

Evaluation Report

Illawarra and South Coast Regional Youth Services Conference 2005

Introduction

The 2005 conference was held at Craigieburn Bowral on October 27 and 28. In total over 100 people were registered to attend with 45 delegates electing to stay overnight. Delegates came from a wide section of the Youth Services industry and comprised representatives from government and non government agencies working with young people aged 12-25 years. The theme of this years conference centred around '**Stressing less**' the conference packs reflected this theme with various items to assist a worker to de stress.

Conference Aims

- To provide an opportunity to work together and network, to meet workers sharing this work in Government and non-Government agencies and to enhance and extend the networks that enhance the services provided to the clients and to show how real partnerships work at a local level.
- To identify partnership opportunities that will enhance local service provision to young people at a local level.
- To provide an opportunity to discuss new ideas, share resources and to become inspired and energised in the work.
- To provide an opportunity to work together on issues in the field and come to a common understanding and develop strategies to address the issues.
- To deliver training to staff that responds to the changing needs and issues in the field of youth work.

Conference organisation process.

The seventh Annual Illawarra and South Coast Regional Youth Services conference was organised by people representing various organisations across the Illawarra and Shoalhaven. Conference organising committee members come from a diverse range of youth services and include professionals who are employed in youth specific housing, health, development, protection and activity/ recreational organisations. The conference organisation can be divided into four specific stages.

Stage one:

- Initial research of youth agencies to identify training needs as identified by workers in the local and regional youth organisations.
- Collation of response directs what training is to be organised.
- Submissions for sponsorship.
- Development of a budget and conference plan

Stage two:

- Organisation of keynote speakers and training workshops.

- Development of the conference day and evening program
- Organisation of venue
- Website organisation
- Delegate collection and collation records
- Invoicing and receipting.

Stage three:

- Overseeing conference organisation over a two day period.
- Assisting delegates, workshop trainers and conference venue staff

Stage four:

- Evaluation of conference
- Planning for next annual conference

Evaluation methodology

The conference was evaluated utilising a variety of methods.

- Formative evaluation occurred through use of direct questions to delegates and conference venue organisers.
- A formal evaluation survey was returned by delegates who gave comments and responded to Likert- scale questions. Likert-scale responses were identified as most useful to investigate how delegates rated conference program, workshops, venue, food, accommodation, location and conference packs. An evaluation prize consisting of overnight accommodation at the venue was utilised to encourage delegates to return completed evaluations.
- Evaluation also occurred at an evaluation forum held in November 2005 by members of the organising committee.

Evaluation results:

Total returned evaluations = **60**.

Workshops were capped at a maximum 20 delegates.

Written Comments:

Comments received fell either into a negative or positive category and are summed up on the following table

TABLE 1.0 Evaluation comments received from Delegates 2005 conference

Positive	Negative
<i>Love stress packs, very informative</i>	<i>Food too gourmet</i>
<i>Well coordinated conference (x3)</i>	<i>More interaction needed</i>
<i>Food, Area & venue good(x3)</i>	<i>Workshop first in best dressed an issue</i>
<i>Worthwhile attending (x2)</i>	<i>Increase workshop variety</i>
<i>Great venue, informative and fun (x2)</i>	<i>Map and directions need improvement</i>
<i>Networking was excellent (x2)</i>	<i>Workshop areas need to be looked at</i>
<i>Discussion time good</i>	<i>More speakers would be great</i>
<i>Loved keynote speaker (Faye) very inspirational</i>	<i>. Coolangatta a better venue for interaction (x3)</i>
<i>Great finish to the 2 days</i>	<i>More toilets needed</i>
<i>Staff lovely and helpful</i>	<i>2 hour workshops too long(x3)</i>
<i>Mental health excellent and valuable(x2)</i>	<i>Improve timetabling needed</i>
<i>Very informative (x2)</i>	<i>Local Wingecarribee services should be more represented</i>

TABLE 2.0 Summary of responses -day one 27th October

ACTIVITY	Excellent	V. Useful	Good	Not Useful	Waste of time	Total returned Eval.
1.1 – GLBT issues & impacts- where can support be accessed Presenters: Young Rainbow Forum members	1	4	3	0	0	8
1.2 –Case Management – getting a better deal for young people. Presenter: Robin Palmer – Coordinator Intensive Family Based Service Burnside	2	5	5	2	0	14
1.3 – Industrial reforms – sector impacts Presenter: Kathy Brooks – ASU	3	2	2	0	0	7
1.4 – Pitfall, Problems and Positives of partnerships Presenter: Viv– Cunningham Smith – Director Barnardos South Coast	3	8	3	2	0	16
2.2 Risk Taking Behaviour Interactive Game. Specifically road testing new interactive game to give feedback to developers	1	3	5	0	0	9
2.3 Motivating and engaging young people and small groups	3	5	7	1	0	16
2.4 What is the role of the youth worker/ ethics behind the position and the passion	2	6	2	0	0	10
2.7 Mental Health Services – who's doing what and what needs to change	8	1	5	1	0	15

Brief Analysis

Table 2.0 shows an overwhelming majority of responses indicate that delegates believed all workshops on day one to be either Very useful, good or excellent. This would seem to indicate that delegates thought the training workshops were able to be practically applied to their work. This is a favourable outcome when compared to conference aims to provide training to meet contemporary professional needs.

A recommendation for 2006 would be to include evaluation of Keynote addresses as formative evaluation of delegates over both days suggested that the Keynote addresses were very useful, interesting and relevant to issues impacting on work.

N.B. - Thank tanks numbered 2.1 Improving practice, 2.5 Industrial issues and 2.6 work with film and music did not run due to poor numbers.

TABLE 3.0 Summary of responses -day two 28th October

ACTIVITY	Excellent	V. Useful	Good	Not Useful	Waste of time	Total returned Eval.
3.1 –Legal responsibilities of youth workers Presenter: Nick Manning	6	2	0	0	0	8
3.2–Accessing ATSI clients. Presenters: Sylvia Campbell & Iriaka Ross – Community Workers from First Step & Illawarra Forum	7	2	0	1	0	10
3.3 – How to be effective with court support + Exploring the victim's compensation labyrinth. Presenters: Travis Flinn and Lucy Houweling	1	7	0	0	0	8
3.4 – Mental Health Part A: depression, anxiety - early intervention through to suicidality Presenter: Faye Jackson – Mental Health Advocate and Educator	19	4	1	0	0	24
4.1 – Mental Health Part B: <i>Prevention, Intervention and recovery from psychotic illness</i> Presenter: Faye Jackson	23	5	1	1	0	30
4.2 – Interactive theatre exploring youth issues Presenter: Nick Higgins and youth	2	3	2	0	0	7
Organisation of conference	Excellent	V good	Good	Fair	Poor	Total
General organisation	33	23	4	1	0	61
Conference registration pack	25	16	8	4	1	54
Access to information about conference	19	16	18	5	0	58
Conference survival packs	31	21	6	2	0	60
Venue	Excellent	V good	Good	Fair	Poor	Total
Food	41	15	3	3	0	62
Accommodation	12	14	10	1	1	38
Location	33	13	7	2	1	56
Workshop areas	24	13	12	8	0	57

Brief Analysis

Workshops

Table 2.0 indicates that Mental Health workshops (No's 3.4 and 4.1) by far exceeded the maximum workshop numbers capped at 20. This could explain lower evaluations returned for workshops held at the same time. The mental health training series was rated excellent by the majority of participants who attended. This could reflect the contemporary training needs of service providers to affordable mental health training. Again evaluation of workshops demonstrated that participants on day two found the workshops to be either excellent or very useful.

Conference organisation

Again delegates have evaluated favourably however it is noted that access to information about the conference will need to be improved for 2006

Venue

Responses indicate that the venue, food and accommodation were of a high standard. Whereas workshop areas could be improved.

Overview of evaluation meeting.

An evaluation meeting was held on 14 November 2005. Those who attended reflected that the new venue seemed to go well but improvements were needed in the allocating of accommodation and workshop areas. It was also recognised that the registration tables and signs prominently displayed would assist delegates to locate the registration desk. It was discussed that the behaviour of a few delegates was disruptive and could be improved through development of an ethical code of behaviour for conference attendees. It was discussed that Craigieburn, unlike Coolangatta wine estate, cannot hold just the youth services conference at the venue unless the number staying overnight reaches over 70.

Conclusion - Suggestions for Improvement

Overall the conference was very successful. Many improvements are noted for 2006 and they include the following recommendations:

- 1 Improve evaluation form to include keynote speakers.
- 2 Improve signage to and at the venue.
- 3 Improve workshop times and area allocations.
- 4 Improve delegate behaviour code.
- 5 Reassess the need for entertainment.
- 6 Continue to work together as a team to organise training.
- 7 Increase networking in the Wingecarribee & Shoalhaven areas.