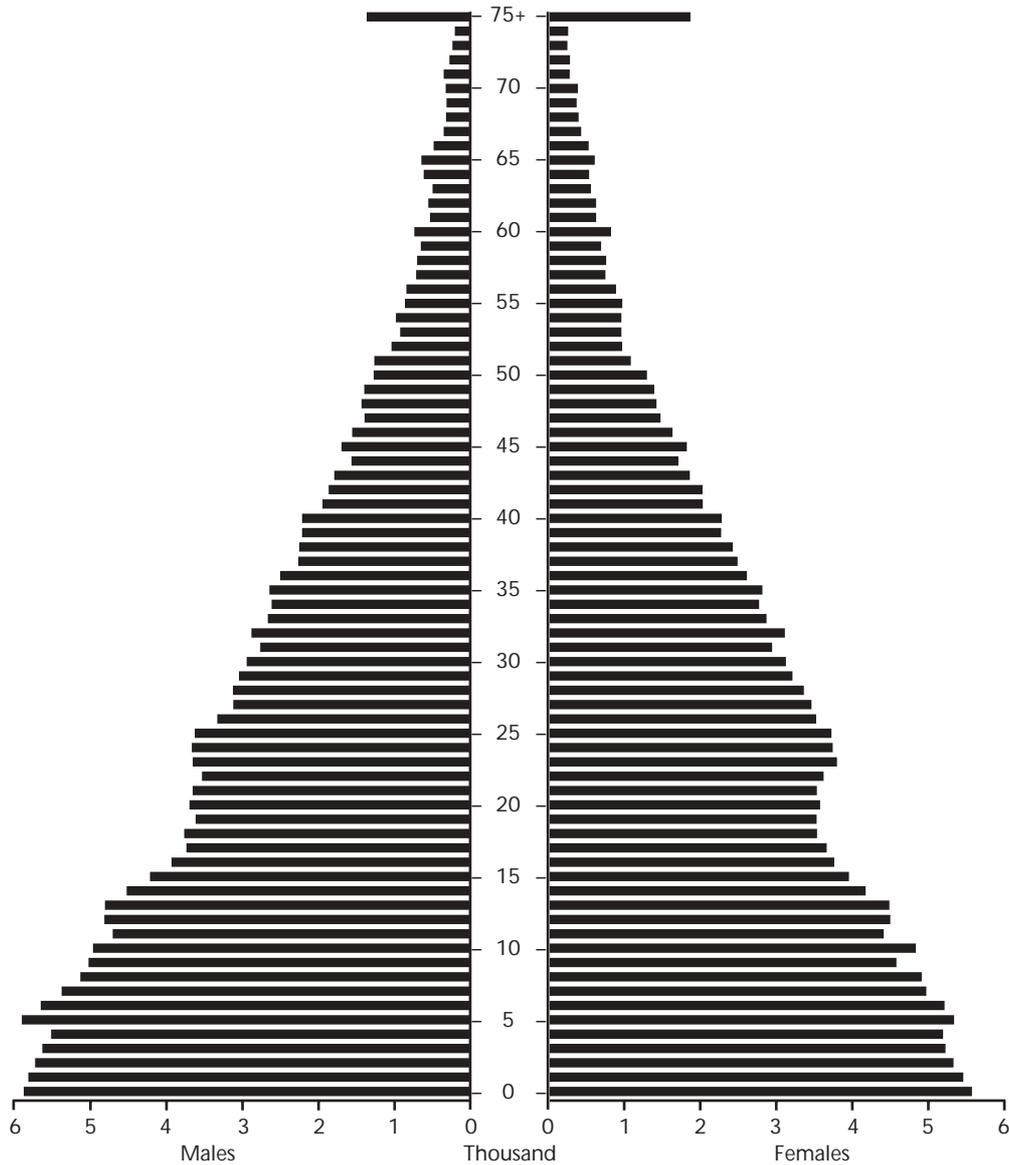


Figure 3.3 Age structure of the indigenous population – 1996

Source: ABS, unpublished Experimental Population Estimates)

attentive to the Indigenous population, and to be aware that in dealing with Indigenous young people they are dealing with a very sizeable proportion of that population. Therefore, policy and service interventions with young people, for better or worse, are likely to have stronger flow-on effects to the Indigenous community as a whole.

Future projections

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' Series 2 projections for the period 1997 to 2051 indicate continual growth in the period to 2015 to a population of around 21.8 million persons. Differences in preferred location for new immigrants and substantial internal migration are expected to result in different levels of growth in state populations. New South Wales is expected to remain the most populous state, but Queensland is expected to overtake Victoria as the second most populous state by around 2030. The population of South Australia is expected to start to decline sometime between 2006 and 2029. Tasmania is expected to decline continuously through the period. All states except Tasmania and South Australia are expected to grow continuously in the period to 2015, with the highest growth in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia. Current trends in the drift from the country to the city are expected to continue for at least the next 15 years, though there may be a move back to semi-rural communities close to the cities as telework and other information technology based forms of work become more significant.

With low numbers of children and not yet high numbers of aged people, the bulk of Australia's population will continue to be of working age. While this will mean that Australia is unlikely to face a serious problem with the costs of maintaining an ageing population, it will also mean that labour market participation rates will remain high. As a result, depending on movements in the economy, we would expect that unemployment will continue to be on the agenda.

Generational tension

In the introductory chapter, we indicated that generational relations are a significant dynamic in understanding the position of young people in society and in planning for youth services. Analysis of the demographics does give some indications of what we might expect in terms of relationships between generations. Demographically, the future for young people

depends on the population changes in and between:

- the 15- to 24-year-old cohort;
- the 45- to 65-year-old cohort (those with whom much of the control of access to resources and power resides); and
- the over-65 cohort (those who depend on personally accrued or government funded resources provided by the working age population).

We have charted the relative changes in populations of different generations in Figure 3.4.

As we noted earlier, the total numbers of 15- to 24-year-olds is expected to remain substantially constant. The number of persons of working age (15- to 65-year-olds) increases by around two million persons during the period. The number of persons over 65 years, however, only increases by about one million, and the increase comes a bit later due to the time lags involved in ageing immigrant populations.

Figure 3.4 also indicates the relative size of the population each year between the ages of 45 and 65. This population is significant in terms of a generational analysis of blocked youth transitions because it is this group that holds most of the positional power in society. Frank Musgrove's analysis (1964) indicates that changes in population size of this group have "knock-on" effects for those who are younger. Briefly, Musgrove argues that an inflated population in the 45 to 65 age group can result in increased competition for positional power, and measures taken by the power-holders to monopolise positions of power by blocking the rising generation from moving into these kinds of roles.

This dynamic can result in frustration within the rising generation (Musgrove's examples are the "beat generation" of the 1960s and the suffragettes, the new cohort of educated women which came into adulthood in the 1920s) leading to political activism or alienation in the young, and increasing hostility and repression directed towards the young by the older generation to keep them at bay. Increased political activism is made more likely also because young people will be "youth" for longer. One of the major inhibitions on youth as a political force is that they grow up, become engaged in the economy, in the process of marrying, buying a house and raising a family, and the stakes for political dissent become higher. In 2015, with late marriage, delayed childbearing and an extended life as a student (noting that students are classically the group most likely to generate alternative forms of political action)

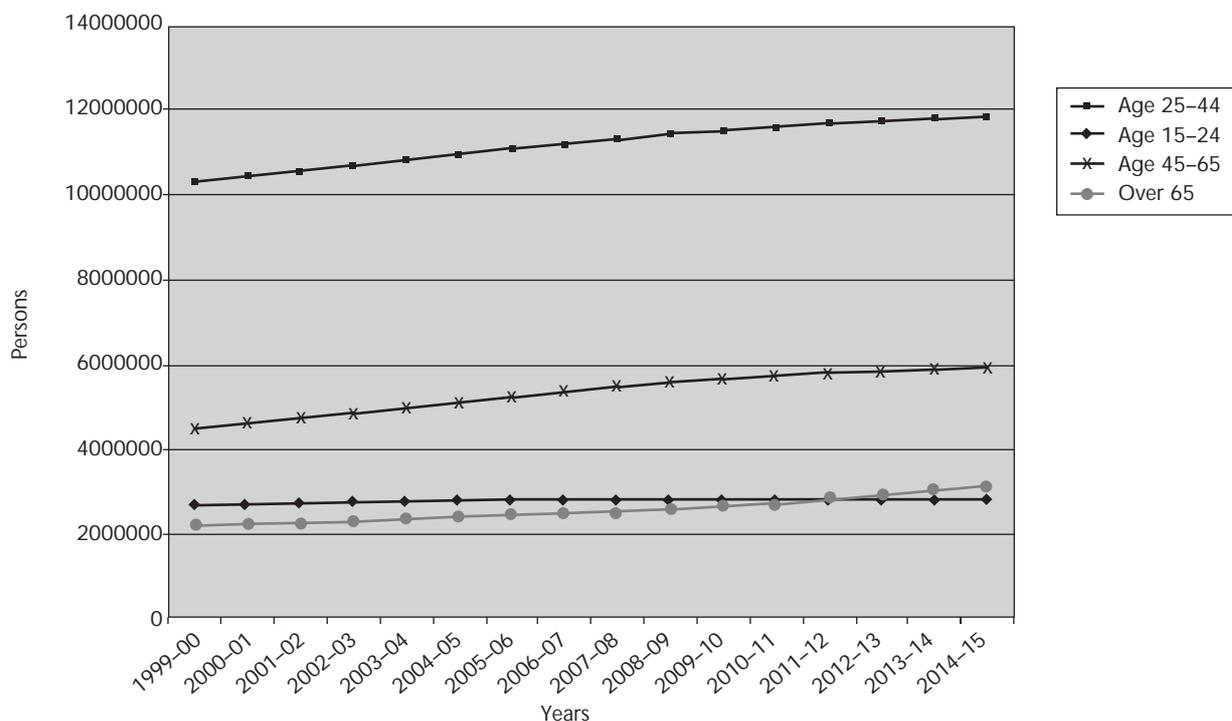


Figure 3.4 Population trends from ABS Series 2a June 1999 – total persons

Source: Dr Terence Love EDU Collaborative Research Team 8 Nov. 1999

we would expect an increase in young people’s political action. The contrary indicator is that political action by the young is also a function of affluence (Keniston 1971), and we cannot see any clear indications that widespread affluence will be a feature of the lives of young people within this time scale.

The above projections indicate that the 45- to 65-year-old populations will increase in size relative to the 15- to 24-year-old population over the period 1999 to 2015. If Musgrove is right, the kind of generational tension that he observed within his study is likely to be evident in the year 2015.

Projections in immigration

Immigration trends are a function of government policy. While the overall rate of immigration has been relatively stable over the last decade or so, a number of factors may put pressure on immigration rates. Demographically, the greatest concern comes from Australia’s falling fertility rate. While a sustainable and age-balanced population can be maintained by immigration, if the natural birth rate falls too low, the levels of immigration needed to supplement the population

may be in danger of exceeding the nation’s social, economic and infrastructural capacity to absorb them.

At the global level, Australia is currently under a great deal of pressure to accept increasing numbers of humanitarian refugees as a result of conflicts in Iran, the Balkans, and East Africa, among other places. The process of decolonisation is still running its course, and we would expect this pressure to be sustained if not increased over the next decade and a half.

Australia is in the position of being able to exercise some choice over its levels of immigration. However, we expect the choices to become more difficult in the next few years as pressures on policy-making increase.

Projections in Indigenous populations

As we indicated above, the Indigenous population is expected to grow significantly faster than the general population over the next 15 years. Projected population changes for the Indigenous community are consistent across age groups and states, with a projected increase by over one-third from the 1996 figures. A state by state analysis (Figure 3.6) shows that the greatest population increases are expected in NSW

(121% increase) and Queensland (92% increase). Population increases in the other States are substantially lower. The greatest growth will be in the younger

age groups with increases in the over 60 age groups much more modest. This is indicated in Figure 3.5 and 3.6.

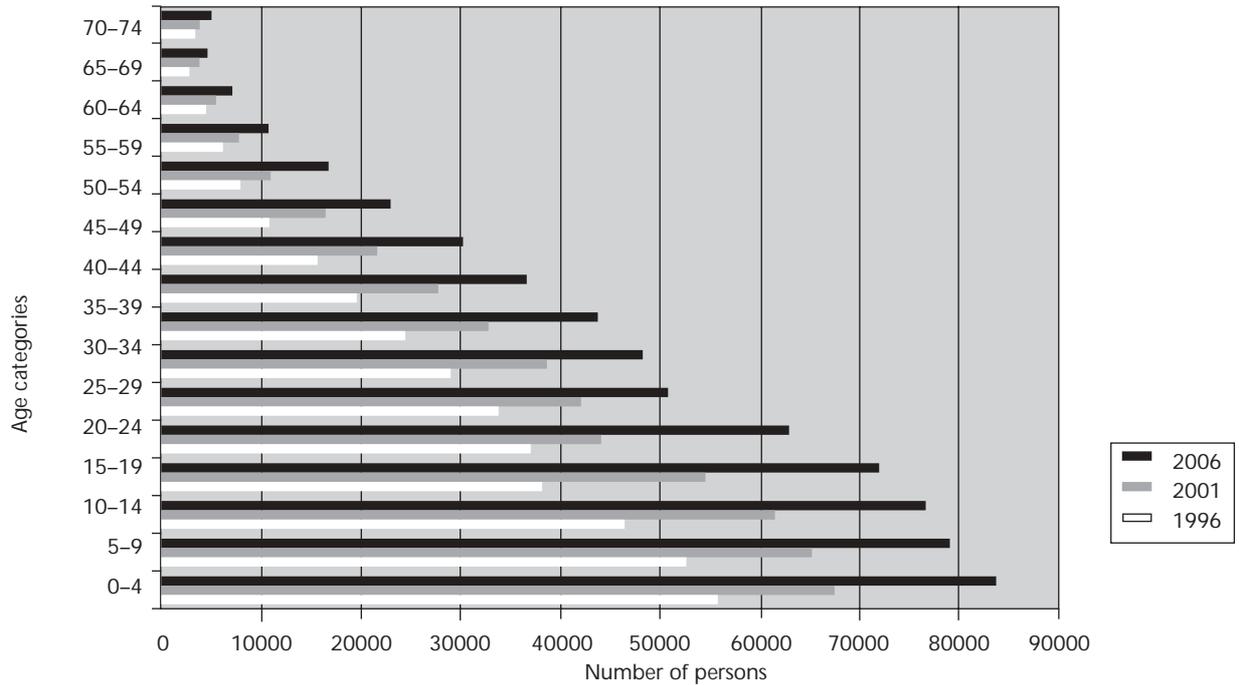


Figure 3.5 Projections of the Indigenous population by age

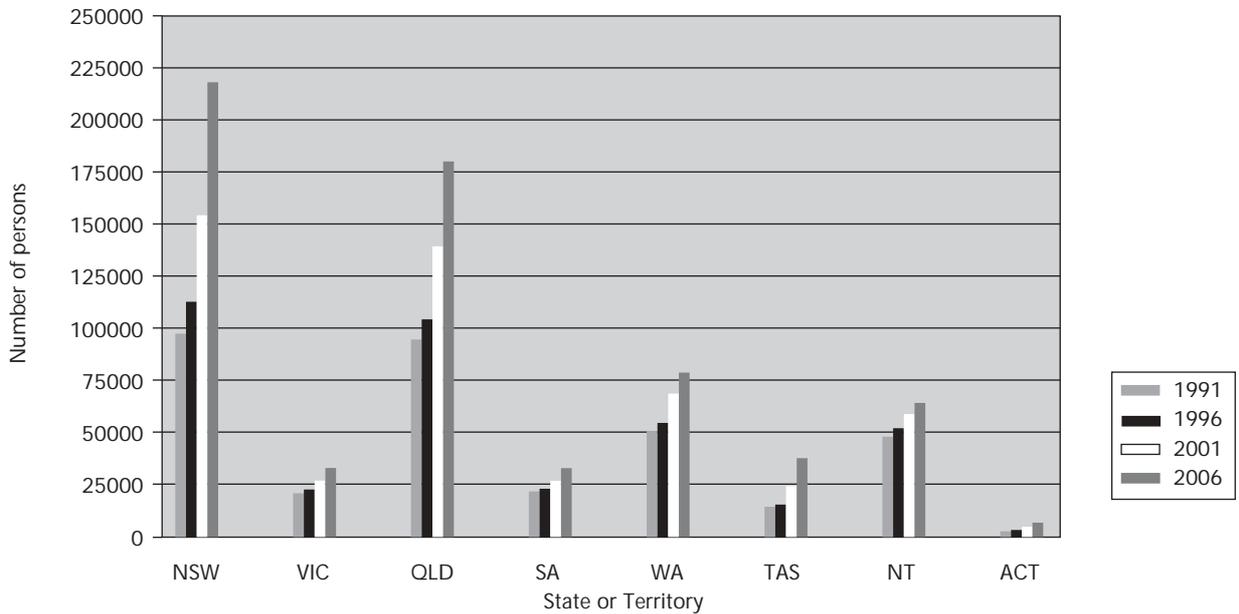


Figure 3.6 Indigenous population projections by State/Territory

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1999c

Summary

Australian population growth is expected to be slow and steady over the next 15 years and more. It is effectively controlled, on a year by year basis, through the management of net incoming migration. Interstate migration, therefore, is the main demographic source of short-term changes in social, cultural and economic scenarios. The number of young people aged 15 to 24 years is expected to be stable, and so direct demographic pressures on youth service delivery will not be significant. However, more 25- to 30-year-olds will be included in the youth category. Changes in the numbers of young people are not a significant factor in the choice of efficient youth services for the future, although the changing age of youth service users will be. The distribution of these services across Australia may well need some attention. Because the ratio of working-age persons to young people is likely to increase, the tax base needed to fund services for young people is unlikely to suffer serious erosion, at least not from demographic forces (McLennan 1998).

Over the next 15 years, the proportions of children, young people, working-age persons, and retired people will change. The population will become weighted towards working age and retired people. It is possible that the problems ascribed to youth may become less visible as the number of young people as a proportion of the youth population declines. These changes could result in young people becoming more valued, and future youth services may become more valued in turn. However, we suspect that the intensification of the youth category due to the extension of the age range and continued difficulty in accreditation as adult will

mean that a more positive view of young people is unlikely to be a natural result of demographic changes.

Already a strongly multicultural society, Australia is likely to become more so over the next 15 years, with the trend towards more migrants coming from non-English-speaking countries continuing. This is likely to be intensified with increasing demands for humanitarian resettlement.

The Indigenous population, young and with high rates of fertility, is expected to grow much faster than the general population. A much higher proportion of that population will be children and young people than is the case for Australia as a whole, indicating the need for special attention in youth service delivery.

The data indicates that conclusions drawn in other nations in relation to a post-World War II baby boom cannot be readily applied to the Australian situation. In the Australian demographic context, concerns that the relatively low number of young people must later eventuate in a shortage of working age persons are unfounded mainly because of levels of incoming migration. This means that the consequences of such a scenario – that there will be little funding raised by taxes to support an ageing population – also appear unlikely.

The data indicates that efficient youth service provision in 2015 is unlikely to be shaped by primary demographic forces such as a surge or collapse in the number of 15- to 25-year-olds. The main factors that are likely to shape choices for efficient youth services are those that originate in the social, political, cultural, economic and technological arenas.

Introduction: education, youth and exclusion⁴

The core institution established for the governance of young people over the past 150 years has been the public secondary school. From small beginnings in the English public schools established for the sons of the middle classes, public secondary schooling has progressively been extended across class, race and gender lines, and deeper and deeper into young adulthood. The youth category in the modern world can be fairly said to be a creation of the secondary school (Bessant et al. 1998).

As an institution for the control of young people, the secondary school has been remarkably successful. It has contained a population now excluded from the production process, it has supplied an educated and disciplined work force, and it has kept young people off the streets. Notwithstanding this, the failure rate of school is still significant, and the social and economic penalties for the minority of young people unable to be contained by the school are escalating (Social Exclusion Unit 1999).

The modern concept of youth is primarily a function of schooling, and secondary schooling in

particular. Cross-cultural and colonial studies have noticed the difference that the introduction of secondary schooling made to populations that didn't have a "youth" category, or only a very weak one. Introduce a high school and before your eyes, a "teenage" population emerges (e.g. Peterson 1976).

The shape of the youth category in the year 2015 will fundamentally be a function of what happens with schooling. Special attention needs to be given to the question of what happens with those young people who are unable to construct a sustainable relationship with school.

School and education

As a number of commentators (most notably Ivan Illich) have noticed, schooling and education are not the same thing. Education is one of the things that schools do. There are lots of other institutions that educate – like the family, the firm, the media, the church, the peer group. There is a broad range of opinion about whether schooling – the process of having same-age groups of people sitting together in a room, learning in structured ways under the instruction of a professional teacher – is the best way to educate people, or even the cheapest.

Schools also do a lot of other things besides education. A major agenda for schools is also always control. This occurs both through and around the

⁴ We would like to thank Assoc Prof Bill Loudon, School of Education, Edith Cowan University, for his incisive and helpful comments on this chapter.

curriculum. Learning that Captain Cook discovered Australia in 1770 involves more than the retention of a historical “fact”. It establishes the right of colonisation by British (rather than French or German) forebears, it relegates the Indigenous inhabitants to the margins, and is an essential component both of the Australian myth of origin and the narrative of nationhood. It helps students learn how to “be” Australian, to give loyalty to the “nation”, and to live within its boundaries. It helps people construct and comply with what Anderson (1983) called the “imaginary community” of Australia.

But the process of sitting and listening (or reading or drawing or making a diorama) is just as important. The body becomes used to being in one place for an extended time, to responding to bells or sirens, to clocking on and clocking off, to permitted “non-work” time which establishes naturally compulsory “work” time, to completing tasks as instructed. Standard templates of power relations (between teacher and student, teacher and principal, student and student leader/representative) are also digested along with Captain Cook.

These varying functions of the school – what we might call the educative functions versus the disciplinary functions – may not necessarily be in tune with each other. Various disciplinary techniques may make students resistant to learning, or may contradict components of the curriculum. The focus on order may not be consistent with things we know about how differently different people learn.

The modern secondary school is still fundamentally governed according to templates laid down by the English public schools of the 19th century, which themselves reach back to the mediaeval monasteries of the 12th century. There are snowballing pressures on the school to adapt and change, in the face of transformative information technology, rapid change, and increasingly strident demands by industry for just-in-time, fully operational labour. The modern secondary school grew in partnership with the factory as the primary site of production. The factory and the assembly-line is now increasingly obsolete as a place of production, and schools will change in response.

Information technology will certainly be part of this change. The obvious direction is for classroom-based instruction to become less and less dominant as the major means of pedagogy as computer-based learning becomes more universal, and as course materials are improved, standardised and more widely available. A change like this in the mode of instruction would also

change the disciplinary environment of the school, as the primary mode of relationship changes from face-the-front, teacher-driven interaction to more individual study using autonomous information discovery learning processes.

In turn, young people will themselves change in response to their different disciplining. Exactly how young people will be different is a little hard to project. But the change from being *ingesters* of knowledge to being *gatherers* of knowledge will certainly leave a psychological and social imprint.

It is easy to say that schools will change. However, the school has been a central pillar of social stability in the West, and societies will be reluctant to embrace radical change in how their children are to be looked after and how their children’s futures are to be secured. Schooling and teaching have proved remarkably resilient. As Tyack and Cuban argue, “the story of educational reform ... is, for the most part, a story of nervous movement from one fad to another, with little enduring effect on teaching practice” (1995, p.290). Certainly, it will be difficult to let go of the disciplinary process that classroom-based instruction delivers.

We can expect more “alternative” schools, schools that are increasingly adaptive to new demands and new constituencies, and increasing tension as education authorities try to make a mediaeval structure adaptive to the pressures of the 21st century. How both educative and disciplinary functions will be maintained and reconciled within whatever new structures evolve is hard to predict. But the chances are that we will see schools evolving, rather than being replaced, as the primary means of disciplining the youth population. The data, both statistical and otherwise, indicate some of the directions that schools are likely to take.

Existing trends in education for young people

The statistical data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics is collected separately for the 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 age groups. This age breakdown corresponds very roughly with the different educational regimes of secondary (typically 15- to 18-year-olds) and tertiary education (18- to 22-year-olds) respectively. There are significant differences in the relationship of these groups to the education system. Far more 19- to 24-year-olds are engaged in the work force. More are involved in part-time education, and in mixes of work

and education. Many more are living independently, and are responsible for their own futures. Many of the pressures facing tertiary education systems are different, at least in degree, to secondary education.

However, there are substantial similarities, and while there may be differences of degree, many of the trends are in the same direction, whether it be in terms of participation rates, equity issues, technology, marketisation and privatisation, and the mix of public and private resourcing for education. Consequences for young people in these different age groups may again differ in degree, but the general directions hold.

School retention rates

The baseline trend datum about young people and education is the extraordinary increase in school retention rates at all levels over the past 20 years. In 1984, 38% of 15- to 25-year-olds were involved in education. By 1994, it had increased to 48.4% – an increase of 27% over the figure 10 years earlier. It had been even higher, reaching a peak in 1991. Year 12 retention and enrolment at university were particularly

spectacular, with Year 12 enrolment growing by two-thirds between 1984 and 1994, and young people’s enrolment at university by almost 80% in the same period.

This was a result of a range of forces. High youth unemployment rates meant that the opportunity cost of further education was low, and many young people considered that they would be more likely to be competitive in the labour market with higher qualifications. Increased retention was an overt Government policy objective. Increased retention not only reduced official unemployment rates and increased an individual’s chances of finding a job, but, governments argued, a more educated work force would attract international capital to Australian shores.

Figure 4.1 quantifies school retention rates to Year 12, and indicates gender differences between them.

Movements in participation in tertiary education follow a similar trend, with the percentage of 15- to 24-year-olds attending higher education almost doubling between 1988 and 1998.

The fundamental consequence of increased school retention is an extension of the youth category, effec-

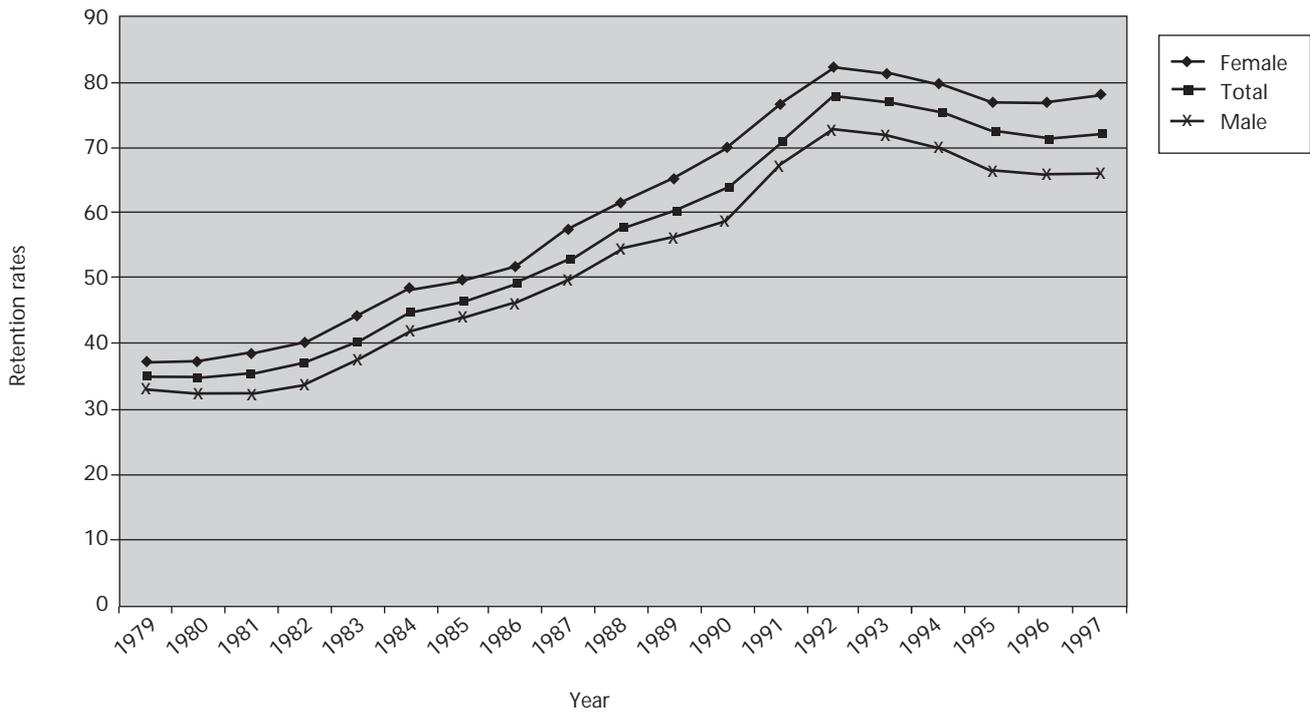


Figure 4.1 Year 12 school retention rates – all Australia

Source: ABS data

tively redefining its scope. In a situation such as the 1970s in Australia, where most young people left school at 15 and entered the work force, and only a small minority continued to Years 11/12 and through into university, the process of accreditation as adult was well under way by 17 or 18. Communities with this pattern will generally find young people leaving home, marrying, having children and demonstrating a range of "adult" roles earlier, all things being equal.

Where the typical school leaving age moves to 18, the engagement of young people in these roles follows. This is partly a consequence of economic necessity: while still at school, young people do not have the economic resources to live independently or to assert adult roles. But it is also a function of their institutional location: engagement in full-time education is a powerful symbolic indicator of a person's status as youth.

The expectation that the youth category will be pushed further up the age range is not an observation that is restricted to educational processes. It is reinforced by trends in employment, and in living arrangements such as age of leaving home, and the age of marriage and of the birth of a first child. As such, **the extension of the youth category represents the**

strongest and most significant projection of this research, and the movement with the strongest implications for service delivery. Because the social indicators that point to this movement are deeply interlinked, the extension of the youth category requires an extensive discussion in its own right. This occurs in chapter 11.

From the point of view of education and schooling, however, a range of other observations were indicated by the literature and/or the expert forums.

Credentialism and the inflation of qualifications

One consequence of near-universal formal education to 18 years is that upper-secondary school graduation becomes an expected norm for the purposes of employment or further study. This has two effects. First, it will place those young people who have not successfully completed Year 12 at much greater comparative disadvantage: effectively at the same status as those who fail to complete Year 10 now. Given that failure in school is highly correlated with a range of contributing risk factors including poverty, there is serious risk of cumulative disadvantage for

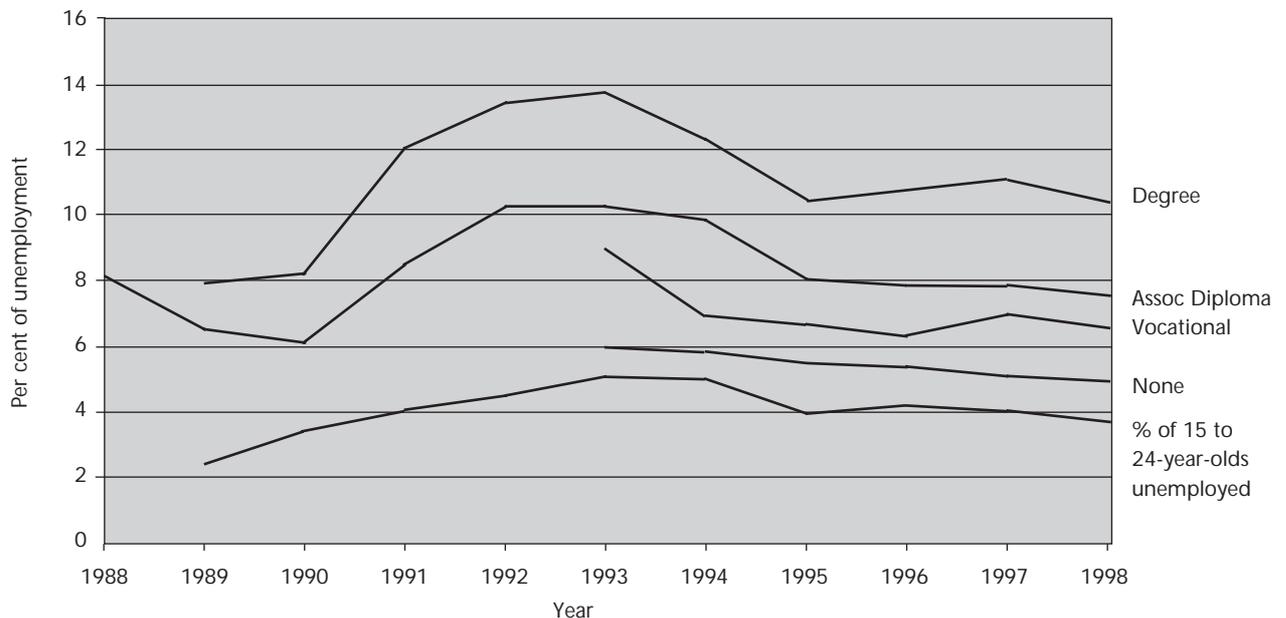


Figure 4.2 Unemployment rate by educational achievement 1988–1998

Source: McLennan, 1999 #624: Overall unemployment rate as % of 14 to 24-year-old population, average of 15 to 19 and 20- to 24-year-old age groups

those young people who for whatever reason have been unable to develop a constructive relationship with school. The bottom rung is further off the ground than it was, and will likely move further up in the future.

The second effect is that it contributes to an inflation of qualifications. Part of the Federal Government's logic in encouraging young people to stay at school has been the observably lower rates of unemployment as you go up the education ladder. But as more young people go up the ladder, unemployment rates follow them. Figure 4.2 indicates rates of unemployment for young people with different levels of qualification. While unemployment rates are obviously and predictably lower for higher-qualified people, the *relativities* between people with different levels of qualification don't change that dramatically. The unemployment rate for graduates increased 95% between 1989 and 1993, compared with 86% for those with no post-secondary qualifications. The rate for graduates dropped 60% between 1993 and 1998 compared with 63% for those with no post-school qualifications: about the same. Relative movements up or down are similar for graduates and those with no post-secondary qualifications.

One implication of this is that inflation in educational qualifications will result in higher unemployment rates for more qualified people. Or to put it another way, unemployed people will be much better educated than they used to be. Expert forums noted the possibility of a range of social consequences of this, including increased political activity.

Future projections

The centrality of the school in the lives of young people

In the year 2015, if current trends continue, it is probable that virtually all 15- to 18-year-olds will be at school. Already, there are moves in South Australia to increase the formal compulsory school leaving age to 18. For several years now, there has been a growing certainty in government that the late teenage years are to be spent in education and training: that there should be no expectation that people should be engaged principally in employment at this time of their lives. We do not expect this conviction to be easily reversed, at least not while there continues to be an adequate supply (or surplus) of labour in the market.

This trend involves the retention of wider constituencies of young people that would previously have left at the age of 14 or 15. Homelessness, periodic detention, problematic drug use, transient lifestyles, psychiatric illness, physical disability, membership of cultural or ethnic groupings not well understood or accommodated by the school, lack of parental support, the need to support parents or other siblings, and especially poverty may all make engagement with the school tenuous and fragile (McLennan 1997, p.49).

School life for many young people is not particularly happy or productive: it is not difficult to find young people who hate school and schools who hate them. For a significant minority of young people, the circumstances of their lives may not have been conducive to an easy relationship with schooling. Historically, legislation was designed to expedite the exclusion of difficult young people from school, even where they were below school leaving age. This practice is already under pressure. Policies such as the Students at Educational Risk policies in Western Australia (and, indeed, the new Education Act in that State overall) are increasingly requiring schools to develop strategies for the retention of all students of compulsory age.

Difficult as this is, it becomes even more difficult if compulsory schooling is extended to 18 years. The frequency and variety of challenging circumstances faced by older teenagers is greater than those for people in their early teenage years. For example, parenthood is rare among under-15s but significantly more common among older teenagers. Problematic drug use, homelessness, same-sex attraction, imprisonment, psychiatric illness, and responsibility for dependent others all increase in frequency with age.

Secondary schools are currently not well placed to deal with this range of social circumstances. Their capacity to engage with the contexts out of which students come to school is severely limited. In the past, they have been able to restrict their interventions to educational ones, and if a student was unable to meet the requirements of school for whatever reason, exclusion was an option. Increasingly, that involves condemning a young person to a life on the margins, unqualified and uncredentialed, with the mainstream economy out of reach.

Schools are already being asked to meet these challenges, though mostly without any increase in resources. The question of capacity must be addressed, both by increasing the degree of linkage between schools and resources available more generally in the community and by increasing capacity within schools

themselves. Current experiments with full-service schools seem a step in the right direction, and we will be discussing these more fully below.

Beyond the move to full-service schools, a greater capacity for information and referral out of the school context into the wider community and human service context seems to be required. Typically, both by training and experience, youth workers have strongly developed professional skills in information and referral, but have not yet found a recognised place within the professional support teams serving secondary schools. There are signs that this could be changing, with some schools currently employing youth workers as part of school pastoral teams. This is a move towards developing an increased capacity for information and referral which should be encouraged.

The other major change taking place in the Australian education system is the move to middle schools. Currently, the major division in schooling is between primary school and high school, with young people moving from one to the other at about 12 and staying in high school until they are 17 or 18. The movement to middle schools (school Years 6 to 9) aggregates students for whom puberty is imminent or establishing on the one hand, and students who are biologically adult on the other. This has the structural effect of separating out adolescents from youth, and establishing the youth category even more firmly as a group of biological adults for whom social adulthood has not been conferred.

The school and the New Economy

Part of the adaptive challenge for schools in the next 15 years is to learn how to adapt to the different work environment which is now emerging. Expert forums were particularly concerned that schools were operating with notions of employment and other economic engagement that belonged to the Industrial Revolution. Current discourse appears still to be that if you work hard at school, you will get a job. A future in which mixes of part-time work, study and enterprise are much more likely to be the norm have not yet filtered through to the teaching practices of schools, although there are some clear exceptions. The current process of the classroom, much of which is centred around obedience and submission, needs to be reshaped to foster initiative, enterprise and the ability to learn things that are not already known.

Our contributors considered that this required a secondary schooling experience in which students were

much more strongly linked to a range of enterprises outside the school, both commercial and community-based (Gamage 1996). However, the relationship between the school and the enterprise needed to be developed in critical ways. It was not just a matter of work experience, in which students learnt how the enterprise worked, but a critical and educative experience in which fundamental questions needed to be raised and problems needed to be addressed. How can the perennial funding crisis of this community agency be fixed? How can this business expand its market? How can the environmental risks posed by this plant be minimised? How could this firm deal with its workers so that they were happier to work there?

Participants in the expert forums were of the opinion that schools have often been used over the last 15 years as "holding pens" for a youth cohort unable to be accommodated in the labour market. Successful schooling in the future will facilitate an active engagement with the world. In turn, our commentators suggested that the next 15 years will produce young people who are very clever indeed, able to think independently and critically, to identify the information they need and seek it out, and to be able to evaluate the quality of information they receive.

Marketisation and privatisation of schools

There are also pressures currently for the marketisation and privatisation of the school sector. Marketisation, in which education systems are structured to create a "market" for education in which individual schools compete for students and for income, is already under way in several states. Privatisation, in which government schools are sold to private business, and where private business increasingly penetrates the market providing profit-driven schools, is still being approached cautiously. However, education departments across the country have been pursuing policies of devolution, increasing the autonomy given to local schools. Increasing autonomy is a prerequisite, and may well be a precursor to the privatisation of schools in the future, in which governments take no responsibility for the direct provision of schooling.

Privatisation and marketisation of all public enterprises has been a major trend in government administration over the past 15 years. We would expect also that schools themselves will increasingly be subject to the same processes that many other sectors of the social infrastructure, like child care, youth work and health care have already been through. Proposals

for full fee paying tertiary education and voucher systems for all levels of education, including primary and secondary education, have been on the drawing board for some time.

Participants in the expert forums were seriously concerned that marketisation would be likely to increase inequity among young people, with long-term effects for their futures. Where schools are able to select their students, as is common with marketised systems, significant advantage is gained by those students who are already advantaged, while students from poor backgrounds find themselves unable to get into the “best” schools, even if they are in their local catchment area. Lower-status schools find it harder to attract quality staff, are less able to generate additional income by charging fees and by fundraising, and are disproportionately populated with “problem” students. These pressures are further intensified with the full move to privatisation, in which schools’ continuing survival is predicated on their ability to compete. Typically this depends on their ability to guarantee high student test scores. “Skimming the cream” is simply good business practice under these conditions, and worsens the polarisation of outcomes for students.

Diversification and alternatives

While it is not the only route, marketisation does open up the opportunity for massive diversification in the provision of education to young people. For the past century in Australia, free, universal and compulsory education has meant a standardised, state-provided system, albeit with some provision for religious institutions to provide schooling for those who make that choice. Over the past few years, there has been a proliferation particularly in the kinds of religious institutions providing schooling, and in the forms of teaching and learning utilised. Government support for private schools has expanded relative to government schools, and their market share has also been gradually expanding: the proportion of 15- to 19-year-olds going to private schools increased from 20% to 23% between 1986 and 1996 (Figure 4.4). Home schooling has grown as an education option for many parents, albeit still mostly at primary school levels.

Providing that there is financial support for educational options which do not involve government run secondary schools, we would expect an increasing diversity in secondary schooling options over the next 15 years. In 2015, the majority of students will, as now, attend a major high school in their local area. But for

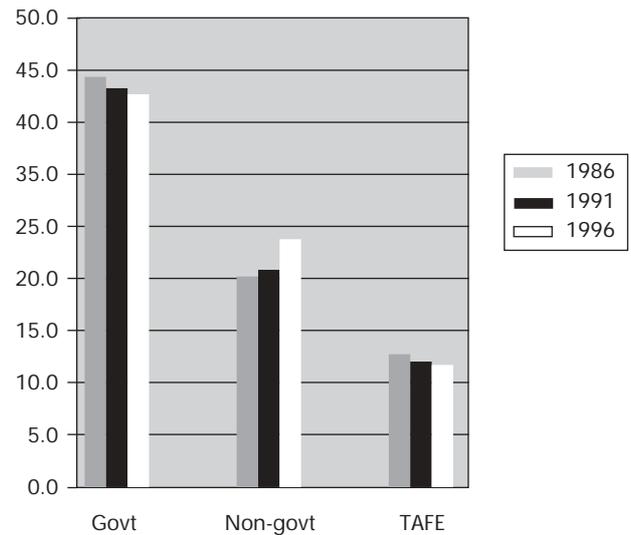


Figure 4.4 Secondary school enrolment: 15- to 19-year-olds: percentage

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 1986, 1991, 1996

many students, small alternative schools, religious schools, or parent-directed schools will be a live option. Independent schooling using electronic instruction materials, while not a majority choice, will also be an increasingly viable alternative for some young people.

The consensus of the expert forums was that there was a need for students to have access to a wider variety of education strategies than was typically within their reach. A significant minority of young people find standard schooling practices alienating, irrelevant and unengaging. Others struggle with specific learning difficulties which remain undiagnosed. Even if they know what is wrong, the capacity of the standard classroom to accommodate their special needs is typically severely limited. Cultural background, especially for Aboriginal and Islander people but also for Muslims and even more generally for the children of the working class, produces tensions between home environments and schools which militate against success. Moving beyond “one size fits all” approaches to secondary schooling may produce an educational experience which is healthier, more equitable and more fulfilling. Expert forums wanted to encourage this kind of flexibility and diversity. The nature of effective diversification could include:

- schools employing different educational philosophies;
- schools allowing Indigenous students to study together;

- bicultural schools;
- small private schools of 12–15 students;
- workplace-based schools; and
- specialist schools.

One of the recent developments in secondary schooling in Australia and elsewhere has been the attempt to create an integrated environment on school campuses known as “full-service schools” (Dryfoos 1994; Lowenthal 1996). In these models, a range of services are available on campus or are in a close relationship with the school. Services may include: health services, including dental services; counselling; various welfare services, including food clubs and financial counselling; accommodation or accommodation brokerage; recreation; employment services, including job placement and job creation services; and after-hours education, including vocational, secondary and leisure-based education.

Full-service schools serve a number of useful purposes. They may provide a central place for service delivery, which increases access for most participants. They use school resources normally left vacant after school hours. They provide cheap office space for community agencies in an environment where the cost of commercial space can be prohibitive and zoning laws make other space unavailable. They increase the linkage between schools and the communities they serve, and between community agencies.

There are, of course, disadvantages. The question of who meets the administration and maintenance costs of more intensive usage of school plant is an immediate problem to be solved. And there is a possibility that young people who are in conflict with the school may find that other services they need are also unavailable to them.

However, on balance, participants in the expert forums identified full-service schools as a significant development, and one which ought to be persevered with and expanded. A variety of models are now well-established in many parts of the world, especially the USA, and while some problems and failures have been encountered, many meet objectives that the forums identified as being critical for productive, equitable and effective education in the year 2015.

Technology

The increasing use of information technology within schools and universities has already been noted a number of times. We are sure that information

technology will not replace face to face tuition. However, it will certainly take a larger role in the process of instruction than it does at the moment, and the role of face to face teachers will undoubtedly change.

One of the consequences of the move toward IT-based learning will (and is already) the globalisation of education. Electronic interactive learning packages are expensive to make, though the cost falls with every new generation of authoring software. There is already a global market in tertiary education, using web-based instructional materials. While still really in its infancy, we would expect such materials to be mainstream by the year 2015. This is happening first at tertiary levels, where access to computers is high, but will undoubtedly flow through to secondary and primary levels. Secondary students may study a glossy, interactive, game/simulation-based multimedia module on Australian history written by software companies in the USA. Five students in the same class may be doing five different modules from different educational software providers. This will have interesting consequences for the “imaginary community” of Australia and for the discipline of its people.

The nature of current technology interfaces also indicates that education may become more individualised as it becomes more computer-based. A computer interface socialises students differently to a teacher and fellow-students in a classroom, often involving less time in face to face contact with other human beings. Provision will need to be made for experiences which develop students’ capacity for face to face communication, social responsibility, teamwork and cooperation.

The dependence on technology raises equity considerations also. While the vast majority of households in 2015 will have a computer connected to the Internet, the question must be raised about those who don’t. The quality of household technology is also an issue, with students from wealthier households able to take advantage of sophisticated multimedia presentations which may not be available to those with more modest means.

Schooling and equity

Schooling, paradoxically, has always been a force both for increasing equity within society and for establishing status distinctions. The introduction of free, compulsory and universal schooling at the end of the 19th century was motivated significantly towards providing all members of the common wealth with

sufficient education to be able to participate effectively within a liberal democracy and within the capitalist economy to which it was harnessed.

At the same time, the distinctions between schools for the elite and schools for the masses have served to entrench class division and class privilege, and to ensure that the children of the elite continue to enjoy advantage even in a “meritocracy”. Even within government schools, according to sociologists of education like Willis (1970) and Corrigan (1979), active processes are afoot to make sure that “working-class kids get working-class jobs”. Overwhelmingly, the children of the middle classes do best at school, and graduate from school to occupy the social and economic positions reserved for their class. Research has repeatedly shown that schools with a predominantly affluent constituency rank best in terms of average student scores. While there are some individuals who are able to use schooling to move beyond their class of origin, at a macro level schooling entrenches and intensifies inequality.

Gender and equity

Historically, there is little doubt that young women have been extensively discriminated against in the classroom: by classroom process and discipline, by limitation of access to strategic courses, and by general social discouragement of learning, education and the development of intelligence in women. A great deal of work has gone into reversing some of these trends, and despite evidence that young women continue to be subjected to a range of discriminatory processes both from other students and staff, it appears that many of these strategies have been successful. There is a great deal of data to suggest that girls currently do better out of the education process than boys do. They have higher retention rates, score higher in assessments, enter university at higher rates, and complete qualifications more often than boys do (DETYA 1999a). A number of reasons have been suggested for this, including, among others, the now pronounced feminisation of teaching as a profession. In 1998, 77.5% of primary teachers and 53.5% of secondary teachers were women.

A number of educationalists have begun now to raise concerns about the education of boys. Clearly, standard education and disciplinary techniques do not work well for a significant number of boys. The risk is compounded when combined with other risk factors. Research into gender-specific learning processes is a

prerequisite to gender-equitable education. Social and educational remedial services for boys who have been excluded from school would appear to be required unless these trends can be reversed. A growing population of under-qualified, unemployed young men poses a range of difficulties for a society in 2015 which has not been able to successfully address this problem. It may be, however, that technology-based learning processes may swing the balance of gender equity in education back away from girls because of young men’s greater facility with the medium.

Race and equity

The major concern here is with Indigenous young people. Participation and retention rates for people from non-English-speaking backgrounds are not significantly lower than for other groups, and are in many cases higher (Long, Carpenter & Mayden 1999).

The data on educational disadvantage for Indigenous young people is unequivocal, consistent, and serious. An extensive statistical report compiled for the Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs by the Australian Council for Educational Research indicated that Indigenous young people have lower participation rates, lower attainment, and lower completion rates at all levels of education. Figure 4.5 indicates the extent of this.

A quarter of Indigenous young people had already left school by the age of 15, compared with about 6% of non-Indigenous 15-year-olds. Participation rates in tertiary education for the general population were three times that of Indigenous 20- to 24-year-olds. About 10% of Indigenous 20- to 24-year-olds were enrolled, compared with 25.8% of non-Indigenous young people.

The trend data indicates that the situation is not noticeably improving. Apparent Year 12 retention rates for Indigenous students actually fell between 1994 and 1997, both absolutely and relative to non-Indigenous enrolments. Longer trend data is not available for Australia as a whole, but data is available on a state by state basis. The situation there is mixed. There has been no clear improvement in Western Australia since 1991, when rates did increase over the previous year. The retention rate in South Australia fell from 24% to 19.5% between 1990 and 1997. The rate for the Northern Territory was less than 10% in 1997, having fallen from 13.7% in 1990.

In contrast, in 1990 the figure for the ACT was not that different to the NT, at 20%. But by 1997 the ACT

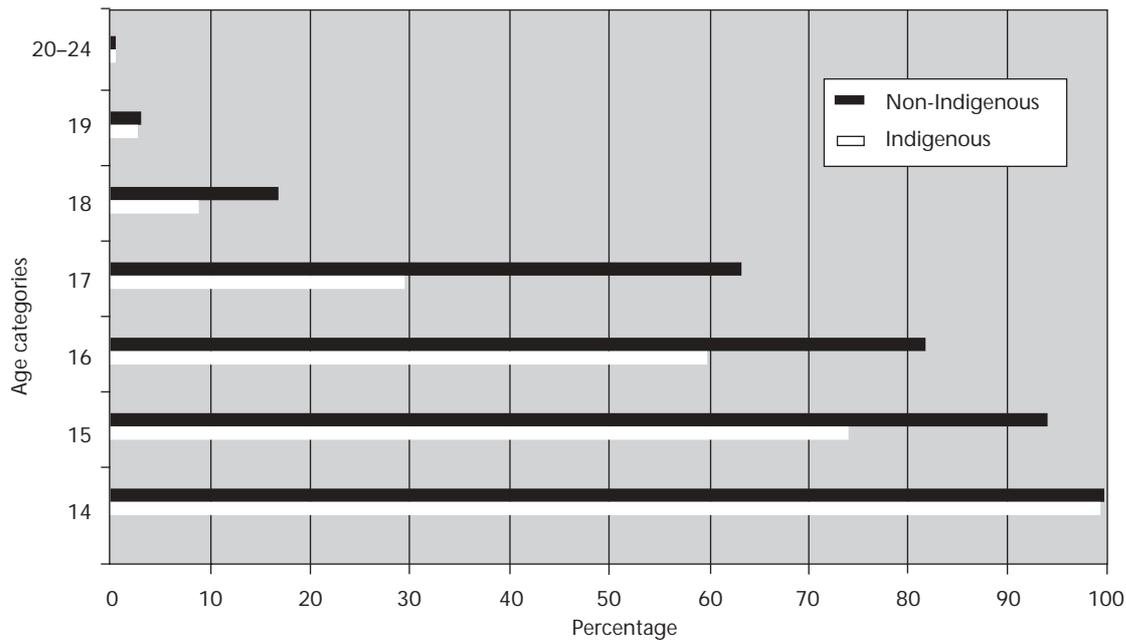


Figure 4.5 Primary and secondary school participation rates 1999

Source: DETYA 1999

had improved to 90%, almost equivalent to the non-Indigenous retention rate. New South Wales and Victoria also made consistent improvements.

The ACT is, no doubt, a special case. However, the result indicates that there is nothing inherent in being Aboriginal that means that young people do not stay on at school. If 90% of Indigenous young people in the ACT stay on, and that can be improved from a figure of 20% over seven years, then some improvement is possible, notwithstanding that the situation in rural Northern Territory presents a very different set of challenges.

Services needed

This discussion has highlighted a range of possible services to address the needs of young people in educational contexts in the year 2015. Others are implicated in the discussion, or have been indicated by the expert forums. They include:

Full-service schools

Schools represent both a resource and an opportunity to address equity and access questions for a range of

young people. An integrated environment should be created on school campuses, or reaching out from them, with a range of services available including: health services; dental services; counselling; various welfare services, including food clubs and financial counselling; accommodation or accommodation brokerage; recreation; employment services, including job placement and job creation services; and after-hours education, including vocational, secondary and leisure-based education. Of course, models for full-service schools vary, and will need local adaptation and evaluation.

Integration with community and business enterprises

Relationships need to be developed between the school and outside agencies. Workplace placement needs to be a critical and educative experience in which the student is given opportunity to become aware of fundamental questions for the enterprise, including tensions and dilemmas in maintaining economic bottom lines, the nature of the environment for the enterprise, dealing with government, staffing and industrial issues, occupational health and safety and other key issues.

Training for entrepreneurship/New Economy

Teaching and learning need to be tuned to an environment which is increasingly diverse, unregulated, fragmentary and volatile. Students need to be trained for self-employment and autonomous work practices.

Alternatives: Secondary schooling needs to move beyond a “one size fits all” approach to embrace alternatives which may include:

- Schools employing different educational philosophies
- Schools allowing Indigenous students to study together
- Bicultural schools
- Small private schools of 12 to 15 students
- Workplace-based schools

Continued free, universal education

Marketisation is likely to increase inequity among young people, with long-term effects for their futures. Continued State responsibility for education is recommended. States need to be vigilant about the contribution of schooling to cumulative disadvantage among young people from marginalised groups.

Access to technology

Students must have equitable access to information and communications technology in their communities, including after-hours access.

Boys

Measures need to be put in place to develop teaching and learning processes which help young men improve their communication and language skills.

Indigenous students

Efforts to support Indigenous students in schools need to be maintained and extended. Schools which specialise in serving Indigenous students should be supported.

Relentless opportunity for success

Failure at education must not be allowed to become a permanent deficit. Second-chance access, access to alternative forms of schooling, and other strategies must be employed to ensure the possibility for success, particularly for educationally disadvantaged groups.

Conclusions

The research indicates that important as school is in the lives of young people now, it is likely to become even more dominant. Near-universal enrolment seems likely for 15- to 19-year-olds, with a majority of 20- to 24-year-olds also being involved in formal education processes.

At the same time, the pressure is on for schools to be able to respond flexibly to the needs of young people in an environment where more are likely to be involved in part-time work and a range of other activities, and where the student population is likely to be more diverse than ever before. Exclusion of difficult students is less and less of an option.

Schools already know that while their job is education, their capacity to do the job is deeply affected by the social circumstances of their students. Schools in the future will need to be able to engage with these social circumstances, and to develop a problem-solving capacity to enable their students to remain engaged within the school environment. The costs of failure for students, already serious, are likely to be much worse in 2015 than now.

Education is a two-edged sword. Measures to increase equity can at the same time enshrine privilege and make pariahs of those young people who they cannot engage. Education systems need to be actively and constantly developing strategies to engage those young people for whom schooling is a barrier to education, and to removing obstacles to their continued participation. A capacity for outreach would need to be standard within schools of the next 15 years.

5 FIVE: WORK AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Introduction: work, unemployment and exclusion

If schooling has been the critical institutional process which has established youth as a population and a social category in the modern period, formal paid work has been the critical process for their accreditation as adult. The nature of work, the way that work is structured and rewarded, and the access that young people have to formal paid work are thus pivotal to the lives of young people and to their place in society. And so, obviously, the services that will be needed for young people in the future will be a function of young people's engagement in work in the future.

The world of work for young people has been changing for some time. Easy access to secure full-time employment has not been part of most young people's experience now for the last 20 years, and the trends continue to move away from that pattern. Rates of unemployment have been persistently high, and where work has been available, it has become increasingly tenuous: part-time, casual, temporary. In the opinion of many commentators, the experience of young people is the vanguard of a deep undercurrent of change in the way that the economy operates, the way that people engage in work within it, and the mechanisms of reward that are employed.

For some, the new flexibility in the working week has been welcome, leaving them free to pursue

education or other priorities. For others, it has meant persistent struggles with financial security and difficulty in building an asset base.

While full-time employment may not have been an expectation of teenagers, most people in their twenties have enjoyed relatively secure jobs. That situation is changing, and changing fast. People in their twenties are more likely to be unemployed, and likely to be unemployed longer. Full-time permanent jobs are disappearing for the 20- to 25-year-olds as they did for teenagers.

The expert forums identified two major dimensions of the question of young people and work in the future: trends in the *rate of unemployment*, and the *structure of work* for young people.

The youth unemployment crisis

The critical role of employment in the governance of out-of-school young people is strongly reflected in the immediate history of youth policy in Australia. Young people's engagement in the paid labour force has undoubtedly been youth policy's single largest driving force since the economic recession of the early 1970s. While earlier generations might have been preoccupied with young people's war readiness (the 1910s and 1920s), or delinquency (1950s), or political revolt (1960s), the core agenda item since the mid-1970s has been youth unemployment.

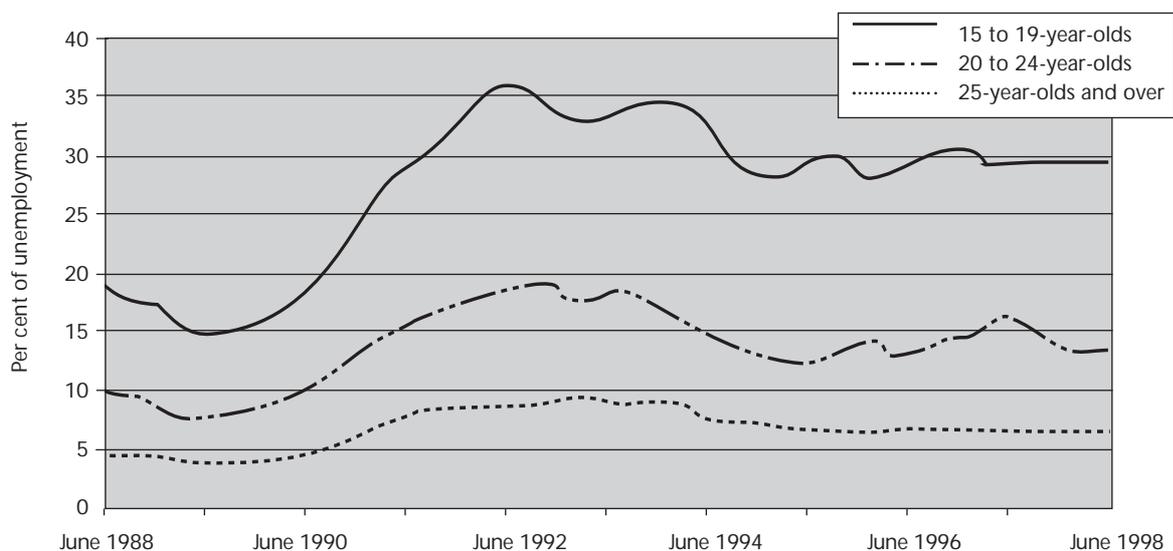


Figure 5.1 Full-time unemployment rate 1988–1998

Source: ABS: Labour Force Australia September 1998 ABC Cat. No. 6203.0

Levels of youth unemployment continued to climb to a peak of 34.1% for teenagers in June 1992. They have declined since then, with some fluctuation, but are still only slightly better than during the 1983 recession (Wooden 1999, p.20). In 1998-99, the rates for 15- to 19-year-olds (25.4%) and 20- to 24-year-olds (12.6%) looking for full-time work were still significantly higher than the average for all age groups (7.9%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1999a).

As in most other western nations, these broad statistical sweeps over the employment circumstances of teenagers ignore the high levels of variability in young people's circumstances, and the issues that are specific to different groups of young people who lie outside the mainstream for which most youth employment policy has been formulated (Lugaresi, Jones & Frustaci 1997).

Indigenous young people have been particularly at risk here. At least a third of men and half the women between the ages of 20 and 24 are neither working nor studying (DETYA 1999b, p.29). The 1996 census indicates that 22.6% of Indigenous males were unemployed, compared with 12.9% of non-Indigenous males. Unemployment rates for young women were more equitable, but the relative figures for young women not in the labour force match almost exactly the unemployment figures for men. This is compounded by living in rural areas.

However, Indigenous young people's labour market participation is trending upwards. Between 1991 and 1996 the percentage of the 20- to 24-year-old Indigenous population working full time increased from 28.3% to 31.4% for young men and from 17.3% to 19.8% for young Indigenous women.

Youth and the supply of labour

Understood in market terms, youth unemployment has been a product of forces both from the supply side and the demand side of the labour market equation.

In supply terms, there is no doubt that high levels of youth unemployment were partly a function of demographic forces which delivered a larger population of young people onto the labour market in the 1980s and 1990s. The number of registered births per annum had increased almost linearly between 1932 and 1962 (from around 110,000 births per annum to around 240,000 births per annum) (McLennan 1999). Births dropped briefly between 1962 and 1971 before forming an irregular plateau of around 240,000 births per year. The youth population obviously follows 15 to 25 years later.

It is important to note that as a percentage of the total population, youth has been falling since about 1979/80, when they represented around 17.5% of the

population. The peak in youth unemployment rates comes in 1992/93 even though young people as a proportion of the population had declined to 15.7%. Into the future, the youth population is expected to increase slightly while youth as a percentage of the population falls. Even though the projected figure for 2021 will fall to around 12.7%, the total youth population is expected to increase slightly to 2,869,000. It seems to be the numbers of young people, rather than their representation within the total population, that is the critical demographic force in determining unemployment rates, at least from the supply side. And the size of the youth population will be maintained at least for the next 15 years.

As well as the number of young people in the population, the supply of youth labour is dictated by the degree to which young people are involved in the labour market. If young people are not available for work either because they have given up looking or because they are doing other things, they do not feature as part of the unemployment rate.

Education has been the principal alternative to involvement in the labour market for the youth labour force. To a great extent, youth unemployment figures have been able to be controlled over the last decade through the use of a variety of incentives and penalties

to encourage young people to continue their education. For this reason, the trend data on youth unemployment probably tells us as much about the level of political intervention as the underlying trends in youth unemployment. Even independently of these policies, the existence of high rates of unemployment itself is an incentive for young people to remain in school, both because of the comparative advantage that higher qualifications give, and because there are no jobs to go to if you leave.

Obviously, participation rates in school limit participation rates in employment, although a large and increasing number of students are involved in some way in the labour market. The data indicate that participation rates in education are increasing and would be expected to continue. Employment, as the graph below indicates, is also increasing, but this is due to a rapid expansion in part-time employment. As Figure 5.3 indicates, the involvement of young people in full time employment has been falling away rapidly.

The graphs below indicate the trends in young people's share of full-time employment, and their participation in the labour market over the last decade. They indicate that while the numbers of young people engaged in the paid work force may have been maintained, their level of engagement has dropped

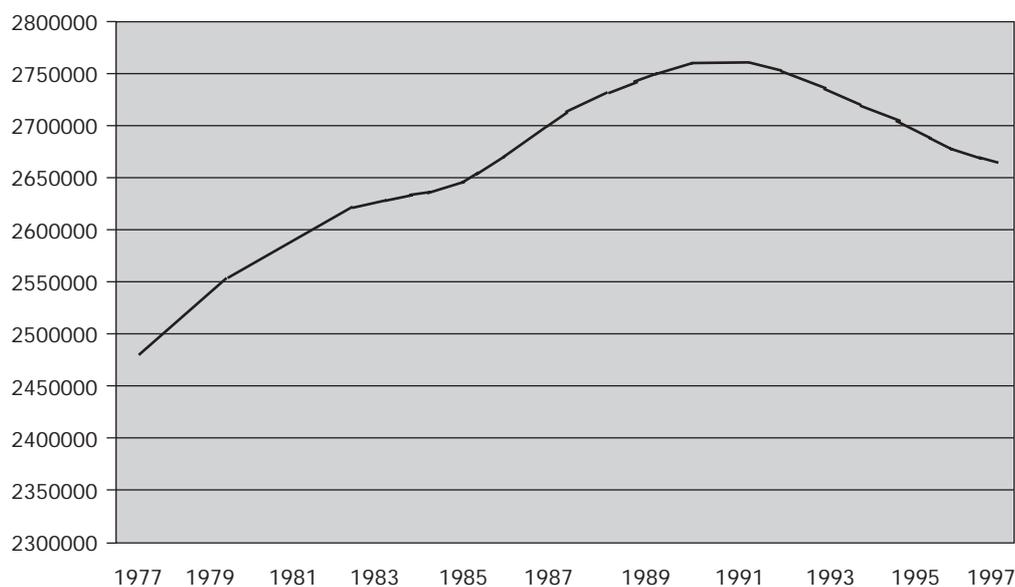


Figure 5.2 Total youth population: 15- to 24-year-olds 1977–1997

Source: ABS Household and population survey 1977–1997

considerably due to the increase in part-time, casual and temporary work. This is a major feature of the changing labour market for young people, and deserves more extensive discussion than is appropriate at this point. Suffice to say that there has been downward pressure on the supply of youth labour as a response both to diminished demand – young people removing themselves from the market, including the pursuit of education – and to active policies by governments to encourage young people in this direction.

The demand for youth labour

While the youth population was growing, a range of structural factors meant that the demand for youth labour was decreasing. Partly, this was a result of the disappearance of jobs which had traditionally been youth jobs (Sweet 1988). So jobs for typists disappeared with the advent of the word processor and the personal computer. Jobs for service station attendants disappeared as self-service fuel became standard. Low level clerks became redundant as communications technology improved: nobody needed message boys any more. The shift to supermarkets deleted scores of jobs in the retail industry as grocers, haberdashers, bakers and butchers disappeared. While other youth

jobs have emerged – notably in tourism and hospitality – they have not yet replaced the jobs lost in the last wave of economic restructuring.

Partly, the reduction in demand was a result of increasing credentialism moving jobs out of the reach of teenagers. This was partly, but only partly, because new technologies required higher levels of autonomy and higher levels of training. Nursing, once an entry position for young women, moved into the universities and became the province of graduates. Accountancy likewise. The public sector began employing fewer and fewer school leavers and more graduates.

Partly, the decreasing demand for young workers was a result of increasing competition from adults who were engaging in paid labour at much higher rates than had been the case. Married women, who had been forcibly excluded from the work force through the 1950s and 1960s began to take advantage of the opportunities offered by reliable contraception, equal pay and anti-discrimination legislation. Young people faced other workers who were perceived as more reliable, more secure, having greater skills and more established attitudes to work.

It is pertinent to ask why the labour of adults is preferred to that of young people. No doubt, one factor is the changing nature of work. The natural advantage

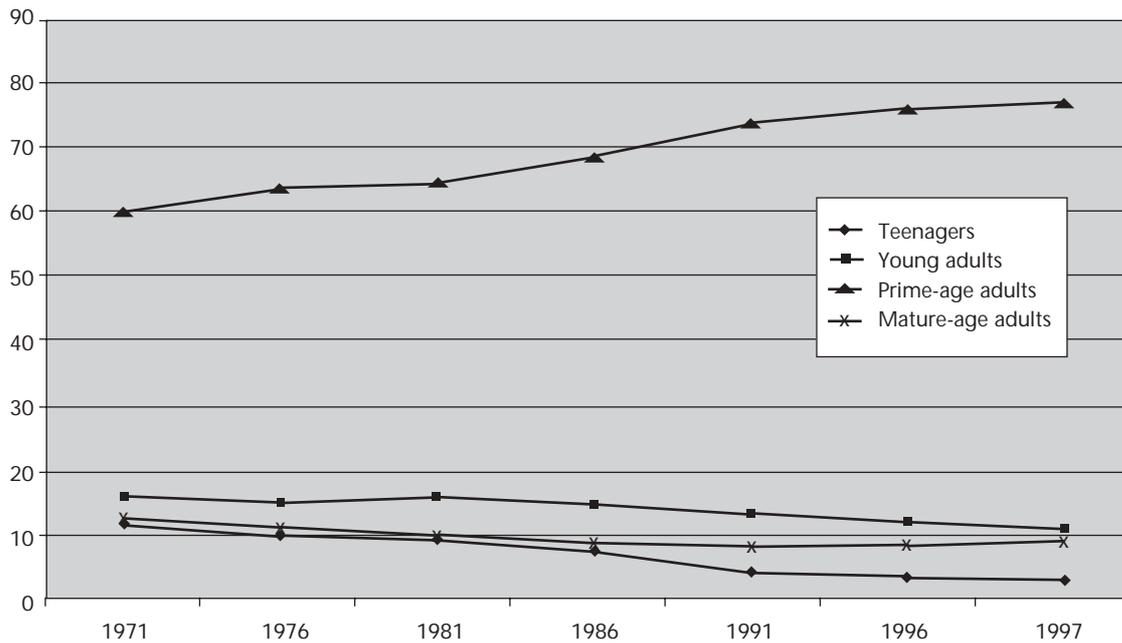


Figure 5.3 Percentage of people involved in full-time employment, various age groups, 1971 to 1997

Source: ABS via Wooden, 1998

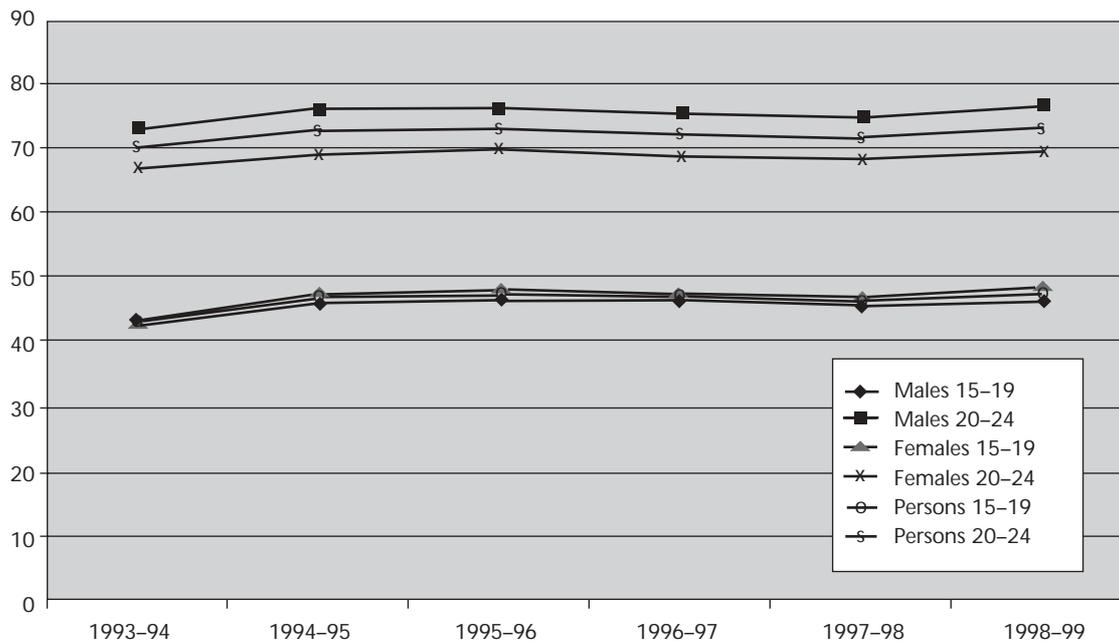


Figure 5.4 Labour market participation rate: 15- to 19- and 20- to 24-year-olds

Source: ABS

that young workers have traditionally had is the strength and agility of their bodies. Structural changes in the economy, especially increasing automation and other technological changes, have been eliminating physical jobs fast. Communicative skills have been elevated, and adult workers, with their greater experience and wider communicative repertoire, have an advantage.

However, young people are also subject to naked discrimination, resulting from the negative public perception of the attitudes and behaviours of the young, including a poor work ethic. The perception has no substantive base. Morgan and Banks recently surveyed over 3,200 employers across all industries and found that nearly 70% of employers rate the work ethic of young people they have hired as the same or better than other age groups in their workplace (Morgan & Banks 1996, p.13).

Finally, the demand for youth labour was probably affected by the relative gains in youth wages in the late 1970s and 1980s. The relationship between the price of youth labour and demand for it is complex. While economists can point to increasing levels of unemployment in periods where youth wages have gone up, unemployment does not fall when they go down. For example, between 1985 and 1995 the earnings of

young full-time workers declined from \$320 per week to \$300 for 15- to 19-year-olds, and from \$511 to \$487 per week for 20- to 24-year-olds (McLennan 1997, p.72). In the same period, unemployment rates increased significantly. Several studies indicate that wages are not the most important factor for employers in making an employment decision (e.g. Morgan & Banks 1997), and things such as discrimination appear to be at least as significant as the price of young people's labour. However, it seems likely that, in some areas at least, wage relativities have been a factor. The serious decline in apprenticeship as a pathway for youth employment may be one.

All of these dynamics will continue to factor in youth unemployment rates over the next 15 years.

Future projections: youth unemployment

Youth jobs

A major part of the structural change of the past 25 years has been to do with the impact of information and communications technology. We would expect that much of the disruption involved in the massive structural change involved in that technological

revolution has already been cleared. Certainly, the economic impact of the Internet is only in its early stages, and there may be significant further economic restructuring as more and more of the mode of distribution moves online. E-commerce may have a serious impact on retailing, which, given young people's concentration in that industry, may have a significant impact on youth employment. However, the Internet phenomenon is unlikely to result in the widespread job losses in the youth labour market that were seen with the last technological revolution. Indeed, it appears that many of the jobs emerging as a result of the Internet will be jobs for young people, including jobs in distribution processes.

Unskilled jobs are expected to continue to decline. To the extent that skill is a function of age, some continued erosion of job opportunities for young people without qualifications would be expected.

More broadly, the kind of economic instability that plagued Western economies from the early 1970s through until the early 1990s seems to have settled. The lethal combination of high levels of inflation and high levels of unemployment of that period seems now substantially under control, and many economists are predicting a long growth cycle through to or close to 2015 as the communications and information revolution matures in an environment of economic stability. In the longer run, the environmental limits to

economic growth and the impact of higher levels of economic competition from developing economies will create economic management difficulties for countries such as Australia, but in the 15-year time frame, few economists are predicting disaster.

Generally, we believe that the damage to the youth labour market has mostly already been done. Some recovery would be expected within the 15-year time frame.

Competition from adult workers

All the data indicate that competition for jobs from adult workers is likely to be maintained or intensified. Both demographic forces and labour force projections indicate that the numbers of adult workers will be increasing. Figure 5.5 indicates a significant expansion in the numbers of people in the work force over time.

Substantial numbers of these workers will be prime-age employees, representing a significant body of competition to young workers. In particular, the participation rates for mature-age women, who often compete in the same labour market as young people, are expected to rise significantly.

The age profile of these workers is also important. In Figure 5.6, we note especially the huge increase in the number of post-65 employees. The data indicate that this population has a high degree of involvement

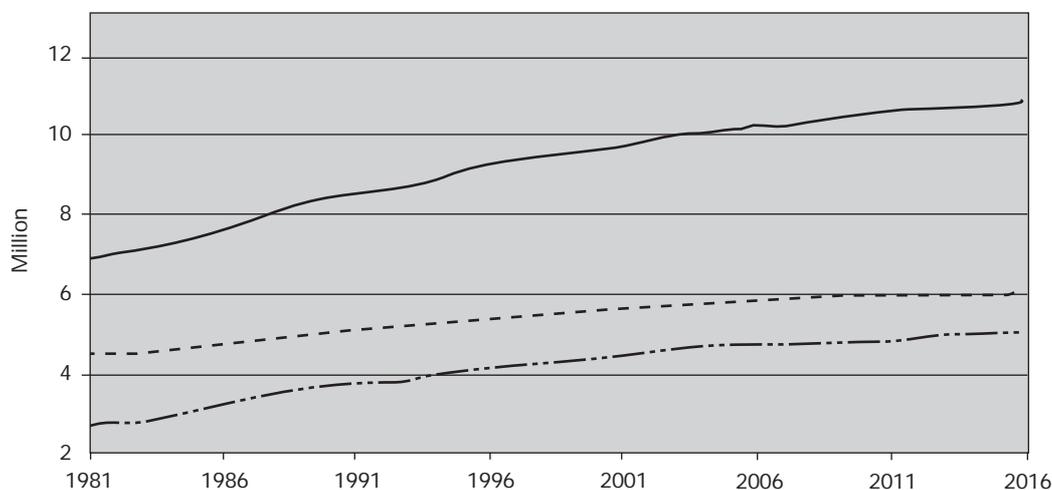


Figure 5.5 Labour force projections to 2016

Source: Labour Force Projections, Australia 1999–2016 (Cat. no. 6260.0)

in the part-time and casual labour market, often in industries now substantially occupied by young people.

We can take this analysis further by comparing the numbers of workers ready to enter the work force with the numbers ready to leave it. Figure 5.7 compares the projected numbers of 18- to 24-year-olds against the numbers of people at retirement age: both the middle-class superannuated retirement age of 55 years and the more general retirement age of 65 years.

After 2001–2002, the numbers of 18-year-olds, 24-year-olds, and 55-year-olds are pretty similar. There is, however, a gap between the numbers of people aged 18 or 24, and 65 years. This raises a potential problem. There aren't enough people at age 65 and retiring to make way for 18- or 24-year-olds entering the labour market. This is even without the likely increased retention of over 65s in the labour market as a result of increased health and life expectancy and the probability of less generous pensions with stricter eligibility criteria. Continued blocked entry of young people into the labour market seems likely, in demographic terms at least. Given how central employment has been within youth policy over the past 20 years, and the very real implications that exclusion from the labour market has for young people's economic independence and accreditation as adult, this conclusion is of the greatest importance.

One factor which is more difficult to quantify is the possibility of change in young people's competitiveness in the labour market. The comparative advantage of young people in the labour market in 2015 is a little

hard to predict. At present, younger people have some credential advantage because more of them have post-secondary qualifications – a legacy of the expansion of education from the 1980s. Fewer people in the 1960s and 1970s had access to education in an environment when tertiary education was for the elite. By 2015, the educational advantage of the young will have moved through the adult population such that the whole of the adult labour force will have lived through an environment of mass post-secondary education. On the other hand, the labour of young people at present seems undervalued, given that the price of youth labour is low but their productivity is comparable to that of other workers (Morgan & Banks 1997). Some correction might be expected therefore if the market works as it should, although prejudice is an inhibition to such correction. As we argue below, young people may have some advantage in the flexible work force increasingly required in the New Economy.

Future projections: the changing nature of work

The futures literature has identified the changing nature of work as one of the most fundamental shifts in Western cultural and economic life in the next 30 years. According to Alvin Toffler, the post-industrial wave of change is the third in a series of fundamental changes in the nature of work, of which the agricultural revolution and the rise of industrialisation were

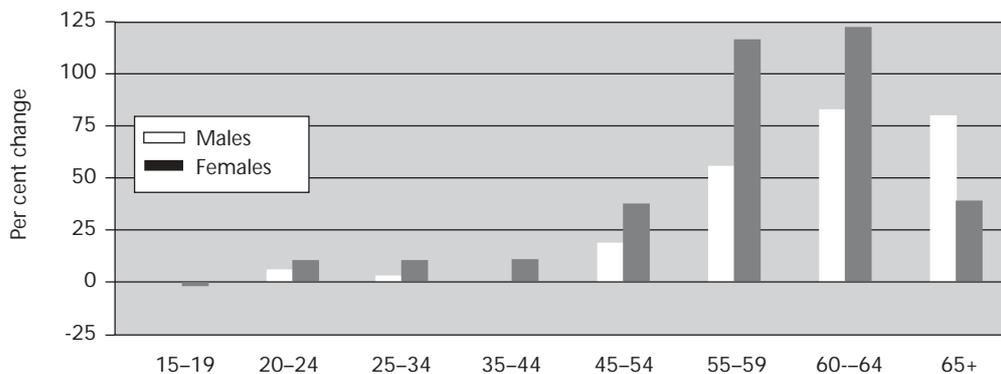


Figure 5.6 Percentage change in the labour force for different ages of workers, 1998–2016

Source: Labour Force Projections, Australia 1999–2016 (ABS Cat Number 6260.0)

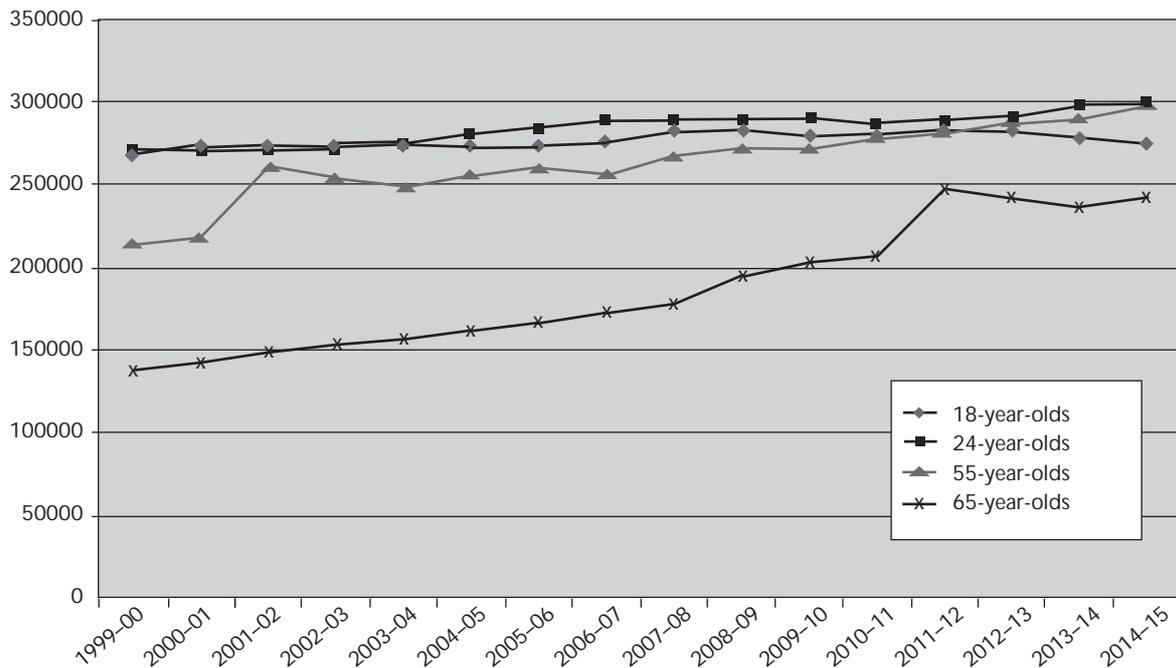


Figure 5.7 Work-force entry and exit numbers

Source: ABS 322202A

the first and second (Toffler, in Harr 1998). The fundamental features of the third wave are the self-managing nature of the new generation of automation, and the elimination of the need for physical proximity through the use of communications and information technology. In other words, the machines can do things by themselves, and they can be instructed to do them from anywhere in the world.

A range of commentators point to the following factors as fundamental to the shape of the New Economy, and to the future of work within it.

Less paid work will be available. As automation increases its reach, employing organisations need less labour. New areas of work, especially in the area of personal services, are expected to grow, but the mode of employment is unlikely to be the same as in 20th century industrial labour.

The distribution of work will be less equal. Some workers will have more work than they want, but most workers will have considerably less. For as long as incomes are tied to labour, this is expected to result in significant inequalities of income and income security.

More workers will be mind workers. Muscle labour is the area that is most likely to contract. Intelligent, flexible, highly skilled communicators will be those most likely to be in demand.

More workers will be portfolio workers. Increasingly, people will be putting together a “portfolio” of income earning and non-income earning activity including permanent part-time employment, contract work, self-employment, study or training, hobby and community work.

Entrepreneurship will be more important as “jobs” disappear. “In the de-jobbed world, the work will be done by the people who have the desire and the ability to do it” (Bridges 1995, p.141).

The link between work and income will be dislocated. As there is less and less paid work available, communities need to find ways to engage their populations in meaningful work and to ensure that their material needs are met. However, there may not be an immediate link between the two. Many commentators argue for a guaranteed minimum income or, more

radically, a moneyless economy. According to several commentators, *time* will be the new measure of value, not money (Handy 1994; Jones 1995; Rifkin 1995).

Occupations will appear and disappear with greater rapidity. By 2015, many of the occupations to which young people now aspire will simply not exist, and a range of others will have emerged. Training and retraining will become essential, as a rapidly-changing technological and social environment requires fast switching between both the content of work and ways of working.

Location will be less important, with more workers being outworkers. Already, a growing number of workers are able to run their offices from home, via the laptop computer and the mobile phone. Where face-to-face communication is necessary, it will be unlikely to be in either participant's place of work. And as communication technologies move further into virtual reality, face-to-face communication will itself become less necessary and more a matter of choice and pleasure.

Fewer people will be employees of organisations. Or, if they are, they will be organisations which organise people for other organisations, rather than organisations which themselves produce artifacts. "We are all self-employed, whether we work in an organisation ... or outside" (Hakim 1994).

Casual, contract, part-time and task-specific employment will increase. Workers will need to be flexible and capable of doing a wide variety of things.

The data

Already, many of these things are true for young people. The data indicate that the New Economy has already started to bite for young people, and while most still have an expectation of a job in the traditional sense, for an increasing number that expectation is unlikely to be fulfilled until their late 20s, if at all.

The core feature of this has been the shift from full-time permanent jobs to part-time, casual and temporary jobs. Casual workers and part-time workers are not the same thing. Casual workers have been defined as workers who "are not entitled to paid holiday or sick leave, who have no expectation of ongoing employment and for whom each engagement with their employer constitutes a separate contract of employment" (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1999c). Casual work may be full-time, and part-time work may

be temporary. Both forms of labour, however, represent a shift towards a more marginal engagement with the mainstream economy and greater levels of economic risk.

Trends toward casualisation have been a feature of the labour market in general: the proportion of the labour force in casual jobs increased from 19% to 27% between 1988 and 1998. Its effect on the youth labour market, however, has been extreme, with the proportion of young people in casual jobs increasing from 39% to 65% for teenagers, and almost doubling (17% to 32%) for 20- to 24-year-olds (ibid.).

Within the youth population, young women have been exposed even more. In 1988, 45% of teenage women were employed casually. By 1998, that had increased to 72%. Young women in the 20 to 24 age range were employed casually at a rate of 19% in 1988, compared with 34% a decade later (ibid.).

The movement to part-time work has been just as dramatic. Full-time participation rates have fallen for teenagers: from approximately 50% to 25% for males, and from 45% to 25% for females between 1978 and 1997 (Wooden 1999). In the same period, the share of full-time employment increased significantly for prime-aged adults. Part-time participation rates have increased (approximately from 12% to 35% for males, and from 10% to 25% for females)(ibid.).

Looking at the proportion of young people involved in part time employment is even more dramatic. Around 8% of teenage men worked part-time in 1971, and women only fractionally more. In 1997, over 50% of teenage men were working part-time, and 73% of women. In 1971, 2.3% of men in the 20 to 24 age range were working part time, and 14.1% of women. By 1997, these figures had changed to 19.4% and 35.3% respectively.

There is a close relationship between participation in education and the pattern of employment. Much of the increase in part-time work has gone to students – often, it seems, at the expense of the unemployed. Young people who have not gone on to further study have suffered a declining employment position relative to students.

Wooden (1999, p.13) notes that students generally prefer part-time work, and do not generally want more hours of work than they have. However, part-time workers who are not studying express high degrees of dissatisfaction with the hours available: 65% of females and 72% of males would like more work. This is significantly higher than is the case for the adult work force. Employees in casual positions are generally more likely

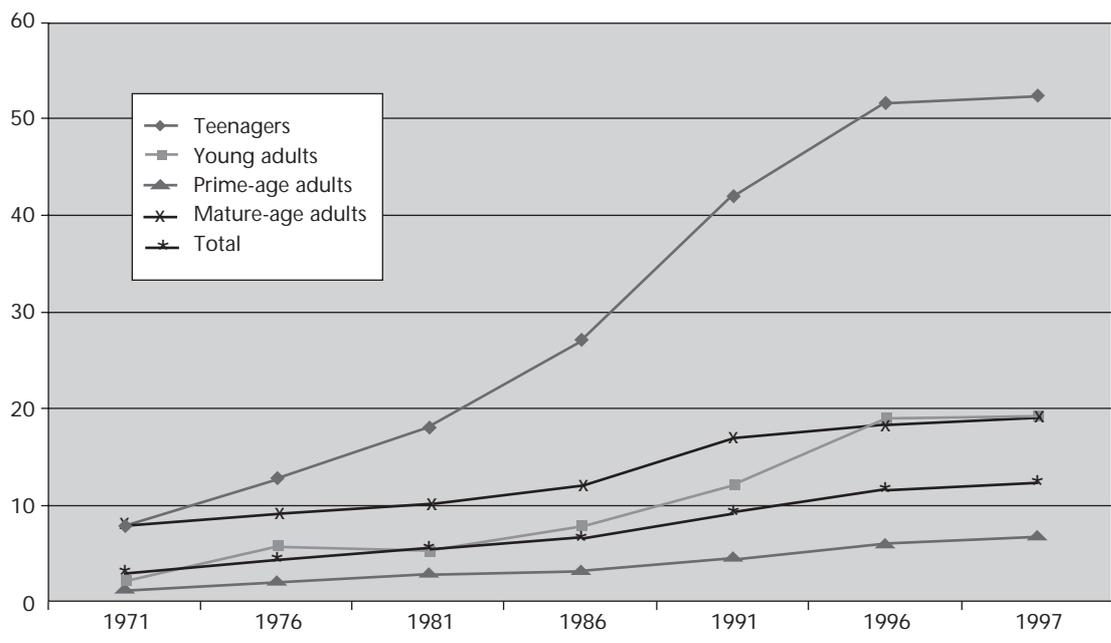


Figure 5.8 Proportion of men in each age group involved in part-time employment 1971 to 1997

Source: ABS via Wooden, 1998

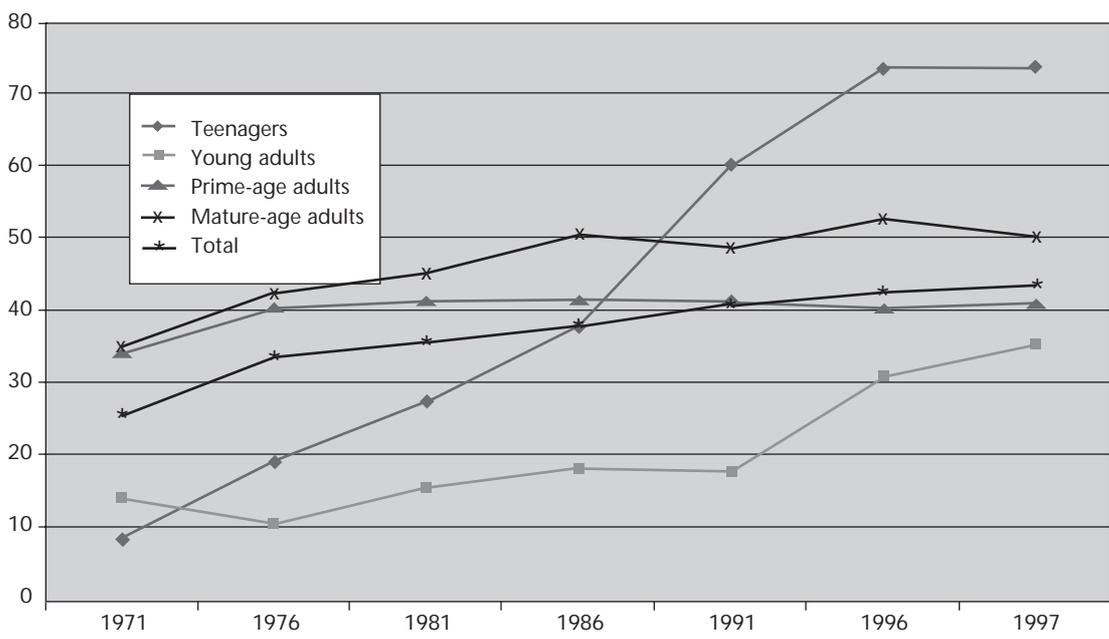


Figure 5.9 Proportion of women in each age group involved in part-time employment 1971 to 1997

Source: ABS via Wooden, 1998

than part-time employees to feel this way, and the proportion of casual workers dissatisfied with their hours is increasing (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1999c).

Sweet (1998) argues that low-paid, temporary and part-time jobs have an adverse effect on the lives of young people rather than being a stepping stone to future employment. Casual work also involves young people in a range of risks. The lack of sick leave and annual leave, the insecurity of positions, and vulnerability to exploitation, especially in an under-unionised environment are among them. In the longer term, the lack of career pathways, training and any sense of future direction is just as worrying (Wooden 1999, p.11). However, the movement in this direction seems inexorable, and the issue seems rather about how the potentially destructive effects of the New Economy on young people should be managed. In particular, how are young people, by their greater exposure to marginalised labour, to be insulated from the processes of exclusion which may well accompany such status? And how are those young people most exposed to economic risk to be guaranteed sufficient means to sustain life? How are we to avoid the economic polarisation of young people, so that the information/communication-rich, well educated and well supported do very well out of the opportunities presented by the New Economy, and those without these resources struggle with chronic poverty and its associated vicious circles of crime, homelessness, drug use and lack of hope?

It is not the case that all young people will be disadvantaged by this shift to a jobless economy. Indeed, it may present a range of opportunities for those who may be better able to adapt to the new environment by virtue of having never known anything else. Young people generally have an ability to be flexible, to take things as they come, and to be open to different ways of seeing and doing things: perhaps a function of their state of cognitive development, or of a lighter investment in the status quo. But many young people could do very well indeed out of the New Economy, and enjoy themselves doing it.

Expert forum participants gave significant attention to this question. They concluded that the conditions for survival and success in the New Economy would appear to be:

- success with educational institutions, and capacity to continue with ongoing education and/or training;
- adequate family or other support to tide them over lean periods or periods where an enterprise has

not been successful;

- access to venture capital, either through financial institutions, family, or other sources;
- sufficient skill to be able to manage an autonomous enterprise; and
- sufficient self-confidence to be able to take on a number of new ventures over time, and sell their skills to a variety of buyers.

These qualities are likely to be unevenly distributed in the youth population. Once more, our expert forums pointed to the dangers of a “deepening divide”, where some young people stood to do well, and others stood a fair chance of being excluded altogether. They were particularly concerned about the fate of young people who were alienated from education at an early age. In an economy that privileges mind-workers, young people who have barely learned to read and write seem to stand very little chance at all. The responsibility of educational institutions to do whatever it takes to engage these young people has been discussed in another chapter, but it won’t hurt to repeat it here.

In addition to questions of educational disadvantage, the family clearly has a crucial role to play in determining whether a young person will be able to negotiate the new work environment successfully. Families who have built up capital will be in a much better position to invest in the son’s or daughter’s enterprise than a family living close to subsistence on a low wage or welfare benefits. Likewise with support through periods of change or where a venture has failed. In fact, all the above criteria for success in the New Economy appear to be cumulative: you are likely to have most or all of them, or none at all.

The year 2015

Most commentators are looking at a longer range of sight than 2015, and social arrangements, as Marx observed, take a lot longer to change than technological ones. Some of the pronouncements, such as those of Robert Theobald (1999), on the total demise of “the job” in the sense of full-time permanent work with a single employer seems unlikely at least within the 15-year time frame. Corporations may find that there are significant economies in investing in a stable, permanent core of workers, and the pendulum may swing back in favour of traditional employment patterns for some workers. There are indications that this is already happening.

But even if this is the case, it seems clear that the practice by corporations to define their core functions

narrowly and source others out to service organisations or contract labour will continue and gather momentum. It seems likely that young people will be over-represented in this fluid, arguably more marginal economic sector. Certainly the trends both in terms of the kinds of jobs which are being created and the extent to which young people are employed in them lead strongly in the direction of a casualised, short-term, marginal labour force. The younger the worker, the more likely this is to be the case, although high casualisation rates are climbing the age ladder year by year. Women are currently more exposed than men, and this inequality increases with age. While this is likely to move gradually to a position of increasing equity, significant gender difference may still be in place in 2015.

Work will also be a less dominant force in the lives of the next generation of young people than it was for their parents and certainly for their grandparents. Work will probably not be the principal form of people's social connection. "What do you do for a living?" may cease to be the primary question on meeting someone new – the question that establishes their class, culture, status and social location. Work will increasingly support other things that people want to do, rather than be the primary commitment: things like sport, art, maintaining social connections, hobbies, religion, travel – forms of work and play that do not make profit.

Services needed for young people in the area of work and employment, 2015

Services identified by the expert forums, or otherwise indicated by the research, include a range of services which will be needed by all young people, and a set of programs to engage those young people who are not competitive in the new labour market, as well as strategies to improve their competitiveness. Throughout, the predominant concerns were to avoid the position where:

- young people could not secure an income sufficient for subsistence;
- an unacceptably large gulf existed between those young people who were well-positioned in the New Economy and those who were not;
- young people were subject to processes of marginalisation or quarantine that involved them being excluded (or secluded) from their communities – out of sight and out of mind;

- young people were subject to meaningless activity for the purposes of governance, rather than necessary or desirable production; and
- services were punitive and/or coercive in approach, including coerced volunteerism or civil conscription of various kinds.

The research indicated a range of services which would be required to enable young people to prosper in the New Economy. Obviously, the need for such services is not evenly distributed across the youth population, but most of them would be required by most young people at some time.

- *Universal training and preparation for successful jobless work* needs to be available both within the school curriculum and in the post-school environment – in fact whenever young people need it.
- *Small business incubators and supports* need to be available to help young people in the process of generating self-employment.
- *Income support models need to be reformed* to be able to deal effectively with mixed incomes, and with fluctuating and irregular incomes. A serious public discussion of Guaranteed Minimum Income schemes is overdue in the light of the predictions for work and unemployment for young people in the future. Another option suggested was a scheme similar to HECS, but organised as a credit to be drawn on rather than a debt to be paid off.
- Young people, especially those who do not have strong family backing, need access to *cheap risk capital*, perhaps on an equity basis.
- Tax systems need to be more sophisticated to deal with the informal economy.
- The community will need to take a greater role in the generation of *non-market varieties of goods* such as recreation, in order to include people who may be income-poor. Increasing use of non-money forms of rewarding work at the community level should be explored, including labour credit schemes where access to resources is open to those who contribute labour rather than those who pay cash.
- Given the growing importance of education, young people (and others) need *relentless opportunity to try again at education* through a variety of educational models and institutions and at all education levels.
- Sophisticated *brokerage services* will be needed to connect young people who have labour to offer with organisations needing labour.

- Young people must have *access to information and communications technology*. It may be that by 2015 computers will be effectively free, perhaps paid for by resident advertising programs. If not, other facilities will be needed: Internet cafés, 24-hour open access computing in libraries, schools or shopping centres.
- Youth services themselves should *mirror the work pattern* of young people: be flexible, just-in-time, mobile, service driven.
- *Alternative processes for accreditation as adult, or as citizen, need to be in place*. These may include some formal rites of passage, perhaps equivalent to citizenship ceremonies.

Conclusion

Work, and the absence of it, is a key structural and symbolic force in determining the social progress of young people and the overall shape of the youth category. Young people's successful establishment within the socioeconomic order currently depends on their success in the world of work as income, and the access to social life that it affords, are dependent on paid labour. The accumulation of assets and reserves to provide some insulation against difficult economic times is a function not only of successful engagement in paid labour but also success over time.

Currently, accreditation as adult is dependent on successful colonisation of the working world. The

present environment, with its high levels of unemployment and expanding categories of casual, temporary and part-time work leaves the status of young people unhelpfully ambiguous. Young people occupy a no-man's-land of citizenship and participation.

The future for young people appears to involve a rapidly changing set of work practices in which the under-utilisation of youth labour will continue to be a problem. Market processes, the dominant means for distributing labour in the current situation, seem unlikely to be effective in distributing the available profit-generating work in such a way that all members of the community will be able to meet the requirements of subsistence, let alone to prosper. Without appropriate intervention, the natural mechanisms of the market seem destined to leave us with a large population of chronically poor young people who are unable to become adult. Already, in an environment where working hours continue to rise for those in full-time work, the unemployment of some workers is mocked by the overwork of others (cf. Australian Bureau of Statistics 1997, p.92).

Changing work practices do offer significant opportunities for a life that is more interesting, variable and flexible, and is able to engage in a wide variety of economic, aesthetic, personal, sociable and family activities. The challenge is to avoid the risk of dehumanisation, even for a part of the population, and to maximise the capacity for a human life that new structures of work offer.

Introduction: youth, access to income, and exclusion

In a market-driven economy, income is a key determinant of a person's ability to participate in the range of opportunities that the society has to offer. Or, to put the corollary, a key determinant of exclusion. For young people, income dictates the level of access that young people have to services that are otherwise available for those with the means to pay. Young people's income, and the gap between that income and the services that are available for purchase on the open market, are obviously a key factor in the kinds of services that will be needed now and in the future.

The current situation is that youth income levels are significantly a function of Federal Government policy. The major sources of cash income for young people are wages and government income support (usually in the form of Youth Allowance payments). The Federal Government is directly responsible for income support settings, including both the level of benefit and eligibility criteria, and is also influential in the establishment of junior wage rates, or at least the relativity between junior rates and adult wages.

Income settings are predicated on a range of assumptions about:

- the productivity of young people;
- their level of need;
- their competitiveness within the labour market;

- the income settings which are likely to be most conducive to their continuing engagement with their family of origin; and
- the relative desirability of work, study, training, leisure, or unstructured free time in meeting social goals and disciplining the individual.

In line with these assumptions, governments have made decisions about income levels with a keen eye for the effect that given levels or sources of income will have on the choices young people make, with other criteria such as presumed need and the preservation of parental prerogatives also being at issue. As such, income setting has been an active, and often coercive, policy instrument for intervention into young people's lives.

The application of these criteria generally results in discounted incomes for young people, with carefully managed relativities between youth incomes and adult incomes, wages versus government benefits, government benefits for study versus unemployment allowances. Generally, these criteria work in combination. Youth wages are set low, in part to improve young people's competitive position in the labour market. Government allowances are set even lower, to make welfare dependence less attractive than wages as a major source of income.

The result is highly discriminatory. In fact, youth wages and allowances remain as one of the few areas

where discrimination on the basis of non-relevant attributes (e.g. age, gender, race) remains legal. As a result, young people are currently among the poorest Australians in terms of wealth and income.

The actual economic position of young people is, of course, much more complex than this. Economic health is a function of both incomes and costs, and most young people have access to a range of cost-reduction measures including parentally-subsidised food, accommodation, transport, recreation, and loan income. A larger majority have lower costs than other age groups because of their freedom from the responsibility to support dependents.

However, a significant minority does not have access to parental support, parental support is marginal, or parents place unacceptable conditions on support. An unknown number of young people have responsibilities for dependents which are not recognised by eligibility criteria – including responsibility for parents, siblings or peers who for various reasons may be an economic liability. Policies which assume lower income needs for young people based on parental support place such young people at serious risk of acute poverty.

Poverty analyses based on the 1996 census indicate that 11% of the total population was living in poverty as defined by the Henderson Poverty Line (Brotherhood of St Lawrence 1999). The most seriously affected were single young people. Social security payments to 16- to 17-year-olds were 51% below the poverty line, 18- to 20-year-olds were 46% below, over 21-year-olds were 35% below. While most 16- to 17-year-olds were living at home, most over 21-year-olds were not and so had limited access to parental subsidy.

The process of generalising about the incomes of young people is subject to a range of complexities both in the diversity of young people's lives and in the problems of collecting reliable data about them. The question of effective youth services for 2015 requires us to find our way through some of these complexities, and to attempt to make some predictions about what is likely to happen with the key variables.

Existing trends in youth incomes

The problem of collecting data

Accurate data collection and analysis of youth incomes is difficult. Landt and Scott (1998) draw attention to several factors that limit our understanding of the income status of young people.

- There is a high non-response rate in income surveys.
- Data collection agencies have not yet found a way to accurately quantify the internal cash and in-kind transfers to young people from other members of their "income unit".
- Young people, like other populations, may have access to incomes which are not recorded in the statistics, including cash and non-cash income from informal, illegal and "hidden economy" sources (White 1997).⁵
- Youth incomes are highly volatile. Landt and Scott (1998) found that around 30% of 15- to 19-year-olds and 17% of 20- to 24-year-olds changed their labour force status at least once in each six-month period.

As a result, youth policy and service provision must be deeply cautious about the assumptions about income and income transfers within households. Some income-poor young people are very well-off indeed, because they live in rich households. Young people who are income-rich compared with their peers can find themselves in difficult circumstances, particularly where they are part of a couple with dependent children. Many young people find it hard to make a living income. Others can be earning more than many adults in full-time work, while still living at home without dependents.

Part of this variation is an enormous difference between the income demographic of young people at the bottom of the age range, at 15 years old, to people at the top, at 24. People at the bottom of the range are mostly still in school, rarely involved in full-time work, almost all still living with parents. Fifteen-year-olds receive on average \$60 per week in income (Landt & Scott 1998, p.8). Twenty-four-year-olds receive \$417 per week on average (Beer & Johnson 1999, p.4). But only 9% of 20- to 24-year-olds were classed as

5 In particular, effective marginal rates of taxation for people on means-tested government allowances are extremely high (in some cases, over 100%) once income tax is combined with the reduction in government allowances resulting from any increase in earned income. For the average single 20 to 24-year-old in the bottom 20% of wage earners, effective marginal taxation rates are estimated at 76% (Beer & Johnson 1999, p.18). When the loss of cost-reducing devices such as health care cards are factored in, it becomes clear that the incentive for engagement in cash-in-hand employment is very high for part-time workers in receipt of Government allowances. Again, however, the opportunity or inclination of young people to engage in these economies will vary widely, with some young people making a great deal of money from such sources and many making none.

dependent children (1995/96 data) (Beer & Johnson 1999, p.2) while 61% of 15- to 19-year-olds were in this position (1994/95 data) (Landt & Scott 1998, p.5).

Obviously, the income status of young people depends a great deal on their availability for income-generating work. This depends in turn to a great extent on their participation in education. For this reason, the ABS draws up its tables according to the degree to which young people are involved in study, work, or some combination of the two.

Table 6.1 indicates the major source of *cash* income for young people (i.e. what percentages of young people get most of their money from where), depending on their participation in study.

The table indicates that in 1992, wages were the principal source of income for almost 52% of young people, followed by government benefits and allowances. Almost 20% of young people had no income of their own. Dependence on family was clearly greatest for full-time students, with 41.2% of them having no personal income, which, we assume, is only possible if they survive by intra-family transfer. Their median income from any source was only \$72 per week, compared with \$325 for those who weren't studying.

Family situation and living arrangements

As chapter 7 indicates, more young people at all age groups are living at home with their parents. This is true across the income range of young people. Five per cent more people in their early twenties who are in the top 20% income bracket for their age were living with relatives in 1995-96 compared with 1992. For many teenagers, however, there is no option. Twenty-eight per cent of 15- to 19-year-olds were receiving no income in 1994-95. The remainder had an average

income of only \$150 per week, making independent living difficult (Landt & Scott 1998, p.5). Increasingly, families are being called upon to subsidise the living costs of their young adult offspring, and increasingly, young people have no choice but to depend on their parents for support. This movement is likely to increase with Youth Allowance eligibility provisions which assume parental dependence until the age of 25 in the case of students and 21 in the case of non-students.

Wages and salaries

Nominal youth wages, indicated by the median weekly earnings of full-time employees, have been increasing over the last decade. However, the wages of young workers have declined relative to their adult workmates. Carlton and Mobila (1997) point out that the wages of 20- to 24-year-old men constituted 87% of adult wages in 1985. By 1995 these had dropped to 79%. The position of young women was worse, falling from a wage which was close (97%) to the adult female median wage in 1985 but which fell to 89% of that wage a decade later. This is probably due in part to adult female median wages rising faster relative to other groups as barriers to adult female employment and promotion decline.

While nominal wages, indicated by the average full-time wage, may have increased over the last decade, the actual incomes earned by young people have generally fallen. Since 1982, in real terms, average wage incomes for teenagers have fallen by 6% for full-time workers and 29% for part-time workers (Landt & Scott 1998, p.13). The effect for 20- to 24-year-olds has been less severe. Part-time workers' average weekly income dropped by 7% between 1990 and 1995-96 but full-time workers' wages increased by 2% in real terms (Beer & Johnson 1999, p.4).

Table 6.1 Main source of income for young people by participation in education, 1992

	Percentages of young people in each category						Median income (\$)	Number (000's)
	Wages	Own business	Govt benefits	Investments	Other sources	Nil/ only partner's income		
Not studying	64.6	3.2	24.6	0.5	0.6	6.5	325	1391.4
Studying full time	28.2	0.7	22.4	2.6	4.9	41.2	72	1066.4
Studying part time	77.6	2.5	13.9	1.0	0.4	4.6	301	290.4
Percentage total	51.8	2.2	22.6	1.4	2.2	19.8		

Government benefits and allowances

The incomes of young people whose main source is Youth Allowance or other government income support have been rising over the last decade. However, eligibility has been declining. For example, the proportion of unemployed teenagers who do not have any income more than doubled between 1982 and 1995–96. While those on full benefits were better off in real terms, the average income of unemployed 15- to 19-year-olds fell by 5% over the period (Landt & Scott 1998, p.15). This trend is increasing with the increased use of breaching provisions under Mutual Obligation policies. Full-time students on education allowances faced similar circumstances. The average total income of 20- to 24-year-olds studying full time increased by 25% between 1990 and 1994–95, and income from education allowances increased from \$28 to \$42 per week. However, there were also a rising number of young people with no incomes at all or incomes only from part-time work.

Inequalities

Earned incomes for males and females have moved significantly towards a more equal earning situation for some age groups, but continue to be different in spite of equal opportunity legislation. The inequalities in actual incomes are also larger than the full-time wage differentials indicated by Table 6.2. Beer and Johnson (1999, p.4) note that 17- to 24-year-old males have up to 30% higher incomes (from all sources) than females.

The income differential increases with age. Assuming relatively constant size age cohorts, summing their findings across the age range of 15 to 24 translates to an average gender-based income

inequality in favour of males of 13.4% for young people 15 to 19 years old and 15.2% for 20- to 24-year-olds. Of the top 20% income earners aged 20 to 24, 67% are male. Of the bottom 20%, 61% are female.

Indigenous young people are particularly vulnerable. The mean income for working Indigenous people in 1994 was \$24,300, excluding those employed in Community Development Employment Projects. The figure for the general population was \$27,100. And most Indigenous people aren't working. Government payments were the main source of income for 55% of Indigenous people over 15 (Australian Bureau of Statistics & Australian National University, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research., 1996). Labour market participation rates for 20- to 24-year-old Indigenous young men are about ten percentage points lower than for others (75.1% – 85.8%). For Indigenous young women, the difference is more than 25% (50.1% versus 76.9%). The situation did not improve significantly between 1991 and 1996 (DETYA 1999b). The median income of Indigenous people was only two-thirds that of the general population at the 1986 census (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996b).

Summary

A number of significant trends emerge from the data.

- The sources of income for individual young people vary widely and are becoming more, rather than less, diverse.
- The amount of income earned by individual young people varies widely, even where their sources of income appear to be similar.
- The cost and expenditure patterns of individual young people, affected most commonly by intra-family transfers and subsidies, varies widely.

Table 6.2 Median weekly earnings: full-time employees

	1985		1990		1995	
	Earnings	% median wage	Earnings	% median wage	Earnings	% median wage
m 15–19	184	51	246	50	273	45
f 15–19	178	61	238	59	273	53
m 20–24	308	87	412	83	469	79
f 20–24	279	97	379	94	453	89
m all ages	358	100	495	100	594	100
f all ages	288	100	405	100	508	100

Source: Carlton and Mobila 1997, ABS Catalogue No 6310.0

- There has been a steady drop in full-time employment with an increase in young people studying and an increase in students working part-time.
- Many young people have no income and depend on their parents. The percentage of young people in this situation is increasing.
- Income dependence on parents decreases significantly with age.
- Incomes of part-time and full-time workers have fallen since 1980.
- Wage relativities between young workers and other workers are falling and falling more rapidly.
- Part-time workers who are not studying have incomes of around half those of full-time workers.
- Government allowances have increased over the last decade, but eligibility criteria have tightened significantly.
- The percentage of young people without income has increased due to increased difficulty in gaining access to government income support.
- The highest incomes are for those in full-time employment, including those working full-time and studying part-time
- Most young people in the highest income groups are young men in their 20s working full-time in professional or trade occupations.
- Income generally increases with age
- Young people who are neither in education nor employment have the lowest incomes.
- Effective marginal tax rates are high to extremely high for young people on low incomes.
- Significant gender inequities persist in youth incomes and, apart from the youngest age groups, have not changed significantly in the last ten years.

Future projections

The major criteria that will determine future youth incomes are likely to be:

Government decisions on the nature, eligibility and amount of allowances

Movements in political ideologies around income support are hard to predict over a 15-year period. Current trends indicate a willingness to maintain rates of benefit at subsistence level, but to limit eligibility by transferring responsibility for income support to families or individuals wherever possible. Income support budgets have not been expanding for some

time: there may be some correction to this in the next 15-year cycle, and perhaps some increased largesse by government. Government's capacity to support the payment of allowances is likely to increase, or at least to be maintained, as the income-producing proportion of the population is likely to remain high.

The capacity and willingness of parents to subsidise youth incomes or defray costs

The ability and willingness of families to support their young adult offspring will vary a great deal, as now. In general, it is likely to be made more affordable by the fact that most families will have only one or two children. One of the most common income units in the year 2015 may indeed be a two-person unit consisting of one parent and one dependent student. Low income families, larger families and families that do not place a high value on education are likely to be least supportive. These features are likely to be cumulative: low income families are likely to be larger and to place a lower value on education. The most supportive families are likely to be middle-class or higher. While we would expect slow and uneven improvement in their socioeconomic position over the next 15 years, young people from Indigenous families would continue to be at high risk of poverty. Indigenous families are likely to be least able to support adult offspring.

Whether young people live at home or in other household arrangements

Current government policy has sought to increase the number of young people living at home by extending the assumption of parental support higher into the age bracket even though the data indicates that only 9% of 20- to 24-year-olds are in fact dependent on their parents. It remains to be seen how effective incomes policy will be in reconstructing the dependent relationship for 20- to 24-year-olds. However, it seems that there are other forces which lead in the same direction, and that the trend for more young people to stay at home for longer will continue. The increasing fragility of youth wage incomes may make an extended dependent relationship necessary, at least on an on-again/off-again basis.

Particular attention will need to be paid to young people from rural areas who are wishing to continue their education. Not having access to the subsidies provided by the family home will have significant impact on their income relativities.

Wage movements for young people, and changes in mechanisms that determine such wage movements

Youth wages have been under downward pressure for some time. It is difficult to see a reversal in this trend. While the youth population is declining relative to the population as a whole, the youth labour market is and always has been vulnerable to competition from other adult workers. With high and increasing participation rates across the population, it is difficult to see young people's labour market position improving.

Non-market forces, like the degree of unionisation and the existence of centralised wage fixing or other statutory or legislative mechanisms are generally heading in directions that decrease the level of wage protection for young people. Even apprenticeship systems, which have been the most regulated of wage-fixing systems, are heading in the direction of increased flexibility, including wage flexibility. In the next 15 years, we would expect a static or declining average wage rate for young people. Again, however, this is likely to be uneven. In a rapidly-changing world, young people who have been able to adapt to the New Economy may find substantial economic rewards.

The move to part-time, casual and temporary work

As we have discussed a number of times, the pressure in terms of the casualisation of labour seems all one way. The trend data indicates that the effect of these forces is to decrease youth incomes. Incomes for young people will vary widely in this environment.

Education retention rates

While the rapid increase in the numbers of young people engaged in education has levelled off since 1993, the general trend continues to be upwards. While the income of full-time students aged 20 to 24 has increased significantly since 1990, all of the increase has been in non-wage incomes (Beer & Johnson 1999, p.7). A significant proportion of this has been due to active intervention by governments to provide incentives for study over unemployment. We would not expect these increases to continue.

The effectiveness of governments in controlling black or grey economic activity

Expected improvements in surveillance, changes in criminal law (e.g. legalisation of cannabis) and the move towards electronic rather than cash transactions may well increase governments' control over the informal and criminal economies. In strictly income terms, any limitation in the informal economy will

have an impact on those young people who are engaged with it. Decreasing incomes as a result of improved controls are likely to have an effect across socioeconomic groups but might be expected to impact particularly on young people from low-income backgrounds.

Services

As the Introduction to this chapter noted, the demand for services in areas such as education, employment, housing and health are significantly a function of what is happening in the area of youth incomes. The capacity of young people to meet their own needs without requiring external assistance depends on their capacity to pay, any decline in youth incomes will require an increasing range of services in health, housing etc. to be provided within the public or community sectors. In an environment where the public sector is subject to increasing disinvestment, youth incomes will need to be sufficient to meet needs no longer provided by the public sector. Or, the trend in user-pays and privatisation approaches will need serious reconsideration.

However, the discussion above does have a number of implications for structures within which youth incomes are provided.

Given the declining role of unions in the workplace, and the decreasing capacity for unions to provide services within the fragmented, casual, temporary work environment foreshadowed by the New Economy, young people will need access to information and advocacy services to protect them from breach of contract, underpayment and exploitation.

Junior wage structures have been under challenge for some time. Prima facie, it is unjust for two workers to be paid differently solely because one is younger than the other. Equal pay for equal work has long been a primary principle of wage justice in Australia, but it does not yet apply to young people. While there is some logic in the claim that lower wages improve employability for young people who generally suffer higher rates of unemployment, we would not countenance the same approach for other groups which are subject to discrimination, such as Indigenous people. We would expect that by 2015 junior wage structures will have been dismantled in favour of training wages or skill provisions.

While many young people have the benefit of cost reduction associated with living with their parents, many do not. The very significant difference in

effective income which this involves will need to be addressed. Currently, this problem is addressed for couples and families either through the provision of add-on income support (e.g. family income supplement) or through direct income tax mechanisms (e.g. dependent spouse rebate). Similar mechanisms could be used to provide income equity for young people in different living circumstances to ensure that the assumption of parental support does not result in marginal survival conditions for young people who do not have that privilege.

Parental support needs to be established in fact, not presumed. Provision needs to be made for those not uncommon circumstances where parental support is not forthcoming.

Conclusion

Generally, the future for youth incomes appears to be characterised by diversity. There are general pressures towards lower incomes, more brittle incomes, and greater difficulty in access to income from all sources. Incomes are likely to come from several sources for more young people: combinations of wages (often from several jobs), short-term contracts, government allowances, parental support and self-employment.

Income from any or all of these sources is likely to fluctuate. Many young people, particularly as they get older, may enjoy periods of affluence as they are able to tap into a particularly well-paying contract or line of activity. Some will establish businesses or find economic niches which pay very well. Some will have the kind of parental backing which will give them access to capital, supported education, an economic buffer in lean periods, and low cost of living structures. Some will have an aptitude for the New Economy enabling them to become members of a new rising wealth class.

Most young people, however, will be poor, and discounted incomes both from wages and allowances are likely to extend further up the age range in the next 15 years. Young people without parental support,

whether due to parental poverty, large family sizes, geographical distance, or breakdown in family relationships are the most vulnerable. This will be intensified where young people have been unable to construct a successful relationship with school and other educational institutions, and who face barriers to any kind of employment as a result.

Of particular concern to the expert forums was the likelihood of polarisation in effective youth incomes. Advantage and disadvantage are likely to be cumulative. Young people who have high levels of family support are also likely to have competitive advantage in part-time work due to presentation, accent, transport and stability factors. They are also likely to be able to cope reasonably well with formal schooling. Young people who are able to fit government objectives and thus to be eligible for allowances and other assistance are at a significant advantage over young people who may have left school early and for whom further education is not a possible pathway to income security.

A long-term and not so visible problem would appear to be those young people who do not fit particular target groups or eligibility criteria. They are able to get part-time work, but not full-time work, and not enough to support themselves or move out of home. They don't have entry requirements for university, or formal education is not attractive for them. Their parents are not requiring them to leave home, but aren't in a position to subsidise them either. Immediate survival is not at stake, but there is little option of building up a career path or a long-term assets base. In such cases, in the event of a crisis such as a broken bone, a court case or a car breakdown, the distance to absolute poverty is short.

Young people who are neither in work nor in education and training are likely to face severe poverty. If the informal or criminal economy is not to be their only option, creative and well supported services need to be in place for information and referral, the development of work and training options, and the adequate provision of incomes in the meantime.

7 SEVEN: FAMILIES AND HOUSEHOLDS

Introduction: exclusion, family, and household forms

The household in which a person lives is obviously a key factor in determining their personal and social health. Households provide a range of supports and economies for people, and consequently enable people to have enough background resources to engage successfully in enterprises outside the household and within it. The failure of households to support and resource their members, whether the household is based around a person's family of origin, the families they form themselves, or other household combinations, has significant implications for social difficulty and therefore for service provision.

The core household for most young people in Australia is their family of origin. Most continue to live at home, and mothers and fathers continue to be the strongest influence in their lives and their most valued source of information and advice (Springhall 1984). The process of negotiating autonomy within the family and separation from it can sometimes be a challenge for young people (and more typically their parents) but generally conflict between young people and their parents is reasonably short term, and confined to reasonably minor issues such as bedroom tidiness. Serious conflict is not common (Hollin 1988). However, where it does occur and young people leave home early, the acceleration in social difficulty can be

extreme. Once the family is removed from the picture, social support structures become very thin.

The process of becoming accredited as adult is also intimately tied up with this process of negotiating autonomy with the family of origin. The acceptance of adult status within the family is an important precursor to the assumption of adult status outside it. Leaving home, and establishing a household and ultimately a family of one's own is a crucial signal to the world that a young person is ready to be dealt with by the world on equal terms. The points of separation from the family are therefore important instalments on the extended passage into adulthood that young people go through in Australia. In current legislation and social policy, for example, marriage and/or the birth of a child serve as unambiguous indicators of adult status where the *age* of independence can still be subject to administrative fiat and convenience.

The family can mitigate and mediate the exclusion that young people experience, and provide safe and negotiated entry into the world of adulthood. On the other hand, it may prolong dependency, denying young people the experiences and responsibility necessary for them to take their place in the world. Or it may eject them early and unprotected into a world that is ready to assume that they are deviant and dangerous, and thus begin a career of alienation and exclusion.

The family is changing. This is not new: the nature of internal relations within the family, its size, compo-

sition and power structure are dynamic and responsive to social and economic changes. Families in 1950 were very different to families in 1850. With these changes, the position of young people within the family, their role, their relationships to other people in the household, the balance of dependence and autonomy also becomes subject to change.

Families are also diverse. While there may be dominant forms in a given society at a given time, on the ground there will be a wide variety of family structures incorporating a range of different kinds of members, some of whom will be related, some not. This diversity is increasing, and what dominant forms exist are becoming less so. Young people are among those within Australian society who are most available to experiment with different household forms, and may be most creative in the development of new templates for living together. However, this process of social experimentation can also have its costs and tensions.

This chapter explores what is happening with young people, their relationships with families of origin, the households in which they live, and the kinds of families or surrogate families which they establish.

Existing trends in how young people live

Who young people live with

Young people are involved in a number of different living arrangements. The vast majority of young people in contemporary Australia continue to live with their parents, and this figure is increasing. In June 1997, around 88% of 15- to 19-year-olds, and about 46% of 20- to 24-year-olds, were living with at least one parent. Since 1982, the total percentage of young people living with parents has increased from 61% to 66% (McLennan 1997, p.19). In particular, the numbers of those aged 20 to 24 living with their parents has been slowly rising, from 43% in 1988 to 48% in 1999. The rate of change has accelerated in the past couple of years, rising as much in the last three years as in the previous ten (*ibid.*).

Other living situations include living alone, living as a couple with or without children, living in institutions such as hospitals, hostels or prisons, living in shared housing, living with relatives, and living as a single parent.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has projected

these living arrangements in five-yearly stages to 2021. Calculated by linear projection from the 1986–1996 census data, the results of this projection are represented in Table 7.1

There are a number of shifts indicated by this data.

- The number of “traditional” two-parent households with children will decrease, and the numbers of young people living in such households will decrease.
- The number of single-parent households will increase.
- The number of young people living with a single parent will increase. Most will continue to live with their mothers.
- The number of young people living in group households (i.e. with non-family members) will increase.
- More young people will be living alone, though most will continue to live with other people.
- Fewer young people will be living as a couple.
- Fewer young people will be living as a couple with children. In fact, by 2016, for the population at large, there will be more couple families without children than with (*ibid.*, p.2).
- More young people will be living with a relative.

Interestingly, this particular set of projections shows a stable trend for the proportion of young people living with parents, in contradiction to other data and to intuition. The figures are explained by the fact that these numbers are projected from the 1986–1996 trend. In the scheme of yearly fluctuations, 1986 was a high year, and 1996 a low year for young people staying at home, particularly teenagers (McLennan 1997, p.28).

Other data show an increased likelihood of young people continuing to live at home in the future. McLennan (1997, p.19) suggests that the underlying trend for young people to stay at home is strong. Carlton and Mobila (1997, p.38) indicate that the proportion of 15- to 19-year-olds staying at home increased from 84% to 89% between 1982 and 1992. For 20- to 24-year-olds the figure increased from 41% to 47%. Figures offered in McLennan (1999, p.28) show an increase in the proportions of 20- to 24-year-olds living with parents, from 43.3% in 1988 to 48% in 1999. The rate fluctuates up and down a little, but the trend is clearly for more young people to be living with mum and/or dad in the future, especially 20- to 24-year-olds.

Retention of young people within the family home

Table 7.1 The living arrangements of 15- to 24-year-olds: linear projection from 1986–1996 data (Series C)

	1996 %	2001 %	2006 %	2011 %	2016 %
Partner, couple+child	4.6	3.3	2.4	1.8	1.3
Child, couple	49.3	49.3	48.0	46.7	44.8
Relative, couple+child	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.6
Partner, couple no child	8.3	6.7	5.5	4.5	3.6
Relative, couple no child	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7
Male single parent	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Female single parent	1.9	2.1	2.3	2.6	2.8
Child of single parent	11.2	12.2	13.0	13.7	14.3
Relative of single parent	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6
Relative	3.0	3.3	3.7	4.1	4.6
Living with family	82.8	81.6	79.9	78.4	76.7
Group households	10.3	11.1	12.3	13.3	14.5
Male alone	2.2	2.3	2.5	2.7	2.9
Female alone	1.9	2.2	2.5	2.8	3.2
Institutions etc.	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.8	2.7
Total 15- to 24-year-olds	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Skinner, T. (1999) Household and family projections Australia 1996–2021 ABS, Canberra

has also been a direct objective of policies such as the Youth Allowance, and we would expect such policies to impact over the next decade, rather than the last. Retention within the family home is also strongly correlated with participation in education (Carlton & Mobila 1997, p.38), and as education participation increases, we would expect young people to stay at home for longer.

Is retention within the family a good thing?

While the majority of families certainly care effectively for the young people within them, it cannot be assumed that living at home indicates that this is so. Assumptions that an appropriate level of support is available from within the family, or that the family works well in other ways for the care of its members need to be tested in practice and alternative sources of support need to be available where the family cannot, or will not, effectively care for the young people in its midst.

Of particular concern to the expert forums was the observation that families are not necessarily very adaptive to changing conditions. Parents, in the absence of good information, can often assume that

conditions for young people now are pretty much the same as when they were young, and have expectations of their young adult children which are not realistic in a changed environment. They may not know how to effectively resource their offspring in an environment which they themselves do not understand, and may develop repressive and damaging patterns of interaction in response.

Participants were conscious of the way that increasing social and governmental demands were being made of a structure which is smaller, has fewer non-working hours available, and overall fewer internal human resources. These fewer resources are being expected to meet higher and higher economic and social expectations in the care of family members. They suggested that the family was becoming overloaded and stressed, and wondered about the effects of this not only on the health and well-being of family members but on the rate of family breakdown itself.

Family structure

Households are becoming smaller in Australia. In 1996, the average number of persons per household was 2.6. It is expected to fall to 2.4 by 2011, and below 2.3 by

2021. Families will have fewer children, more people will live alone, and the proportion of single-parent families is expected to rise. This may have a number of consequences. Smaller families, and single-parent families, are more mobile. With increasing geographic mobility, the chances of social dislocation for young people tend to increase. Moving to new areas may mean the loss of old friends, distance from other family, including a non-custodial parent, and loss of a sense of neighbourhood and belonging. The risks of alienation, detachment from social belonging, and the resulting anomie are significant.

It may also be the case that smaller family size increases the potential for conflict within the family, and serious conflict may be more likely to trigger leaving home. Smaller families have fewer places to hide either physically or socially, and nowhere else to go but to leave. The intensity of relationship and relationship expectations in households with only two or three members may also increase the pressure on relationships within the household.

However, we would also expect countervailing forces. All things being equal, the economics of households with fewer children would be expected to improve on average. Lower costs and the opportunity for higher household levels of labour force participation would both contribute to a potential decrease in household poverty, one of the fundamental dynamics in the design of youth services for 2015. Having fewer children increases the opportunity for investment in the care and education of each child, and there is some potential for more effective socialisation. However, there are losses as well. Siblings are a vital socialising influence in children and young people, and with more one-child families, this influence is lost. Raising children effectively will be more dependent on parental skills than previously, as brothers and sisters will be unable to compensate for the mistakes of parents (see Muuss 1988, p.26ff).

If trends in divorce and remarriage continue, we would also expect more young people living in step and blended families (i.e. where one or both parents have children from another relationship) in the future. Step and blended families are inherently less stable, particularly for young people, than natural families. Young people tend to leave home earlier, and conflict is cited as the primary reason for leaving home more often: in fact, more than twice as often than is the case for natural families (Castles 1994, p.22).

Rates of separation and divorce have been a primary social concern in Australia over the last 15 years, and

parental relationship breakdown clearly has a profound impact on young people and the services they need. However, movements in the rate of divorce have been moderate over the last decade, only increasing from 2.4 per thousand in 1987 to 2.8 per thousand in 1997. Average duration of marriages has not changed significantly over the last 30 years (Castles 1994, p.12). The change between 1987 and 1997 was a slight increase from 7.3 to 7.7 years (McLennan 1997, p.19; McLennan 1999, p.29).

The percentage of divorces which involve children under 18 is falling slightly, but still involves over half of all divorces. It appears that the problems associated with divorce and separation for young people will occur at a rate similar to the present if current trends continue. Of course, with over 50% of divorces implicating children under 18 and around 30% of marriages ending in divorce, these problems are not insignificant. Family breakdown associated with de facto partnerships is harder to track, and the large and growing proportion of relationships of this kind may indicate a trend in family breakdown which the ABS data does not disclose.

Young people and family/household formation

It is important to recognise, that a significant number of 15- to 19-year-olds (15.7% and growing), and a clear majority of 20- to 24-year-olds were *not* living with their families in 1996. When youth policy or youth services are directed to families of origin, and assume that young people are generally residing there, they do so at the cost of completely missing one in six teenagers and more than half of all 20- to 24-year-olds.

Young people are actively involved in household formation, especially after leaving school, and in beginning households, partnerships and families of their own. These processes are the subject of some quite clear movement over the last 15 years.

While marriage rates are still high, it is now normal for couples to live for a time in a de facto relationship before formalising it in registered marriage. Young people, when they marry, are marrying later. The median age of first marriage for men was 23.4 years in 1971, and 21.1 years for women (Castles 1994, p.9). In 1987 the figure was 25.9 for men and 23.8 for women. By 1997 it had climbed to 27.8 for men and 25.9 for women (McLennan 1999, p.29).

Marriage has always been a reasonably unambiguous rite of passage into adulthood for young men and women. With more young people marrying closer

to their thirties, and more occupying the inherently greyer ground of de facto partnership, clear graduation into adulthood is once again being delayed. And a growing number of young people will never marry. The crude marriage rate, according to the ABS, has decreased from 7 per 1,000 in 1987 to 5.8 in 1997.

The same trend can be observed with the process of having children. The birth rate for teenage mothers has gone down from 5.7% of all births in 1987 to 4.9% in 1997 (McLennan 1999, p.29). In 1971 it was 11% of all births (Castles 1994, p.13). Age-specific fertility rates per 1,000 women have plummeted: from 55.5 in 1971 to 22.1 in 1991 for teenage women, and from 181.9 to 75 for 20- to 24-year-olds. The general trend is for more women to have a child outside a registered marriage (18% of all births were outside marriage in 1987, compared with 28.1% in 1997 and rising (McLennan 1999, p.29)). It also appears that fewer young people are marrying because of a pregnancy: the number of births which occurred seven months or less after marriage has decreased significantly (Castles 1994, p.13).

Parenthood has historically been another reasonably hard-line indicator of adult status. With the increasing age of parenthood, the increasing number of young people who will never have children or who will delay parenthood until their late thirties or forties, the acquisition of adulthood becomes more compromised and once again more ambiguous.

Where young people live

There are some significant differences between young people and the general population in terms of the kinds of housing and the terms on which they stay there. Few young people, for example, own their own homes: less than 1% in 1994. Slightly more have a mortgage, at 6.2%. Most are renting (25%), boarding (20.6%) or are living "rent free" – e.g. with parents or perhaps partners (47%). More unemployed young people are living rent free than others, and there is a range of data that indicate that staying at home or moving back there is a common response that young people have to unemployment (e.g. Castles 1994, p.21). It is also a common strategy for survival as a student. Over 70% of those not in the labour force are living rent free.

No trend data are available specifically on housing tenure for young people, but the trends aren't difficult to project from other influencing factors such as the rate of unemployment and retention in education and from the data on household types.

It has been recognised for a long time that housing costs are a vital component in disposable income, and therefore for poverty. Poverty lines, for example, have always calculated after-housing income as well as the more familiar income level. Young people, according to the data, spend a high proportion of their income on housing. Thirteen per cent of young people were spending more than 50% of their income on housing in 1994, and 44.8% were spending more than 25%. Single parents were particularly exposed, with 30% spending more than half their income on housing, and 62.2% spending more than 25% (Carlton & Mobila 1997, p.41). Young people also live in more dilapidated housing, notwithstanding the numbers that continue to live with their parents. In 1994, the number of young people living in houses with five or more problems was one and a half times the average (ibid.).

One of the most persistent and serious concerns within the youth affairs field and the broader Australian community has been youth homelessness. Given that almost all our statistical data comes from household surveys, it is not surprising that our data on youth homelessness is exceedingly poor. The paucity of good data is exacerbated by the fact that young people who are homeless are often also not engaged with other social institutions such as school and employment, so do not feature in statistical collection at those sites either.

The Morris Report (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Community Affairs 1995) came to the conclusion that there were 15–19,000 young people homeless in May 1991. The report suggested that the number of homeless under 18 year olds had doubled in the three years since, to 21,000 by May 1994. Supported accommodation agencies dealt with almost 17,000 separate young people in the six months to December 1996, indicating a 1996 figure seriously in excess of the total estimate for 1991. Note that this only counts young people at services for the homeless and is an underestimation of unknown, but probably large, proportions. Notwithstanding this, it still indicates that somewhere around one young person in 150 had contact with a supported accommodation agency in that six months. This is not a small figure.

Indigenous young people

As with other areas of inquiry, the statistical picture for Indigenous young people is quite different to that of the general population. More Indigenous households

are family-type households (86.6% versus 76.2% for the general population). Extended family and multi-family households are also more common; 6.2% of Indigenous households were of this type as opposed to 1.2% for the general population. Forty five per cent of all three-family households were Indigenous.

This indicates a significant pattern of overcrowding. Indeed, the census indicates that Indigenous households have almost two-thirds more people than the general population, and rural households have more than double: an average of six persons per household in rural areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1994). The number of Indigenous households with more than one person per bedroom is seven and a half times the average (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1999d).

Household overcrowding is likely to be a significant factor in the presence of Indigenous young people in public space. In many families, household conditions are such that they depend on young people spending most of their time out of the house (Sercombe 1983). This has implications for a variety of risk factors, including being victims of crime and being the subject of police attention.

Trends for the future do not indicate any immediate relief in these pressures. The Indigenous population is young, with over half being under 20 years old, and 14% under 5. Fertility rates are high – over a third higher than for the general population. At the age of 45, Indigenous women had on average 4.9 children each, according to the 1986 Census. The national average was 2.6 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1994). This points to a population that is rapidly growing. The actual rate is difficult to quantify, but the Indigenous population is expected to grow by more than 10% between 1996 and 2001 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000). The attendant strains in Indigenous households are obvious.

Consistent with this, Indigenous young people are less firmly located in their household of origin. In 1995, less than half of Indigenous young people were living with parents, compared with almost two-thirds for all 15- to 24-year-olds (Australian Youth Foundation 2000).

Many Indigenous households are also touched with a history of dislocation and institutionalisation. In 1994, 10.3% of Indigenous people over 25 had been taken away from their natural family. Over 90% of these had been raised in non-Indigenous settings, and over 60% in institutions like orphanages or missions (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996b). This experience

has clear implications for the development of natural parenting skills.

Tenure patterns also differ from the mainstream. Almost 70% of Aboriginal households are in rental accommodation, 42% of which is public housing. More than 21% of households said that their accommodation was unsatisfactory – usually because it was too small or in poor repair (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996b).

Future projections

The data indicates that if current trends continue, it will be more difficult in 2015 for young people to establish themselves as adult. Symbolic indicators of adult status such as marriage, having a child, and leaving home are all receding further and further into the distance. This adds to trends already noted in employment and education, and contribute to a well grounded belief that unless action is taken, the youth category will be progressively redefined and expanded up the age range. This conclusion was also supported strongly by the expert forums.

Increased levels of family stress can be expected as a smaller, more mobile, harder working family unit is expected to provide more economic, psychological and social support for young people within it. Increased tension, and presumably higher rates of family breakdown, may result.

An increase in extra-family supports is projected: more young people in care, and more resources needed for those young people. Homelessness among young people is expected to increase, and to impact on young people at younger ages. Accommodation will need to be directed towards meeting the needs of people much younger than current services do.

Serious problems will arise in the availability of housing. If public housing trends continue to decline in the way they have been, a severe shortage of affordable housing stock is predicted. Forums suggested that all types of housing tenure are likely to be difficult to access as affordability declines. This will have disproportionate effects on young people, as demand for limited rental housing stock increases. The effect on Indigenous households, who are highly dependent on public housing, will be even more critical.

If trends worsen, however, expert forums feared a deeper polarisation in living conditions, with some families not being able to afford housing (or, indeed, food and other necessities) and others living in high security luxury housing precincts. Economically well-

established families may be able to offer younger members significant resources, leading to cumulative advantage in education, competitiveness in employment, and lower living costs. Poorer families will find their young excluded from increasingly market-driven education, vulnerable to short-term and erratic employment, and unable to meet the costs of a family that is economically dependent until the late twenties.

Under these conditions, homelessness would be expected to increase as family breakdown and the stresses of step and blended families make it harder for young people to survive within family settings. The hard-to-service end of the young homeless population may be met with increasingly repressive forms of governance including institutionalisation and carceral approaches to their care.

In a worsening trend, increased stresses on the family and the limited capacity of generational cultures to adapt to changed environmental conditions would result in greater reactive generational conflict. Generations will find it harder to understand each other, and the willingness to understand may dissipate with an increasingly hard-line older generation. Young people may well seek refuge from a more febrile family and household situation by developing alternative forms of social living, including communal and other living experiments.

The plummeting birthrate would produce a society in which children are scarce. Economic uncertainty, increasing expectations of educational qualifications, and the increased projected costs of supporting children through to independence will mean that many young people may choose to defer childbearing until their late thirties or forties, have only one child, or choose not to have children at all. Economic recession and instability would increase as consumer demand drops off on the back of a declining population base and shortfalls in the supply of labour begin to bite. An implication of this is that attempts to meet further falls in birthrate with migration may result in cultural tensions as immigration programs are expanded beyond the capacity for social adjustment.

In the light of this, expert forums suggested a range of principles that should govern effective service delivery in order to produce outcomes which are productive, positive and fair for young people. These included services which promote a community which:

- is equal,
- is healthy,
- is safe and secure,

- maximises freedom and autonomy,
- is adaptive,
- is restorative and integrative,
- is engaging, and
- ensures power is accountable to its constituents.

Forum participants indicated strongly that effective planning could ensure that families were supported in the context of local communities. Small, potentially mobile families would need the support of a strong wider network of households, and a healthy community would be one in which these links were facilitated and resourced. Forums spoke of raising children in “villages”, whether they be urban communities, communities in a rural setting or communities of interest.

A healthy society would be open to new forms of family, and willing to support experimentation with new ways of living together. Given the centrality of family as a support in the lives of young people, a healthy society would see it as essential that the supports are supported. Part of this would be assistance for social structures like the family to change, develop and adjust.

Different generations would be actively engaged with one another, and actively interested in respecting, understanding and working with difference across generational lines. Generational payback, either from the old to the young or the young to the old, would be reduced or eliminated.

The overall implication is that expert forums were not indicating that a healthy society would necessarily be one in which “the traditional family” was supported at all costs as the sole acceptable template for successfully living together. There was acceptance that the family is already a plural institution, and that it is likely to become more so. Consequently it is important to support all families and households, whatever their shape and size, to be able to do what they do well. The critical dynamic in this is the quality of the family’s wider social connections and support as a means of guaranteeing resilience in an environment which was subject to rapid change and high mobility.

Services needed

Expert forums indicated a need to pay close attention to the range of housing options available for young people and their families. This included attention to the question of public housing, which is currently being sold off in most State jurisdictions. A housing economy with a primary focus on owner-occupiers and

which structures economic advantage in that direction is an economy which structurally disadvantages young people, because they are generally not owner-occupiers. This is intensified in the case of Indigenous young people.

This structural disadvantage is likely to increase with changes in employment for young people and indeed for others in the labour market, including their parents. Participants were not convinced of the capacity of the private market to meet Australia's housing needs. A significant reinvestment in public housing, in a variety of forms, including group and community housing, was supported. For Indigenous households, larger houses and more community housing was clearly indicated.

Support for families was seen as important. Early intervention, and open access to counselling, conflict management and mediation were seen as important components of this. A recognition that many families were unlikely to be completely self-sufficient without state and community support underwrote many participants' thinking.

Prevention of destructive forms of conflict and damaging forms of communication, interaction and patterns of behaviour is critical. This may involve intervention, or access by families to services which improve the capacity of the family to deal with change, tension and internal conflict. In particular, families may need help to adapt to a changed household dynamic in which parents are living with adult offspring, and living with them for many years, rather than (or at the same time as) being set up for the care and discipline of small children.

Other programs involve rebuilding community life so that families, whatever their size and form, are less isolated, better connected and have access to lines of release or healing that do not involve formal, State-mandated intervention by professionals. A reinvestment in community development was seen as essential to effective family support.

This focus on social capital, on more integrated communities as the means to healthy families was indicated in all three scenarios. An active, supportive community is needed whatever the future looks like. Community development, including attention both to the built environment through better town planning, transport policy and environmental management and to the social environment through active processes which rebuild and sustain community life, is a core strategy for the support of young people in families and other households.

In a worsening environment, the same supports would be needed as indicated in the "same" kind of projection, but at a higher level. Family crisis accommodation would be needed, and crisis intervention services for cases of family violence or abuse would need to be upgraded. Quick-response rescue services for cases of domestic violence were one of the strategies indicated by expert forums.

On the other hand, expert forums indicated that no services would be needed if we are able to effectively develop the kind of community in which diverse and healthy forms of family and household were encouraged to develop. This may be an overstatement, but it indicates how critical it is to build the kinds of communities that are able to offer support to households as part of the natural everyday rhythm of life, rather than statutory state intervention. Family policy is therefore community development policy.

Notwithstanding this, the data indicate that relationships will not suddenly cease to break down, and all conflict disappear, because people live in healthy communities. Many difficulties arise in families as a product of personal and private factors, which, although responsive to social influences, are not ultimately reducible to them. This may often be painful, and generate levels of resentment and anger even in the best of worlds. In some cases, young people may be left isolated by the process of breakdown, or more typically by the process of repartnering. Access to effective professional support under such conditions, and ideally before the process becomes toxic, should be part of the standard resource which any community holds for its members. For young people especially, the most viable option may well be to move to independent living, perhaps with alternative personal and economic supports in place. A range of housing stock and household options needs to be in place to ensure young people's safety and health in such situations.

Conclusion

The direction of change in the position of young people in the context of the households and families in which they live echoes many of the features noted in chapters on work and employment, education and income. Young people are staying in the family home longer. The statistical and other data indicate that the age at which young people are able to establish independent households is creeping closer to 30 for a large and growing number of young people.

The process is intensified by other factors discussed

in this chapter such as delayed family formation, including age of marriage or other forms of partnership, and delayed childbearing. Both of these have been part of the constellation of markers which symbolically indicate that accreditation as adult is imminent – in fact, they have been among the most powerful and unambiguous of them. Their absence indicates that accreditation is likely to become more ambiguous and uncertain, and subject to further delays, than at present. As we indicate elsewhere, this was a major concern of contributors to this study. What vague and diffuse rites of passage currently exist are becoming even more vague and diffuse, if not disappearing altogether.

There may be other reasons why shoe-horning

young people back into the family may not be productive. While most families adapt reasonably well to their children's emergent adulthood in the context of the family home, many families are set up for the care of dependent children and do not adjust well to the very different requirements of dependent adult offspring. There is a serious risk, expressed by the expert forums, that in wanting to affirm the family and its prerogatives, current policy may be increasing the pressure within families beyond load limits. Policies which facilitate the progressive, negotiated, supported movement of young people to independent living, in ways that maximise their continued connection with their families of origin may well be healthier both for young people and for their families.

8 EIGHT: HEALTH, YOUNG PEOPLE AND YOUTH SERVICES

Introduction: health, youth and exclusion

Young people in Australia are, on the whole, pretty healthy. According to everyday medical measures of physical good health, as shown by morbidity and mortality rates, young people are the healthiest section of the community. Health is, of course, broader than that. Mahler (1981) defines health as that condition which enables people to lead socially and economically satisfying lives. The constitution of the World Health Organisation (WHO) points in the same direction, defining health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being” (World Health Organisation 1984).

The definition has also been extended to include the political and spiritual dimensions of life (Manaharan 1982) with the recognition that feelings of powerlessness are basic to apathy and ill-health (World Health Organisation 1986). It follows that exclusion, because it creates powerless groups in society, promotes ill health in the groups that are excluded. In this context, there are clearly a number of risk factors that sometimes lead to young people’s health and well-being being compromised.

For the last couple of centuries, understandings of health have been dominated by medical discourse. This is true of youth health too: youth health is principally seen in terms of medical data on illness and the physical condition of young people, despite the

widespread acceptance of the WHO definition of health, and the relatively minor importance of physical health in the overall picture of youth health. Conversely, the data on well-being is disconcertingly thin (Moon, Meyer & Grau 1999). There are reasons for this: data collection about medical conditions is now routine and institutionalised. The medical profession is dominant in health research, including designing and implementing health surveys. And while medical data is perhaps not the most important data set for young people, it is critical to assessments of health for other age groups.

However, for young people, health is principally behavioural and social in nature, rather than simply a function of the body. Mostly, young people’s bodies work well. Therefore, this chapter also gives attention to the broader framework of well-being and risk-taking behaviour as well as physical health. The categories are not exclusive or independent of each other, but will be useful when looking at current and future strategies for effective health interventions. Young people also, of course, live in the general Australian environment, and are subject to the health effects of that environment, including conditions like obesity and cancer and everything else, though typically at lower rates than others. However, we have chosen in this chapter to focus on issues that are typical of young people, or typically ascribed to them, rather than universal health concerns from which young people are not exempt.

Well-being

Within the literature, several factors are considered to be important to well-being. These include:

- secure and supportive personal relationships;
- hope for the future;
- feelings of self-worth;
- feelings of being needed;
- positive relationships infancy and early life;
- seeing a positive role in the world for self;
- feelings of being accepted for who you are, by significant others; and
- basic material needs securely met.

Other factors are considered to be detrimental to well-being, including:

- child abuse and neglect;
- erratic parenting, unstable family life;
- parental substance abuse;
- parental depression;
- family violence;
- maternal death before 11 years old;
- rejection by family or peers;
- feeling unable to live up to expectations of significant others;
- disability, chronic pain;
- incarceration; and
- marginalisation.

At the more concrete level, public concern about young people's health has mostly concentrated on the following issues:

- sexual health, including sexually transmitted diseases;
- pregnancy and childbirth;
- various mental health problems arising from societal, social and personal difficulty, including stress, anxiety and depression;
- mental illness, including bipolar affective disorders and schizophrenia;
- risk-taking behaviours;
- suicide;
- chronic medical conditions such as asthma;
- suicide related behaviours (parasuicide) and self-harm;
- anorexia and other body-control disorders;
- problematic drug use; and
- accident and injury.

Many of these conditions have been considered as medical problems, and medical intervention has certainly been important for recovery to health.

However, several of these conditions do not have a primary physical origin. Suicide, for example, at the extreme negative end of the well-being continuum, is more usually related to personal conditions than to a physical medical condition (Watts 1997). But a recent report, finding (perhaps a little obviously) that many suicidal persons were depressed, therefore placed depression as a major cause of suicide (Carr-Gregg 2000).

Existing trends in youth health

There is now a very rich stream of data on young people's health, thanks to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's (AIHW) comprehensive report *Australia's young people: their health and well-being* (1999). Statistics are presented on a wide range of health indicators, and we have used the report extensively. However, we still confront the problem that trend data is much more scarce, even within this report, and presents limitations on projection here as elsewhere.

Risk factors in young people's well-being

A number of commentators have pointed to an increase in potential stressors within young people's lives over the last two or three decades. The literature suggests several reasons for what are perceived to be upward trends in suicide, parasuicide, stress, substance abuse, anxiety and depression.⁶

One idea is that the higher material standards of living available in modern society removes hope of future improvement, and takes away the ability of the individual to plausibly blame their circumstances or society in general for their plight. This increases the likelihood of self blame. Some argue that the materialism of modern society means people are valued according to their possessions rather than their personal qualities and that this marginalises both the young and the poor even though their standard of living may be above subsistence levels (Van der Gaag 1999). Intolerant or oppressive cultural norms may make it impossible for many young people to be valued as they are, because of racism, sexism, heterosexism, or on the basis of disability or inferior social status.

Another contention about societal change, currently popular with political speech writers, is the assertion that western culture has become neglectful of

⁶ It needs to be noted, however, that the data supporting this perception is uneven and ambiguous.

the moral dimension of life, or of spiritual or faith issues (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2000b). Others have argued that young people perceive that they no longer have a clear future role or have no satisfactory future role available to them.

Richard Eckersley, an influential commentator on young people's well-being, argues that young people have become more fearful about the future because of their awareness of potential for global catastrophe (Eckersley 1995). A variation on this theme suggests that rapid social change, and high levels of geographic mobility have a disruptive effect on social relationships (World Health Organisation 1993). The general extended deferment of adulthood makes young people both more "achievement conscious" and more "infantile" and dependent on others, leaving many young people with a profound sense of failure.

Lack of well-being can show itself in different ways with different groups. Young women feature in the statistics on parasuicide, depression and anxiety. Young men stand out in the statistics on completed suicide. Gay and lesbian young people are over represented in the statistics on suicide and parasuicide (e.g. suicide-related behaviour such as attempted suicide or self-harm), and may be over represented in statistics for depression (MacDonald & Coffield 1991). Aboriginal young people are over represented in suicide generally, including deaths in custody. This is partly because Indigenous young people are significantly over represented within the imprisoned population, and so constitute a higher proportion of prison deaths (Mental Health Branch Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services 1997).

It is important to recognise that while many young people may be affected by these forces some of the time, the vast majority continue to enjoy good health and well-being. According to Moon et al., around 90% of young people in Australia describe their health as good, very good, or excellent (Moon et al. 1999, p.211). While health issues need to be addressed, the temptation to pathologise young people as a whole needs to be carefully avoided.

Risk-taking behaviour

Youth theorists have noted that risk-taking is often a feature of adolescent behaviour (Elkind 1967). Risk-taking behaviour in young people can manifest itself as accident, injury, exposure to violence, sexual health risk arising from choices made about sexual behaviour, or substance abuse.

Probably all healthy people take risks. Some theorists suggest that experimentation and "proving self", pushing boundaries, rebellion against parents and accepted social standards are part of a developmental process that increases skill and understanding about life for people of all ages. However, young people's risk-taking behaviour sometimes takes a form which involves high risk of long-term damage to themselves or others.

Explanations for this apparently reckless behaviour include suggestions that young people do not take seriously the possibility of their own death, that they have a kind of "immortality myth" (Elkind 1967). It may be because they are impulsive, that inexperience makes them unaware of likely consequences of their actions, or they are not fully aware of what serious injury will mean to their health and well-being in the long term. Inexperience seems to be a common factor in these explanations.

It may also be that young people in vulnerable situations accept risky behaviour because they feel they have few safe choices in their lives. Like other groups, they may suffer social penalties from peers if they refuse risky activities, or may be in situations where power differences make it hard to refuse. The difficulty that some young women have in insisting on safe sex is an example.

Because there aren't many spheres of activity in which young people can take risks, risk-taking behaviour for young people usually involves risk to the body, the one site where they do have some control. Other groups may take risks with finances (gambling, risk investment or speculation), with relationships (adultery or sexual adventurism), travel, careers (resigning and starting a new career) and so on. In our culture, the body as a site for risk is perceived as extreme and often spectacular, and so young people's risk-taking seems more remarkable than that of other groups.

However, risk-taking behaviour can have implications for morbidity and premature death in later life. This is especially so for heavy drinking, smoking, and drug use, but applies also to sexual health risks and patterns of violent behaviour.

Different groups engage in risk-taking in different ways. Young men, on the whole, are more likely to have problems as a result of risk-taking behaviour. They are over-represented relative to women in almost all areas of risk: motor vehicle accident, accidents at work and in sport, problematic drug and alcohol use, and violence. The main recognised risks for young

women relate to sexual health, unwanted pregnancy, infertility arising from sexually transmitted disease and family and domestic violence. Homeless young people experience higher risks of violence, drug use and sexual health problems than the general population. Aboriginal young people experience higher levels of violence, teenage pregnancy, and sexual health problems. All economically and socially disadvantaged groups experience higher risks of violence.

Stress, anxiety and depression

There is a common perception that stress, anxiety and depression are increasing. This is hard to confirm statistically. Trends over time for comparable data for young people are not available in many areas, although suicide statistics are comprehensive. Reports of greater levels of stress, anxiety and depression than previous generations are hard to substantiate, given how recently depression has become generally understood, and how recently professional intervention has become acceptable.

Suicide

Suicide has occupied a lot of attention as a youth health issue, partly because it has been a core proposition in social planning that suicide rates are a reliable indicator of the psychic health of a society, and particularly its level of cohesion. In Richard Eckersley's work, for example (Eckersley 1988, 1989, 1995, 1999), suicide provides evidence that Western society is in the midst of a crisis of values in which young people no longer are in touch with life's meaning, and where their visions for the future are dark and despairing. Current suicide rates are twice or three times those of the post-war period, indicating a crisis of confidence and a surge of alienation. Figure 8.1, which charts youth suicide rates since 1921, certainly looks that way, at least for young men.

The data is inherently problematic, because the total figures for suicide are still very small and there are considerable annual variations. The increase up to the 1980s may well be due to under-reporting in earlier generations, because of severe taboos around the topic of suicide prior to the 1980s. It is likely that many suicides were (and still are) reported as accidental



Figure 8.1 Suicide, Australia, 1921–1995, 15- to 24-year-olds by gender

Source: Australian Institute for Health and Welfare, National Injury Surveillance Unit, (AIHW NISU) 1997 in Mental Health Branch, 1997

deaths. Recent figures show that youth suicide rates for the past decade have been pretty stable (see Figure 8.2). Certainly, there is nothing like the epidemic in youth suicide that some commentators have been talking about (Carr-Gregg 2000). In fact, no upward current trend is discernable. The most recent data indicates that suicide rates among young people are in fact falling (*Youth Studies Australia 2000*).

The rate of suicide among teenagers is also lower than for any other adult age group. The rate for people in their twenties is marginally higher (about ten percentage points higher than for 40-year-olds – 0.037%pa compared with 0.027%). Rates for young people in general are lower than for 40-year-olds, and are in the vicinity of the rate for the population as a whole (Moon et al. 1999, p.98).

The stabilisation of youth suicide figures, in the face of some extreme social stressors may indicate a degree of resilience in the youth population which is not normally attributed to them. At least they indicate that the youth population is not particularly morbid or pathological, in contrast to the common public perception (Offer 1969; Offer et al. 1988; Offer & Offer 1972). ABS data on vitality (amount of energy), the

impact of emotional health on work or daily functioning, and on feelings of happiness and peace, indicate that scores for young people are very similar to the rest of the population (Moon et al. 1999, p.30).

Parasuicide and self-harm

While youth suicide is a statistically rare event in Australia, other forms of self-destructive behaviour are more common (Moon et al. 1999, p.100). Statistical data on the changes in the rate of parasuicide, as it is called, are much less available than for completed suicide, and are inherently less reliable. Hospital admissions indicate that the numbers of young people admitted for suicide attempts have been steady between 1990 and 1995, maybe even declining slightly. But many more young people attempt suicide: about 17 times that for completed suicides. In 1997 around 3% of 18- to 24-year-olds said that they had attempted suicide at some stage in the past, compared with 0.024% completed suicides (ibid.). Figures for suicidal thoughts are higher too. It is commonly assumed that completed suicide is the tip of an iceberg of distress among young people that reaches deep into a large

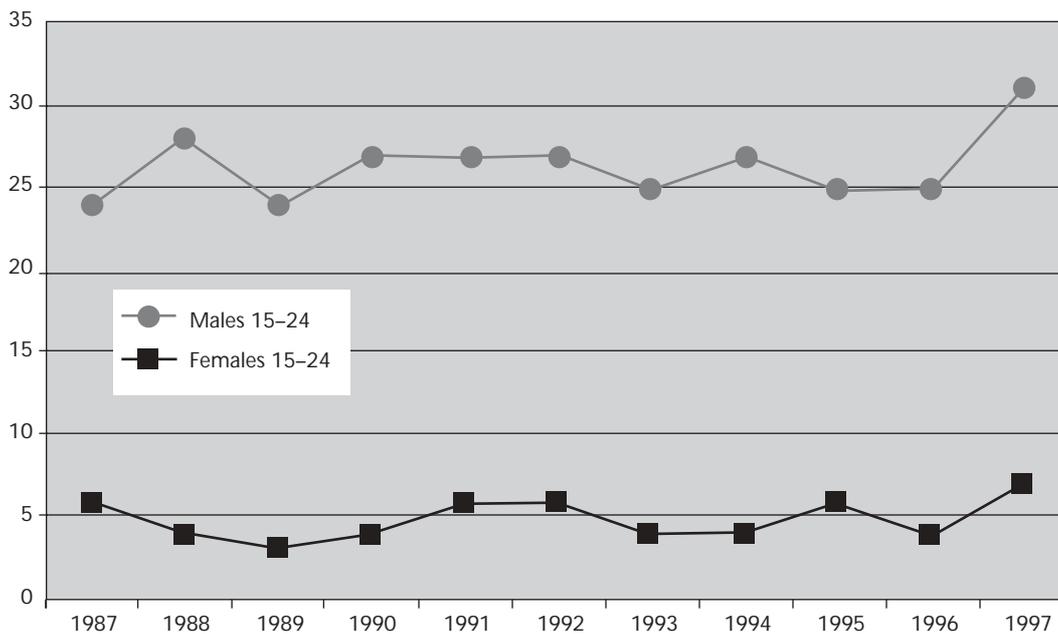


Figure 8.2 Youth suicide rates per 100,000 by age 1987-1997

Source: ABS Cat. No. 4102.0

proportion of the youth population. However, this is only an assumption, and runs against figures for happiness and well-being among young people which are not significantly lower than the rest of the population. Generally, the thesis that young people are in turmoil is not well supported by the evidence (Springhall 1984).

Problematic drug use

Recreational drug use is a feature of our society, with large leisure industries built around caffeine, tobacco and alcohol.⁷ In this section we will deal with recreational drug consumption as a whole, although as a matter of social (and often arbitrary) decision, some recreational drugs are illegal and some are not. Several of the illegal drugs are not markedly more toxic than the legal ones.

High or constant use of any recreational drug, legal or no, may also lead to economic, health and social difficulties, although there are higher costs and risks in maintaining habitual and heavy use of an illegal substance. As a health issue, the illegality of a recreational drug becomes important because it means that quality control and monitoring of strength and purity are not in place. The drug becomes dangerous *because* it is illegal, in addition to its inherent toxicity. Drug overdose rates fluctuate and appear to relate to changes in drug purity and changes in patterns of drug use.

Trends in recreational drug use are quite dynamic, and the points at which such use becomes problematic can also change quite dramatically. For example, over the last five years, heroin has become more available as a mainstream recreational drug. Because a lethal dose of heroin is only marginally higher than a recreational dose, deaths from overdose have increased quite sharply in that time (Moon et al. 1999, p.119).

The trends in recreational drug use appear to indicate that total recreational drug use by young people is steady or declining, although the mix is changing. The use of the legal drugs tobacco and alcohol are steady or may be decreasing (Moon et al. 1999, pp.126,127), but use of several other categories of illegal substances such as ecstasy (MDMA), amphetamines,

LSD and heroin have increased. Cannabis use is now thoroughly mainstream, with a reasonably large minority of Australians of all ages (but especially young people) using regularly. Prescription drugs with recreational potential such as dexamphetamine and Rohypnol have also entered the recreational drug market. Young people also appear to be using recreational drugs of all kinds at younger ages, as indicated in Table 8.1.

Finally, the number of recreational drugs available is increasing, with a reasonably regular release of new designer drugs into the market. Overall, many of the barriers to illegal drug use seem to be disappearing, and the wall between drug-using cultures and the mainstream seems to have been largely broken down. National Drug Strategy Household Survey data shows that opportunities to use illegal drugs have increased across almost all drugs between 1995 and 1998 (Moon et al. 1999, p.129).

Motor vehicle death and injury

Motor vehicle deaths constitute one of the three primary causes of death for young people (the others being suicide and other accidental death). Motor accidents remain the most common cause of fatality among young people, although the figures have been improving significantly over the last 20 years. This is probably due to various public and environmental health interventions, including road improvement, anti-drink/ driving campaigns, seatbelt legislation, improvements in vehicle safety standards and provision of late night public transport in metropolitan areas.

Workplace injury

Workplace accidents remain a cause of health concern for young people. The trend data is encouraging – the rates have fallen in recent years – but they remain higher than for other groups within the work force (Worksafe Western Australia 1994/95). The downward trend is believed to be due to environmental health policies, but may also be due to changing patterns of youth employment away from high risk occupations or indeed away from full-time work completely.

Other injury

Other accidental injury includes sports injuries, which are significant as a cause of incapacity even though

⁷ The term "recreational drug use" is used to distinguish between drug use approved for medical treatment and drugs used for pleasure, in social situations or generally for some non-medical purpose. The lines do become a little blurred when people self-medicate using psychotropic drugs such as alcohol or heroin for mental conditions such as depression.

Table 8.1 Drug use and mean age of initiation Australia 1995, 1998

Drug/behaviour	Proportion of the population aged 14 years and over					
	Lifetime use		Recent use		Mean age of initiation 1995	Mean age of initiation 1998
	1995	1998	1995**	1998**		
Tobacco	64.8	65.4	27.1	26.4	15.6	15.7
Alcohol	87.8	89.8	78.3	80.7	17.3	17.1
Marijuana	31.1	39.3	13.2	17.9	19.1	18.7
Analgesics<	12.3	11.4	3.5	5.2	19	19.7
Tranquillisers<	3.2	6.2	0.6	3	23.8	23.4
Steroids<	0.6	0.8	0.2	0.2	18.7	21.6
Barbiturates<	1.2	1.6	0.2	0.2	18.2	19.7
Inhalants	2.4	3.9	0.4	0.8	16.1	17.5
Heroin	1.4	2.2	0.4	0.7	20.6	21.5
Methadone <		0.5	*	0.2	*	21.6
Amphetamines <	5.8	8.7	2.1	3.6	20.2	19.9
Cocaine	3.4	4.3	1	1.4	21.1	22.3
Hallucinogens	5.5	10	1.8	3	19.1	18.8
Ecstasy, designer	2.4	4.7	0.9	2.4	22.7	22.7
Injected illicit drugs	1.3	2.1	0.6	0.7	*	20.7
Any illicit	39.3	46	17	22	18.9	18.8

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 1999

* not asked in 1995

< for non-medical purposes

**Recent use means used in the last 12 months.

fatality rates are low, and also can have severe consequences in later life. Sporting injuries appear to be related to participation rates in high risk sporting activities. Accident patterns seem likely to change with participation rates and the adoption of safety equipment.

Violence is another important cause of incapacity and injury. Statistics for serious violence (murder) are fairly steady over time on a per capita basis. There is some evidence that violent crime may be increasing (see chapter 9). Young men are the group in society who are most likely to be both the perpetrators and the victims of violence. In some Aboriginal communities there are high levels of family violence. Currently, initiatives are addressing this issue from within an Aboriginal framework of intervention (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2000a).

Sexual health

Sexually transmitted diseases have been a central area of concern for young people's health, especially since

the advent of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Here, the trends again look good. Downward trends have been noted for new infections from AIDS and syphilis in the general population, largely the result of targeted harm reduction policies. This downward trend has not been universal, however, and has not been the case in some Aboriginal communities, where mainstream harm reduction programs have not been particularly successful.

Upward trends have been reported for chlamydia, which, untreated, leads to infertility and which can be asymptomatic in women, and also for gonococcal infections (Moon et al. 1999, p.108). This trend has been attributed, in part, to changes in sexual behaviour, especially the average time between first sexual experience and the establishment of long-term monogamous relationships, which generally increases the number of sexual partners that a person has and therefore the risk of infection. There is also a persistent preference for the use of the contraceptive pill rather than condoms as a means of contraception.

Pregnancy and childbirth

As chapter 7 indicates, there has been a drop in teenage births over a 25-year period and a rise in the mean age at which the first child is born. Among the reasons for the change are easier access to contraception and abortion, rises in the standard of living and changes in cultural expectations about women's role in society, including the "ideal" age for child bearing and the relative importance for women of career and child rearing. Again, however, these trends are not universal. Patterns of childbirth for Aboriginal young women show a younger mean age for the birth of the first child and higher rates of teenage pregnancy than the general community. The reasons for this are probably a combination of social exclusion and differential cultural expectations.

Asthma

The most common problem for which regular medication is taken is asthma (Zubrick et al. 1995), ahead of migraine, attention deficiency disorders and all other conditions. Asthma rates are higher in Australia than in many other countries. Medication rates of asthma in teenage years fall compared with childhood years (ibid.). There appears to be some additional risk of asthma for those living in dusty environments, but also some indication that it may be triggered by lack of exposure to allergens in early childhood. There is currently no agreement about the cause of asthma and treatment is palliative to alleviate symptoms. The incidence of asthma has risen over time but now appears stable (ibid.).

Future projections

There are several concerns embedded within the current health service environment for young people, which if they continue in the same direction, or worsen, may mean that the current good health of young people may be at risk. For instance:

- Services may be fragmented further as competition policy reduces interagency co-operation.
- The increasing trend towards "user pays" systems may reduce access to health services for those who need it most.
- Health funding priorities may be skewed towards new medical techniques rather than health promotion and public health initiatives, especially if they have commercial potential in a global market for medicine. The limited funding

available is offered to patch up the sick rather than for preventative health measures.

- Youth health services may be absorbed into main stream health services controlled by the medical profession and working narrowly within a medical model of health.
- Compulsory treatment facilities may be developed and extended for a range of medical and non-medical health conditions based upon concepts of deviance. Youth workers may be employed in compulsory treatment units under the supervision of medical staff.
- The public/private two-tier medical system may increase polarisation, with choice and a safety net for those who can pay, and a means-tested public system for those who can not pay. Private patients would have access to a burgeoning range of surgical interventions without proven value, while public patients have no choice of treatment and a minimum provision of strictly medical health interventions.
- In the broader social environment for young people, the sense of powerlessness may be exacerbated by the growing list of coercive policies like work for the dole, curfews and exclusions from public space, compulsory education until 18, mandatory sentencing, increasing incarceration rates and perhaps requirements that young people may not leave home before 18 unless they are clearly able to support themselves or are supported by their parents.

In terms of the specific issues discussed above:

Suicide and parasuicide: Prediction in these fields is difficult, although one would expect a rising trend if the increase in the range of stressors discussed in other chapters translates into young people feeling that they have few options for a realistic and satisfying future. Suicide rates for men, which are many times the figure for women, are closely correlated with unemployment rates, and expectations for future suicide rates follow the rate of unemployment. Much depends on other factors, particularly the general health of communities, the resilience of young people and their sense of belonging in society.

Problematic drug use: Trends indicate are that young people will have easy access to a wider variety of recreational drugs from an earlier age. The criminalisation of drug use does not seem to be a major disincentive. A

wide range of recreational drugs will be a part of mainstream young people's recreation, although a large majority of young people, then as now, will be very selective about what recreational drugs they use. These may not be chosen from the available legal selection.

Motor vehicle accidents: It seems probable that that further improvements in vehicle safety will be made, including the possibility of satellite speed control devices. In the next 15 years, recent safety innovations such as airbags will also flow through to the second-hand car market and be available for young people's use. We would expect the downward trend in road trauma to continue.

Workplace injury: While current trends are encouraging, there are several tendencies in the data on the future of work that will mean that young people are less well-protected than now. Declining unionisation and the increase in casual, part-time and temporary work are among these.

Sexual health: With the trend towards an increasing number of sexual partners due to the increasing amount of time that young people are sexually active but single, sexually transmitted diseases will continue to be of concern. With increasing globalisation, the emergence of new diseases or new strains seems likely.

General health risks: There may be an increase in risk from infectious diseases with the increase in travel and transport and the emergence of strains of disease agents which are resistant to current treatments.

Effective services

General services for maintaining the health and well-being of young people

Measures to improve inclusion

From the discussion above it is clear that a supportive community has the capacity to increase well-being among young people. It makes good sense to invest in services which build the capacity of communities to accept, include, and resource their young people – particularly vulnerable groups of young people such as same-sex attracted young people and young Indigenous people. A society more tolerant of difference would reduce the likelihood of individuals and groups facing social exclusion and marginalisation.

Anti-discriminatory legislation around gay and lesbian employment and an equalisation of the age of consent for heterosexual and gay and lesbian young people would be one step towards creating a more tolerant and accepting society. For Indigenous young people, reconciliation is clearly high on the agenda, and may counter some of the effects of racism and dispossession of Aboriginal people.

Youth work and well-being

Youth work plays a role in promoting well-being among young people both through direct service provision, as, for example in youth accommodation, in integrating the services provided by other agencies and in working in an "educative" manner with the young person to improve their assertiveness, self-esteem or interpersonal skills. Youth workers work directly with young people to help them to overcome their feelings of apathy and powerlessness.

Youth workers are also able to make contact with young people who are hard for other agencies to contact, and may have opportunities to work with groups of young people around issues of self-esteem and individual support. This encourages peer support networks and helps young people develop problem solving and interpersonal skills in a social context. Advocacy and information-giving roles have the potential to provide young people with access to political mechanisms, helping to overcome feelings of powerlessness.

The capacity for youth work practice to be mobilised to improve health outcomes for young people is not always fully exploited. For example, the section on "community services" in the AIHW report does not mention youth work as a service (Moon et al. 1999).

Safe places

The social exclusion factors most relevant to risk-taking behaviour appear to be social marginalisation and poverty. The poor and the marginalised have fewer options in their lives and are likely to have access to fewer safe options. For example, homeless young people are more at risk of violence because they have no access to safe accommodation. The homeless young person also has more limited access to legal employment and may resort to forms of illegal employment that increase their risks of violence or sexual disease.

Safe places are essential in these instances. Accessible youth and women's refuges and drop-in

centres, go some way to reducing risk for some groups of young people.

Medical services

In some cases the best result to improve health outcomes lies with medical trauma services, including accident and emergency departments and paramedical services, including ambulance services. Trauma services are at present unevenly spread. The closure of rural medical services in recent years might be expected to impact negatively on the health of young people in rural areas who have suffered a medical emergency.

General practitioners are the most frequently contacted medical specialists. Young people use GP services for routine testing or because of illness, minor injury or for contraceptive advice, although some groups such as homeless young people are more likely to use hospital outpatients or emergency department for advice and information.

Youth health services, where they exist, provide young people with non-judgmental advice on medical and contraceptive issues. In some locations young people are able to self-refer to detoxification programs. Issues about the effectiveness of medical services for young people include whether young people are able to access to appropriate free services in their locality and whether they can be assured confidential advice. However, mainstream services are not always “young person friendly” and this may deter some young people from using medical services. Programs developed by the Australian Medical Association for the professional development of GPs are currently addressing these concerns.

There are particular concerns about young people's access to medical services in country areas. For example:

- there may be no choice of service provider;
- specialist services may be unavailable;
- confidentiality and non-judgmental attitude may be more difficult to assure; and
- there may be no “bulk billing” service available to young people.

Harm minimisation and health promotion

Public health measures that reduce affects of accidents, like safety equipment in sports and seatbelts in cars, are an important part of harm minimisation strategies. Examples of this approach include the AIDS campaign, and harm minimisation drug strategies. Broad adoption of harm minimisation strategies, particularly for illegal behaviour, has been limited by the fear that discussions

about harm minimisation may be interpreted as condoning undesirable behaviour. In the current environment, harm reduction appears to be regarded with suspicion in some quarters as a primary health promotion strategy despite its apparent effectiveness in curbing the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Health promotion campaigns and abstinence

There are a number of health interventions which advocate abstinence as a key strategy for reducing the consequences of risk-taking behaviour. Examples include media campaigns directed at young people that encourage them not to engage in sexual behaviour (for example the “true love waits” campaign in the US), anti-smoking campaigns, campaigns against drinking and driving, anti-drug campaigns. Abstinence campaigns are unlikely to be successful with populations that already engage in the risky behaviour. In the absence of other approaches, they run the risk of keeping vital information from those who most need it.

Health information workers and health promotion

Examples of these approaches include health education programs in school and community settings. The main issues for this approach are to ensure that the information is presented in appropriate form and that young people have access to the information. New technology, in the form of web pages offers some interesting possibilities for young people who have access to the Internet. However, while information is clearly essential for people engaging in risk-taking behaviour, the availability of information does not necessarily correlate well with behaviour change. This is especially so if the information does not tally with young people's existing information – for example, if it is unnecessarily alarmist about activities that have a finite but small risk attached.

Environmental change and health promotion

Examples of this approach include:

- banning cigarette advertising;
- replacing tobacco sponsorship with Healthway support of youth events as “smoke and drug free”;
- banning smoking in enclosed spaces;
- seatbelt legislation;
- air quality legislation; and
- alcohol sale restrictions in some Aboriginal communities.

This approach is considered to be effective on some issues because it may not require individual behaviour

change. It is limited when, to be effective, the environmental change requires some behaviour change. For example, seatbelt legislation requires cars to be fitted with seatbelts, but behaviour change is required to ensure that people actually use the seatbelts when they are provided. Not all issues are amenable to this approach.

Effective services in the issue areas discussed above may include:

Suicide and parasuicide: Decreasing exposure to risk factors is clearly part of any strategy for youth health. Non-custodial alternatives in juvenile justice would reduce the opportunities for death in custody. There is some evidence that completed suicides increase with ease of access to lethal means and for copycat suicides. As a public health measure therefore, the potential of the 1997 gun buyback to take guns out of the equation should not be let go of easily. The risk of cluster suicides has already been addressed by voluntary media reporting restrictions on suicides and to monitor the presentation of suicide in dramas and television soap operas (Mason 1990). While the evidence that media portrayals of suicide increase suicide rates is not strong, caution is probably well-advised.

Problematic drug use: Current overemphasis on criminal enforcement is ineffective and counterproductive to health outcomes. The reality that a wide range of recreational drugs will be available to young people needs to be recognised. Young people need to be trained in decision-making about their selection of drug of choice, especially about which recreational drugs constitute an acceptable risk in health and well-being terms. Accurate and balanced information is essential, and well-researched strategies for harm minimisation are a part of this.

Fear campaigns are likely to be counterproductive. While they may deter young people who are not in contact with use of a drug, they tend to undermine the credibility of information sources in the eyes of young people who see non-deleterious use all around them. Increased support for best-practice models for drug rehabilitation where use has become problematic are an important part of the equation. Youth specific services which maximise young people's access are also indicated.

Motor vehicle death and injury: Further restricting young people's access to motor vehicles in an attempt to decrease their exposure to risk factors presents unacceptable costs in terms of exclusion, given that participation in most Australian communities is heavily personal-transport dependent. Increasing the reach and frequency of public transport may, however, pay off significantly in terms of road trauma. Other services may include significant increases in training, and especially, given increased school retention, the availability of driver education and training in schools. Availability of learner permits at younger ages and the availability of trainer training for parents may be an important part of this strategy.

Workplace injury: With the decline of unions, the state must take an increasing responsibility for the maintenance of safe work places. Effective legislation with appropriate penalties, the availability of employee advocates to insist on safe workplaces, strict laws about victimisation of workers who complain about unsafe working conditions, and the vigilant maintenance of workers compensation seem essential.

Conclusion

Young people in Australia currently enjoy very good levels of health and well-being, and many of the indicators of health show a stable or improving trend. These trends are likely to continue, particularly if advances in diagnostic and preventative medicine continue. However, there are a number of environmental and social pressures that increase levels of risk for young people, and translation of these factors into young people's general levels of well-being may compromise current standards. In particular, care should be taken about approaches to young people's health that deal with problems primarily in categories of deviance, whether moral or criminal. Such approaches deny young people access to effective means of health, in the fear of condoning the behaviour in question.

Rather, we need to equip young people to make good choices on reliable information, and to have access to ameliorative or rehabilitative services when problems emerge. There has been an increasing trend for research to address questions of resilience, the factors that enable a person to maintain health, rather than on risk alone. Further research in this direction is important.

9 NINE: CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Introduction: the justice system, young people, and exclusion

The power to criminalise and punish certain sections of the population is one of the most direct tools of governance and control available to the state. Crime and punishment has a special place in the life of a society that began as a penal colony. In the British “eliminative” project during the last two decades of the 18th century, “most of the people transported to Australia ... were young men in their late teens or twenties with convictions for property offences” (Rutherford 1998, p.121). Since then, the trend has been towards “those seen as core members of the dangerous population confined, warehoused, stored away, and forced to live their most active years as consumers of control” (Christie 1993, p.171).

The punishment of young offenders in the last two decades of the 20th century has been “not simply a measure against serious crimes but more generally a measure of elimination of those likely to continue to commit small crimes” (Radzinowicz & Hood 1986, p.485). As the move in the late 1990s towards mandatory sentencing in the Northern Territory and Western Australia indicates, repeat offending, particularly against property – however trivial – now attracts punitive governance and exclusion by the state.

Over the years, priorities and practices which the state has used to achieve the governance and control of

young people have been diverse and often contradictory. Since the early 19th century, state responses to the youth problem in Australia have swung between welfare and justice, control and care, treatment and punishment. These responses have carried “an array of overt and covert meanings which construct youth and crime in particular ways and which have crucial implications for the lives of young people and the way in which they are positioned within social relations” (Macmillan & Brown 1998, p.54).

Up to the mid-19th century, young people (and often children) were treated much the same as “adults”. They were held directly accountable for their actions, prosecuted by conventional (adult) criminal courts, and punished accordingly. No separate records were kept about their involvement with the criminal justice system, nor were there any services noticeably dedicated to the factors underlying such involvement.

Between 1850 and 1970, penal policies shifted towards modified magistrates’ courts to provide summary (and therefore quicker) justice for children. From the establishment of Reform Schools in Britain in 1854, and the first Children’s Court in South Australia in 1890, most state responses within this period favoured the construction of young people as a separate category requiring “care” and “protection” “because of their immaturity, vulnerability and impressionability”. This culminated in the diversionary schemes of the 1960s, such as the WA Children’s Panel,

introduced in 1964. These approaches weren't aimed at reducing the extent of state control over young people. Rather, they "sought to extend the capacity of the state to intervene in young people's lives by expanding the grounds for coercive intervention to include certain non-criminal behaviours ... believed to be indicative of future delinquency or propensity to offend" (O'Connor 1997, p.231).

In the last 20 years policies have changed to privilege views of "justice" where a "more traditional form of justice" with its emphasis on due process of law, combative lawyering and punishment became dominant (Naffine 1993). In the 1990s, most states and territories in Australia incorporated a more retributive approach in their youth justice laws. Concerned mainly with community protection (narrowly construed as locking away young offenders: see Omaji 1997a), and with individual accountability, these laws significantly limit courts' ability to take account of the context of action in their decision making.

The new focus on retribution was evident, for example, in Western Australia's *Crime (Serious and Repeat Offenders) Sentencing Act 1992*, Queensland's *Juvenile Justice Act 1992*, South Australia's *Young Offenders Act 1993*, and Western Australia's *Young Offenders Act 1994*. In the last five years of the century, this trend intensified through legislation like Western Australia's *Criminal Code (Amendment) Act 1996* that introduced mandatory detention for young offenders convicted for a third time of home burglary. The Northern Territory's *Juvenile Justice Amendment Act (No.2) 1996* also introduced mandatory imprisonment for offenders who commit a range of property offences twice or more. And, by the *Sentencing Amendment Act (No 2) 1999*, the NT government extended mandatory sentencing to violent and sexual offences.

All of these provisions permit courts to sentence juveniles 16 years of age and over to adult prison, for periods ranging from a maximum of three months in Western Australia to two years in Queensland. The trend towards more exclusionary forms of governance has also come through in the use of curfews, street-clearance operations, and "zero tolerance" policies. They illustrate a deep inconsistency in state policy towards young people which *treats them as adults in crime but as children in citizenship*.

There are, however, several alternative movements in the administration of justice in Australia. Approaches such as *restorative justice* and *human rights watch* represent a counter movement to the retributive justice programs with which Australia entered the new

millennium. Since the victim-offender conferencing initiative commenced in the city of Wagga Wagga, NSW in 1991, several jurisdictions in Australia have adopted approaches pioneered in New Zealand in developing "alternative systems" for dealing with young offenders, using restorative justice philosophy. South Australia moved in this direction for certain kinds of offences and offenders in 1993; Western Australia in 1994; and NSW in 1997. Proponents are hopeful that these systems will correct the punitive and crime-generating features of the traditional criminal justice treatment of young people, but the jury is still out (Strang 2000).

The actual and symbolic use of state power in criminalising and punishing young people has been a major force in how young people are defined and serviced, and what the future holds in Australia for them, both as offenders and victims. The nature and extent of youth crime is a significant *reality* in itself. But it is the trends in the processes of governance and exclusion, including criminalisation, apprehension, prosecution, punishment and restoration by the state, that are more important in determining trends in youth crime and the justice-related services the next generation of young people will require.

Existing trends in youth crime

Traditionally, crime trends have been seen as a function of the proportion of youth in the total population. For instance, one study found that during the two world wars several countries in Europe also recorded a significant drop in crime rates – attributed to the fact that most of their young men were overseas (Mukherjee 1997). Commenting on the Australian crime trends between the 1850s and the 1970s, Mukherjee notes that

during the two wars, offences against the person and good order offences declined substantially. These are offences committed predominantly by young males. A significant proportion of such young males were in the defence forces at this time. (Mukherjee 2000, p.50)

At the time, commentators such as Walker and Henderson (1991) argued that the strong increases in property crimes in Australia during the early 1970s were related to demography. As the 10 to 17 age group was expanding, so also was the increase in the violent crimes as this cohort moved into the 18 to 24 year group. In the 1990s, in those States where the number

of young people arrested for serious offences declined, the youth population was also declining. In Western Australia, for example, the *number* of juveniles among the distinct persons arrested by police declined from 6,321 (16.4%) in 1990 to 3,006 (8.3%) in 1996, before rising slightly to 3,132 (9.0%) in 1998 (Ferrante, Fernandez & Loh 1999, p.46).

However, Australian experience challenges the idea of a simple direct relationship. Many of these crimes kept up their momentum for most of the 1980s and early 1990s when the population of the 10- to 24-year-olds was in fact in decline. Also, in a 20-year period from 1973–74 to 1994–95, the total number of reported major violent and property crimes and arrest rates for young people (males in particular) increased (Table 9.1), while the proportion of young people, especially under-18s, declined from 35% to 25.4% of the Australian population. During this period, juveniles as a proportion of all male arrests for serious assaults increased from about 9% to over 14%. For girls, the arrest proportion increased fourfold, from 4% to 18% over the same period. For all youth, the arrest rates for serious assault, break, enter and steal, motor vehicle theft and fraud, increased gradually, peaking in 1992–93 (Mukherjee & Graycar 1997, p.47). Table 9.1 shows the trend for the first 15 years of this period.

Further, during this period of population decline, the number of persons in juvenile corrective institutions per 100,000 of the 10- to 17-year-old population increased from 577 in 1992 to around 780 (an average of 37 per 100,000) since 1996. The number of persons held on remand, as a percentage of the total number of persons in juvenile corrective institutions, also increased from 21.4% in 1981 to 42.6% in 1998 (Carcach & Muscat 1999).

Clearly, there is a relationship between youth demographics and the rate of youth crime, but the relationship is complex. Categories of people subject to exclusionary processes are routinely over-represented in crime statistics, so it is no surprise that young people are too. Again, the degree of their criminal involvement is likely to be a function of their exclusion.

Different States have marked differences

in incarceration rates. Table 9.3 illustrates the variation between the jurisdictions in Australia in relation to juvenile incarceration.

The number of young people involved in criminal activity is and will continue to be small. Most of these will be first-time offenders, and most will be involved in minor property offences. However, the trend data indicates a “hard end” of severely alienated young people who may well continue to be responsible for a rising trend in more violent crimes. The size of this group in 2015, and the degree of their alienation, may well be a function of policy settings in place between now and then.

Table 9.1 Involvement of juveniles in serious crimes cleared in Australia, 1973–88 (Rate per 100,000 population)

Year	Serious assault	Robbery	Break, enter & steal	Motor vehicle theft
1973–74	18.5	24.3	1030.2	467.5
1974–75	23.0	23.1	1098.3	446.3
1975–76	24.7	25.4	1145.8	456.3
1976–77	23.5	20.2	1072.4	479.2
1977–78	27.9	20.0	1189.5	505.0
1978–79	36.3	21.0	1219.6	453.9
1979–80	44.7	28.0	1307.8	592.8
1980–81	45.8	27.1	1425.7	556.0
1981–82	47.7	29.0	1391.4	586.6
1982–83	51.2	32.3	1423.9	531.5
1983–84	68.3	37.7	1431.1	579.1
1984–85	70.8	38.9	1487.2	599.2
1985–86	76.5	55.1	1393.8	527.7
1986–87	90.7	58.0	1561.1	500.3
1987–88	109.7	46.7	1650.5	569.0

Source: Adapted from Mukherjee and Dagger (1990)

Table 9.2 Rate of juvenile involvement in serious crimes in Western Australia, 1991–1997 (per 100,000 population of Juveniles)

Year	Serious assault	Robbery	Break, enter & steal	Motor vehicle theft
1991–92	93.02	41.01	1907.39	747.15
1993–94	115.64	63.48	1622.93	664.82
1995–96	126.42	80.15	1803.30	472.77
1996–97	218.18	117.99	2374.27	680.30

Source: Adapted from Australian Institute of Criminology database

Gender and youth crime

Youth crime in Australia remains essentially a male phenomenon. Although the gap between rates of involvement by males and females in crime has been narrowing since the late 1980s, young males are, on average, six times more likely to commit serious crimes than young females. Figure 9.1 illustrates gender differences in relation to robbery during the late 1970s and most of the 1980s. Inter-jurisdictional data for 1991–1997 show that these differences did not change much.

The number of females charged with an offence during the 1981–1998 period increased, but this did not translate into an increase in incarceration as it did for young males. The offences committed by young women seem to be less serious than those of their male counterparts; and females had reduced recidivism rates or took a longer period to re-offend. In fact, the rate of detention for young women generally declined from 17.2% in 1981 to 6.3% in 1998. This decline was driven mainly by the trends in NSW, Victoria and Queensland. Western Australian and South Australian figures remained relatively stable over the period.

The narrowing gap between the rates of male and female involvement needs to be taken seriously. The needs of young female offenders are not currently a priority, and that will need to change.

Indigenous youth

The national rate of incarceration among Indigenous young offenders is on the decline: from 538.2 per 100,000 in 1993 to 406.6 in 1998.

However, compared to the rate of incarceration for non-Indigenous youth (20.66 per 100,000 in 1993, 21.99 per 100,000 in 1998), this hardly makes a dent in

the over-representation for Aboriginal young offenders in custody. The seasonally adjusted data for the last quarter of each year within this period show that the over-representation ratio in fact increased from 16.2 in 1993 to 18.5 in 1998 (Carcach & Muscat 1999, p.24). The census of persons in juvenile detention taken on 30 June 1998 shows that the ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous young detainees ranged from 7.8 in the NT to 31.8 in WA (Ferrante et al. 1999, p.118). Indigenous young people are also being imprisoned at an earlier age. In Queensland, for example, 56% of all 13-year-olds and 81% of all 14-year-olds detained are Aboriginal (Lincoln & Wilson 2000, p.211). Although this Report adopts the “15 to 24 years” definition of youth, it would be remiss not to acknowledge the complications in service provision/delivery that populating our jails with children under 15 years will introduce.

Regardless of how these data are viewed,

the process that results in over-representation of any segment of the community in the penal system gives the state a false sense of achievement and ultimately will only undermine community safety. (Beresford & Omaji 1996, p.15)

Existing trends in the victimisation of young people

Often, the focus on youth crime overlooks the criminological fact that young people are the most likely age group to become victims of serious crime (including robbery, theft, physical and sexual violence) (Halstead 1992). Research shows that during the 1993–97 period,

Table 9.3 Juveniles (10–17 years) in corrective institutions, 1992–1998

Year	(per 100,000 relevant population)								
	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	ACT	Aus
1992	38.88	10.34	20.06	46.49	33.25	8.79	127.06	26.80	28.55
1993	46.40	10.23	22.68	51.59	38.45	15.83	102.71	16.15	32.19
1994	54.77	12.89	24.93	64.31	36.42	17.59	57.45	24.27	36.89
1995	57.83	14.87	35.06	49.33	24.44	17.51	74.78	37.77	38.33
1996	49.33	13.98	34.44	50.41	51.64	45.38	56.14	18.91	37.66
1997	51.39	14.11	24.94	51.97	47.83	40.20	89.38	43.75	37.11
1998	48.01	13.22	33.61	62.65	30.93	33.52	103.53	30.39	37.01

Source: Carcach and Muscat (1999, p.12)

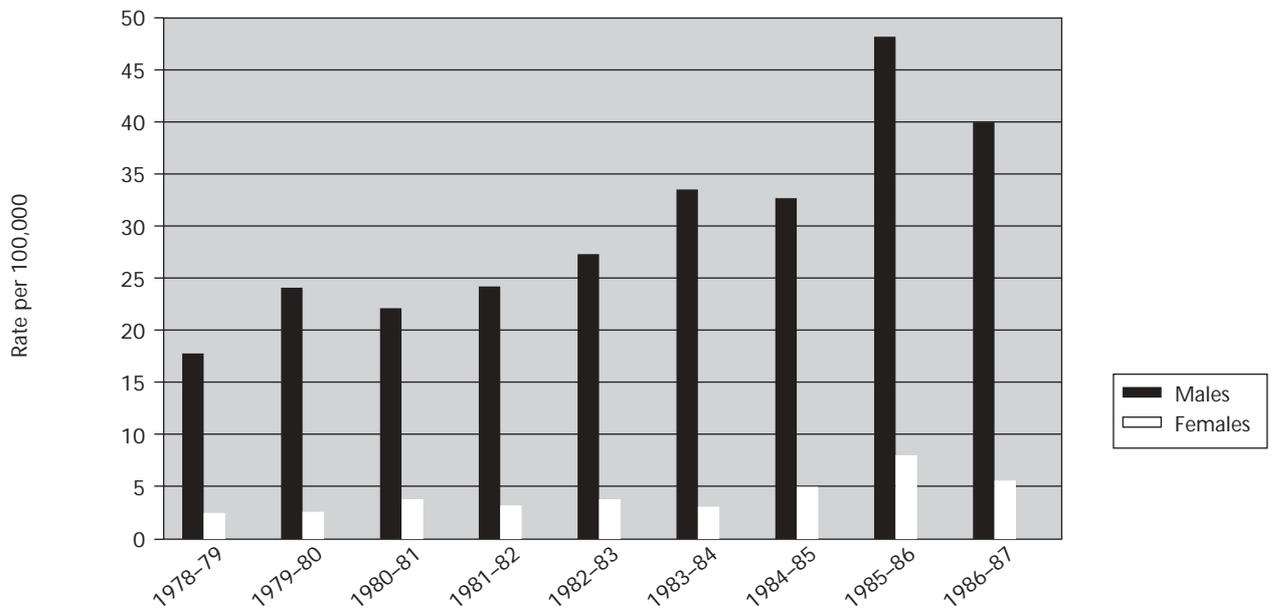


Figure 9.1 Involvement of juveniles in robbery in Australia, by gender, 1978–1987

Source: Mukherjee and Dagger (1990, p.75)

15- to 24-year-olds consistently had the highest victimisation rate for personal crimes. In 1993, the rate was 7.9%, about 75% more than the next most victimised group (25- to 34-year-olds at 4.5%) (Mukherjee & Graycar 1997, p.26). In 1997 the victimisation prevalence rate for 15- to 19-year-olds was the highest at 10.6%, with males in this group having a rate of 12.3% and females 8.7% (Mukherjee 2000, p.55).

Carcach (1997) found that over a seven-year period (1989–96), 28% of the 2,415 victims of homicide incidents were aged below 25 years. Male victims outnumbered females by around 2 to 1. The 18- to 24-year-olds had the highest risk of becoming victims, mostly from “stranger homicides”. One-sixth of the victims had a previous criminal record and about a third of the victims had high levels of blood alcohol at the time of their victimisation.

Other notable findings of this study include:

- Most youth victims of homicide belong to the same racial group as their victimisers.
- Most young people become victims as a result of altercations/revenge homicides and in the course of other crimes such as robbery, sexual assault and arson.
- Many victims died from homicide incidents at their homes and pubs or related environments.

- Youth involvement in homicide, as victims and offenders, is remarkably the result of lifestyle and routine activity patterns, involving high risk places.

It is important to note that most of these deaths happened in conditions indicating intense social exclusion. Evidently opportunities for meaningful participation have been diminishing for our youth over the last ten years so that a risky lifestyle becomes attractive, and the balance of risk slight. This, however, compounds the tragedy rather than mitigates it. As Adam Graycar observes, “the killing of a young person represents the loss of many years of potentially productive, active life ...” (in Carcach 1997).

Future projections

The decline in the size of the 15- to 24-year-old cohort as a proportion of Australia’s population will generally continue at least for the next 15 years, although this trend may be reversed completely or significantly reduced if the upper age limit for young people shifts to 30 years as we predicted earlier. The Indigenous youth population is rising, however, and may present a different pattern of crime and punishment. Research

shows that Australia “faces the strong prospect of an increase in the number of young Aborigines getting into trouble with the law” in the years ahead (Beresford & Omaji 1996, p.16). It has been projected that:

because of high birth rates and a resultant greater proportion of Aboriginal youth, it is anticipated that there will be a 50 per cent increase in ATSI imprisonment by 2011 based on 1992 estimates. (Lincoln & Wilson 2000, p.216)

As we have argued, it is imprudent to forecast a single direction for the level of youth crime based simply on the projected movement in population. The relationship is complex, and much depends on what happens between now and 2015. Young people most at risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of crime in 2015 are now between one and five years old. Their life-chances, more than their numbers, may well determine the extent to which they will get involved in crime down the track.

If things continue as they are, youth crime in Australia in the next 15 years is likely to retain the characteristics that it displayed at the close of the 20th century and in the first year of the new millennium. The overwhelming majority of it was not serious. All things being equal, youth crime will generally still,

- be non-violent in nature;
- be more likely to be directed at property;
- not be organised;
- when drug related, predominantly involve the use of cannabis;
- be committed predominantly by young males;
- remain flat or continue the downward movement it had begun in the mid-1990s, especially with regard to the rate of property offences; and
- be transient, obedient to the proposition that young people “grow out” of crime.

However, for the current trends in state responses to this *type* of youth crime to continue means further exclusion for young people in the year 2015. Although there has been a gradual turn in official opinion and policy in Australia since the 1990s whereby governments began to pursue preventive interventions on a larger scale, the traditional exclusionary approach of treatment and control, using the police, courts and corrections, remains the cornerstone of most state policies (Omaji 1997b). Even if the press and the public’s appetite for punishing the young remains at the 1990s level, juvenile justice policies and practices

of today will deny active citizenship to more youth in 2015.

To this must be added the generational effects of higher rates of imprisonment during the 1990s. By 2015, many of the children of those imprisoned during the 1990s will be teenagers. The experience of having a parent who has been imprisoned would be expected to increase propensity for criminal engagement.

If conditions deteriorate, we would expect the current dialogue between the media, the state and a community’s fear of crime to intensify and sharpen, to “condemn a little more and understand a little less” (John Major, quoted in *Mail*, Sunday 21 February 1993). Media sensationalisation of youth crime will balloon, taking advantage of the ongoing view that “the potential for community outrage regarding some aspect of the criminal justice system is a subversive sleeper in every election campaign” (Fairall 2000, p.37).

As politicians pander to this media “cash-in”, feelings of insecurity (fear of crime) will increase and private citizens (individual or corporate) will respond by creating more “locations of trust – small bubbles of security in an insecure world”, such as gated communities, private police forces, secure apartments, public buildings and car parks. Such security bubbles will further “use exclusion of those who are believed to be potentially threatening to reduce fear and risk” (France & Wiles 1998, pp.68-9). Young people, who on present form will bear the brunt of this exclusion, could be expected to react by feeling further marginalised and angry; and respond by increased delinquency and violence in a larger proportion.

Following a totally “market-driven” approach, come 2015, the state in Australia will abdicate its special duty of care to young offenders by handing over most segments of the juvenile justice system to the private sector. Prisons, run privately for profit, will create an inertia of powerful vested interest in keeping prison populations high and keeping services within them at a minimum.

Young people will find that “the pathways to adult status and autonomy are ... replaced with extended forms of dependency” (France & Wiles 1998, p.67). The rank of youth as a “surplus population” or a “human residue” of the economy will swell (Jamzorik 1995). Unemployment will be much more concentrated among school-leaver age groups – “precisely the age groups who are most liable to turn to crime out of idleness and boredom” (Walker & Henderson 1991, p.3). Delay in their financial independence will greatly enhance the frus-

trations normally felt by adolescents anxious to begin life as adults.

Accelerated drug use, as both a reaction to exclusion and as a survival strategy, would be expected. The trade in illegal drugs may well escalate. The homicide and gun use associated with an illegal but highly profitable drug economy may make an increasing impact, as it has in the USA since the 1970s with “guns and violence accompanying the introduction of crack cocaine and the increase in the neighbourhood drug markets” (Redding 1998). If we choose the same route in the administration of juvenile justice as the United States has, Australia, by 2015, can expect to mirror this experience.

In a deteriorating environment, punitive approaches to crime will intensify and manifest in:

- the extensive use of mandatory sentencing, zero tolerance, and curfews for young people;
- the lowering of the age of criminal responsibility. At present, the minimum age for criminal responsibility in NSW and in most other Australian jurisdictions is 10 years. In Tasmania and ACT it is 7 years and 8 years, respectively. All these are already lower than in New Zealand where a child under 12 years is not considered to be criminally liable for his or her actions (Boni 1999). The current debate in the US about how to deal with a six-year-old who shot dead his class mate may, in this environment, have local currency also; and
- the abolition of juvenile justice. Again there is now a growing push in the US for the juvenile justice system to be abolished, and for young people to be dealt in the same way as adults. The existence of a separate children’s court in that country is now “under the most severe attack it has experienced” since its inception (Wundersitz 2000, p.103). While this not yet a matter for public debate in Australia, a worsening scenario may see this “American disease” afflicting Australia in the next two decades.

The entire turn for the worse will leave in its trail more young people with “no hope, no fear, no rules and no life expectancy” (Gest & Pope 1996). In the words of Professor John DiIulio, there will emerge in Australia many “chaotic, dysfunctional, fatherless, Godless and jobless settings where ... self-respecting young [people] literally aspire to get away with [crime]” (ibid.).

However, things could go differently. Where the media and the state seek to influence the society at all,

it could be to generate a greater understanding of the structural and psychological conditions under which youth exclusion occurs. Rather than reducing its responsibilities, the state could, as a matter of policy, assist young people to find pathways to active citizenship.

Operators of public space and private space for the public could see young people as bona fide users and agents of advancement.

Damaging drug use by young people could be rolled back, as resilience and protective factors increase. More efforts could be made to remove the criminogenic properties of work: that is, the kinds of employment that may be damaging to young people’s personal development in ways that breed criminal behaviour. The lessons of the Industrial Revolution, and the eventual emergence of protective legislation such as the British *Health and Morals of Apprentices Act 1802* should not be forgotten.

The focus in dealing with crime at all levels, but especially with young people, could be on restoration of broken or violated relationships and on re-integration of the offender. A paradigm shift towards “re-integrative” justice would lead to positive measures that involve full mobilisation of all possible resources, including the family, volunteers and community groups, as well as schools and other community institutions, for the purpose of promoting the well-being of the juvenile, with a view to reducing the need for intervention under the law (UN Beijing Rules 1.3). Policies would be based not only on responsibility, but also on restoration and reintegration for young offenders.

Such a turn for the better would entail the Commonwealth Government following up its 1991 initiative, when the Federal Government started funding nine youth crime prevention projects in six States, as part of the Australian Youth Initiatives Grants Scheme, and developed a \$100 million Youth Justice Strategy to redress some of the conditions that cause youth crime.

Services needed

With regard to services, a note about our premise is in order. We agree with Coventry, Muncie and Walters (1992, p.9) that responding to crime, whether it is for prevention or punishment, “should not be the initial justification for social intervention and the provision of structured services which address the life conditions of disadvantaged young Australians”. As the British Youth Council (British Youth Council 1993, pp.19-20)

asserted, youth crime “is simply the most tangible representation of the marginalisation and disaffection [ala exclusion] felt by young people in society”. The views of the state and the views they construct thereupon are the focus of this section.

If current trends continue, youth crime in 2015 will call for more:

- specialist or targeted services in relation to recreation, personal development and community integration;
- positive alternative activities for “at risk” youth;
- school support programs;
- alcohol and substance abuse programs;
- mental health services;
- services that break the cycle of youth victimisation;
- custodial rehabilitation programs such as education/vocational training services;
- advocacy services, and
- post-release support services such as accommodation and linkage to training/employment services to ease offenders back into society.

According to David Faulkner, “solutions to the [current] problems of crime have to be sought by inclusion within the community itself ... by providing opportunities and hope for young people and not by exclusion from it” (quoted in Rutherford 1998). He is right.

In a worsening environment, effective services that are required to deal the consequences of a wholesale dis-investment in youth are a bit like trying to defuse a time bomb. Whether public policy follows a conservative line, opting for tougher prison terms and law enforcement tactics, or a liberal one, of prevention plans that merely entrench existing exclusionary constructions of young people, it seems that most of the services for young people will be custody-based and “eliminative” in purpose. There may be a relapse into “boot-camp” approaches to service design and delivery. The underlying philosophy will be structural power and constraint as opposed to social relations and inner motivation.

However, in a more rational and inclusive scenario, the benchmark of services must embody a multi-systemic, family preservation, home-based, intensive wrap-around service model designed *for* and in consultation *with* young people. It must reject a *new penology* that is focused primarily on narrow community protection and “management of the risk associated with particular groups and locales” and, instead, institute a *solidarity project* with a nation-wide program

of political incorporation and cohesive service provision as its centre piece.

Britain adopted the former approach in the 1980s and 1990s, and her reliance on “market” mechanisms for the allocation of services led to the impotence and withdrawal of youth services. A widening gap between rich and poor, fanned by the flames of commercialism which, for many, set unattainable targets, gave rise to the social exclusion of a significant group of young people (Ledgerwood & Kendra 1997, p.ii).

France, on the other hand, took the latter approach during the same period. Using the philosophy of “a new relationship between citizen and state”, the French central government mobilised resources to link the youth (defined as citizens), the community and the state. This approach had three main features.

- 1 It adopted a contextual view of youth crime and found social dislocation at the root of the problem.
- 2 It targeted with precision neighbourhoods and young people for special service delivery.
- 3 It vertically integrated the machinery for delivering “community safety” (including specially created Youth Centres) with the political system – linking them all the way to the top, with the Prime Minister chairing the National Council for the Prevention of Delinquency.

The strategy vastly improved the political participation and input from people on the social margins as excluded groups were increasingly given a stake in the society. This in turn led to significantly lower crime rates (Pitts & Hope 1998).

Australia’s *solidarity project* on effective services for youth in the future has to be radically different in content and delivery from most current practices. It should, among other things, seek to:

- establish a single cabinet level youth justice agency;
- establish a national college for the training of youth leaders;
- develop community mentoring programs (linking a safe, stable adult with each high risk factor youth);
- provide support services for youth facing loss, grief, and post-traumatic stress;
- increase the number of after school programs;
- promote peer delivered mediation services;
- provide effective community reintegration (aftercare and transition) programs for young offenders released from detention; and

- increase recreation/meaningful pre-employment services.

In terms of typology, the project must aim to ensure that there are:

- capitalisation-of-strength services (learning to cope with difficulties; e.g. Strengthening Families strategy in New Zealand);
- remediation services – services of sufficient power, intensity and duration that have the potential to achieve positive outcomes with “at risk” adolescents (In New Zealand these are called “Wraparound” services and include Family Start and Social Workers in Schools programs); and
- pre-emptive or capacity-building services (strong mainstream generic services in education, accommodation, health, employment, recreation, personal development and community integration).

Conclusion

The administration of juvenile justice is a key institutional factor in the lives of young people. Situated as it is at the point at which young people come into conflict with the norms and rules of adult society, the justice system has the capacity to repair damaged relationships, resolve conflict, educate, socialise. It also has the potential to further alienate and damage, to create an environment of suspicion and fear, to entrench resentment, to erode respect.

Currently, it seems that juvenile justice administrators are conscious of these choices. Both lines of action are present in current practice. On the one hand, authorities are increasing police intervention with young people in public space by extending or consolidating police move-on powers or through “zero tolerance” policies. Mandatory sentencing is in place or on the agenda in most jurisdictions. Penalties have been increased. Street clearing exercises, including youth curfews, have been introduced, at least selectively. A substantial private policing and prisons industry has already emerged. The industry is already a major employer, and will become more influential with governments as it grows. If crime is big business, the new security industry is even more so.

At the same time, a number of jurisdictions have introduced programs based on restorative justice principles, including the very successful family confer-

encing program in Western Australia. The success of such programs is already putting pressure on authorities to expand them and broaden their reach. (Sercombe 2000). Diversionary programs have been expanded. Formal cautioning has kept many young people out of the court system. Alternative forms of punishment, including home detention, have been introduced. Community policing is increasingly seen as core policing work at least by senior levels of police forces in Australia. Drug courts, with a different and more flexible approach to the vexed question of illegal drug use, are being considered in a number of jurisdictions.

This ambivalence indicates that we are, at the turn of a new millennium, at a crossroads in the area of crime and punishment. Services in the area of crime and punishment for the year 2015 very much depend on what we do now. There is no doubt that many of the conditions for a criminogenic society (i.e. one that breeds crime) are currently in place, and are intensifying, especially for Indigenous young people. Many of the young people currently being put into prison under mandatory sentencing or drug laws will be parents of teenagers in 2015. For the next generation, whose parents have already been in prison, the resistance to lawlessness is already substantially broken down. Many families have lived with long-term poverty and unemployment, often across more than one generation. The gap between rich and poor continues to widen.

The design of responses to crime can either increase the propensity for crime or decrease it. Current trends indicate a widening gap in youth crime and in our responses to it. A more severe and excluding regime is intensifying criminality among those whom the community has been least able to engage. A smaller number of young people are being prosecuted for more offences and more serious offences. Paradoxically, first-time offenders and less serious offenders are being effectively diverted from the criminal justice system, and criminality generally is declining among the young. The challenge for effective service delivery is to extend the reach of restorative justice to serious and repeat offenders, to those most alienated from the common wealth. If this can be done successfully, we may well enjoy more safety, and security will mean what it should: confidence, peace, and a more open society. If we fail, we will inherit a more dangerous society, and increased security will simply mean more locks, more bars, more guards.

3

PART THREE:

CONCLUSIONS

10 TEN: ADDRESSING YOUTH EXCLUSION IN 2015

Previous chapters have outlined the trends in a range of spheres that shape the lives of young people. It is not the intention within this chapter to repeat or to summarise those conclusions: we have left this job to the Executive Summary to this Report. But we have noticed that many of these trends converge, across employment and work, family and household, education, crime and justice, and health. In this section, we bring together some of the underlying dynamics that will shape the position of young people in Australia, their relationship with the parent society, the social environment that is impacting on them, and the form of services that may best serve their interests in the year 2015. Recommendations arising from these global conclusions are included.

The social environment: trends for the youth category to 2015

1: The extension of the youth category

The youth category exists in the space between biological adulthood and social acknowledgment, or accreditation, of adult status (Seig 1976; Sercombe 1996). The evidence indicates that we are currently witnessing a transformation of the youth category as fundamental as the establishment of the modern youth category in the latter half of the nineteenth century and its extension to “teenagerhood” in the immediate

postwar period. The trend is that the youth category is once again being extended.

While the reality is often complex and contradictory, it is true to say that prior to World War II, many young people began to take on adult roles in their early and mid-teens often leaving school at 13 or 14. They married young, and started families by their early 20s.

In the postwar period, with the extension of the compulsory school leaving age to 15 or 16, employment, wage-earning and other adult roles were delayed until the later teenage years, creating for the first time a distinctive youth culture. Still, however, their exit from the youth category tended to be swift, relatively unambiguous and complete by the early 20s. Employment was readily available, and most young people had left school by the age of 15 without jeopardising their futures. Economic independence came with employment, and relatively early marriage and birth of the first child followed.

In the current environment, the category is expanding in both directions. Biological adulthood is coming marginally earlier, and accreditation as adult is coming significantly later. At the turn of the century, the age of social adulthood corresponded fairly closely to the age of biological adulthood: both happened pretty much around 18 to 20 (Potts 1990). Currently, both because of earlier onset of puberty and the delay of adult accreditation, the gap is somewhere around five to ten years.

Over the next 15 years, school retention until the age of 18 is expected to become universal, and post-secondary education the norm. Full-time stable employment is expected to be out of reach for most young people until their late 20s or early 30s, if at all. Family formation will be deferred until the early 30s or later, both in terms of permanent partnerships and having children. Many may never acquire these symbols of adult status. The gap between biological adulthood and its social accreditation is expected to stretch out to 10 to 15 years. Youth status is likely to last around five years longer, and the youth category is expected to embrace twice as many people as it does now.

Diagrammatically, we could model this as in Figures 11.1 and 11.2.

Following our argument that youth is function of the exclusion of biologically adult members of a society on the basis of age, the graphs display, in symbolic form, predicted changes in who gets counted as youth, and to what degree. There is, of course, no precise index of “youthness” that we could use to generate technically accurate charts of this kind: Figures 11.1 and 11.2 are nothing more than a diagram. However, they do serve to illustrate how the youth category is

expected to change over the next 15 years.

We have argued previously that the categorisation of a person as “youth” is a matter of degree. At the moment, the point at which the tension between young people’s biological adulthood and their exclusion on the basis of age (and so the degree to which they are implicated in the youth category) is at its peak would be somewhere around 16 or 17. This tension is lower in younger age groups: while the degree of exclusion is high, the degree of adulthood is low. At the other end of the scale, the tension also declines, up to about 25, as greater powers and responsibilities are conferred with age. Thus their adulthood is high, but exclusion is lower.

Trends for the future, on this model, would indicate a longer, more intense engagement in the youth category from around 14 through to around 27, and a deeper tail through to the early 30s.

Consequently, although the youth population is expected to decline as a proportion of the overall Australian population, *the proportion of the population likely to be regarded as youth is likely to increase significantly.*

This may result in an exaggerated juvenilisation of young people, of people who are “24 going on 16”.

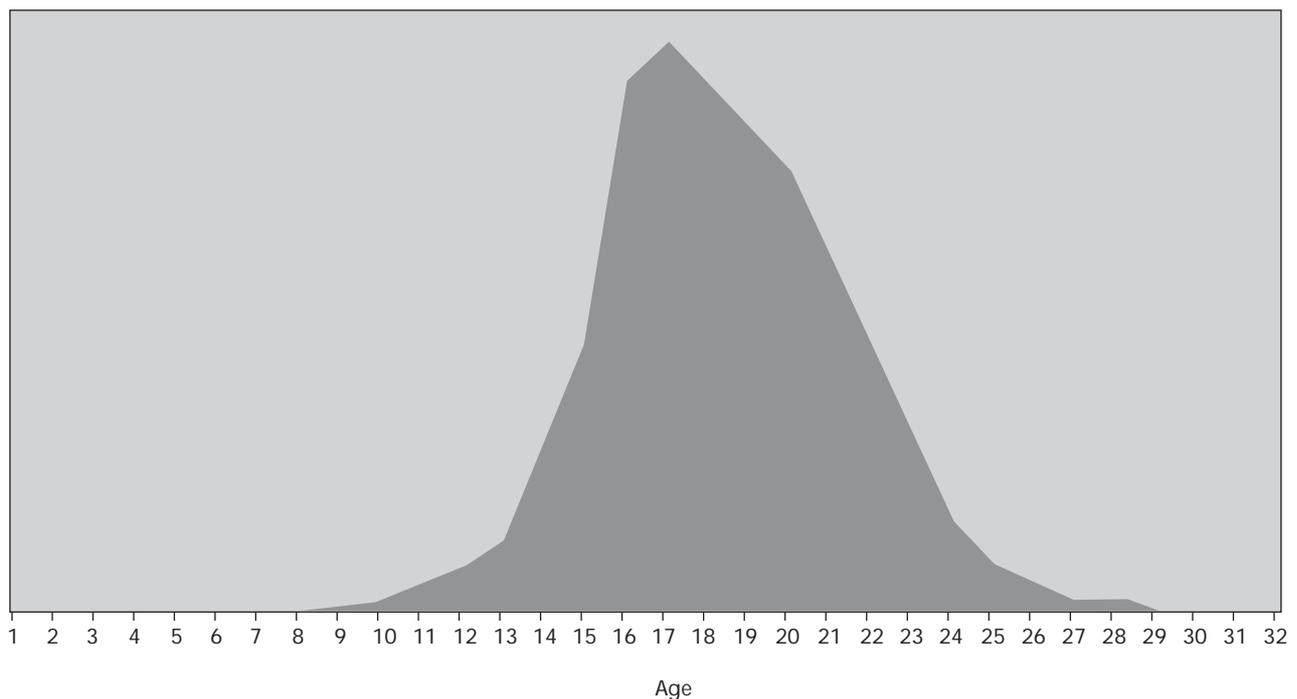


Figure 11.1 Tension between adulthood and exclusion: present

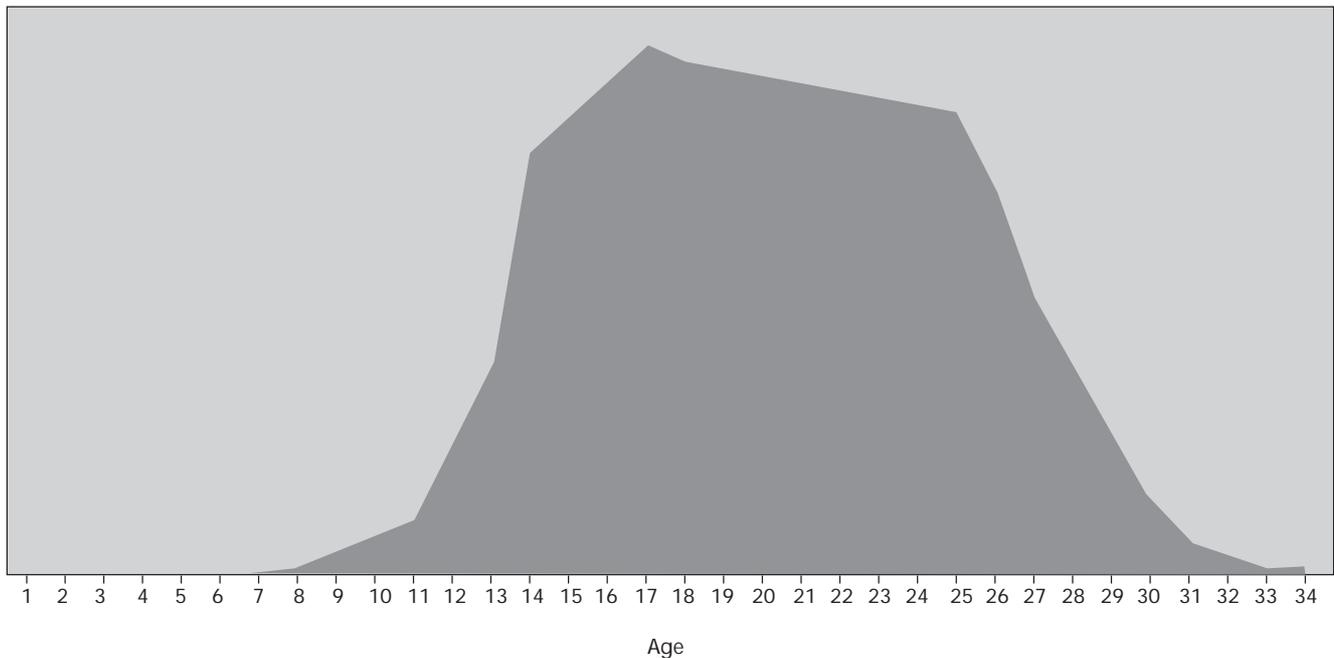


Figure 11.2 Tension between adulthood and exclusion: 2015

Certain areas of concern, like some risk-taking behaviour, disengagement from social institutions, property crime and illegal drug use, may be a function of what Talcott Parsons (1942) called the “moratorium on responsibility” structured into the youth category, as well as a reaction to exclusion from responsible social roles. To the extent that this is the case, we would expect the total number of people engaged with such activities to increase, and to be from older groups.

Some problems may also be compounded. For example, teenage populations are not significantly implicated in violent crime, but young men in their 20s are. Peak rates for property offences, however, do lie with younger age groups. If higher rates of offending move up the age scale, as seems structurally likely, property offences may be aggravated by an additional element of violence.

2: Increasing ambiguity

Many of the classic authors in youth studies (e.g. Eisenstadt 1988; Mead 1939; Seig 1976) have argued that the existence of a youth category in any culture need not be problematic. Under the right conditions, the youth category can make a strong and positive contribution to social processes. The conditions for a functional youth category, according to Eisenstadt (1988), are:

- that youth have a clear role;
- that youth institutions (youth organisations, youth services, schools, etc.) are integrated with other social institutions, and articulate with them; and
- that the process of graduation from youth is clear and unambiguous.

Arguably, none of these conditions apply in contemporary Australia. Youth institutions are typically segregated from other social institutions. In addition, a positive role has not really been found for young people. Rather, they have been dealt with as a kind of social and economic expansion joint, used to carry the strains of economic restructuring and social change. Policies around young people have mostly been about containment, rather than a clear social role with appropriate rites of passage.

The process of graduation is hopelessly arbitrary, uncertain, anomalous, ambiguous. Legal ages of majority start kicking in at 15 (the end of compulsory schooling in most States) and kick irregularly, inconsistently and erratically without any consistent logic other than budgetary convenience until the age of 25. Social and customary rites of passage start their slow, cumulative and ambiguous ascent to adulthood at around 13 (with the achievement of “teenagerhood” and enrolment in secondary schooling) and reach

some vague terminus in the late 20s or early 30s with permanent employment, marriage, mortgage, and parenthood.

The trend is for these indicators of adult status to become more ambiguous, not less so. Employment, a powerful signifier of adulthood, becomes less so as work becomes increasingly casual, temporary and part-time, and the capacity to economically support themselves and others becomes increasingly fragile. Leaving home will be later and often temporary, dependent on mobility and economic circumstances. Marriage, if it happens, will be preceded by many years of a more indeterminate cohabitation. Having children will happen later, and may or may not happen within a permanent relationship between the child's parents. All the traditional signs indicating that adulthood is ready to be bestowed on the person are already losing definition, stretching, breaking up, or disappearing. The linear transition to adulthood will increasingly be a historical curiosity for all but a few young people. These trends seem set to continue over the next couple of decades.

3: Increasing complexity

As a result of these and other trends, the process of accreditation as adult is becoming more complex and indeterminate. More is required of young people to "make their lives". Continuing marginalisation in the work force, multiple jobs, the requirement for ongoing training and lifelong education, increasing mobility, and less stable personal relationships make for a lifestyle that is more transitional and fluid, and where destinations are not guaranteed. Most young people deal with this complexity and indeterminacy very well, and may prefer it (Murphy 2000). Their capacity to do so, however, is a function of the resources they have at their disposal, especially family backing, access to resources, and their own strengths and abilities.

4: Polarisation

Many of the current trends in the labour market and in other fields indicate that some young people will do very well out of the changing circumstances. Their skills and aptitudes will be well suited to the New Economy; they will be technologically astute, sophisticated communicators, able to sell themselves and their services in a volatile market, able to be enterprising, to identify opportunities and to know how to take them. They will have been intimate with information and

communications technologies since childhood, and have the access to capital, often from their families, to integrate technologies into their work. They will be well-networked, having maintained connections with equally able schoolmates and fellow-professionals.

For young people who have left high school without really being able to read, who have given up on the struggle of living with reconstituted, fragmenting, highly mobile or under-resourced families, who are members of already marginalised populations (especially Indigenous populations) or who are stuck in jobless outer suburbs or country towns, things may be more difficult. Continuing education will be harder for people who were unable to negotiate it successfully the first time. Access to capital will rely on the judgment of commercially driven financial institutions, and the barriers to entry into markets will be higher.

Clearly, the trend is for this gap to widen. Across the issues and institutions we have discussed, both advantage and disadvantage are cumulative, or as Matthew's Gospel puts it, "Whoever has will be given more, and will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them." (Matthew 13:12). Discussion of a permanent underclass of youth who have never had jobs, who live permanently on welfare and the proceeds of the black economy has been going on for some time (White 1989). Current dynamics almost without exception are leading in the direction of greater inequality and polarisation, not less.

This all appears to be heading towards a set of circumstances that involve more risk, more difficulty, and greater exclusion for young people. However, it is important not to translate this into a general pathology of youth. Young people mostly will cope, often with creativity and resourcefulness, with the challenges that life and society place in front of them. But their capacity to do so becomes more stretched with the height and number of barriers they must surmount.

This is especially so where multiple exclusions compound each other. For some young people, it is easy to succeed, and while it may become more difficult in the future, the bar will still be low, and the disincentives for failure will be high. For others, the opposite will be the case. The challenge of making it in the New Economy on the resources at their disposal will be high, the cost of trying and not succeeding will be prohibitive, and it will be easier to passively, but pragmatically, accept a place in the underclass. This is also the classic picture of a criminogenic society. It is in this equation that youth policy, and the services that

flow from it, can make a difference: either for better or worse.

A foundation for youth policy in 2015

Rites of passage and the status of the youth category

Effective youth services for 2015 need to be embedded within a clear and well thought-out policy framework which removes the ambiguity of the status of youth. Across policy areas, policy makers need to pay attention to how the youth category is to be constituted in policy, and how the relation between young people and the rest of society is to be shaped. The policy framework needs to rest on a solid foundation of understanding about the position of young people in society, both in terms of analysis of their current position and a vision for what that position should be. Within the youth category itself, policy needs to address the question of polarisation, of the cumulative advantage and disadvantage that results when other categories of exclusion like race, socio-economic background, cultural difference and gender are amplified by the dynamics of the youth category.

Essentially, there are two options here. One is to work progressively to eliminate youth as a legal status, as has happened with most statutes regarding race and gender. This would involve the establishment of a single point of passage – from childhood to adulthood. Prior to this age, people would be legally children, with none of the rights of adulthood but also none of the expectations. They would be eligible for children's concessions for transport or entertainment, but would also not be entitled to drive, to purchase and consume alcohol, or to vote. They would have a legal claim on their parents for support. After this age, they would be eligible for adult wages and government benefits, be assumed to be independent, but also be responsible for their own debts and the fulfilment of contracts, and subject to adult sentencing processes at law including imprisonment. Discrimination on the basis of age (including for employment purposes) would be illegal, as it is currently on the grounds of race or gender.

This position has much to commend it. It is consistent with what we know of young people's intellectual capacity post-puberty, and with general liberal democratic principles on civic rights and responsibilities, which establish that discrimination is legitimate

only where there are relevant grounds. In the case of voting, for example, the only relevant ground is the capacity to reason, on which young people are as able as any other section of the population. In the case of a licence to drive, it is about the ability to drive competently and with due care.

The critical question is at what age adult status is conferred. Theoretically, according to the liberal democratic tradition, the principle of universal adult franchise means that it should be conferred at biological adulthood or close to it – somewhere between 14 and 16. Such a position is, however, a long way from current policy and practice in Australia, and would require some radical shifts and interventions to make it stick.

Present practice would probably lead towards conferring an absolute and unambiguous age of majority, but later. Current discussions in Britain are considering nineteen as such an age (Social Exclusion Unit 1999). A later age, however, still suffers from the problem that there are no grounds in principle for many of the areas of exclusion that young people live with between 14 and 19. It would have the advantage that it is a minimalist position; that it would involve few radical changes to current practice, but would still put a limit on the arbitrary decisions about the age of majority that continue to proliferate in the current policy vacuum.

The other possibility is to *institutionalise* youth as a legal status, with clear roles, rights and responsibilities and a clear and consistent position before the law, rather than the not-adult/not-child status they currently hold. This would involve the establishment of two legal points of passage: one from childhood into youth, and another from youth into adulthood. The rationale is that while there is no evidence to indicate that young people's inherent capacities are inferior to those of other adults, the reality of inexperience and the increasing social, cultural and economic expectation of citizens justifies the establishment of the youth category as a protective and preparatory status. This position is already anticipated by the establishment of the Youth Allowance, and is generally consistent with current practice.

If this is the case, however, policy needs to be thought through on a whole of government basis to eliminate the "Catch 22" situations which currently plague the position of young people (Jones & Bell 2000). So for example, while the Youth Allowance currently assumes that young people will be dependent on their parents until the age of 25, they have no legal

claim for support if parents fail to meet this expectation, especially if they continue to live in the family home. There are no provisions, as there are with child support, for a standard formula for transfers of income within the family, especially from parents to adult children.

The institutionalisation of the status of youth could establish some rationale for ages of majority that need to be conferred progressively through the teenage years. Entry into the status would need to be unambiguous, and carry with it a range of important freedoms and rights – including, we would argue, the right to vote. Other rights could be granted progressively through to the conferring of unambiguous and absolute adult status, from which point all discrimination on the grounds of age would be illegal. We would recommend formal state recognition of the conferring of adult status, similar to a citizenship ceremony, to recognise the new citizen's place in the Commonwealth of Australia.

We would stress, however, that each age of majority that is delayed beyond biological adulthood represents an act of exclusion, however well-meaning. Exclusion on the grounds of protection or preparation may be justified, but in each and every case, the case for exclusion must be rigorously made. Paternalism, while often necessary, is not always in the interest of the subject population. And under certain circumstances, there should be provision for authorities to grant adult status before the specified age: for example, if both parents of a 17-year old are killed, and the person is living independently. Or an entrepreneurial prodigy, already on the way to making their second million.

A possible framework might be:

Rights conveyed at entry to youth status (somewhere between 14 and 16):

- To vote, but not compulsory
- To leave school
- Allowances paid to the young person, but means tested on parent's income
- To live independently
- To accept full-time employment
- To consent to sex
- To apply for a learner driver's permit
- Legal claim on parental support
- To sign contracts, but with guarantor or sponsor
- Youth concession for public transport, recreation, etc.
- State support up to adult levels if parental support is not forthcoming

- Offending dealt with by a youth court separate from children's courts and adult courts
- Training guarantee
- Consent for medical procedures
- Right to marry with parental consent and support
- Entry to "MA" rated entertainment
- Training wage paid

Rights conveyed progressively during youth status:

- Right to purchase legal recreational drugs such as tobacco and alcohol
- Right to be on licensed premises
- Eligibility for a driver's licence
- Ability to sign contracts
- Entry to "R" rated entertainment

Rights conveyed at adulthood (somewhere between 18 and 23):

- Right to marry
- Voting compulsory
- Allowances paid at adult rate and free of parental means test
- Assumption of economic autonomy
- Subject to adult courts and sentencing
- Adult wages paid
- All other rights

The balance between rights being conferred on *entry* to the youth status and conferred at some point *during* youth depends on the nominated age of entry. If it was decided that the age at which youth status is conferred is 14, certain rights such as being on licensed premises, or signing legally binding contracts, might be deferred to 17 or 18. If the nominated age is 16, it might make sense for more rights to be conferred at the point of entry rather than progressively.

The Social Exclusion Unit's report *Bridging the Gap* (1999) also recommended issuing a Youth Card to young people, similar to the Senior's Card issued in several states, which would entitle them to discounts for a range of services such as transport and entertainment. Similar measures could be initiated in Australia.

Recommendation: That State and Federal Governments establish the status of youth in legal and policy terms, with clear and consistent rights and responsibilities, and which balance obligations and privileges, benefits and penalties for young people.

Service delivery: the role of the professions

The data looks forward to a future that is more uncertain, more fragmented, and in which core social

institutions are more temporary, diverse and fluid. They circumscribe an environment for young people with a high risk of increasing division and polarisation in life chances for young people, a future in which relative ease for some young people is in contrast to the deep struggle of others, financial success and prosperity to long-term poverty, and easy welcome to persistent exclusion.

Consistently, expert forums identified the need for *linking services*: advocacy, brokerage, information, referral. Of course, core service delivery agencies must also be part of the picture, otherwise there is nothing to link young people to. But in a more fluid and fragmented environment in which the dangers of multiple exclusion are extreme, young people must have the means of effective contact with mainstream, generic and specialist youth services. Of necessity, if services are to engage those most at risk of exclusion, a strong outreach component is an essential part of this profile. There is clearly a role for all professions within this, and a clear need for capacity-building to embrace these styles of service delivery. In particular, according not only to expert forums but several reviewers of the Report, the capacity of youth workers to effectively address these concerns needs conscious development, given that these kind of linking and advocacy roles have typically fallen most directly within their ambit.

Compared with many European countries, youth work as a specific practice is undeveloped in Australia. Widespread government support for youth work practice has been available really only in the last 25 years, and on an ad hoc basis through labour market programs, supported accommodation, and a range of other funding programs. Although proposals for an Australian Youth Service, modelled along the lines of the National Youth Service in Britain have been floated from time to time (e.g. Kirby 1984), youth work is still an emerging profession, in the process of developing a clear self-consciousness and idea of its role. No accreditation process for youth workers is in place in any Australian State, and recruitment and training for youth workers continues to be haphazard. Several States and the Territories have no tertiary training capacity for youth work professionals, and reviewers have indicated that because of the uneven development, training and capacity current among youth workers, their ability to move into the roles that young people will be looking for in the year 2015 cannot be assumed.

The projections for effective service delivery in the year 2015 require a ready supply of skilled professionals

adapted to working in informal settings, initiating contact with young people, making assessments of their needs and capacities, and facilitating linkages. While the development of youth work as a profession, including recognition of the youth work role and training for youth workers, is substantially the responsibility of practicing youth work professionals, institutional recognition and support would pay dividends. Concerted training of other professionals to help them in these new kinds of roles will also be important.

Recommendation: That State and Commonwealth Governments support the development of professional youth work practice, including effective training, and its recognition and utilisation within service delivery to young people, as well as training for other professions to work within a more flexible and diverse environment.

Conclusion

The position of young people in the year 2015 depends critically on the policy settings that are in place for them between now and then. Current trends indicate that unless proactive steps are taken to channel the forces of change in different directions, we face a transformation in the youth category as significant as any that have happened in the last century.

In particular, we will be facing an extension of the youth category to the point where the gap between biological adulthood and the granting of adult status looks like stretching out to 10 or 15 years, or perhaps even more. Each such extension, while it conveys some freedoms on young people in terms of relief from responsibility, also contributes to a structure of disenfranchisement. Political reaction to this disenfranchisement, whether in terms of overt political dissent, subcultural tension, or "pragmatic apathy", is a predictable result. Behavioural adaptation to an extended juvenile role may not always produce responses that are productive either for the individual young person or the community as a whole.

The need for intensive policy work on establishing an unambiguous and absolute age of majority is indicated by these trends. Data on the inherent capacities of young people (see Melton 1983) indicates that a single point of graduation from child to adulthood is possible and consistent with liberal democratic traditions. Given the current situation, and the proliferation of ages of majority across different issues and jurisdictions, young people deserve at

minimum a two-point process which establishes youth as a clear legal status with unambiguous rights and responsibilities. The establishment of the appropriate ages of majority, with attendant rites of passage, deserves serious policy consideration.

The data also indicate a trend to the polarisation of wealth and other forms of advantage/disadvantage within the youth population, and for this polarisation to be cumulative, persistent, and transmitted between generations. Without effective policy settings to counteract this trend, beginning now, Australia faces a situation in which a significant proportion of young people may never be able to participate effectively in social processes, whether political, cultural or economic. The costs of this, both in human terms and the costs of service provision for seriously disadvantaged young people and for the families that they will eventually form, are likely to be prohibitive. Policy needs to be directed towards making the liberal democratic claim of equality of opportunity at least an arguable approximation of the truth .

It has been the persistent public position of parties from all persuasions that youth are the future of this country. However, policy and service delivery have not always honoured them as such. Too often, the force of effort has not been to create opportunities for young people to move smoothly into their place as full members of the common wealth, but to keep them in a kind of holding pattern until things get better, or more

convenient. Youth as an experience has been for too many young people an exercise in frustration, rather than a process in which the world opens up to them and the adult world welcomes them into its frameworks of power and responsibility.

Almost 50 years ago, S. N. Eisenstadt argued that for the youth category to be functional, there needed to be a clear role for young people, that youth institutions needed to articulate with and be integrated into other key social institutions, and that there needed to be a clear process of graduation into full adult status. It is clear that none of these criteria are met in Australia at the beginning of the 21st century, and that the trends lead further away from their fulfilment. Young people have coped amazingly well with the structural and social adjustments of the past 30 years, in spite of the fact that even these minimum requirements have not been in place.

The easiest way to predict the future, as the proverb goes, is to create it. The point of a futures study is never to predict what 2015 will be like. It is to set up the principles for action now. With the assistance of the range of informants, partners and reviewers who have contributed to this Report, we believe that some of these principles and directions are clear. The question of whether young people will be more productive, healthier, politically and socially engaged in 2015, of course, depends not on what we do then, but what we do now.

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A Appendix 1

Reflections of the expert forums: future scenarios

As we indicated in the Methodology, expert forums were asked to project three possible future scenarios for young people, on the basis of the data presented and their own observations and expertise: a better future (“the good”); a future that was significantly worse for young people (“the bad”) and a future that was pretty much an extension of current trends (“the much the same”). The chapters of the Report, in varying degrees, reflect this approach.

There are clearly strong implications for policy and for effective service delivery in all three of these. Expert forums clearly had a view that whether the future was better or worse for young people was significantly a function of the policy settings in place. And the kinds of services that would be possible as well as necessary were different in each case.

The expert forums dealt with the three scenarios slightly differently. The “much the same” scenario was organised similarly to this Report, with reflections on the situation in work, households, education and so on. Descriptions of the “good” scenario and the “bad” scenario were much more addressed in terms of themes and principles.

Many of these reflections inform our analysis in the individual chapters, especially our conclusions for effective youth services, and so there is some risk of repetition. However, we were concerned that the distinctiveness of the contribution from the expert forums not be lost in the process of melding it with

our other sources of data: the literature, the statistical material, and the work of the research team itself.

1: The good

Principles and themes for a society which dealt well with its young people included:

Equality: Young people would have access to a living wage which would allow them to support themselves economically. There would be means to address big disparities in income. The good society would not allow discrimination on the grounds of age for wage, employment, housing or other such opportunities. Health, education, transport and housing would be collectively provided rather than being solely a function of the private market in order to ensure equality of access. There would be mechanisms in place to ensure young people’s access to capital for business ventures and self-employment.

Freedom/autonomy: Young people would be in a position to be self-determining and self-reliant, with the resources to make choices about their lives and their primary relationships. There would be flexibility in moving between alternatives, with the opportunity to experiment and to find a place. Young people would be resourced to deal with change, to embrace it, and to overcome fear of change.

Engagement: Young people would see themselves and be seen by others as active citizens. As a legitimate constituency rather than a “target group”. They would be politically aware and involved, not only in the process of electoral politics but in the politics of their own lives: of educational institutions and other processes that affect them directly.

Representations would be sought by all decision making processes in which young people had an interest, and participation would be seen as a normal, automatic part of decision making, rather than a special provision. They would be involved in the design and thinking stages, rather than a tacked on consultation at the end. This would be more than a “junior” parallel to political processes. Young people would not just be seen in terms of their “future” or “potential”. Society would invest in them because of what they offer now. And young people’s interest will be recognised not only in the classically “youth” areas, but across a wide range of decision-making.

The hostility and suspicion that frequently accompanies young people’s involvement would be replaced by respect for young people’s expertise and their opinion. Leadership would be encouraged. Young people would be liked – social processes would be naturally youth-friendly.

Culture-building: A healthy future for young people involves an aesthetic life as well as a functional one. Technology would be engaged towards creative ends, with the acceptance of aesthetic indicators of value as well as money, efficiency and function. Young people would be encouraged to be creative, and the arts would be supported. The traditional access that young people have had to travel and cross-cultural experiences would be extended to sections of the population who have not had such opportunity. Young people would be actively engaged with building national, community and personal identities.

Diverse: “The good” society is one in which differences are tolerated, respected and celebrated. It is an inclusive society, multicultural in form, open to new forms of family and relationship, and to emergent spiritualities. It recognises the need for change in the ways we think and speak in response to a changing world, and is open to new ways and new words in which what is important in human interactions are preserved and transformed. The project of reconciliation with our Aboriginal past and with Indigenous people in the present will have made significant advances. The idea of the “mainstream” will be much broader than now.

Accountable: A corollary of young people’s more active citizenship will be that Governments and other decision-making bodies are more accountable. This will not primarily be about arms’ length criticism, but rather a greater sense of collective responsibility, arising from an increased connection with government and a more open relationship with authorities. The media would have a stronger sense of the way it shapes society, and the responsibility it carries for the way populations, events and social processes are constructed.

Adaptive: Australia in 2015 will be a dynamic, rapidly changing society, regardless of policy and planning between now and then. Young people will be trained and supported to change, develop, and adjust to changing circumstances and demands. Education systems will be flexible and diverse, focusing more on strategy, frameworks, and ways of thinking and problem solving rather than learning content for its own sake. They will encourage adaptation and enable students to deal with fear: changing courses or directions will be facilitated and respected. Learning will be future-centred, while not ignoring history and heritage. People will not expect to ever finish their education. Along with lines of access to capital, young people will be educated and intelligent about capital.

Supportive: In the context of rapid change, support and stability become ever more important. In spite of its greater vulnerability, family will be more central to young people’s life chances than it is even now. There will need to be programs which support the support systems like family. Work needs to be done also in creating or restoring communities. Regardless of where people live, it should be possible to raise children in a “village”. Reinvestment in community development and careful planning of the built environment seems to be pivotal in this process. A supportive network is essential to building resilience, a theme now often expressed in youth affairs as well as broader contexts.

Integrative and Restorative: Many of the components of an inclusive society have already been mentioned, such as the acceptance of multiculturalism and the importance of community development. A premium would be put on people’s social skill: their negotiation, conflict management, and ability to communicate and to listen. “The good” would mean that intergenerational hostilities, including resentment, payback and suspicion, would be reduced. Intergenerational partnership would be encouraged. Young people would feel that they belong.

Such a society would pay close attention to the initiation of its young into full citizenship. Negative initiation through burdens and penalties would be reduced, being replaced by a consistent and clear process of acceptance as adult.

In the area of justice, adversarial and alienating processes would be progressively replaced by restorative justice principles which focus on the broken relationship and the recognition and reparation of damage rather than the broken law and the obligation to the state. Imprisonment would be rare, with diversion the norm. There would be a keen appetite for better ways of doing juvenile justice, based on reintegrative and restorative processes. Recreational drug use will be significantly decriminalised.

Safe and secure: Crime rates will have declined as a function of decreased alienation, and better ways of dealing with crime. A decrease in personal violence will result from better social connection and sense of community. Despite a more dynamic and fragmented labour market, people will feel that they are safe economically. Core incomes will be secure, there will be more full employment, more security in employment, and less casualisation. Flexibility in the work force will have been reconciled with the rights of workers and the need for a secure income.

Healthy: The “good” will be clean. Health will be improved, and health care will be distributed according to need, rather than income. Primary healthcare will be free. There will be a quantum improvement in supports for young people with mental health difficulties. Understandings of health will be integrated across a range of professions and disciplines including planning and housing. There will be a range of flexible housing options. High rise blocks of flats will be seen as a historical curiosity.

2: The Bad

Expert forums identified the following features of a society displaying a serious deterioration in conditions for young people.

Polarised: This kind of society would exhibit a large and growing gap between rich and poor, with a growing underclass. Educational experience may be foundational here. Increasing privatisation and decreasing public funding for schools could see young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds attending inferior, poorly staffed and equipped schools while

wealthy students have access to well-resourced private institutions. The quality of education would be dictated by the ability to pay. Full fee paying secondary and tertiary education would contribute to this. Intergenerational poverty and wealth would be institutionalised.

This division would be cemented in separate housing precincts, with the wealthy living in high security housing precincts for the rich. Living in a wealthy area, going to wealthy schools, access to finance and capital, competitiveness in applying for jobs would be part of a picture of cumulative advantage. The corollary, cumulative disadvantage, would follow.

Recognition of the effects of such disadvantage, and attempts to address it, would be eroded. Support for marginalised groups would be withdrawn, except through charities and private benefaction. The welfare system would be seriously cut, with an increase in absolute poverty, including poverty among working people. Some would find it hard to afford housing, food, and basic living.

Equal opportunity gains around gender, class, ethnicity would falter and reverse. Racism and inter-group suspicion increase, and tolerance for sexual preference and other differences would collapse. A legal system based on the ability to pay would see higher rates of incarceration of young people from marginalised groups and those on low incomes. Effective equality before the law, already under threat, would lose all semblance of possibility.

Dependent: Current exclusionary provisions for young people would be extended and intensified. Participants saw an increase in the voting age as possible, dependence on family and government until well into the 30s as likely. Longer compulsory engagement in a variety of institutions, especially schools, was seen as likely. Young people would mostly be excluded from employment as a result both of structural factors and stigmatisation. Young people’s sane behaviour would be increasingly psychiatrised. They would decreasingly be seen as a population with rights.

Over-controlled/under-controlled: Participants forecasted a crisis in the balance of social control in this kind of society. On one level, harsher penalties, tighter policing and strict law and order directions would result in the adoption of policies such as zero tolerance and curfews for young people. The cycles of alienation involved in this approach to order would result in

increased levels of violence and other crime. Participants predicted an escalation in the means of violence, including an entrenched gun culture. Participants saw this society as being increasingly criminogenic.

At the same time, approaches which are not based on cooperation and consent are not able to effectively contain people's behaviour, and escalate the degree of resistance in subject populations. This dynamic may produce increasing lawlessness in suburbs and ghettoisation in central city areas, even in the face of escalating control. Increased gang formation was likely along with attendant gang warfare. At the extreme, participants saw the possibility of complete social collapse and effective, if not actual, martial law, with civil controls increasingly being taken on by the military.

Carceral: Mandatory sentencing and other forms of penal escalation and net-widening would lead to a cycle of policies involving increased rates of imprisonment, especially for young men but in increasing degrees for young women also. A rising proportion of young men would be dead or in prison by the age of 20. Vulnerable populations, such as Indigenous, migrant or other ethnic minorities would be of especial concern. Fears were held for those young people with mental health problems, who may find their psychiatric condition is criminalised. Institutionalisation, the standard response to difference in such a society, would be used also for other non-criminal matters, such as homeless people, particularly the "hard end".

Work: High levels of unemployment, with polarisation not only in access to paid work but consequent extremes in income were forecast. Work conditions would decline, with decreasing controls over health and safety in industry and greater competition among workers, and the progressive exclusion of unions and other workers' organisations. Trade cycles of boom and bust would be endemic and intensified with laissez-faire approaches to economic management.

Health collapse: Poverty is perennially an indicator of poor health outcomes, and forum participants' vision of this kind of society forecast a range of deteriorating health conditions. Increasing infant mortality, infanticide and other death rates in childbirth were predicted. Life expectancy among the poor declines, even in the face of vastly improved expectancy for those with means. Reduced quality in public health, e.g. water supplies, would predicate increases in infection, plague,

and other epidemics, including HIV. Environmental degradation would lead to increases in respiratory ailments among young people, and increasing toxicity of the environment. Suicide rates would be expected to climb. Inaccessible health care would lead to increased rates of disability. Drug use would increase in real terms, and harmful use becomes more difficult to control as the range of drugs available proliferates. Drug use is even more seen as a criminal matter, not a health issue.

3: The much the same

Generally, the expert forums were not optimistic about the future for young people in Australia if many of the present trends continue. In fact, their vision for a future in which things were much the same as they are now, except 15 years on, has a lot in common with the negative future outlined above. Present trends, projected along a straight line, also indicated a society in which young people were increasingly dependent and excluded from significant social roles, a society increasingly polarised between rich and poor, in which cycles of poverty, crime, and imprisonment worked in self-reinforcing cycles, and in which the State was increasingly authoritarian and unaccountable.

The data from the forums came in a form that much more closely followed the categories through which the body of this Report is organised – through the frames of work and employment, family and household, education, crime and punishment and health, with minor variations. Participants were also interested in the way that services would be delivered in the future, particularly in the administration of funding for services, including accountability provisions.

Expert forums paid special attention to the relative position of young men and young women, and the possibilities with respect to gender in the future. Gender issues were certainly not expected to disappear, with both power and identity issues still on the agenda. Participants painted a complex picture. Young women were expected to improve their position, as more support services for young women became available, and their relative advantage in educational qualifications flowed through to their position in the labour market. But the improvement might only be relative, an effect of "cashing down" due to equally exploitative entry level jobs, and casualisation may continue to affect young women more than young men.

There may be a significant change in gender roles,

as the cultural shift driven by the gender politics of the late 20th century is natural and normal for the next adult generation. There may even be a reversal of gender disadvantage, as young men begin to pay for the fact that they do less well at school than young women in an increasingly information and communication-driven economy. Young men risk further alienation. Already, they have structurally fewer choices, including having a baby.

Other issues raised by the forums included:

Work: Employment would continue to be central in most people's lives, and for its importance to intensify. They saw an economic environment with natural selection pressures which would produce a narrow technological industrial "economic man". Participants expected work to become more demanding and to be done under more difficult circumstances. A work environment organised by individual contracts, in an environment of continued high unemployment would lead to poorer wages and conditions, security and safety and increased worker competition. Jobs would continue to be destructured favouring just-in-time, short-term, casual work contracts.

For many young people employment prospects would continue to be poor. The experience of the 1980s and 90s makes second or third generation unemployment likely. Increased technology, leading to a decreased demand for labour, and increasing skill requirements may make up to 30–60% of the population unemployable. Many young people won't ever expect to work or be able to. For some, the limit of their work experience will be volunteerism and recreation activities.

Family and household: There would be an increasing expectation of families to care for their adult offspring, as well as elderly parents and family members with disabilities or mental illness. Projections indicate increased levels of family stress as the limit to family load-carrying capacity was approached and in many cases exceeded. Levels of tension within the family would rise as adult offspring, disenfranchised by lack of income, struggle to find role and autonomy while under their parents' roof, while parents struggle to understand their sons' and daughters' lack of economic progress and independence. Well supported young people will have more choices, unsupported young people will be worse off than at present.

Continued high levels of family breakdown and reformation, and attendant levels of conflict, would see

an increased number of kids in care and increased resources needed to cater for them. The age of children at the point of family breakdown is also an issue, with alternative accommodation needed at much younger ages.

There may be a growing crisis in the availability of housing as owner-occupation, the dominant form of housing tenure in Australia, became less affordable. In fact, all types of housing tenure would be harder to get. The trend towards dismantling the public housing sector and the shortage of private rental housing would make rental housing scarce and expensive. Rent increases would be expected to follow, impacting particularly on young people who are heavily exposed to movements in the rental market.

Education: The prognosis for education is contradictory, with again widely unequal outcomes expected for different populations of young people. In a communication-rich environment, young women are expected to increase their comparative educational advantage, with young men's comparative position sliding. Budgetary constraints would be expected to produce a deteriorating public education sector, with an increasingly profitable private education sector for those who can afford it.

Generally, participants expected a swing to more conservative education approaches, with a stronger emphasis on disciplinary rather than educative aspects of schooling to cater for parents' fears for their children's economic futures and insecurity about their social risk. However, the general increase in time spent in education may produce a population of young people who are extremely clever. It raises the question of what they do with it – whether the rising population will turn their learning towards the pursuit of self-interest, towards social responsibility, or to cynical and alienated counter-cultures.

Law and order: Trends towards increasing alienation would be expected to result in increased levels of violence, especially youth violence. Some participants expected that children's current engagement with the symbolic violence of video games could translate into greater capacity for violence in later years. Trends in justice systems indicate increased incarceration of young men, and prison experience has its own part to play in cycles of violence. With improving technology, more intensive surveillance of citizens' behaviour seems likely.

Political commitment: There is a contradictory picture for young people's political engagement. On the one hand, the experience of disenfranchisement and the increasing concentration of political power would be expected to lead to lower political participation and "pragmatic apathy", perhaps for the majority of young people. But the existence of an educated, under-engaged youth/student population would mean that political activism would be unlikely to disappear, finding expression not through the parliamentary process or mainstream party politics, but through underground politics, direct action, and counter-cultures. With the rapidly changing environment, and the likely development of a strong generational consciousness on the part of young people, youth politics may involve a polarisation between a conservative mainstream, a radical alternative, and a passive and apathetic middle ground.

Community: The research anticipates a number of forces tending to further erode the depth and extent of community networks and community organisation. Urban drift and the consequent rural depopulation will continue to make rural Australia more marginal socially. Even in larger centres, the transience of the population (and of young people in particular) will make the development of integrated, healthy and secure communities difficult to sustain, resulting in increased individualism, isolation and the potential of increasing suicide. Space becomes increasingly commodified and privatised: fewer and fewer resources are in communal hands. Walled, high security housing estates for the wealthy, and blighted welfare suburbs for the poor, intensify social distance. Decreasing community involvement, or "opting out", results from increased individualism, the increasing dominance of the market as the primary way of organising human relations, and the sheer pressure of a more complex and demanding work environment. The decline of organic forms of community increases reliance on State provision for social needs that communities would ordinarily provide. Trust in social support systems declines.

New forms of community, corresponding with the information and communications revolution and the New Economy, are yet to develop and are unlikely to be in place in 2015 without significant intervention. Identity, both personal and social, becomes increasingly fractured.

Services: Current movements towards the marketisation of youth services are expected to continue, with youth services increasingly being provided by private firms, and Governments providing fewer services themselves due to outsourcing. A larger role for local Government is expected, however. Services will be more fragmented and competitive, with increased risks of exclusion, particularly for hard-to-serve client groups. Government demands for accountability from non-government and private providers are expected to intensify, while resources decline. Pressure on ethical youth work practice results. The gap between need and social policy already present in the 1990s continues, and social support systems are put under increasing strain. Youth services become less creative, and more institutional, and continue to be reactive rather than proactive.

Competition for social provision between the generations becomes an issue, with resources redistributed from the young to the aged. The growing political power of the aged, and the continued disenfranchisement of the young, means that youth services are less than equitably catered for in budget decisions. The current gap between policy-makers assumptions about how young people live and the actual facts of their lives is not expected to diminish.

Health: Expert forums predicted a higher incidence of mental health problems if current trends continue – especially stress related problems, depression and problematic drug use. Obesity would be a growing problem among young people. In the face of increasing demands from the elderly, young people's share of the health dollar declines.

Appendix 2

Expert forum participants

Participants who were unable to attend, but who received the materials and were invited to give feedback, are included in italics.

Western Australia

Back, Kylie
Youth Worker (mainly rural and remote areas)

Bell, Collin
Futurologist

Boyd, Stuart
Manager, Freo Youth Service

Bridgland, Jude
Chair of AYPAC 1999

Carvosso, Helen
President of NUS (WA)

Chadwick, Rona
Training (CYTS)

Daniels, Gerard
Ethnic Liaison Police Officer

Ferguson, Ken
Futurologist

Hall, Andrew
Manager, Wanneroo Youth Accommodation Service

Mapstone, Rod
Youth Worker (Education)

Rajan, Paul
Director, Westrek

Thai, Minh
Youth Worker, Balga Detached

Victoria

Bamblett, Alf
Aboriginal Community Service

Cassar, Nicole
Victorian Aboriginal Health Service

Cooper, Ian
Centre for Adolescent Health

Crosbie, Jamie
City of Moreland Youth Service

Griffin, Clare
YACVIC young spokesperson, Victorian Association of Young People in Care

Guerra, Carmel
Coordinator, Ethnic Youth Issues N'work

Hall, Richard
Youth Service Coordinator, City of Knox

Harrison, Fee
City of Monash Youth Services, Chair of Regional Youth Committee

Holdsworth, Roger
Youth Research Centre, *Connect* Student Newsletter

Holmes, Simon
Victorian Aboriginal Health Service

McKenzie, David
RMIT Youth Research Centre

Pocock, Julian
Secretariat for Aboriginal & Islander Child Care

Sparks, Val
YACVIC

ACT

Bavinton, Tim
Member of Youth Coalition, Program Manager of
service assisting male survivors of sexual abuse

Billing, Don
Office of Youth, ACT Dept Ed. & Comm.

Bui, Veronica
YWCA – AXYS Outreach Worker

Callan, Michelle
YWCA – Program Manager

Dilkara, Simone
Coordinator, Junction Youth Health Service

Earl, Mel

Fairburn, Katrina
Barrister/Solicitor

Harrison, Linda
Belconnen Youth Centre – Administrator and Youth
Worker

Hunter, Meridith
Youth Coalition of ACT – EO

Rick, Vivienne
Office of Youth ACT Dept Ed. & Comm., Services
Program Manager

Sattler, Kim

South Australia

Adams, Roxanne
Australian Association of Young People in Care

Bishop, Vivian
Inner North-East Youth Service

Bradbury, Joanne
Youth SA

Davey, Kym
Youth Affairs Council of SA Executive Officer

Deslandes, Anne
Youth Roundtable Representative

Handshin, Mia
Youth Roundtable Representative

Hanson, Greg
YOUTH SA (policy)

Hassan, Tirana
Adelaide Central Mission

Jung, Sabine

Macdonald, Sarah
YACSA

Nam, Frank
Director of Aboriginal Youth Service

Nam, Fred
Kumanera Aboriginal Youth Service

Raifs, Claire
COPE

Thomas, Jeff
City of Charles Sturt

Tschirren, Ria
Inner City Youth Service

Voorenndt, Wendy
Plaza Youth Centre