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(dis)engaged, some thoughts on how young people engage with party politics, political issues and policies in the democratic process is a submission to the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee of the Office of Premier and Cabinet, Queensland Government's inquiry *Voices and Votes: a parliamentary committee inquiry into young people's engagement in democracy in Queensland* by www.vibewire.net

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renewing youth media

Vibewire.net is an online community created by young people for young people - a platform for people's energy and inspiration. It is a project of Vibewire Youth Services Inc. (ABN 75 609 614 367) a not-for-profit, volunteer-based, non-profit youth media and training organisation.

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submission overview

It is a misconception to think that young people today are not political. Of course they are. But they are a generation that has been taught to be questioning. They are inherently sceptical of governments and institutions. They don't take well to not being heard. And the too-and-fro nature of political mudslinging that is the most visible manifestation of party politics does not appeal to them.

Equally, the question 'do you care about politics?' is the wrong question. The question should be 'what do you care about?'. If you ask this question and provide the space for young people to reveal their thoughts, you'll rapidly discover that young people care deeply about all aspects of their world. It is not political ideas or issues that have turned young people off, it is the political process that has turned them off.

What is often missed from the coverage of young Australian's alienation from the political system is that the political system has largely switched them off; rarely speaking with them, almost never including them as valid participants in the political process.

Because young people's ways of participating in public life – the ways they communicate and the issues they become active around – do not always correspond with traditional notions of "political involvement" their community engagement is not always as visual in the mainstream as more recognisable means of being heard politically. The result is that the media and politicians have branded young people as apathetic and uninterested.

But this does not mean they are not politically engaged. If anything they are more engaged. They have acutely identified the failures of traditional

processes of political engagement that young people in years gone by relied on or were relegated to. In their anxiety and frustration they have created their own means of being active, taking advantage of new technologies and age-old generational connectedness.

Greater access to information and digital technologies such as blogging, peer-to-peer networking, instant messaging and text messaging have fused with the this generation's post-modern

scepticism and traditional expression outlets such as self-published media, music, film, art, design and the written word, spawning a new and vibrant environment where political and social issues can be identified, discussed and criticised in non-traditional political and non-political arenas.

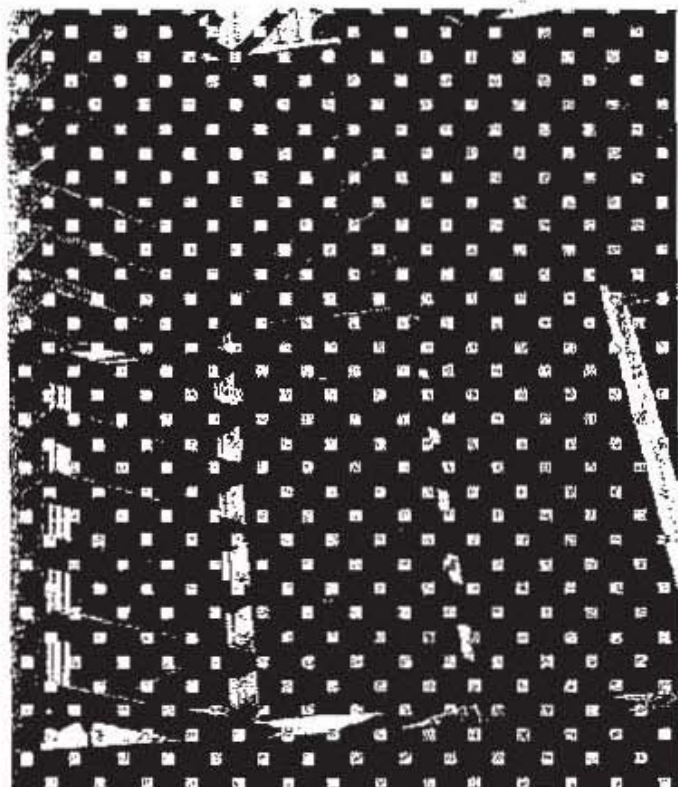
Organisations such as Vibewire Youth Services, as well as SYN-FM, Express Media and Straight Out of Brisbane Festival already engage young Australians in politics and policy debates. But it's more than that. These organisations try to position politics alongside and within other issues affecting young peoples lives – culture, community, music, film, literature, design, theatre and the arts – because we believe that politics and democracy are as central to the lives of young people as these issues. This submission is as much a comment on the problems with engaging young people in democracy as it is an exploration of ways they engage.

“ Because young people's ways of participating in public life – the ways they communicate and the issues they become active around – do not always correspond with traditional notions of "political involvement" their community engagement is not always as visual in the mainstream as more recognisable means of being heard politically ”



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..... some thoughts on how young people engage with party politics, political issues and policy in the democratic process



submission aims

This submission intends to:

- 1 briefly analyse the current socio-political climate surrounding young people and the democratic process;
- 2 dismantle some of the widespread misconceptions about young people and their political engagement;
- 3 identify some of the existing ways young people engage with democracy and politics whether it be governmental, organisational, social or personal;
- 4 identify strengths and weaknesses of those existing ways of engaging young people in democracy and politics;
- 5 suggest ways to build on the strengths and overcome the weaknesses of these strategies; and
- 6 identify potentially new ways to further engage young people with democracy and politics, based on our work at Vibewire Youth Services.

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prior engagement: an introduction

Democracy is underpinned by the premise that classes of people will, where necessary, stand up for their own interests and their own rights, and that they should have the ability to do so without fear of persecution. Individuals are able to organise into groups for solidarity, and they may lobby their elected representatives as they see fit.

Young people are placed in a very awkward position within this democratic process. They are not children, so they do not gain the protection afforded their younger counterparts, nor are they considered adults by older generations. They do not have the 'excuse' of immaturity to exclude them from the responsibility of society, and therefore political engagement like children do (see Liddbrook 1996), but they do not have the knowledge or life experience of an adult on which to base informed political opinion. As a result, many refrain from participating in politics altogether. This phenomenon results in allegations that all young people are apathetic.



on the issue of alleged apathy, see issue 1:
(mis)information about young people and politics, page 12

The reality for young people is more complicated than that. Young people have varying levels of maturity, knowledge, skills, articulation and influence. Some are engaged directly with the party political system, political issues impassion some, others do not concern

themselves with such matters at all, and still others are disengaged due to a perceived lack of time and/or skill, rather than intention on their part. In other words, it is not simply young people who must change their approach to political involvement, political systems must change to create new and better access points for young citizens.

The rhetoric around young people and political engagement tends to categorise all young people into three rough groups:

- 1 young people who are party political;
- 2 young people who are issues-political, and
- 3 young people who are disengaged.

The first category relates to those young people who are explicitly involved in party politics. Members of youth organisations or divisions of existing political parties, these young people are not only politically minded, but have an extensive knowledge of party politics, governmental procedure and bureaucracy.

Disengaged young people, who make up the final category, includes people who, for whatever reason, are not engaged in the political process. That may be because they are cynical of the system or denied access to the system because of lack of information, lack of resources or discrimination. Also in this category are young people who do not prioritise politics (which may be the result of cynicism or lack of access).

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But it is the category between the polar extremes of total integration in the political process and complete disengagement that are somewhat invisible to mainstream political discourse. They are young people who are active on specific issues that matter to them

such as education, the environment, employment, policy, economics, human rights and sexual identity, or are simply active in discussing the issues they care about, testing their ideas, becoming informed. Table 1, taken from a report on young people and the media produced by Vibewire Youth Services last year, shows those issues the sample of 733 young people consider important in their lives, indicated proportionately with one being the lowest

and five the highest. The data collected on these young people indicate they are more active and better resourced than most young people.

The report also tabulated data related to the activities that its respondents engaged in. Table 2 is a replication of that information.

The data clearly indicates that the young people responding to Vibewire's research are engaged with

political issues, but not necessarily party politics. This difference is significant, as evidenced when one compares this data to the results from the IEA Civics and Citizenship study, on which the federal government partly justifies its Discovering Democracy program. In the IRA study Mellor asked 14 year olds about their involvement in clubs and organisations, receiving the responses shown in Table 3 [Mellor 2003, p32]. These results specifically exclude non-formal activities from young people's involvement in their communities.

The results in Table 3 ask only about organisations rather than issues. It asserts that 1 per cent and 3 per cent of females and males respectively were involved with UN or UNESCO clubs. Yet if the corresponding issues-based category "global issues" in Vibewire's report is considered then 43 per cent of respondents gave it the highest possible rank, which clearly contradicts the former. Although there are demographic differences between sample groups, this variance is still profound. Such oversights are in part responsible for the belief that young people are apathetic, as increasingly, young people are engaging with their communities in ways that are often not recognised by researchers and the media.

This concept was explored by Blanchard, whose research found that young people are active and engaged politically, but not through traditional means [Blanchard 2003]. They steer away from political parties and unions in which they feel their efforts and ideas will be ignored, preferring instead to engage with issues through sporadic social action, talking with friends, and most notably, through the media (especially new media). Manning and Ryan pursued this line of thought, finding that young people are often socially and culturally active in their communities through personal and local actions that are generally not considered by researchers

issue	rank 1	rank 2	rank 3	rank 4	rank 5	average rank	
global issues	1%	4%	14%	36%	43%	4.17	4
business news	21%	34%	27%	13%	3%	2.43	11
news about celebrities	37%	33%	19%	7%	3%	2.04	12
fiction writing	12%	24%	30%	21%	11%	2.96	10
politics	6%	11%	22%	30%	30%	3.67	8
the arts	3%	12%	23%	31%	30%	3.75	7
the environment	2%	7%	24%	33%	33%	3.89	6
entertainment	3%	11%	29%	36%	20%	3.60	9
family life	2%	8%	20%	27%	46%	4.04	5
friends	1%	2%	9%	25%	62%	4.45	2
relationships	1%	4%	11%	28%	55%	4.33	3
education	0%	2%	8%	26%	63%	4.51	1

table 1: issues of concern to young people and corresponding ratings

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[Manning and Ryan 2004, p50]. The NSW Office of Children and Young People [2004] found similar results, with 37.8 per cent of young people surveyed involved in setting up projects with friends, and 63.5 per cent involved in cultural activities.

Young people, in our experience, are connecting to each other on common ground for the same or similar causes. They organise themselves around issues. They put forward ideas and opinions, enter a dialogue around them and offer commentary and criticism.

With a better understanding of this second category, and more resources to help support existing outlets for such organising, these young people will be inspired to continue coming up with ideas, continue having conversations and continue engaging with politics. Hopefully they may be able to even (re)engage some of their peers in the process.

organisation	females (%)	males (%)
a sports organisation or team	82	87
an art, music or drama organisation	61	32
a charity collecting money for a social cause	55	37
a student council / school parliament	35	32
a group conducting voluntary activities to help the community	35	26
Boy or Girl Scouts / Guides	31	26
an organisation sponsored by a religious group	26	20
an environmental organisation	22	14
a group which prepares a school newspaper	20	12
a student exchange or school partnership program	16	10
a computer club	4	12
a cultural association with membership based on ethnicity	6	5
a human rights organisation	5	4
a youth organisation affiliated with a political party or union	3	5
a United Nations or UNESCO Club	1	3

table 3: Metliff's categories for young people's engagement

activity	number
written a letter to the editor of a newspaper or other publication	364
contributed to a discussion forum on a website	498
attended a rally or political demonstration	410
written a letter to a politician	289
engaged in volunteer work in my community or overseas	601
engaged in industrial action at work	86
travelled overseas	525
attended a film and/or media festival	508

table 2: activities engaged in by young people



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DISILLUSIONED, DISENGAGED AND
DISENFRANCHISED: THE SOCIO-
POLITICAL REALITY FOR YOUNG
PEOPLE

In principle all people in a democracy have the opportunity to influence public policy – as lobbyists, commentators, professionals or politicians – but this is far from the reality of modern representative democracy. Few people have the opportunity to individually affect social change using the democratic political process. Young people least of all.

John Kane and Haig Patterson, authors of *Challenge and promise of e-democracy* paraphrase the e-democracy criticism of contemporary representative government, saying:

"The People", the foundation of democratic legitimacy, really matter only at election times when governing elites pay them brief, if ardent, attention. During the campaigning season electorates are relentlessly wooed, flattered and bribed by competing parties desperate to attain or retain political power."
[Kane and Patterson 2004, p203]

There is no denying the truth of this statement, but "The People" they refer to rarely, if ever, includes young people as a discrete voting group. Politicians recognised this short falling, and half-heartedly attempt to fill this "democratic deficit" using youth participation projects such as Youth Councils and Advisory Groups. But such organisations hardly have the ear of government and only attract certain kinds of young people. In fact, no single engagement mechanism in and of itself will be able to fill the democratic deficit: it is only through the pursuit of multiple mechanisms, YACs amongst them that young people in all their diversity can be more fully engaged.

For the rest of the young people who don't currently access existing participation tools, their perceptions of politics are vastly different. Many young people choose

“ Democracy is conversation. Elections are important, but they are an administrative function, the quality of conversations [are] the true measure of a democracy. We say that Australia has too few conversations played out between too few participants. Young people are the least well represented in these conversations. ”

Vibewire.net Manifesto

not to engage with politics because they are disillusioned with the party political process or with the perception that their opinions on policies matters are not respected. They have angers, frustrations, fears, uncertainties, drudgery, disappointments and defeats. When these are linked to a political matter the disillusionment is compounded because young people don't feel they can make a change. Politicians rarely, if ever, speak to young people, both in the sense of addressing young people specifically and in the sense of outlining policy specifically for or about young people. (And when it does happen it tends to be negative policy such as curfews).

Why do young people choose not to engage? Because they feel they go unheard in the political arena. Worse still, they cannot always gain access to resources to collectively organise effectively in order to push for change and this situation leaves them disenfranchised. As Iris Marion Young said in *Inclusion and Democracy*.

to be sure, democratic politics has some joys: the thrill of being part of a crowd of thousands marching down the street chanting and singing for a cause we believe in; the sense of solidarity with others as we work in a campaign; the excitement of victory. Defeat, co optation, or ambiguous results are more common experiences than political victory, however. (Young 2002)

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issue 1

(mis)information about young people and politics

“ Politicians often speak about the rights and obligations of Australian citizenship and exhort young people to be more aware of the rights and responsibilities that flow from their status as Australian citizens.”

Robert Ludbrook

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The mentality Ladbroke identifies in this statement exemplifies the mentality that young people should engage in politics but do not. This fails to address why they don't, or what barriers are keeping them from engaging. One of those barriers is that young people feel belittled and denigrated by mainstream misconceptions about their interests.

A range of sources, such as the recently released *Tomorrow's Parents Today* report put out by Crompter Communications Ltd, purport that young people are more conservative and less likely to be active. In the media, 'young people are paradoxically presented as selfish, different, disrespectful, spoilt, untidy, hoons, bored, substance consumers and generally having too much time on their hands as well as simultaneously respectful, caring and more socially aware' [Bolzan 2003, p53]. The media bombards the public with images of young people as lazy (or apathetic), aggressive (juveniles and delinquents), vulnerable (disempowered victims) or as elite achievers (see Bolzan 2003, p21). It is only the final category which is positive.



See *Tomorrow's Parents Today* report young People and the Media: Opposite Sides of the Fence? which found that young people have an acute awareness of how they are stereotyped by the media

There is a range of misconceptions that are generated from such stigma, including that young people:

- 1 don't have the capacity to make political choices
- 2 aren't interested in making political choices and are apathetic towards politics; and/or
- 3 hate politicians and politics.

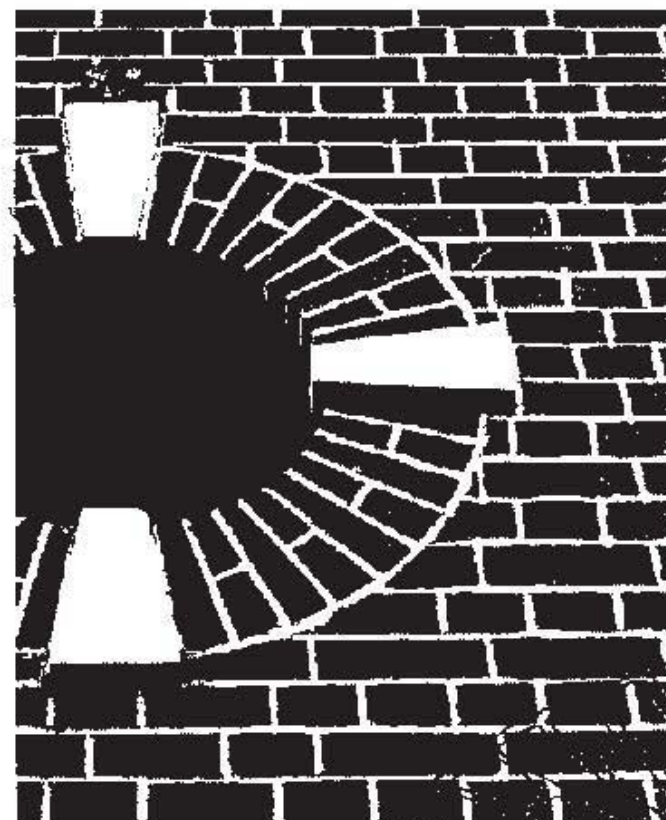
capacity to make political choices

Arguably children don't always have the capacity to understand complex issues and to make decisions about them, but this is not the case for adolescents and older young adults. Between the ages of 12 and 15 young people develop a more thorough sense of self, and further develop a finely tuned sense of justice [Lawrence, 2003]. They undergo political socialisation, consolidating their familial and scholarly influences with personal opinions and choices to form individualised decisions and opinions [Lawrence and Valsiner, 2003].

If anything part of the problem is that young people (younger adolescents in particular) are not encouraged and have little incentive to be involved in political matters. In instances where they do seek out or are exposed to political information there is a risk that they will passively consume the information.

In situations where young people's capacity has been recognised – especially at a local government level – there have been substantial successes and learnings. These have lead to the release of numerous reports, guides and models of effective youth participation. All of these – from *Alive and Motivated* [NYARS, 2004] to *Taking Young People Seriously* [State of Victoria, 2004], to *Telling the Emperor* [State of South Australia, 2000, republished by State of Western Australia, 2002] – emphasise the capacity of young people to engage in significant conversation and decision-making, but only when the material is presented in ways that are purposeful and give young people a clear indication that their input is valued and useful.

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CASE STUDY 1

GENERATE WEBSITE + THE SOURCE WEBSITE

www.generate.qld.gov.au
www.the-source.qld.gov.au

Websites such as the Queensland Government's Generate and the Commonwealth Government's The Source are "gateways to government" and exist to provide young people with information about the respective governments such as directories of ministers, youth affairs, government-run youth initiatives and organisations, a list of up-coming government-run youth events and information relevant to young people.

They are part of a growing trend world wide of e-Democracy, designed to give new and more appropriate ways for citizens to be involved in the political process, utilising digital technologies and the internet.

Government youth websites world-wide provide a range of mediums through which young people can discuss and engage with politics including forums, chats and articles.

young people's (alleged) apathy and lack of interest

Although it cannot be denied that there are some young people who are genuinely not interested in politics, there is a greater body who are or feel that they are under-educated in politics, under-experienced in politics and unable to properly articulate their interests in a political setting.



on lack of information, see issue 2: a lack of political information useful to young people

Many young people seek out information and are faced with one of three problems:

- 1 they cannot find the information they are after; or
- 2 they are presented with volumes of information; or
- 3 the information is presented in a way which discourages them.

Sources of information for young people exist (for example, see CASE STUDY 1) that provide some information for young people. But the information provided can often be highly targeted, limited to preferred topics and have limited opportunities for two-way dialogue which may result in some young people feeling blocked from properly engaging with politics.

As well, many young people do not use these spaces, either because they do not know they exist, or they do not wish to engage on a site that is established by a government authority.

As a result of being or feeling blocked out of political discussion because of informational and experience barriers, many young people feel disempowered. Disempowerment leads to inactivity that is the perpetuates the stereotype of political apathy

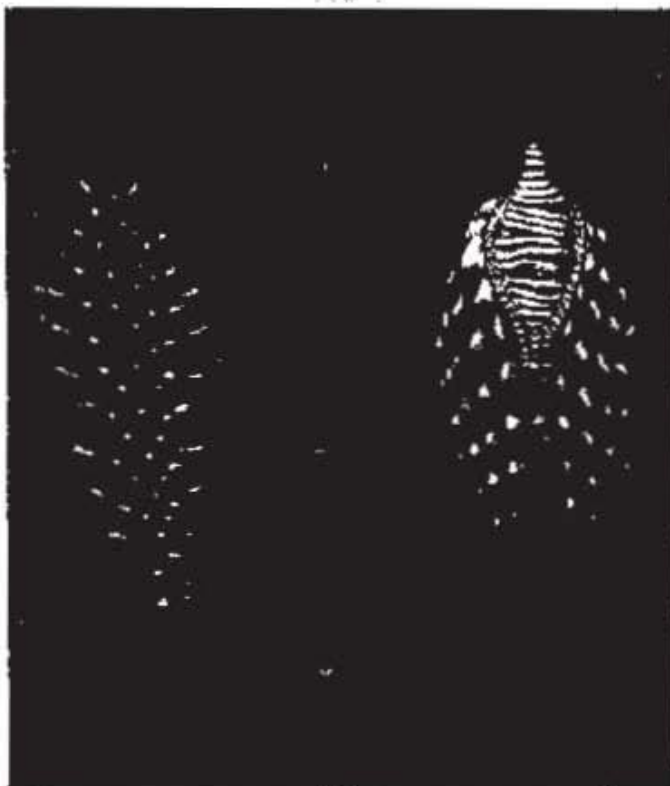
young people's distrust of politicians

It is true that young people tend to have a dislike of and a distrust of politicians - a result found by Manning and Ryan as well as Mellor. Whether this is an enactment of the tall puppy syndrome, inherited parental biases or the result of personal experience, it is generally coupled with resentment over the image often projected of young people and the tokenism some government-run youth initiatives emanate. Importantly, this distrust tends to be reactionary: it stems from the an underlying scepticism of politics and the feeling of rejection that is bred by a lack of focused political discussion with young people rather than an unqualified hatred of politicians.

An example of this was brought to our attention in conversations with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) when talking about the process they went through to engage with young people in creating the *Rights of Passage* report. In a focus group conversation in Wollongong, a group of young people shared the story of how the NSW Minister for Transport came to "consult" them on a series of changes in relation to young drivers. The forum went well, with lots of discussion, but the young people found it later that the consultation was irrelevant - as the legislative changes had already been drafted. Their input was, in their minds, completely taken [personal correspondence].

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Last year, Vibewire conducted a survey around young people and the media with the aim of discerning how young people engage with and create media. Among the results, it was found that the young people who engaged with Vibewire.net and who took part in the media survey only participate in political activities when these were seen to have a real and meaningful impact [Moss et al 2004, p70] – a result that echoes those of Blanchard [2003] and Manning and Ryan [2004]. Equally, they are passionate about issues that directly involve them, and to a lesser degree, issues that affect the world around them. But they acknowledge that they are often only permitted to be involved as consumers [Moss et al 2004, p50].

They disliked the fact that content for young people is almost exclusively focused around entertainment, with only a handful of youth-oriented media covering social or political issues [Moss et al 2004, p23]. They wanted a media that was both more interactive, with greater opportunities for participation, and was more diverse.

What is needed is support for existing youth-run media organisations (see CASE STUDIES 2, 3 + 4) and funding options and start-up spaces for the future are crucial for allowing young people to help themselves right the wrongs written about them. Young people should not have to rely on other people – namely the mainstream media – to write about them. Young people should be writing about and for young people. And they should be able to do it their way.

the importance of youth participation

Many commentators agree that the meaningful involvement of young people is essential to the existence of a healthy liberal democracy [see State Government of Victoria, 2002; Manning and Ryan, 2004; Blanchard, 2003; Kimberlee, 2002]. Going beyond the research on citizenship, the meaningful involvement and participation of young people is seen to be important for the development of a vibrant cultural

discourse within society (NYARS, 2004; Lumby, 2001). It is through various forms of media that the political and cultural dialogues that shape our society take place. The research has suggested that young people are aware of the role that they can play in this dialogue, and some have chosen to take part. But for each person who is able to take part, others are excluded by structural issues of technological access, knowledge and money. For those who are able to take part, they are left feeling alienated and isolated by a media system that by-and-large does not acknowledge the roles played by young people. Vibewire Youth Services (see CASE STUDY 2) has the opportunity to expand the space where young people are able to create conversations about these issues, contributing to the dialogue.

But it is still questionable as whether this social dialogue is that important. Despite the expression explosion from the technological revolution, social and cultural policy continues in much the same way, with a small elite influencing the largest number. Even then, it is a valid question to ask whether the 'dialogue' that is spoken of is really only a small group of politically and socially obsessed people talking to themselves through the loudspeaker of mass media. Newspaper circulations are dropping, cultural and political publications are scarce, while entertainment and pop culture resources abound. Looking at the market and the reality of consumption, it could be argued that the most accurate representations of young people are things like *Daily*, *Cleo*, *The OC* and *The Panel*.

It is then more appropriate to consider Vibewire and its projects as playing more than just a facilitation role within the media. Vibewire, is committed to promoting the idea that young people's contributions to social discourse are meaningful and useful. Vibewire cannot simply assume that because it is good for democracy, young people will want to engage. Rather, Vibewire must act as a mediator, bridging the gap between young people and social/political discourse through media channels, in part facilitating conversation, in part framing it in ways that are relevant and interesting to young people.

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CASE STUDY 2

VIBEWIRE YOUTH SERVICES + VIBEWIRE.NET PROJECT

www.vibewire.net

Vibewire Youth Services Inc is an incorporated, volunteer-based, non-profit, youth media and training organisation. The organisation operates projects ranging from a website/web-portal, online events, virtual think tanks, print anthologies and magazines and a national touring short film festival. The organisation is run nationally with team members based in offices in Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney and from other regional and metropolitan locations.

The organisation's vision declares that, "Vibewire will be the most representative and inclusive forum for Australia's youth – a community where young people access resources, engage in cultural discourse, and empower themselves." To this end the organisation focuses on a range of media production that are in need of diversification of voice and works to get the voices of young people and their diverse communities into those spaces.

Vibewire's pilot project, the online youth portal Vibewire.net, is an community created by young people for young people. It is a place where (sub)cultures meet technology, where geographically dispersed communities meet, merge and splinter, where ideas and fun rule and where young people are in control.

The site has multiple ways in which young people can engage with the site: as readers, as writers, as editors, as commentators. The functionality of the site allows for publishing of articles, columns and reviews, as well as allowing each member to publish blog entries on any topic they wish.

The site also operates a forum space and includes integrated commenting to allow for multi-way dialogue to discuss published works. Each member is given a profile

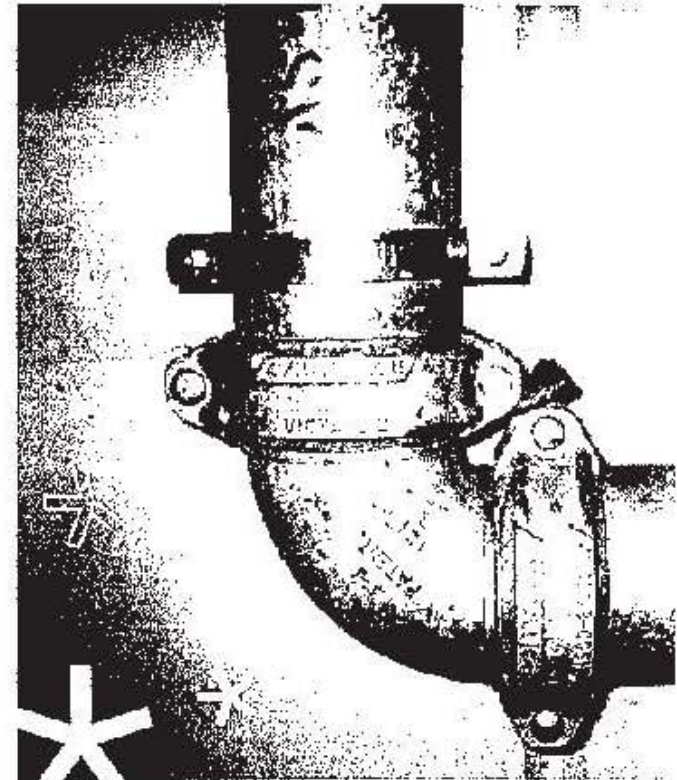
page which operates as a digital CV, linking to content they have published on the site. Member's profiles and blogs are accessible through the 'Member Profiles' section as well as via intuitive URLs.

All content on Vibewire.net is written by young people, edited by young people and commented on by young people. The site publishes thousands of articles, opinion pieces, reviews and interviews every year in one of three categories:

- 1 **pulse:** politics, policy, economics, trade, foreign affairs, human rights, education, law, sexuality, gender and opinion
- 2 **life:** fashion, film, music, gigs, games, art, visual art and lifestyle
- 3 **create:** fiction, long fiction, comics and poetry

Early next year upgrading of existing features will happen, as well as the adding of RSS (real-simple-syndication) feeds across the site. Also, Vibewire.net will launch a range of new features which will allow members to upload and exhibit their cultural output in film, music and digital art. This will feed content into a world first collaborative creative content authoring platform. Vibewire intends to re-engineer how young Australians can publishing creative content, assisting with the whole process from conception to finding an audience. This will potentially open up a whole new way of producing films, one which is inherently democratic (including using Creative Commons licences) and collaborative.

Vibewire is the 2005 recipient of the World Summit Youth Award (WSYA) for Community Engagement.



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CASE STUDY 3

SYN FM

www.syn.org.au

The Student Youth Network Inc (SYN) is a cross-media youth organisation run by the young people in Melbourne, for the youth of Melbourne. SYN aims to provide young people aged 12 to 25 that are into radio, television, print and web media with opportunities, access, practical experience and training within a range of media disciplines.

It is a leading example of youth participation in the media, currently managing and operating a full-time Melbourne-wide community radio station (90.7 SYN-FM) which can be heard 24 hours a day, seven days a week all around the Melbourne area. The music and content on-air is determined by the presenters and producers of each program. Therefore, music ranges from punk to hip-hop, from indie to dance, and everywhere in between. Content includes musical sub-cultures, sport, comedy, youth issues, satire, finance, science, food and travel.

It also produces 7.5 hours a week of live television for three TV programs broadcast on Channel 31 Melbourne. SYN City airs weekdays from 4 - 6pm, The Sauce airs Saturday mornings from 10.30am (repeated Mondays at 9.30pm), and SYN TV broadcasts on both TV and radio from 5 - 6pm weekdays. SYN TV is presented entirely by under 18s.

SYN also operates syn.org.au, a full-time internet presence. Four times a year, SYN releases its youth magazine, *Pacado* which is free for all SYN members, and can be found at selected retailers.

SYN has become a dynamic, informative and entertaining media outlet providing unparalleled access for young people to participate in creating their own media. SYN has proved to be an innovative leader in the community broadcasting sector and many of the youth-based participation programs developed by SYN have been utilised by community broadcasters across the country. This was recognised at the end of 2002 when the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia presented SYN with the Tony Staley Award for excellence in community broadcasting.

However, SYN has become more than just a media organisation; rather, it offers a unique access point and meeting place whereby like minded youth organisations and individuals meet, make contacts and undertake initiatives in support of the diverse needs and interests of the youth community. As a result, SYN has been able to undertake numerous projects encompassing a broad range of activities designed to serve young people from across Victoria.

Not only does youth run media help to break down stigma by correcting stereotypes, engaging young people and presenting new images of young people, but it gives young people opportunities to develop skills in a variety of media...

Not only does youth made, youth run media help to break down stigma by correcting stereotypes, engaging young people and presenting new images of young people, but it gives young people opportunities to develop skills in a variety of media while exposing them to a much broader range of ideas and opinions.

Media literacy is best taught by doing, by creating and communicating in the individual's own voice, according

to their own ideas, and on their own terms. Because of its potential to build community, and the collaborative nature of media production, it should take place amongst peers, where skills and experience can be shared on an equal basis, and allowing for a plurality of voices. Both autonomy and cooperation should be encouraged. It should allow for, but not enforce media activism and active citizenship, and encourage discussion and debate.

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CASE STUDY 4

EXPRESS MEDIA

www.expressmedia.org.au

Express Media is a media organisation that was founded in 1985, the International Year of Youth. Since then, they have run a number of programs that have given countless young people the chance to participate in exhibitions, performances, online projects, and various writing, media and arts projects. These include spoken word, photography, website design, radio presentation, journalism and creative writing.

Some of their projects include:

- ★ Voiceworks magazine, national, quarterly magazine
- ★ *Tiny Epics*, an anthology of young people's writing on the themes Anatomy, Junk, and Rhythm
- ★ Silent Army, (in conjunction with the 2002 Next Wave Festival) a 100 page anthology which collects the work of 20 young Australian comic artists
- ★ a spoken word CD (in conjunction with Noise Festival) of young Australian spoken word artists as part of the Come to Your Senses Issue of Voiceworks

They also will be publishing *Incommunicado* in March 2006 as part of the 2006 Next Wave Empire Games (in conjunction with the Melbourne Commonwealth Games). Any young person in the Commonwealth under 30 years of age will have the chance to get their writing published in an international context.

This year they launched the inaugural John Marsden Prize for Young Australian Writers with over 300 entries received. John Marsden, patron of Express Media and bestselling Young Adult fiction author, selected the winners in the Poetry and Short Story Competitions.

Express Media also presents an annual program of special events, writing workshops, exhibitions and artistic projects. These are often presented in conjunction with such organisations as Triple J, National Young Writers Festival, Melbourne Fringe, 3RRR and the Next Wave Festival. All of their projects aim to provide young people with professional and affordable access to Australia's artistic and media communities. Workshop topics that Express Media have run include:

- ★ zine making
- ★ poetry
- ★ spoken word
- ★ writing and producing a school newspaper
- ★ writing a novel
- ★ song-writing
- ★ playwriting

VOICEWORKS MAGAZINE

Express Media's Voiceworks, a national, quarterly magazine, is dedicated to publishing new writing by young people. It includes features, interviews, and creative writing. The magazine also includes comics. Each issue has a theme to which contributors are encouraged to respond, but are not required to. Contributors can write on any topic and in any style.

Voiceworks is a magazine dedicated to publishing writing by young people under 25. To add to it's appeal, all articles are produced entirely by young people.

Voiceworks provides a platform for young writers and artists to publish their poetry, short stories, illustrations, drawings and more. The magazine is entirely by young people and encourages feedback from the readers to make it better.

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issue 2

young people lack adequate media literacy

“ Youth created media should be strengthened locally
and globally, to increase media-literacy and provide an
outlet for youth creativity and opinions citizens. ”

recommendation of the UNESCO 31st General
Conference Youth Forum

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One of the key recommendations of The UNESCO 31ST General Conference Youth Forum (held in 2001) was that "Youth created media should be strengthened locally and globally, to increase media literacy and provide an outlet for youth creativity and opinions." Vibewire strongly endorses this recommendation.

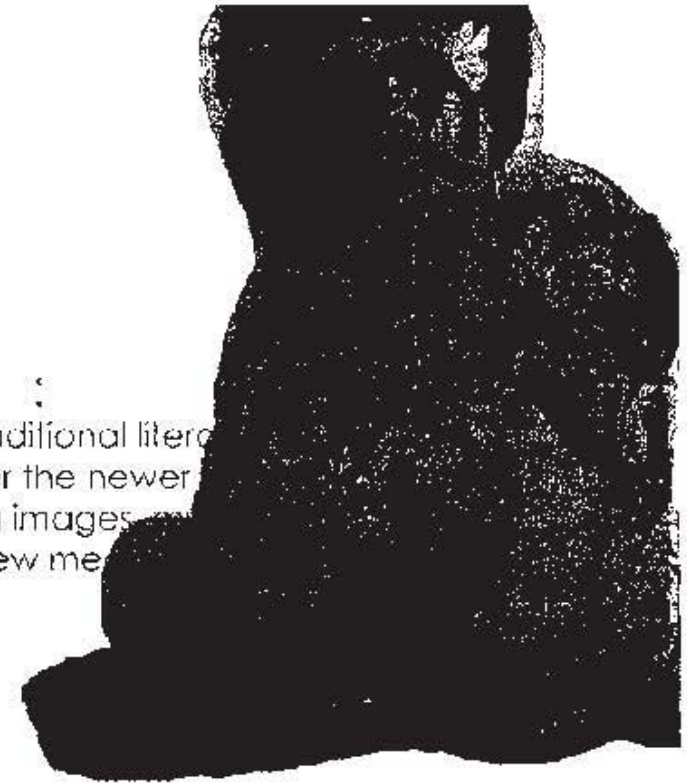
Media literacy is traditional literacy writ large, expanded and extended to cover the newer forms of communication. From still to moving images, music and sound, television, advertising, news and new media, media literacy is the ability to understand these texts. It is the ability to understand not just their content, but also their construction, the ideas, processes and techniques that make them mean what they do. It is the ability to think critically about the texts that mediate the world, and to engage with them, rather than simply receive them.

Media literacy, importantly, is also the ability to create. It is about self-expression, communication and creativity - about finding a voice and using it. Media literacy allows the individual to use the media for their own purposes, beyond simple consumption, to access audiences and publics and actively create or contribute to their own culture. Media literacy is so important because the mass media is the defining media of the modern world. It has become entrenched in everyday life, and dominate the public sphere and public debate more profoundly than at any other time in history. At the same time, media ownership is becoming steadily less diverse, and with it, access to the mainstream media is rapidly declining. So too is traditional literacy. The mass media are the main source of information and ideas about ourselves and our society, and so it is vital that we are able to negotiate the messages they send us.

Media literacy allows people to navigate the media landscape more effectively. It involves an understanding of everything that informs media production, including intended audience, commercial considerations, conventions and agendas, and so a media literate viewer is more likely to recognise bias, stereotypes, or simple omissions. A media literate viewer is aware

that the world presented to them is just that- a presentation, edited, produced and mediated. Media literacy also protects the viewer from any effects of media. The media have been constantly blamed for exposing viewers, especially young people, to violence, pornography, bad language and general moral depravity. Media literacy is heralded by many, especially in the US, as an alternative to classification and censorship. It provides people with the tools to understand and evaluate popular culture on their own terms, without denying them the right to explore art and ideas. Media literacy is about discerning and critical viewing, and so enables young people to see past media representations and realities.

“Media literacy is traditional literacy and extended to cover the newer forms of communication. From still to moving images, music and sound, television, advertising, news and new media, media literacy is the ability to understand these texts. It is the ability to understand not just their content, but also their construction, the ideas, processes and techniques that make them mean what they do. It is the ability to think critically about the texts that mediate the world, and to engage with them, rather than simply receive them.”

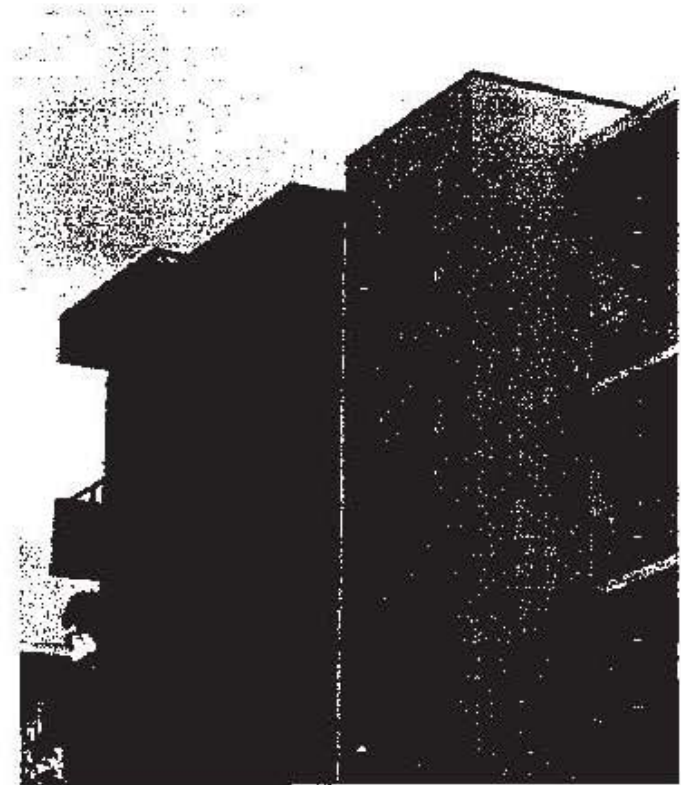


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Given this it is a fundamental responsibility of government to promote media literacy, both through education system but also through supporting and fostering youth media projects and activities. True media literacy can only come through creating media, not simply knowing how to "read" media.

Media literacy is best taught by doing, by creating and communicating in the individual's own voice, according to their own ideas, and on their own terms. Because of its potential to build communities, and the collaborative nature of media production, it should take place amongst peers, where skills and experience can be shared on an equal basis, and allowing for a plurality of voices. Both autonomy and co-operation should be encouraged. It should allow for but not enforce media activism and active citizenship, and encourage discussion and debate.



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The issue of non voting is superficially contextualised as an apathetic response to democracy. This perception, although in some cases correct, fails to address why young people choose not to vote or do not vote. It over emphasises ways of overcoming this political 'phenomenon' without examining the underlying causes.

One such cause is the lack of useful and engaging information for young people. Young people, like most people, are hesitant to engage themselves in an issue about which they are uninformed. This is mainly due to a fear of their naivety, inexperience or lack of knowledge on the topic exposing them to ridicule and criticism from their peers.

As such, young people who do want to engage themselves, whether it be in politics generally or in a specific issue, seek out information to inform their understanding.

At current the main sources of political information are primarily produced by:

- 1 the government;
- 2 political parties,
- 3 activist and political organisations;
- 4 civics and legal high school education;
- 5 the State and Federal Electoral Commissions;
- 6 family
- 7 peers
- 8 the media

party political information

Political parties produce information in various mediums on a semi-regular basis. Generally more so around election times. Outside of election periods websites tend to be most common, regularly updated with speech transcripts and web streams.

But the party political nature of the first three categories makes them likely to be viewed sceptically by young people. So much so that young people are probably unlikely to seek them out.

secondary schooling curriculum

The problem with the senior curriculum when it comes to civics and legal education is that they are mainly focused

on bureaucratic and administrative functions of government rather than the political process. It focuses on legislative and judicial hierarchies, the passing of bills, residential tenancies and contracts.

Although this is beneficial information for young people, it does not encourage young people to engage in politics and provides them with no information on how they would go about doing so.

The main effort that is made at an institutional level to address this is the federal government's Discovering Democracy program, which focuses not on giving young people the skills and understandings necessary for democracy, but rather on the historical, legal and procedural elements, creating a truly dispassionate,

“ The problem with the civics and legal education is that they are mainly focused on bureaucratic and administrative functions of government rather than the political process. It focuses on legislative and judicial hierarchies, the passing of bills, residential tenancies and contracts. ”



rather than the political process.

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and to be honest, boring introduction for young people to democracy. The IEA Study of Civic Attitudes and Knowledge [McIlor 2003], and to a certain extent the NYARS report on Youth and Citizenship [Manning and Ryan, 2004] miss the point - young people don't engage with politics at these formal levels, because to them, they are meaningless.

Derek Hannan [in Blanchard, 2003] encapsulated young people's reality perfectly in arguing that "learning about democracy at school is like reading holiday brochures in prison." Young people's lack of capacity, rather than being brought about by developmental or social factors, is a direct result of the irrelevant ways in which democracy and participation are taught to young people. The problem lies in their very context of being taught rather than experienced.

As a simple thought experiment, if you ask a group of young people, or almost any group of people which is the think more important of these two options:

- 1 "to know the effect of a policy on you"
- 2 "to know the process by which a policy was implemented"

The response is resoundingly in favour of the first option. Ideally, it is not a choice between the two, but a balance between both. And currently, the balance leans too far, too early in the direction of process over engagement.

information from the Electoral Commissions

Political information from the State and Federal Electoral Commissions has the potential to be rejected by young people based on similar rationale as overtly party political material, but it does have the advantage of being seen as a cornerstone of democracy. With better production, information from the Commissions could become an invaluable source of information for young people.

information from family and peers

Two of the major points of social interaction for young people are with family and with peer. For many young people they are imparted with knowledge or they pick up knowledge from their family. There of course are issues with the credibility of this information, but it is a reality that this is a common point of referral for information.

Peer informants is are almost always overlooked in discussions of sources of political information, but is a fundamental and, for most people, primary source. There is much said about the regulation of behaviour that often occurs in peer groups, but there is a potentially positive outcome from peer relations: peer education.

Young people are intensely community-orientated. They move in tribes, linked by common interests and ideals. It is within these peer groups that political issues are often debated, ideas floated and connections made. The internet in particular has taken this style of political discourse to a new level, with internet forums linking people from across the country (and, indeed, the world) to discuss and debate the issues which affect their lives. Vibewire.net is but one example of this.

It has been suggested that people are likely to listen to, consume and engage with information more if the source of information is similar to them [Sloane and Zimmer 1993]. Peer education "asserts that people make changes not because of scientific facts and figures but because of the subjective judgement of close, trusted peers who have adopted changes and who act as persuasive role models for change" [Flowers 2001]. Peer education, as a horizontal intervention strategy, utilises the inherent credibility that one young person is more likely to have with another young person to attempt to impart important information.

Rick Flowers [2001], in exploring the reasons that organisations use peer education, speculates at two main reasons for the success of peer education:

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- 1 it is an effective way to gain access, and convey messages, to a target group; and
- 2 it is a way to facilitate a participatory process of learning

These relationship networks have incredible value beyond simply being a source of information. They are repositories of social capital, and new modes of community, such as online, are vital new sources of social capital in a time when many old locations of such capital are declining. What's more, whereas traditional communities are based around "Bonding Social Capital" – around communities of people of a particular identity, online communities provide opportunities for the creation of "Bridging Society Capital" – Interactions and understanding between those from different backgrounds and beliefs.

For Vibewire, the concept of peer education is not as explicitly used to change young people's opinions, but rather to expose them to a range of opinions which may or may not sway their judgement. By incorporating commenting on the site, and informal mechanisms such as blogs and forums the range of opinions is even broader.

information from the media

The media is an increasingly untrusted source of political information, despite being the major source for many people. The Australian media industry is increasingly concentrated, diminishing the diversity of viewpoints they carry, and is largely inaccessible for young people. The results of Vibewire's survey into youth opinions on the media are covered above, but reveal a discontent with the our media landscape in Australia, and especially their coverage of youth issues.

This discontent is not limited to young people. Roy

Morgan's recently released annual media poll has found that the Australia people find the media profit- rather than news-driven, greedy and unreliable. 63% of people felt newspaper journalists couldn't be trusted to tell the truth, along with 57% of radio hosts and 53% of TV reporters. 71% believe media organisations are more worried about making a profit than informing people.

Interestingly, however, 60% of respondents to the Roy Morgan poll also think the media is, overall, a force for good in the world. In other words people recognise the huge potential impact of the media, for informing people, building community and highlighting issues, but they also recognise that the media isn't living up to this potential.

As Ammu Joseph said:

"Citizens across the globe are slowly but surely waking up to the notion that they have a stake in the media, even if they are not always recognised as stakeholders by the powers that be in government and media organisations. The new awareness is based on the understanding that, in today's world, the mass media are increasingly playing the role once played by family, community, religion and formal education: not only disseminating information and knowledge, but also shaping values and norms, moulding attitudes and behavior, and influencing the very process of living."
(Joseph 2005)

Despite all of this information there is a significant void that remains unfilled. This void could be filled by peer-produced information that is subject to peer review, as well as greater support for youth media and arts platforms, more civics education and better information and coverage during elections.

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more, more, more: making
information on politics
more usable, more
diverse and engaging

“ The challenge for many online resources for young people is that
they are created as separate websites ”

Albrow's Resource

proposal 3

CASE STUDY 4

To (re)engage young people with politics you need to feed better, more diverse and more engaging information directly into the environment. To overcome young people's natural scepticism, information needs to be depoliticised and safe. Young people do not respond most effectively to oration, so information is more likely to be effective if it relates to young people directly and is delivered in a way which is comfortable for young people. One way of doing this is by utilising the physical and digital social networks young people construct around themselves.

It is a given that information needs to be more available. A few observations about the informational consumption of young people clearly indicates the direction that political information should be taking. The Vibewire report into young people and the media noted that young people are moving away from newspapers and TV news as sources of information, and towards the internet in droves [Moss et al 2004, p87]

Like young people, many political organisations have embraced the flexibility of digital technologies in delivering their political agendas. All the major parties operate regularly updated websites, e-democracy projects online and newsletters, which have been running since about 1994.

But the issue has counterturned in this instance. There is so much information online with so many agendas and so much questionable legitimacy, much of it in a tone which most young people find alienating, that for young people matters have become confused. It is hard to tell what information is useful and reliable.

What is needed is a reliable source that provides information, analyses information and links to external information. Something that can act as a resource portal. This is what Vibewire's project, Resourcewire, aims to do (see CASE STUDY 4).

RESOURCEWIRE

www.vibewire.net/resourcewire

Resourcewire is about better connecting young people with both the information and the community to assist them to overcome challenges and advance themselves towards their futures.

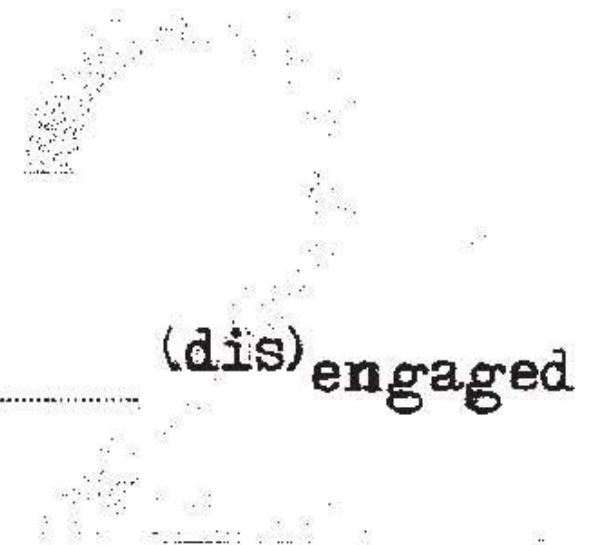
Young people are increasingly using the internet as both a source for and a location of their peer communities, and to access information and resources of relevance to their lives. The challenge for many online resources for young people is that they are created as separate websites. The vast majority of people are either unaware of these sites or unwilling to visit a stand-alone site for drug, health or sexual information. As such there is a need for this information to be packaged and presented in the context of a wider site dealing with a diversity of youth issues and interests. Vibewire.net is that site.

In providing health, legal and educational resources as part of the Vibewire.net portal, we are providing easier access to these resources for the many young people who won't go looking for them separately, but will benefit from this information. This would allow them to visit the site for film or music or politics, but when they need information they'll know it's there. It's their Resourcewire. It has the added advantage of being available to browse casually. This would not happen for information on a stand-alone web-site without an attached community.

With an integrated peer rating system which will allow consumers of the information to rate information and add comments and 'blurbs' about the information, Resourcewire seeks to merge all the information types outlined above into a dynamic space that is user-driven.

Resourcewire will launch its Health section in 2006.

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more diverse

Not only is there a need for information to be more useful, but also the information needs to be more diverse. This was a desire expressed by a number of young people who responded to the Vibewire young people and the media survey. It is futile pushing for a more diverse mainstream media. In an ideal world young people would be active staff members on mainstream newspapers, newsmagazines, magazines, journals, websites, on the radio and on the television. This would result in more information produced by more writers, from more diverse backgrounds on more topics. But this is unlikely.

Accordingly, young people must make their own media, in a diverse range of mediums (see CASE STUDIES 5 + 6). There are many young people with diverse motivations to publish articles and opinion pieces on issues that they are interested in. As a result, alternative and independent media sources have had to pick up the slack by providing alternative views and opinions to the mainstream media. Spaces like vibewire.net and SYN have emerged to publish young writers and encourage them to publish their own information for each other on diverse topics such as party politics, policy, employment, education, the environment, trade, immigration, indigenous issues/native title, law, sexuality, gender and economics.

But placing this information in an interactive environment where young people can discuss rather than consume ideas, lots of other young people are likely to respond to issues in an environment depoliticised and social enough that they feel comfortable doing so. The result is an open dialogue where young people are presenting ideas and issues which they and other young people are discussing and criticising amongst each other. This engages the much larger group of young people than traditional methods of young people's engagement.

In considering an issue like diversity, it is not only diversity of opinion that is of importance. Diversity of

sources is just as significant, a point that was made by the Department of Family and Community Services, who recently acknowledged that the Federal Government's youth website, the source, was not the place for discussions about government. When asked about the removal of the Talk it Up (forum) section of the site, head of Communications, Richard Volker commented that "now there are quite a few sites out there that do this outside of government. As government there are restrictions on how we could run the website. Now, other non-government sites like Vibewire.net have stepped in to fill that gap, so there's less need for us to serve that role." (personal communications).

Another benefit of such a move is that Vibewire, in being a non-partisan space, for some young people is a non-threatening environment that they are more likely to engage in.

Another area that could benefit from an injection of diversity is the State and Federal Electoral Commissions. The Commissions should also investigate the viability of employing people from other disciplines, such as marketers, advertising managers, community organisers and young people. By including these people on their staff these government bodies will gain a new set of skills and a fresh set of ideas on how to achieve their educational role. Proper targeted campaigns can be devised and implemented using grass roots methods of information distribution and delivered by young people to other young people. This helps alleviate the automatic withdrawal that many young people, particularly secondary school adolescents have when presented with speakers who they do not relate to such as bureaucrats.

The AEC should also examine the possibility of funding alternative youth coverage of election campaigns (see CASE STUDY 10). Mainstream election coverage is both written in a style which does not attract younger readers but rarely focuses on the issues of most relevance to young voters. Apart from trotting out the tradition "young people are apathetic" stories each election campaign the mainstream media mostly ignores younger voters, who do not comprise a coherent bloc which can swing

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election results and are therefore of no interest. Election coverage written by-and-for young people can present critical news and information in a more accessible way, and provide both a diversity of opinion and a range of practical information about enrolment, parties, platforms and voting, to help young voters understand and engage in election campaigns.

CASE STUDY 5

INTERFACE ANTHOLOGY + OTHER PRINT PROJECTS

www.vibewire.net/interface

INTERFACE, an anthology of new youth perspectives on contemporary political, cultural and personal issues was a print publication published by Vibewire Youth Services in 2004. It was a collection of some of the best writing by Australian young people from 2004. Ranging in scope from critiques of government policy to discussions of sexuality, with a powerful collection of prose and poetry in between, the Interface anthology shows the diversity of young people's opinions from throughout the Australian community.

Included in the works were articles by Filint Blerise, Zach Alexopoulos, Rachel Furnari, Dee Jefferson, Antony Loewenstein, Ben Eltham, Tom Dawkins and Katanna Konkoly. These 23 works by writers under thirty express some of the most powerful and compelling ideas of our generation.

Vibewire is currently preparing for the second **INTERFACE** anthology, using a new, collaborative content production submissions process where young writers team up with industry professionals to develop their article before publication.

Reelife Short Film Festival is a festival of youth filmmaking and ideas. It is run entirely by and for people 25 years and under. But unlike the 300 or so other film festivals in Australia at the moment, Reelife is different. It utilises the short film festival as a forum specifically for youth expression and ideas. It is a platform on which young people can project their concerns, their issues and their achievements.

Reelife is less about showcasing commercially viable and technically outstanding films, and more about showing films that deal strongly with issues and perspectives of Australia's young people, something that rarely graces the silver screens of large commercial cinemas.

As a rule young people have little access to or control over mainstream media or their portrayal in the media. Film is by far no exception to this rule. In this environment, the question

becomes, 'how do young people get heard on the issues that are important to them and to their diverse communities?' Reelife is one answer.

The vision for Reelife is to canvass a wide range of short films that reflects the cultural, socio-economic and geographic diversity of young Australians, and then tour different programs regionally and nationally. It aims to be a channel for young people's diverse voices.

This short film competition represents young Australians taking control of their society's most popular medium and (re)using it to present and define their own culture and concerns.

As of 2006, Reelife will also encompass an online video platform to give international, 24 hour access to the films of young Australians.

Diversity is more than additional voices; it need also me in more diverse mediums. Young people engage with a multitude of mediums for transferral of information – the internet, magazines and newspapers, film, radio, television, telephonic digital content services – a point recognised by HREOC in *Rights of Passage* report, which engaged young people through surveys, focus groups, an essay competition and an art competition. Gareth Boylan, project officer for the report noted that "the survey had a fantastic methodology, but was quite dry and a bit inaccessible...they really went for small discussions in focus groups...and we had some amazing responses to the competitions."

These are the mediums young people utilise to express themselves, and therefore, these mediums should supply all information young people require, including political information (see CASE STUDIES 5 + 6).

CASE STUDY 6

REELIFE SHORT FILM FESTIVAL

www.vibewire.net/reelife

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some thoughts on how young people engage
with party politics.

CASE STUDY 7

STRAIGHT OUT OF BRISBANE/VIBEWIRE VIRTUAL THINK TANK 2004

www.vibewire.net/socb/04/0011

As part of the Straight Out Of Brisbane Ideas Program for 2004, Vibewire co-hosted a series of three panels which made up the SOOB Virtual Think Tank. The panel ideas were lifted from the program that was to be held during the festival a month after the think tank. The idea was to broaden the audience and engage more people than could be physically present in Brisbane in December. It also acted as a lead up event to the broader Ideas Program.

The panels were:

- * "You can't govern a nation by Google!": the future of ideas online" which explored new technologies such as peer-to-peer and their impact on social organisation
- * "Copyright Copywrong": which was an introduction to the latest tactics for rescuing the worn and fluffy creatures of intellectual capital and pounding out the question: 'can you keep your intellectual property rights and share them too?'

- * "What's on the cards: future agendas for change": which was an exploration of the result of political domination, and the other people who have plans for Australia.

Speakers included:

- * Alex Burns, Senior Researcher, Smart Internet Technology Cooperative Research Centre and editor, disinfo.com
- * Elliott Bledsoe, team member, Creative Commons Australia
- * Damian Lewis, webmaster, Queensland Government's youth engagement site Generate and member of Paralympic
- * Sam de Silva, video maker
- * John Sutton, lecturer in Communication, University of Newcastle
- * James Arvanitakis, coordinator, The Commons Institute
- * Graham Young, Chief Editor, On Line Opinion
- * Mark Davis, author of *Gangland: Cultural Ethics and the New Generationism*

The discussion forums were later published as a (now well-published magazine) entitled *(a) novel of ideas*: excerpts from the SOOB virtual think tank. It was licensed under a Creative Commons ShareAlike license, meaning it was able to be reproduced easily for wider dissemination of the ideas. It was also distributed as part of the SOOB Ideas Program during the festival in Brisbane.

The zine is available from the Undergrowth Digi-zines website (http://www.undergrowth.org/a_novel_of_ideas)

more engaging

The advantage of the internet is that it has less production costs than other media outlets, making it more substantiable. Also it is a more readily adaptable medium which, as Ludbrook notes, young people now are more acutely aware of post modern ways of negotiating information. They are sceptical of sources of information. They examine content and accept or reject information. They carefully select and subtly change information to fit their understanding and interpretative framework. This kind of informational engagement needs a medium that is flexible enough to be regularly updated, edited and altered. Vibewire is an illustration in point of this fact.

Many young people have never considered or are not interested in publishing articles and opinion pieces. That does not mean they are not concerned with the subject matter of these issues. By developing spaces that publish more useful and diverse information, and fusing that with multiple layers of interacting with the information, the result is an environment of discussion rather than presentation of information; a space where people read information, comment on it, criticise it, analyse it and generally engage with it. Vibewire's use of integrated commenting software as well as informal publishing methods such as a forum and blogging technology provide other ways of engaging with the content published on Vibewire.net

Taking a step away from publishing, other outlets for engaging young people exist. Seminars, screenings with workshops, roundtables and panel discussions all provide a space in which young people can be involved in discussions. SOOB's ideas program (see CASE STUDY 7) serves as a good example. Another, more multi-platform example is Sanctuary, which was a print publication, online resource manual and a series of panels (see CASE STUDY 8). Also see the recent VSU think tank hosted on Vibewire.net

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CASE STUDY 8

VSU THINK TANK

SANCTUARY + ONLINE PANELS

in partnership with Sanctuary

Vibewire also hosted a series of online panels around Sanctuary, a mini mag publication distributed nationally through AvenirCard on multiculturalism and immigration and its place in the Australian identity. Along with the print publication, Sanctuary was an online event encompassing written articles and guest-led online discussions. The articles had links to forums space to encourage conversations around the issues being addressed by the articles. Such discussions included:

- ★ "Migrant Past, Migrant Present, And the future?": which was an exploration of existing immigration policy and alternative futures of immigration
- ★ "Creating the great Australian multi identity": and unravelling of identity and multiculturalism in Australia
- ★ "The Personal is Political": a space for anecdotal experiences of multicultural Australia

Speaker included:

- ★ The Hon Laurie Ferguson, Shadow Minister for Immigration
- ★ Mira Wroblewski, human rights and environmental activist
- ★ Tom Nilsson, economist
- ★ Thao Pham, Vietnamese immigrant of the Western Young People's Independent Network (WYPIN)
- ★ Thao Nguyen, Youth Chair of the Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW, past Australian Youth Representative to the United Nations General Assembly
- ★ Andrea Loncarevic, Croatian immigrant

- ★ Dongee Sun, co-founder, Honey Roasted TV
- ★ Alana Giles, journalist, National Indigenous Times
- ★ Dylan Smith, National Youth Convenor for the Australian Republican Movement, Chair of the Queensland Committee of the Foundation for Young Australians
- ★ Sai Aun fai, Burmese political activist who immigrated to Australia

Sanctuary included a two-part Resource Guide. The first part was a guide on multiculturalism outlining the history of Australian multicultural policy, ethnic and racial discrimination, assimilation theory and multiculturalism as it happens now. The second was a guide on immigration that outlined the role of immigration and emigration, refugees and asylum seekers, immigration services and organisations and a history of Australian immigration policy including an analysis of The White Australia Policy.

Sometimes issues that affect young people come around that are not only contentious but complicated. To address such issues, Vibewire began running virtual think tanks (in a similar vein to the SOOB Think Tank) to provide a space where multiple opinions on the same topic could be published as a series to allow for multi-lateral discussion. Each article is clearly marked as part of the think tank to maintain continuity and flow between them.

The first think tank was around the proposed Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU) issue. Topics covered by the VSU Think Tank included:

- ★ an overview of VSU by Ioby Brennan, former President of University of Sydney Union ("the calm before the storm")
- ★ an analysis of the future of student media under VSU by Elliott Bledsoe ("The Final Editorial: the grim future for student media under Voluntary Student Unionism") and Tim Norton, co-editor of Rabelais ("The Future of Rabelais")
- ★ an exploration of the economic rationale behind VSU by Matt Mier, Industrial and Research Officer, National Union of Students ("More than the price of a sausage roll") and Zack Alexopoulos, Vibewire's economics columnist ("Moving out of the first person")
- ★ Tim Williams, student media writer, presented the potential social and community ramifications of VSU ("Unis are communities: it's compulsory") and Aparna Rao, President of the ANU Student's Association explores the non-political side of VSU ("Morality, Democracy and Another Way")
- ★ a feminist critique of VSU by Isabelle Barrett Meyering, Women's Officer at University of Sydney, NSW Women's Officer, National Union of Students (NSW Branch) ("For women, it's worth fighting VSU")
- ★ lebediah Cole, former UNSW Student Guild Secretary and Treasurer ("Power, Choice and Factions: A VSU Story"), Joe Stella, Editorial Director, The Student Leader, former editor of harunka ("Good Thing We're Forced to Join") and Tim Train ("Why VSU is good for you") pounded out the potential benefits of VSU

Most of the articles in the Think Tank were highly commented on. Some gained comments as long or longer than the published article.

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STRAIGHT OUT OF BRISBANE FESTIVAL 2004 IDEAS PROGRAM

www.straightoutofbrisbane.com/ideas

The SOOB Ideas Program was designed to explore issues emerging from Brisbane's intellectual undergrowth, drawing on the energies of independent thinkers who don't mind getting their hands (and minds) dirty putting great ideas into action. The program was about uncovering emerging ideas people and letting them loose on 2004's most interesting issues. It was a jam-packed program of workshops, screenings, hypotheticals, creative collaborations, debates, rants and panels. The program includes speakers such as:

- ★ Antony Loewenstein, Sydney Morning Herald webdiarist, Australasian editor of Znet
- ★ James Arvanitakis, coordinator of the UTS Research Initiative on International Activism and founder of The Commons Institute
- ★ Marni Cordell, co editor of Spinach7
- ★ David Morgan, Senior Reporter, Channel 9's A Current Affair
- ★ Professor Brian Fitzgerald, Head of School, QUT Law School, project leader, Creative Commons Australia
- ★ Judith Ireland, a campaign reporter from the electionTracker project, who was the first youth media reporter to travel on John Howard's campaign bus
- ★ Eve Vincent: co-organiser of the Critical Culture forum series as part of Koxt Wave Festival 2004, co editor of Spinach7, and co-editor of the anthology, Scrapbook to Somewhere
- ★ Tim Blair, prominent conservative blogger who covered the Democratic and Republican Conventions
- ★ Sohail Inayatullah, futurists with 20 years

- ★ experience writing in future studies
- ★ Regad Ahmad, producer of The Fourth Estate program on Sydney community radio station 2SER
- ★ Andrew Hansen + Dominic Knight of The Chaser and CNNNN
- ★ Seteneah More, co-producer and host of radioACTIVE, a national program on politics and black Australia
- ★ Jim Nyland of GRIFFITH REVIEW
- ★ Christian Kerr of Crikey.com.au
- ★ Merlin Luck, refugee protestor from Australian Big Brother 2003
- ★ Dr Kristen Lyons, lecturer on food politics at Griffith University
- ★ Andrew Monk, CEO of the Biological Farmers Federation
- ★ Therese Wilson, corporations law lecturer at Griffith University

The program ran panels on a range of topics including:

- ★ "The New TO" on new ideas for global economics
- ★ "The art and politics of terror": exploring art and political activism
- ★ "TOP! Goes politics": exploring popular culture and political engagement
- ★ "The Business of Social Change": exploring the division between corporations and corporate ethics

The program also ran hands-on workshops and an alt careers day to provide people with information on alternative careers.

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The benefit of such events is that they take political issues and divorce them from politics, which alleviates the automatic reaction of dismissal that many young people have when issues are made explicitly political.

For young people, by and large, tend not to think in traditionally political terms. To them, politics denotes parliament and protest. Young people's interest in political issues comes for the forefront when they're contextualised as issues that they care about, in their terms. The MakePovertyHistory campaign's youth wing has taken this concept and used it to incredibly powerful ends, as the below case study illustrates.



on engaging with young people in the ways they engage themselves, see proposal #1. (re)engage young people in the ways they engage themselves below

on engaging with young people in the ways they engage themselves, see proposal #1. (re)engage young people in the ways they engage themselves below

CASE STUDY 9

STAND + THE OUR GENERATION'S CHALLENGE ROAD TRIP

www.theoaktree.org/roadtrip.pdf

STAND is an advocacy campaign coordinated by the Oaktree Foundation (www.theoaktree.org), designed to give young Australians the opportunity to take action as part of the MakePovertyHistory campaign. Working through schools, universities and community groups, it culminated in simultaneous public displays in Cairns, Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Perth of more than 700 young people on October 24. Standing in silence for 8 minutes in respect of the millennium development goals, the events featured a high school student speaking about each of the eight goals at each location. Varying in age from 12 to 18, these speakers didn't consider what they were doing as political, nor did they – or their parents – consider the event to be a protest. Taking the same principles, the Oaktree Foundation teamed up with the United Nations Youth Association of Australia, World Vision's Vision Generation and the

MakePovertyHistory campaign to coordinate a road trip of more than 200 young people to Canberra to talk to politicians, bureaucrats and above all each other about combating world poverty. Fewer than 10% of the participants had ever met an MP, and the majority had never been to Canberra. In their time in Canberra they met with more than 50 MPs and Senators, with every young person able to meet with at least two MPs/Senators. These young people were engaging with democracy in the truest sense of the word. They chose to act directly and in person, giving those involved an immediate sense of achievement and interaction of having done something. But they didn't consider themselves to have done anything political. Rather, they perceived themselves to have simply shared their views and interests with the people who they felt could do something about them.



on engaging with young people in the ways they engage themselves, see proposal #1. (re)engage young people in the ways they engage themselves below

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CASE STUDY 10

ELECTIONTRACKER

www.electiontracker.net

forms, along with online forums offering visitors the chance to question representatives of the major parties.

The project utilised and developed the skills of a core team of 10 editors, project and tech coordinators, provided the four election 'Trackers' with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, as well as giving 30 other young writers the chance to develop their skills in a challenging and very public forum and have their voices heard on the issues which matter to them.

The four trackers were:

- ★ Tim Martyn (tracking Mark Latham), tracker and policy and research assistant in the community sector
- ★ Hailey Baldwin (tracking Mark Latham), tracker and contributor to FUEL
- ★ Judith Ireland, tracker, assistant editor and pulse columnist
- ★ Dan Stapleton, tracker

The intelligent and well-written commentary produced by the Trackers proved that young people are capable of thinking and communicating about politics in erudite and engaging ways, and have a voice worthy of respect. Via a set of partnerships with community and government radio stations 4ZZZ Brisbane, 2SER Sydney, RRR-FM Melbourne, Edge Radio Hobart, Radio Adelaide, RTR-FM Perth, SBS Radio's Alchemy and Radio National we were able to reach many tens of thousands of listeners and keep them better informed about what was happening on the campaign trail as well as provide positive role-models and imagery of young people getting involved in political activity.

These case studies are examples of ways existing organisations are finding new and innovative ways of engaging young people in discussions about the things that affect their lives. They illustrate the dual reality of political engagement for young people: that young people are interested in political issues and that many do not engage in party politics.

CASE STUDY 10 details two Vibewire projects that aimed to (re)engage young people with the political process. These projects were electionTracker, which saw young people reporting on the 2004 Federal Election campaign, and budgetTracker which allowed young writers to analyse the 2005 budget.

Importantly, these projects turned overtly political events into non-threatening and engaging spaces which discussions around the two events could take place.

During the 2004 Federal Election Vibewire Youth Services ran electionTracker, which sent four young reporters (or 'Trackers') out on the campaign trail travelling with John Howard and Mark Latham and reporting back twice-daily to www.electionTracker.net about their experiences and the issues of the day.

A group of over 30 highly commended applicants from around the country also submitted regular stories to the site, so that frequently as many as ten stories were published each day. These stories were a mix of news, commentary, policy analysis, satire and personal blogging. The site also encompassed voting and enrolment information, information on major parties, Q&As with candidates and MPs, frequently asked questions, links, satire, email-a-politician

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BUDGETTRACKER

BudgetTracker provided intelligent, considered and accessible economic commentary and analysis for young people, written by some of Australia's best and brightest young writers and thinkers.

Launched in 2004, BudgetTracker ran for the second year in 2005, producing relevant reporting and analysis by the Wednesday morning.

The BudgetTracker team consisted an editor and project coordinator, two budget correspondents and five budget reporters. They were:

- ★ Rachel Hris, editor, project coordinator and pulse editor
- ★ Sadie H. Huxford, budget correspondent and journalist
- ★ Nicholas Montgomery, budget correspondent and journalist
- ★ Tim Brillee, budget reporter and Associate Lecturer at ANU
- ★ Ryan Marshall, budget reporter and institutional risk and governmental policy analyst for the Centre for International Risk
- ★ Matt Meir, budget reporter and Vhewire politics writer
- ★ Scott Richardson, budget reporter and law/journalism student
- ★ Symmie Swil, budget reporter and law/commerce student

BudgetTracker also included a comprehensive budget FAQ

The benefit of projects such as these is that they not only generate alternative media on political issues and give opportunities for young people to have a voice on issues related to politics, but they also produce engaging, informative and entertaining content on political matters. The nature of this information makes it more attractive to young people, and importantly, makes it more accessible to young people.

An ongoing electionTracker style project would have enormous benefits for young voters as well as delivering enormous training benefits for young journalists and writers, as would support for BudgetTracker.



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SAME OL', SAME OL':
TRADITIONAL OUTLETS FOR
ENGAGEMENT ARE UNENGAGING

There are existing outlets for young people to be involved in the political process. There are youth political organisations, for example:

- ★ explicitly party political organisations such as Young Labor, Young Liberal, Young Nationals, and Young Australian Democrats;
- ★ United Nations affiliated organisations;
- ★ Youth Advisory Councils;
- ★ youth groups, youth action groups and lobby groups; and
- ★ Youth Parliaments.

Young people can get onto the National Youth Roundtable, or various advisory and lobby groups that have a direct relationship with governments, but it is important to recognise that these outlets only cater to a certain kind of young person.

There are also a range of non-government organisations ranging from large NGOs such as UNESCO, World Vision and Oxfam to small, localised organisations that are also active on policy issues. But again, these types of organisations only appeal to one group of young people.

For the rest, most see little value in participating with those organisations. Many see them as rigid and bureaucratic, producing few real outcomes. Such organisations play an important role in youth engagement, but they are far from representative of the entire youth body.

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The politically motivated young people, the Young Australian of the Year, Youth Ambassadors, the Bachelor of Politics students on campus, Student Councils that organise on party political lines, they all represent only one group of young people.

It is not a bad thing that some young people are explicitly political in their engagement, for that is an important rule that young people need to play in the political arena if youth issues are to count for anything. But there are indirect and unintentional repercussions with these organised ways of being politically engaged.

Before looking at how this category of youth engagement fits within the broader context of youth engagement, some attention should be drawn to the ways the organisations within the category operate.

party political, governmental and institutional organisations for young people

For young people under voting age the only outlet for engagement with the political process is to become a member of a political party or affiliated youth organisation centric to a political party. Organisations such as Young Labor, Young Liberal and Young Australian Democrats do exist in some areas of the country. Such organisations, all of which promote a similar missions:

- ★ to educate young people on political process
- ★ to encourage and support young people in getting involved and active

- ★ to give young people input into the politics of the party to which they are affiliated
- ★ to represent young people in the party and in the community

The major party youth organisations also prioritise campaigning for party endorsed candidates in local, State and Federal elections.

But for a lot of young people, this option is not preferable. Many young people do not like the perceived need to become a formal member of a political organisation in order to speak on political matters. Other do not know that such organisations even exist.

“Many young people do not like the perceived need to become a formal member of a political organisation in order to speak on political matters.”

Another option for engaging in political matters is institutional and governmental organisation that are focused on youth issues. In Queensland the primary governmental organisation is the Queensland Youth Council which is part of the Youth Participation Strategy and is responsible to the Minister responsible for youth.

In general, the same young people often show up in multiple of these locations. As a result these consultative mechanisms don't deliver a representative youth voice, and that most young people neither know of their existence nor feel comfortable trying to enter this space.



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youth-run, government initiatives + events

Guides to Voting are an important tool for young people to make decisions at election time, but they are not necessarily the best way of ensuring that decision is an informed one.

To be more successful they should not be youth-run, government-run youth initiatives but rather youth-run, government initiatives. And yes, there is more than a semantic difference between the two. The former is, as Eltham puts it, run by "hard-working bureaucrats" whereas the latter is designed to be supported by governments but operated by young people.

Events should also have more youth involvement in the lead up. Committees of young people should be established to help organise youth events and periods of public consultation with young people should precede planning to gather information through various means about what young people want at 'their' events.

For some young people the scope of political issues is so overwhelming that it puts them off. The recent Industrial Relations Reforms serves to illustrate the point:

Policy areas such as economics, national security and law all have the potential to alienate young people by their very nature. These policy areas as complicated webs of terminology, knowledge and procedural and cultural processes, that all act to restrict full access to the discourse they generate.

The volume of information that needs to be consumed to discuss these areas is substantial and is often complicated. The result is that they become daunting.

The result is a two-tier system of disincentive to become engaged in these discourses:

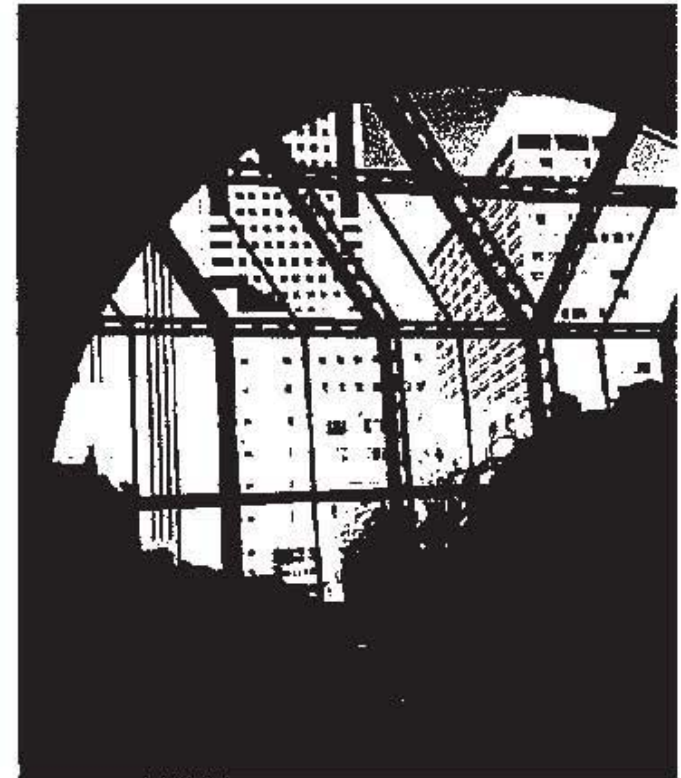
- 1 debates in these areas in mainstream outlets become dominated by experts who have an in-depth understanding of the topic
- 2 the volume and nature of information required to become an expert or to wield expert knowledge requires a high level of commitment and time which most young people cannot afford, economically or time-wise

The problem with expert information is that it can sometimes be imparted with underlying agendas. As a result many young people may be sceptical or critical of the integrity of information provided by experts.

In spaces dominated by young people, for example universities and online forums for young people, the discussion tends to be dominated by young people with similar expert knowledge. This results in an intimidation effect, where young people without that level of

knowledge fear exposing their naivety, inexperience, lack of knowledge and opening themselves to ridicule by those who do have that knowledge

On gaining education in expert fields, the lack of access is compounded by the existing issues related to access to education such as sexism, racism, ethnicity, sexuality and socio-economic status.



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If young people had a reliable, well known and accessible body of information on these kinds of topics they could gain the knowledge to be involved in policy debates in these kinds of environments.



on the basis of better information for young people on political issues (see proposal 2); more, more, more, making information on policies more useful, more diverse and more engaging.

AusAID: Taking Policy to the People

AusAID, the Australian Government's Agency for International Development, has long faced the daunting task of wanting and needing to explain how Australia's aid budget of more than \$2 billion a year is spent. Aid and development are highly technical fields, with confusion and uncertainty even within the field as how to best explain and understand the field that encompasses thousands of economic, social and political indicators and statistics.

Well aware of this, AusAID's public affairs division has

CASE STUDY 11

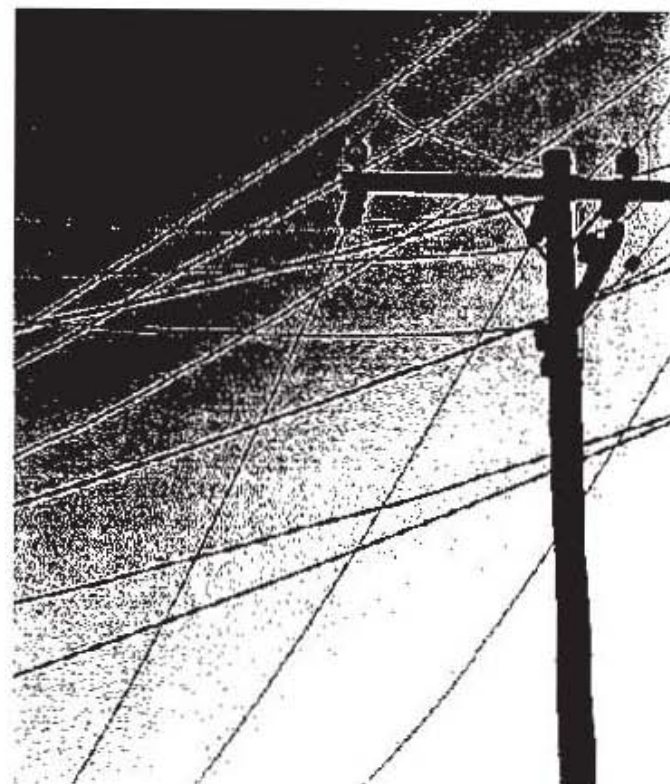
AUSAID

www.ausaid.gov.au

recently initiated a range of initiatives to make aid and development real and relevant for Australians. Through a coordinated and determined campaign, they have rebuilt their website, run public forums on development, held open public consultations on the direction of the agency, filmed a documentary with Channel 10, and worked through schools and education departments to provide professional development on engaging young people in global issues.

In perhaps the boldest move in this area, they agreed to meet twenty delegates from the Our Generation's Challenge Road Trip to talk about the Australian Aid Program and its future. Walking into the room, the first things the AusAID staff suggested was getting rid of the panel discussion setup – tables at the front, behind which officials would sit, and an audience of young people. In its place a large circle was formed, no one behind tables. Nine AusAID staff members attended, and for ninety minutes they took questions and criticisms from the young people present, discussions ranging from the ways in which the government markets the aid program to their engagement of young people in the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYAD) Program, from recognising Indigenous land rights in Papua New Guinea to the OECD DAC's criticism of Australia's over-emphasis on governance as a location of ODA spending.

In follow up conversations with AusAID, they have commended the work of youth-run organisations like the Oaktree Foundation, World Vision's Vision Generation and the United Nations Youth Association for making policy accessible to young people. Moreover, AusAID have indicated, both in words and actions, that Australia's aid program is about more than statistics and outputs. It's about stories and relationships – both on the ground overseas, and here in Australia, between the agency and the Australian public.



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vibewire organisation profile

vision

Vibewire will be the most representative and inclusive forum for Australia's youth - a community where young people access resources, engage in cultural discourse, and empower themselves.

aims

- ★ to provide Australia's youth with a representative forum to express themselves on what ever is important to them
- ★ to provide a broad range of content encompassing issues, entertainment and resources
- ★ foster the skills, competencies and relationship networks of our team
- ★ continually improve and expand as an organisation
- ★ facilitate communication between youth communities and individuals
- ★ encourage active involvement in the exchange of information, empowering youth as active cultural agents

projects

- ★ **Vibewire.net** (www.vibewire.net): Vibewire.net is an online community created by young people for young people - a platform for people's energy and inspiration
- ★ **e-Festival** (www.vibewire.net/efestival): is a conference taken online and democratised, taking the idea of exports presenting papers and flipping it on its head
- ★ **Reelife Short Film Festival** (www.vibewire.net/reelife): is a online festival of youth filmmaking and ideas
- ★ **SquareOne** (www.vibewire.net/squareone): SquareOne is a new generation media and arts project and enterprise hub for Sydney
- ★ **electionTracker** (www.electiontracker.net): youth-created coverage of the 2004 Federal Election
- ★ **print projects**: Vibewire's print projects stream prints a range of publications such as *INTERFACE: an anthology of new youth perspectives on contemporary political, cultural and personal issues* (www.vibewire.net/interface), *Sanctuary*, a mini-mag of stories by young migrants and refugees from non-English speaking backgrounds (www.vibewire.net/sanctuary) and *Go*, an alternative magazine about travel not tourism (www.vibewire.net/go)

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ways young people engage

offline networking

Given the techno-hype that saturates rhetoric around young people's social arrangements these days, one thing that often gets overlooked when exploring young people's social habits is the way young people network themselves offline. Sporting clubs, interest groups, community and youth groups, university disciplines, university clubs and societies, art collectives even as informal things as who young people recreate with, they all illustrate the highly-networked way that young people related to and organise themselves and each other.

Taking the example of the creative and youth sectors, there's a running in-joke in the creative and youth sectors about how "inbred" they are. This is more than a self-conscious reflection on the community than it is realistic. Yet it has some truth, as the youth sector is established in multi-layered networks, where people know many others.

Nationally, there are hundreds of arts organisations ranging in size, motivations, aims and independence from government. Each organisation is a network of creators/agents collaborating for a specific ends. Between these organisations/networks there is a multi-layered network of people who are members of, have involvements with, or are somehow attached to other organisations which ties individuals and organisations together into larger networks. Equally, sections of these highly-networked communities are then linked into broader communities/networks.

Unfortunately politicians, political parties and even (although not to the same extent) government departments, offices and programs are not part of these networks. If these institutions wish to (re)engage young people they need to find better ways of injecting themselves or their information into these social structures, or they will always continued to be considered 'outsiders' by many.

the information economy

Technology is a fundamental dimension of social change. Societies evolve and transform themselves through a complex interaction of cultural, economic, political and technological factors. So technology has to be understood within this multidimensional matrix." Manuel Castells in *Informationalism and the Network Society*

There is no doubt that the internet has created new ways of creating and engaging with information, and young people are one of the fastest adapters to technological change. To deny the existence and the weight of the information economy would not only be futile, but idiotic. Value has been added to information in this age like no other. The key feature of this model is that "intellectual and creative ideas [are] packaged and distributed in different forms over information networks." (Venturelli 2001, p5)

The information economy is the term given to this shift to information-based production. Knowledge soon overtook industrial production as the centre of economic activity. Technology and innovation began to be viewed as an



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important tool in the development of business, but not in the sense of technology itself, but rather the way technology is used. As Shalini Venturoli says:

"...wealth-creation in an economy of ideas is derived far less than we imagine from the technological hardware and infrastructure, since eventually most nations, such as China, will make investments in large-scale infrastructure technologies. Rather, it is dependent upon the capacity of a nation to continually create content, or new forms of widely distributed expression, for which they will need to invest in creative human capital throughout the economy and not merely in gadgets and hardware." [Venturoli 2001, p5]

Ideas were made into currency, with entire companies, such as Google, forming solely around the creation, organisation and access/distribution of ideas. This information exchange is supported by "a new technological paradigm" that, as Manuel Castells [2001, p160] puts it, boasts three features that make it unique:

- 1 information technologies have self-expanding processing capacity in terms of volume, complexity and speed;
- 2 they have a recombining ability; and
- 3 they have distributional flexibility.

What results is an online environment that able to be reproduced, reworked and redistributed in a multitude of ways; a space where, with the right tools, anyone is a 'producer', both a creator and a consumer of information. This creates a direct relationship with the information one consumes, allowing them to be completely immersed in the environment, to be a part of it

informal digital networks

There is no denying the existence of the information economy, but as *WIRED* magazine's Daniel A Pink says, "[I]llogical, linear, analytic thinking remains indispensable. But it's no longer enough." [Pink 2005, p70] Taking an interesting neurological approach, Pink cleaves a line between the sequential, literal and analytical information economy and the contextual, emotional and artistic concept economy. Like the brain there are two distinct hemispheres of economic production. And like the hemispheres of the brain, these economies exist in duality: two distinct spheres of production independent while interdependent. There are strong links that bind these economies that facilitate crucial information flow from the creative sector back into the information sector and technological infrastructure flow into the creative sector. The very notion expounded by influential thinkers on the internet such as Lawrence Lessig [see Lessig 2002].

But what does this mean for young people in cyberspace? Amidst the formalised information channels online, another phenomenon has taken place. Informal, personal social networks have sprung up catering to local, national and international audiences and operating as generic spaces, gaming platforms such as World of Warcraft and Counterstrike, artistic communities like DeviantArt, literacy rings or issue-specific communities such as Vibewire.net. On these sprawling networks the most common age group is 13 to 25. Each community is more developed and complex than merely information deposits, they are comprised of many integrated elements distinct in formality, creative content and degree of personality.

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Mon January 30th -> Sun February 26th



2006



Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

Sat Jan 28th, 2006

National Motorcycle Awareness Ride - Canberra

Thousands of motorcyclists will ride to Canberra on Saturday, January 28 in support of a celebrity based motorcycle awareness ride to highlight a range of important motorcycle awareness and safety issues.

Following in the footsteps of the famous Celebration Rides in 1996 and 2001, this national awareness ride will bring together a cross section of the whole motorcycle community in Australia in order to bring positive public attention to the importance of motorcycling and making drivers 'more aware'.

Organised this time by Bikers Australia, the details will be similar to previous rides with a road closure on the Federal Highway and a mass ride through the cheering throng of local residents to New Parliament House. It is expected that members of the Federal Government will be present and already has the support of Federal MP Jackie Kelly.

January

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Significant Events

Wed Sep 13th, 2006

Netrider Annual GP Dinner



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Ride Classifications

- Class 1: Beginners
- Class 2: Sight Seeing
- Class 3: Intermediate
- Class 4: Experienced
- Class 5: Advanced
- Touring 1: Intermediate
- Touring 2: Experienced

These are approximate and optional guides to assist in classifying rides.

Popular Meet Points

VIC
Cranbourne, McDonalds
Ferntree Gully, 7-11 Store
Lilydale, McDonalds
Nunawading, McDonalds
Rowville, Mobil Servo
The Basin, Carpark

	Mouth
Adelaide	119.5
Brisbane	110.5
Melbourne	120.4
Perth	114.4
Sydney	115.0

Previous Awareness rides to the nation's capital have secured an enormous amount of positive motorcycle coverage in the mainstream media across Australia. Indeed the last Celebration ride featured prominently on news bulletins and significantly featured on the front page of the Canberra Times, as well as other papers and national motorcycle magazines.

As with the Celebration Rides, this National Motorcycle Awareness Ride is expected to attract a lot of positive public attention to motorcycle safety and awareness issues as well as to motorcycling itself. Get your friends to come and make this the biggest ever.

Ride to Canberra details:

Canberra:

North Canberra Road Closure from 11.30am. Depart North Canberra at 1:00pm for Parliament House

Victoria:

Depart 10am Friday January 27, from Elizabeth St. Travel via Hume Highway.

NSW:

Liverpool: Depart 9.30am Saturday January 28th from Cross Roads Truck Stop Hume Highway Casula to Canberra.

Orange: Depart Sam Laws Motorcycles 8am

Queensland:

Depart 9am QLD Time Thursday 26th from Willowbank Raceway, Cunningham Hwy near Ipswich. Ride via New England Hwy. Email qldvmc@hotmail.com for information on QLD ride.

Tasmania:

Depart 4pm Launceston's Richardsons Harley Davidson, Bass Highway, Prospect, ride will travel to Devonport to "Spirit of Tasmania" ferry overnight January 26 to join Melbourne. Book Spirit of Tasmania on 132010. Contact lennards@southcom.com.au for Tassy ride details

Westgate Pwy, Shell Servo

NSW

Berowra, Mobil Servo
Lane Cove, Shell Servo
Loftus, Oval Carpark
McGraths Hill, McDonalds
Narellan, McDonalds
Stanwell Tops, Bald Hill

QLD

Herston, BP Servo
The Gap, Mobil Servo
Yatala, OP Servo

SA

Lynton, Windy Point

WA

ACT

Belconnen, Gull Servo
Watson, Shell Servo

NT

Please CONTACT US to add a popular meet place to this list. All map images courtesy of Virtua Map

*All rides to Canberra are informal with emphasis on safety. Road rules apply and everyone sets their own pace.

Accommodation: Phone 'The Carotel' 02 6241 1377
(North Canberra Road Closure from 11.30am)

For more details, contact:

Greg Hirst
Organising Committee Chairman.
02 9635 0761 ph
canberraride2006@hotmail.com

(Added on Thu Jun 9th, 2005 by Brian Dunscombe)

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