

Youth Ethics Framework for Tasmania: A Consultation paper



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April 2012

ynot is the peak body representing the voice of Tasmanian youth

The Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Youth Ethics Steering Committee in the preparation and research of this paper.

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Foreword by Minister for Community Development, Cassy O'Connor MP

The Tasmanian youth sector does great work in our community, supporting and engaging with young Tasmanians, some of whom are among our most vulnerable citizens.

The development of the Youth Ethics Framework is a positive initiative from the youth sector, as it will support workers' daily decision making in meeting the needs of young people.

The draft of the Tasmania Youth Ethics Framework is very accessible as it states plainly how youth workers work with young people, and fully describes the unique ethical aspects of that relationship.

A dedicated group of sector representatives, led by the Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) have worked on the Framework over the past year and have made significant contributions to the development of the consultation paper. This group has included representatives from across Tasmania and from many different parts of the sector.

The non government and government Youth Sector, and young people, are now encouraged to take this opportunity and engage in the consultation process to ensure that the Youth Ethics Framework reflects their needs. The range of feedback requested includes looking at ways of implementing the code in practice, by individuals and organisations.

Once it is finalized, applying this ethical Framework in practice will strengthen the already exceptional work being undertaken by Tasmania's dedicated youth sector. It will also ensure that the young people they work with receive the very highest standard of support, empowering them to be the best that they can be.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "C O'Connor".

Overview

Consultation initiation

The Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) has taken on the responsibility for developing a Youth Ethics Framework, in partnership with many sector representatives and organisations, through a Youth Ethics Working Group (for membership see Appendix 1). The Youth Ethics Working Group have worked together to develop this initial version of a Youth Work Code of Ethics for Tasmania.

There has already been considerable consultation since the Youth Ethics Working Group was formed over 12 months ago, as the group took every opportunity possible to consult with stakeholders on the progress of their work. These consultations included presentations at all Tasmanian Regional group (YAP, NYCC, NWAY) meetings, at the Tasmanian Youth Conference 2011 (TYC), at the YNOT Youth Sector Forum, and in both written and verbal YNOT communications, including in newsletters and reports.

During consultation, the feedback that was received was positive, although not comprehensive. Many of the presentations resulted in additional sector representatives participating in the Youth Ethics Working Group, as well as a number of other representatives providing suggestions on how the framework could be distributed and utilised by the sector.

A code of ethics is a set of statements identifying the unique values that a group holds.

The code does not address how these values translate into behaviour, provide guidelines on how to act in certain circumstances, or set out how behaviour is to be measured.

Background

Currently there is no uniform and enforceable framework in Australia that is concerned with Youth Ethics. However, there has been debate recently about the need for a national code, as evidenced by the online debate coordinated by the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC).

A number of Australian states, such as Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Victoria have designed their own frameworks. These frameworks are largely voluntary and generally not enforceable. The majority of frameworks currently in place in the states are based on 'The Fairbridge Code' of Western Australia.

The concept of a developing a 'Youth Ethics Framework' has been an item of discussion for many years in Tasmania, as it has around Australia.

In October 2010, YNOT hosted a forum on Youth Ethics for the wider youth sector in Tasmania. The forum included a presentation and facilitated discussion by Professor Howard Sercombe, a recognised expert in the field of Youth Ethics. During this forum a number of significant issues and potential actions were identified by participants, both relating to the need for a Youth Ethics Framework for Tasmania, as well as how the case for such a document could be progressed.

At the forum it was agreed that one of the initial steps to furthering the goal of a Youth Ethics Framework would be to form a 'Youth Ethics Working Group'.

The Youth Ethics Working Group convened monthly throughout 2011 to workshop various aspects of current models of ethical codes, to discuss the scope of a code and the experiences of other states and countries, as well as to conduct their own research and contribute to an online blog.

Who is the code of ethics for?

There are several groups of people who are affected by a code of ethics:

- **Youth workers and those who work with or on behalf of young people**
A code of ethics lays out the values to which this group agrees to adhere.
- **Young people**
Their rights and concerns are at the forefront of what youth workers do.
- **Those working with youth workers**
As youth workers often work collaboratively with other sectors, those working with them will gain a greater understanding of what youth workers believe in.

Consultation Objectives and Scope

Objectives

The main objectives of this consultation process are to:

1. Ensure that the wider youth sector have an opportunity to contribute to a Tasmanian Youth Work Code of Ethics
2. Ensure that the Code of Ethics is appropriate and reflects the Tasmanian youth work context

Outcomes

The outcomes from the consultation process will be:

- Greater awareness of a common framework to inform and support decision making around ethical issues relating to young people in Tasmania.
- A better understanding of the role of youth work, noting the differences between youth work and other professions, reinforcing that young people are the focus and primary client of a youth worker.
- Increased professionalism of the Tasmanian youth sector.
- A better understanding of the position of young people within society, as well as how youth workers are able to meet their needs.
- Promotion of the youth sector, including workers' commitment to best practice.

Outputs

The outputs of this consultation process will be:

- A 'consultation outcomes paper' which will inform the final version of the Youth Work Code of Ethics.
- A Youth Work Code of Ethics that meets the needs of the wider Tasmanian youth sector.

Consultation Process

The Youth Ethics Working Group will be responsible for the following activities:

1. Ensuring that consultation has occurred with the wider Tasmanian youth sector in all regions
2. Ensuring that consultation has occurred with Tasmanian young people

The Youth Ethics Working Group itself has consisted of broad sector representation and has brought to the group a diversity of skills, knowledge and experience in developing this framework.

As evidenced by previous consultations, there is widespread sector support for a youth work Code of Ethics in Tasmania. Therefore, this consultation focuses on the content of this proposed version of the Code of Ethics, rather than the issues surrounding the introduction of a code.

Through their work the Youth Ethics Working Group identified and analysed several options for the Youth Work Code of Ethics:

- Adopt an existing framework from another state
- Create an entirely new framework
- Update an existing framework to suit the Tasmanian context and the current time

With advice from Professor Howard Sercombe it was decided that the best course of action would be to enact the third option and update the framework used in the majority of other states, with the additional benefit that in the future they may consider adopting our work.

Consultation and Submission Timelines

Youth Sector Group meetings	
Youth Action Priorities (YAP)	
Northern Youth Coordinating Committee (NYCC)	
North West Action for Youth (NWAY)	
Statewide Youth Collaborative (SYC) group	
Young people	
Other targeted stakeholders	
Submissions	Date
Consultation completed	30 June 2012
Consultation 'outcomes paper' completed	End of July 2012
Consultation 'outcomes paper' distributed	August 2012
Conclusion	
Youth Ethics Steering Committee meet to address feedback	August 2012
Prepare final Youth Work Code of Ethics	September 2012
Distribute final Youth Work Code of Ethics	October 2012

Consultation Topic: Youth Ethics Framework for Tasmania

Executive Summary

1. Primary client

The primary client of the youth worker is the young person.

2. Ecology

Youth workers recognise the impact of ecological and structural forces on young people. The work of youth workers extends to the environment and context in which they live.

3. Equity

Youth workers' practice will be non discriminatory.

4. Empowerment

The youth worker seeks to enhance the power of the young person by beginning with the belief that young people are competent in assessing and acting on their interests.

5. Duty of Care

The youth worker avoids exposing young people to the likelihood of foreseeable harm, injury or exploitation.

6. Anti –Corruption

Youth workers will seek to ensure that no one will advance themselves at the expense of young people.

7. Transparency

The relationship between a youth worker and young person will be open and truthful. The interests of others will not be hidden from young people.

8. Confidentiality

Information provided by young people will be respected, they will be made aware of the limits to confidentiality, and, where possible, their permission sought for disclosure.

9. Cooperation

Youth workers will actively seek to cooperate with others in order to secure the best possible outcomes for young people.

10. Knowledge

Youth workers have a responsibility to keep up to date with the current information, resources, knowledge and practices needed to meet their obligations to young people.

11. Self-awareness

Youth workers will be conscious of their own values and interest and will also be respectful of the values and interests of others.

12. Boundaries

The youth work relationship is a professional relationship with clear boundaries, intentionally limited to protect the young person. Youth workers will behave in a way that is consistent with these boundaries.

13. Self-care

Good youth work practice is consistent with preserving the health and wellbeing of youth workers.

14. Professional awareness

Youth Workers are committed to youth work. Youth workers will be aware of the strengths and diversity of young people and those that support them.

Youth Ethics Framework with Commentary

Prologue

Youth workers aim to empower young people to achieve full membership of the community. The core of youth work practice lies in the relationship with the young person as the primary client, expressed through a commitment to helping young people reach their potential, and promoting their achievements within the wider community. The following statements are informed by this core position.

Commentary

Young people are important contributors to the economic, social and political life of the nation, and have a right to be recognised and included in a meaningful way. Youth work is a particular kind of professional relationship with a young person, rather than just a set of skills or practices.

1. Primary client

The primary client of the youth worker is the young person.

Commentary

Youth workers are accountable to a range of people: funding bodies, peers, management committees, parents, and communities. However, this statement reminds us that the interests and needs of the young person are at the core of the youth work relationship.

Case Example 1

Jane is a youth worker at a school which is led by a principal who continually emphasises that staff must keep in mind students, parents, teachers and the community when it comes to decision making.

Jane is working with Nikki, 16, who lives with her father. Nikki is struggling with the level of control her dad exerts over her, her friendships, her decisions, her social activities and her access to technology.

When Nikki first meets Jane she discloses that she is depressed, feels suicidal at times, and though she loves her Dad, she would really like to live away from home. Soon after Jane meets Nikki, Nikki's Dad calls Jane to talk about his frustrations trying to get Nikki to behave at home. He asks Jane to help him by telling Nikki that he wants the best for her and by letting him know whenever there are incidents at school involving Nikki. Jane feels stuck in the middle. She decides that her first priority as a youth worker is to Nikki, so she consults with the school's Chaplain about "sharing" the casework for this family and allowing him to provide support to Nikki's dad.

Case Example 2

Mark (17) and Dale (29) live in a small, rural community, sharing a caravan as temporary accommodation. They have known each other since Mark was a young teenager, estranged from his family and living on the streets, with Dale often taking on the role of Mark's guardian. They regularly visit the local Community House to access the facilities and receive support from both staff members of the Community House. Billy is the centre's Youth Worker.

Recently, Mark has reconnected with his grandfather who lives in the next township and has begun to stay with him every few days. This has raised some issues between Dale and Mark, with both men seeking support from the Community House staff, depending upon who is on shift. As the Youth Worker, Billy is clear with both men that Mark is his primary client. When approached by Dale, Billy maintains Mark's privacy and best interests, and refers Dale to another worker to discuss his situation.

2. Ecology

Youth workers recognise the impact of ecological and structural forces on young people. The work of youth workers extends to the environment and context in which they live.

Commentary

Although using the term "ecology" in this context might be unfamiliar, this statement simply acknowledges that youth workers are agents of change in a variety of contexts, both with individual young people, and with the societal systems that can cause the problems in the first instance. The lives of young people are influenced by many complex social forces, including how they relate to their peers, family, community and national social and policy contexts, as well as the events happening around them. Youth workers work within this broader context, as well as being concerned about individual change and case management.

Case Example 1

The residents of a rural community have been struggling with the incidence of underage drinking. There have been a number of education sessions held at the local school in an attempt to address the issue. Although young people participate in this approach, there seems to be little actual change to their behaviour. During consultation with young people and other community stakeholders, it is highlighted that there is excessive drinking in the adult community and a heavy drinking culture within the local sporting and other community groups. A working group of community members including young people is formed to highlight and address a broader binge drinking culture within the community.

Case Example 2

The Government has recently raised the cost of driving assessment tests and driving licence. While it is a policy not directly aimed at young people, young people make up the majority of the group of first-time license holders, so will be disadvantaged by this change as these costs are in addition to novice driver lessons and buying one's first car. Youth workers need to be aware of such contexts, particularly how policies can inadvertently affect young people, during their engagement with clients.

3. Equity

Youth workers' practice will be non discriminatory.

Commentary

All young people have the right to the professional service and respect of youth workers, regardless of their race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation or any other characteristic. The focus here is responding to the young person based on need.

There is the slightly more complex issue of positive discrimination, which is about allocating resources in favour of groups that have generally been disadvantaged by social arrangements, rather than individually on the basis of need. While the arguments aren't easy, the statement does allow for positive discrimination if it is carefully thought through.

Case Example 1

Phillip is a youth worker who is approached by a young man from a Sudanese background. Phillip finds it difficult to understand the young man as he is trying to explain some difficulties around his school enrolment. Phillip explains that they have access to a telephone interpreting service and organises for an interpreter to be present over the phone. Phillip and the young man are both able to make themselves understood by each other, enabling Phillip to not only help the young man find out more about his education options, but also provide information and assistance in a range of other areas.

Case Example 2

Sarah works for an organisation that aims to help young people engage with decision makers. Sarah hears that a Minister is interested in setting up a youth council to discuss with young people their thoughts on various issues. To participate in this group young people will have to provide a lengthy written application that details why they deserve a place at the table. The advertising material for the positions was being distributed through networks of youth organisations and universities. Sarah is concerned that only young people with a high level of written skills will apply for positions, potentially making the youth council unrepresentative of the population and its diversity. Sarah contacts the Minister's office to raise her concerns that their current strategy of engaging young people will not provide them with the diversity of opinion that they seek. The Minister is receptive to Sarah's opinion and she is able to share her thoughts on models of engagement which might be more effective at engaging a broad spectrum of young people.

4. Empowerment

The youth worker seeks to enhance the power of the young person by beginning with the belief that young people are competent in assessing and acting on their interests.

Commentary

The term "empowerment" has become a bit of a buzzword, and its meaning is not often clear. This statement focuses on the youth worker's accountability to young people, and puts empowerment in the context of the young person's own ethical and responsible action. Individual young people may struggle to act in their own interests, due to factors such as mental illness or being in some emotional distress. These things are explored as the youth worker assesses the situation. It is important that this is done with an underlying belief that young people know what they are doing and are able to assess and act in their own interests.

Case Example 1

Hannah is 16 when she comes into the youth health centre. She hasn't been before and is obviously very nervous when she asks to see a worker. Jane welcomes her, offers her a glass of water and explains about privacy and confidentiality. Jane builds rapport by being friendly, non-judgmental and

asking how she can help Hannah. Hannah says she would like an STI check. Jane affirms Hannah's decision to seek health care and normalises Hannah's situation saying that the service is set up to support young people to take care of their sexual health. Jane organises the test and gives Hannah a thorough explanation of the process and follow-up. She outlines the process is free and reassures Hannah about her confidentiality. Hannah is able to ask any questions and organises an appointment to discuss contraception with a GP.

Case Example 2

Simon is 13 and has not been attending school for the last couple of weeks. His mum is worried about him and he has come to the attention of the police for shop lifting and drinking in a public place with a group of other boys. Sandy is working with Simon to support him to manage his anxiety and depression. When Simon misses his regular appointment, Sandy contacts Simon and arranges a meeting at the local youth centre. Sandy listens to what is going on for Simon, and together they make a plan to help Simon get back on track. This includes arranging a case conference involving his key support people: his mum and his teacher.

5. Duty of Care

The youth worker avoids exposing young people to the likelihood of foreseeable harm, injury or exploitation.

Commentary

Youth workers need to recognise the risk in intervention; sometimes action in a situation can cause additional harm. Workers have a responsibility to ensure that activities, referral processes and programs are generally safe, as well as being appropriate for each particular young person in their care. Risk assessment and management needs to be thorough, staff properly trained and equipment well maintained. Given that abuse of young people is not rare, it is also important to exercise care in the employment of staff, whether paid or voluntary, full time or part time. Proper investigation needs to be made into potential workers' work and criminal histories, including volunteers.

Case Example 1

Rupert works for a youth organisation that organises youth events. Rupert runs a panel event with young people who are in, or have been in foster care, discussing their issues with decision makers. Rupert has a volunteer take pictures of the event for their records, the majority of participants provide consent to use their images. One of the young people on the panel asks if they can have a copy of the group photos to put on their Facebook page. Rupert informs this young person that it would be inappropriate to provide this photo to her as participants did not give consent for their photos to be used in this way.

Case Example 2

Part of Gavin's role as a youth worker is to organise recreational activities for young people in order to help build their confidence and self esteem. Gavin arranges groups of young people to go mountain biking, go-karting, surfing, abseiling and other activities. Before young people participate in the activity, Gavin ensures the activity is conducted in a safe way, with appropriate supervision and that young people have completed adequate permission forms, including detailing existing medical conditions.

6. Anti –Corruption

Youth workers will seek to ensure that no one will advance themselves at the expense of young people.

Commentary

Young people are a marginalised group within society, with limited ability to have their voices heard. This statement requires youth workers to ensure young people are protected from misuses of power, including by workers themselves. It does not mean that youth workers shouldn't succeed in their chosen career. However, this cannot be at the expense of young people. This statement encourages youth workers to be honest about their personal motivations and rewards, including financial gain, power, profile, emotional security, personal identity and so on.

Case Example 1

Fran works with young people in an area of the state that has come under negative media attention. She knows that the picture that has been painted in the news does not accurately reflect the lives of the young people she works with. Fran has the opportunity to showcase her work with young parents and to 'set the record straight' with a popular current affairs program. As well as featuring Fran, the interviewer requires 'human interest' stories and footage, directly from the young people Fran works with. After much consideration and guidance from her manager, Fran decides that this opportunity is too risky and may expose the individual young people with further negative portrayal and personal risk. Despite the desire to set the 'record straight', Fran concentrates her efforts on her work, and promotes her work in mediums where there is more control over the messages portrayed.

Case Example 2

Tracey is a youth worker that works with disengaged young people. Tracey receives grant funding to run a program to connect young disengaged people with services. Although Tracey's program did have some good outcomes for the young people that were involved, there was not a high rate of participation in the program. Tracey feels that although it may paint her service in a slightly negative light, it is important to recognise this underwhelming participation in the report to the grant deed. Tracey wishes to outline in the report a number of potential reasons behind this lack of participation, in case the funding body questions the use of their financial aid. Tracey also includes in her report a number of improvements that she would make to the program, should she receive funding again.

7. Transparency

The relationship between a youth worker and young person will be open and truthful. The interests of others will not be hidden from young people.

Commentary

From the outset of the relationship, youth workers have a responsibility to be clear with young people about what services they can and cannot offer. Workers should be mindful of (and discuss where appropriate) issues of confidentiality, disclosure, mandatory reporting, health and safety. Workers also have a role in explaining to young people the relationships they have with other interest groups, including where the funding comes from, who we are working for and what we are trying to achieve.

Case Example 1

Mark works with young people where a large company is the major employer in the area. He has approached the company to see if they would be open to providing assistance with some of his programs. The company has said that they would be willing to donate funds if they receive promotional or marketing services in return, through the use of logos and media opportunities. Mark realises that this would change the nature of the services and the relationship that his organisation has within the community. He decides to negotiate with the company to see if they would be willing to work within his parameters, and decides to forego the funding opportunity if it means compromising the services and his organisation.

Case Example 2

Kath is a youth worker who has started a new relationship in the last few months. Her new partner's daughter, Shenna, comes to see Kath at work and tells her she is pregnant and doesn't know what to do. She is very worried about her father finding out. Kath feels uncomfortable and that she has a conflict of interest in working with her new partner's daughter. She discusses this with Shenna and introduces her to another worker in the service who can talk through her options and support.

8. Confidentiality

Information provided by young people will be respected, they will be made aware of the limits to confidentiality, and, where possible, their permission sought for disclosure.

Commentary

In accordance with national and state Privacy Principles, young people have a right to expect their information is kept confidential. In some cases, confidentiality is not possible or even desirable: there are always limits. It is important that the limits of confidentiality are explained to young people at the beginning of their relationship with a worker. If a circumstance should arise where the youth worker believes disclosure to police, schools or other group is necessary, they have a responsibility to explain to the young person why this is an appropriate course of action.

Case Example 1

Erin is a youth worker who sometimes provides support to young people appearing in the Youth Justice court. Erin attends court to support Cassie, who has been charged with motor vehicle stealing. Cassie confides in Erin that she was under the influence of amphetamines and alcohol when she got into the stolen car. Erin refers Cassie to a drug and alcohol service for counselling.

Cassie's mother rings Erin and tells her she suspects that Cassie has been using drugs. She repeatedly asks Erin whether she knows anything about this. Erin recognises it would be a breach of confidentiality to disclose what Cassie has told her and politely declines to discuss it.

Erin tells Cassie about her mother's concerns. With Cassie's consent, the two of them speak with Cassie's mother about Cassie's difficulty with drugs and explain she has started drug and alcohol counselling.

Case Example 2

Melanie is a youth worker at a youth centre that offers counselling services. One of Melanie's clients, Jess, tells her that she is having difficulties adjusting at home due to her father's new relationship. Soon after the meeting, Jess' father approaches the service and asks to see Melanie. He has found out that his daughter has been visiting the service. He asks Melanie what Jess has been saying during her meetings. Melanie listens and acknowledges his difficulty, and she informs him that she cannot share this information, as it would be a breach of confidentiality. They both recognise that if he wants to know, he will have to approach his daughter.

9. Cooperation

Youth workers will actively seek to cooperate with others in order to secure the best possible outcomes for young people.

Commentary

Ethical youth work practice involves a commitment to working in co-operative partnerships with other relevant service providers to achieve positive outcomes in the best interests of young people. Connection with professionals outside youth work enables young people access to a greater range of choices of support networks, information, skills and resources to meet their needs. Working in isolation increases the risk of developing dependency-based relationships, and denies young people the right to an equal choice of available resources.

Case Example 1

Robyn works with young people in a community based service. She has an arrangement with the accommodation support service in her area to streamline referrals where young people are in need of housing assistance. With the young person's consent, she provides appropriate information to the organisation so that the young person does not have to re-tell their whole story.

Case Example 2

Peter works for a youth service that seeks to provide advocacy services to young people with disability. Peter hears of an upcoming grant round which could provide funding to expand his service to also provide youth with disability the opportunity to participate in decision making forums. However, Peter knows of a service similar to his own that is also interested in applying for the grant round to get funding for a similar project. Peter approaches this service, and asks if they would be interested in collaborating; Peter feeling that there was limited benefit to either if they were competing for the funding. The service is encouraged by Peter's idea, and together they are able to put together a strong grant application.

10. Knowledge

Youth workers have a responsibility to keep up to date with the current information, resources, knowledge and practices needed to meet their obligations to young people.

Commentary

It is essential to maintain a level of competence by participating in training and remaining up to date with current ideas around 'best practice', current legislation, policy, and changes to services and reporting requirements.

Case Example 1

John's work with a Disability support service often entails helping young people with physical activities. His position requires him to have completed and maintain first aid certification. It is his responsibility to ensure that his qualifications are current.

Case Example 2

Maria works with young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. The conditions for aid and education programs change frequently, with new funding opportunities becoming available periodically. In order to provide quality services to young people she works with, she needs to be part of information networks and regular training that will provide the information she requires for her job.

11. Self-awareness

Youth workers will be conscious of their own values and interest and will also be respectful of the values and interests of others.

Commentary

Young people hold a diversity of values and interests, which at times may differ from the values and interests of the youth worker. Despite these differing values, a youth worker who is self aware is able to act in the best interests of the young person and maintain a relationship of respect and dignity. There are times when a youth worker is required to make a decision based on a young person's action which may breach an individual's rights but is culturally acceptable. However, this should not result in a situation where the universally accepted concepts of human rights are compromised.

Case Example 1

Sophia works with young migrants and refugees. She is a second generation Australian and was brought up hearing stories about how difficult it was for her parents to establish themselves in Australia and make a new beginning. And as a young person growing up in a non-Australian household, she was aware of how isolating this experience could be at times. Many of the organisations she works with have people of her parents' generation who tell Sophia that they never had any assistance when they arrived and find it difficult to understand why she is working to help

young people become established. Sophia's experiences with the young people she works with tells her that these new migrants have vastly different reasons for emigrating to Australia than her parents.

Sophia is aware of how difficult it is to hold on to one's culture, yet try to fit in. She is also mindful that many people in Australia, including previous migrants, are not aware of the many different reasons why people emigrate to Australia. She makes sure that those she works with understand the needs of her clients, as well as reassuring them that she understands their own experiences and values their insight.

Case Example 2

Josh has developed a program to raise young people's awareness of political issues. He has a lot of contact with young people from a wide variety of backgrounds, including university students, young people attending the polytechnic, and those who are working, as well as those who are unemployed. He has always been interested in and active in school and university political life, but what interests him most is just getting young people to be aware of the issues that are out there. He encounters a lot of people who have similar views to his, but likewise, he meets many who don't.

He realises that his own views formed out of his background and experiences at university don't always apply to the young people he's trying to reach – especially those who are unemployed and find it difficult to be engaged in any broader issues. He connects with different groups of young people he comes in contact with, and without pushing his own political views, supports them to become more involved in their communities and pursue their own interests.

12. Boundaries

The youth work relationship is a professional relationship with clear boundaries, intentionally limited to protect the young person. Youth workers will behave in a way that is consistent with these boundaries.

Commentary

Youth workers will recognise that the relationship between themselves and a young person is a professional, contracted relationship, and therefore limited. Young people are in a position of vulnerability as they have less access to knowledge, resources and skills than workers. Creating a safe place, where boundaries are not compromised, is important as it enables young people to share secrets, information, emotion, or weakness that they may not share in any other relationship.

Case Example 1

Susan works in a multipurpose youth centre in a regional area. Susan meets Mike at informal pizza and information night at her service. After meeting Susan, Mike regularly drops in to the youth centres to ask information about various services the centre offers. However, as time progresses Susan comes to realise that Mike's feelings for her have developed beyond their professional relationship. When Mike asks Susan out for a date, Susan tells him that she is flattered by the attention but reinforces the limits of her role as a youth worker, making it clear that her professional role does not allow for a personal relationship with a young person.

Case Example 2

Andrew works for a youth organisation which has many young people as volunteers. Andrew often hangs out after hours with many of the young volunteers socially. One of the volunteers makes a casual and flippant remark during a professional meeting with a potential partner of the organisation. Andrew realises that he has entered into inappropriate relationships with many of the volunteers. Andrew decides to modify his behaviour and discusses boundaries with the volunteers. They decide to have a facilitated session to explore the professional boundaries and develop a common understanding of each other's roles.

13. Self-care

Good youth work practice is consistent with preserving the health and wellbeing of youth workers.

Commentary

In order to ensure the longevity of their careers and provide high quality service, youth workers need to prioritise their own health and wellbeing. Good quality professional practice also takes time to develop, and is not well-served by people who are unable to mentally and physically handle challenging situations.

Case Example 1

Bob is a young person and a youth worker, he manages to keep his social group and the young people he works with separate. Bob engages in many of the same 'risky' activities as his client group, but because Bob works and is 'reasonably together' he has a different view of the consequences of these behaviours and has only become aware of how rundown he is when he loses his temper with a young client, and his practice is called into question by his supervisor. Bob reflects in supervision that his lifestyle is impacting on his practice. This has quite an impact on Bob and motivates him to make plans to moderate his risk taking.

Case Example 2

Tracey works with young people who are involuntary clients of a statutory service, many aspects of this work are about safety and protection with little focus on the experience of the young people or the development of their skills. Tracey finds the work both rewarding and challenging but is frustrated by the lack of inclusion for her clients regarding decision making in their daily living. When she tries to raise this during supervision, she is directed back to client and organisational tasks. Tracey is beginning to feel that her professional skills and personal reflections are not valued. Tracey seeks and gains employment in another organisation with a focus that is more in line with her own professional framework.

14. Professional awareness

Youth Workers are committed to youth work. Youth workers will be aware of the strengths and diversity of young people and those that support them.

Commentary

Youth workers must be aware that their role is to support young people, but not to make those young people dependent on their assistance. A youth worker must help their young clients recognise and develop their strengths, building their capacity to be responsible in their own lives.

As youth work is a unique profession that is often not recognised or understood by others, it is important that the youth worker ensures that those they are working with understand their role in providing support to young people. Youth workers also need to acknowledge and respect the approach of other professionals. If youth work is to be considered professional, it is also important that youth workers aim to act in a way that will not bring their role into disrepute.

Case Example 1

Susie works for a service that works with young newly-arrived migrants. Susie aims to not only support the young people that she works with during times where they are struggling to adjust, but also help prepare them to be independent as they transition into Australian life. As an example of how Susie helps to build on the existing capacity and strengths of these young people; after showing them how to use the bus service to get to her own workplace, Susie trusts her young clients to remember how they used the bus service and make their own way, rather than picking them up in her work vehicle and making them dependent on her. In regards to independence, Susie also organises for her clients to participate in driving lessons, although she does sit in the car with them and the instructor, so that they feel supported.

Case Example 2

Michael works with young people with disabilities, helping them to access services. Michael is approached to be on a Working Group which is focused on reforming Education policy, in particular how previous policies have failed to achieve outcomes for young people with disability. Michael attends the first meeting of the Working Group. He is surprised to see that rather than directly engaging with young people with disability, the Working Group consists of workers such as himself, school teachers and principals, bureaucrats and parent groups. Michael brings up this point at the meeting, advocating that young people ought to have their own voices heard by decision makers. The Working Group organises to have a youth representative and forums to get young people directly involved in the reforms.

Consultation Questions

The Youth Ethics Steering Committee encourages those who work with young people, including Government and non-Government organisations, and young people, to provide input into the development of this Youth Ethics Framework for Tasmania by answering the following questions.

- 1. Do the items listed in the proposed Code accurately reflect the needs of contemporary youth workers in Tasmania?**

- 2. Are there any items or issues that should be included? If yes, please elaborate.**

- 3. Are any items listed in the code that should not be included? If yes, please elaborate.**

- 4. Do you support the introduction of a Youth Work Code of Ethics to Tasmania? If not, please explain why, including alternatives that you believe would be more appropriate.**

- 5. How would you use the Youth Work Code of Ethics in your work?**

- 6. Are the examples provided for each of the Code Statements appropriate? If not, please provide your own examples.**

- 7. Please leave any further comments that you feel are relevant to the consultation.**

How to Make Submission

Submission Responses

Responses can be emailed to the YNOT CEO, ceo@ynot.org.au or posted to this address:

Youth Work Code of Ethics for Tasmania
c/YNOT
Suite 4a 236 Sandy Bay Road
Sandy Bay TAS 7005

Any questions about the code of ethics can be directed at Joanna Siejka on 6223 5511.

Deadlines for Submissions

Please provide all submissions by close of business 30 June 2012

Appendix

Appendix 1: Youth Ethics Working Group

Member	Organisation	Role
Joanna Siejka	Youth Network of Tasmania	Chair
Naomi Marsh	Tasmania Youth Forum/Youth Network of Tasmania	Sector Representative
David Perez	The Link	Sector Representative
Fiona Richardson	Geeveston Community House	Sector Representative
James Graham	Derwent Valley Council	Sector Representative
Ann Davie	Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies	Sector Representative
Jill Chisholm	Hobart College	Sector Representative
Annie McLean	Commissioner for Children's Office	Sector Representative
Isabelle Crompton		
Darren Robinson	Health and Wellbeing Centre - Swansea	Sector Representative
Wendy Newton	Launceston City Council	Sector Representative
Simone Zell	Youth Health South, DHHS	Government Representative
Kate Wilson	Child and Youth Services, DHHS	Government Representative
Liv Henry	Youth Health North, DHHS	Government Representative
Anthony King	Children and Youth, Community Development Division, DPAC	Government Representative

Appendix 2: Youth Work Code of Ethics for Tasmania: Aims and Objectives

Aims and Objectives of Youth Ethics Framework

These are the aims and objectives of the group's functions. This is distinct from the aims and objectives of the code of ethics itself. This is what the group hopes to achieve through the actions of evaluating, consulting, discussing, debating, developing and implementing the code of ethics.

Aims – this is the purpose or long-term or permanent goals of the framework

- Inform and support decision making around ethical issues relating to young people in Tasmania
- Promote the youth sector, including workers' commitment to best practice¹
- Provide better understanding of the role of youth work, highlighting the differences between youth work and social work, and reinforcing the understanding that the young person is the focus of a youth worker's work
- Provide better understanding of the position of young people within society in and how youth workers are able to meet their needs
- Increase the professionalism of the Tasmanian youth sector

Objectives – this is a description of what will happen while the group is working on the framework

- Define the values shared by the Tasmanian youth sector
- Define the term 'young people'

¹ Best Practice – A workers support of a client is best practice, when is it appropriate for the particular client; taking into consideration the workers knowledge of current research, the young person's circumstances and all ethical concerns.

- Define the terms 'youth work' and 'youth workers'
- Define the relationship between young people and youth workers
- Define the roles and expectations of youth workers in the Tasmanian community
- Further develop relationships throughout the Tasmanian youth sector and develop effective communication with its members
- Consult with the sector to gauge opinions and gather information to further develop the Youth Ethics Framework

Appendix 3: Youth Work Code of Ethics around Australia

Nationally

The Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) has identified youth work professionalisation as a priority area, with development of a code of ethics as a starting point. In May 2011, AYAC launched "The Great Debate" on their website - a place for those in the sector to weigh in on the discussion of whether there should be a national code of ethics for youth workers.

The work that YNOT has undertaken in development of its code of ethics will feed into the national discussion.

Other states and territories

(From information on the AYAC website: <http://www.ayac.org.au>)

New South Wales: In 2004, YAPA endorsed the Fairbridge Code of Ethics, having conducted a census of youth services in NSW in 2002 which found that 80% supported work towards a state/national code. Since then, YAPA has used its publications, online communications and training to support discussions about ethical practice in youth work.

Victoria: In Victoria YACVic developed a Code of Ethical Practice, following an extensive consultation process with youth workers, youth service organisations, youth work educators, employers of youth workers and young people themselves.

Western Australia: Western Australia was the first State in Australia to introduce a Youth Work Code of Ethics, known as 'The Fairbridge Code', published in 2001 it has become a reference point both nationally and internationally. YACWA's continues to support ongoing discussions in Western Australia regarding professionalisation and adherence to a code of ethics and partner in this process with the WA Youth Work Association.

South Australia: The South Australian youth sector has expressed a wish for ongoing dialogue around ensuring that ethical practice has a place in youth work in SA. Whether this is achieved through the development of a series of resources intended to embed ethical standards of practice within organisations, a Code of Ethics, or through other means, will be the focus of ongoing consultation and engagement with the sector.

Northern Territory: There has been no work done in the NT around a Code of Ethics for the youth sector.

Links to other Codes

YACVic Code of Ethical Practice: www.yacvic.org.au/policy/detail-old.html?filename_num=256701

YACWA Code of Ethics Booklet: www.yacwa.org.au/files/CodeofEthicsBooklet.pdf

YCACT Code of Ethics:

[www.youthcoalition.net/documents/sector%20development/Code20Ethics/Youth20Code20Ethics%200\(ACT\).pdf](http://www.youthcoalition.net/documents/sector%20development/Code20Ethics/Youth20Code20Ethics%200(ACT).pdf)

YAPA Ethics Resources: www.yapa.org.au/youthwork/ethics/index.php