

# **Model policies**

**on**  
**working with young people**  
**for**  
**non-residential youth services in NSW**

**by Nick Manning**

**Youth Action & Policy Association (NSW)**

**2004**

## **Part 4**

# **Inclusiveness**

# Model policies on working with young people for non-residential youth services in NSW

by Nick Manning

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The model policies are available from [www.yapa.org.au/youthwork/modelpolicies](http://www.yapa.org.au/youthwork/modelpolicies), as:

- PDF files for easy printing and reading
- web pages for quick viewing of particular policies
- Word files for easy copying + pasting into your own policy documents.

## Warning!

These are model policies for agencies to adapt to suit their circumstances. We have done the best we can within our resources, but it is not possible to write a single policy which meets the requirements of the wide range of youth services in NSW. You should not rely solely on the information here, but should refer to other publications and authorities and if necessary get qualified advice for your specific situation.

We have attempted to include all the relevant legal requirements as at 2004. However the law is sometimes complex and open to interpretation, and applies to different youth agencies in different ways. If necessary you should get legal advice about your own policies. The information here is not legal advice. If there is a real possibility of legal action, you should talk to a lawyer before you decide what to do.

These policies reflect law which applies in NSW, which may be quite different to law in other states and territories of Australia. Using these policies outside NSW without checking the law, may put your agency, staff and volunteers at risk of breaking the law.

## Acknowledgements and thanks

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## Other contributors:

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[www.yapa.org.au/youthwork/modelpolicies](http://www.yapa.org.au/youthwork/modelpolicies)**

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# Inclusiveness: Developing an inclusive youth service

This policy is the first in a set of policies on inclusiveness:

- Inclusiveness: Developing an Inclusive Youth Service
- Inclusiveness: Expression of Religion, Culture and Lifestyle
- Inclusiveness: Eliminating Harassment, Vilification and Excluding Behaviour.

## Aims

Our agency aims to include all young people in our target group, regardless of their circumstances or background.

By implementing this policy we comply with anti-discrimination laws and the access and equity policies in funding agreements which apply to us. However the agency goes beyond these requirements and takes a social justice approach where we take active steps to increase the participation of all disadvantaged and marginalised young people.

Inclusiveness means that young people not only know about and can access our services, but feel included as a valued person at the agency. The agency's inclusiveness is demonstrated by these principles:

- 1. Access:** Our services are available to all young people who are entitled to them and are free of any form of discrimination. We take active steps to help young people overcome any barriers or special circumstances which may prevent them from accessing our services.
- 2. Equity:** At this agency everyone gets a 'fair go'. Services are developed and delivered on the basis of fair treatment of young people. We allocate our resources according to need.
- 3. Communication:** We inform young people about our services and how they can obtain them. We also consult with young people regularly about the adequacy, design, delivery and standard of services.
- 4. Responsiveness:** We are sensitive to the needs and requirements of young people from diverse backgrounds, and responsive as far as practicable to the particular circumstances of individuals. We work with young people to meet their needs in an appropriate and timely way.
- 5. Effectiveness:** We aim to create good processes and outcomes for young people.

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**6. Efficiency:** We make the best use of available resources. We carefully consider our resource allocations according to the needs of our client groups, including the re-distribution of existing resources to meet the needs of particular target groups.

**7. Confidentiality:** We maintain strict confidentiality as required by law in order to create an environment where all young people have the confidence to work with us.

**8. Accountability:** We report on what we do and what we achieve, to ensure we are accountable for implementing access and equity principles. We are open to public scrutiny by young people, governments, our community, our staff and management.

## Procedure

### Staff and management issues

#### Workplans and reports

This policy outlines general principles and requirements, and suggests strategies to develop the inclusiveness of activities and services. In order to turn this policy into a practical reality:

- the workplan for each staff member or project team, and the agency strategic plan, must identify priority groups for the year, and strategies for reducing barriers and increasing service provision to those groups
- evaluations and reports on each workplan or strategic plan, including the agency's annual report, must report on those strategies implemented and the outcomes which resulted.

#### Recruitment of staff, volunteers and committees

Staff responsible for recruitment of staff, volunteers, advisory committee or management committee members must take steps to minimise barriers that particular groups may face in joining and participating in the agency. These steps may include:

- advertising in locations likely to be accessed by those particular groups
- providing working/meeting conditions which suit a range of groups
- following equal employment opportunity (EEO) practices.

See the agency's:

- recruitment/employment/EEO policy
- volunteer policy

for specific requirements when recruiting paid staff and volunteers.

#### Staff development and networking

The agency supports staff training and development by providing a budget and time away from service delivery.

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Staff should take active steps to increase their knowledge and understanding of issues which affect inclusiveness. These steps might include:

- talk about these issues at network meetings
- obtain local population statistics, such as for ethnic groups and in particular newly arrived and emerging ethnic groups
- talk with specialist agency staff such as migrant workers, Aboriginal workers, disability workers about the needs of young people in your area
- attend professional development conferences
- attend relevant training courses and seminars (eg. access and equity, anti-discrimination, anti-homophobia, cultural awareness, disability awareness, working with interpreters)
- collect resources on or for particular groups (eg. from peak bodies, websites, newsletters, journals)
- run joint activities with staff of other agencies who have relevant skills.

Staff should also encourage and support volunteers and management committee members to do these things.

##### **Barriers young people might face in accessing a service:**

- the young person does not know about or understand the service
- the young person cannot contact the agency or use the service because of ability, physical, transport, communication, time or cost barriers
- the young person cannot read the agency's materials, or understand the agency's staff, because of a language or literacy gap
- the agency does not provide the services that the young person needs, in the way that the young person needs
- the young person's parent does not support or allow them to use the agency
- the cultural norms at the agency conflict with the cultural norms of the young person
- the young person perceives (rightly or wrongly) that they are not the main target of the agency, or that there is an "in group" at the agency, or that they might be harassed, vilified or excluded at the agency
- the young person (or someone else they know) has a negative experience or gets a worse service at the agency than other young people
- the agency has imposed consequences (including a ban) on the young person for breaking agency rules.

### **Young people and barriers**

All staff must take active steps to reduce barriers which young people might face in using the agency.

Some barriers cannot be completely eliminated. However staff should take active steps to eliminate or reduce barriers which are likely to affect a young person because of their:

- gender (female, male, transgender)
- sexual preference/orientation (or their uncertainty about their sexuality)
- HIV positive status or AIDS
- being a parent, pregnancy, or breastfeeding

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- being a carer (eg. of a parent or a sibling)
- marital status
- being a victim of domestic violence
- dress or appearance
- religion or spirituality
- ethnicity (including indigenous, "anglo" and all non-English speaking ethnic backgrounds)
- recent migration to Australia, or their experience as a refugee
- poor English literacy (written or spoken)
- learning problems, or leaving school early
- disability
- mental illness
- drug use or addiction
- criminal record or involvement in the justice system
- anger or behaviour problems
- financial situation or poverty
- homelessness
- address (eg. an isolated area, a particular suburb, public housing etc)
- belonging to a particular social group or subculture of young people
- age

or because of a combination of these things.

Note that by targeting services to particular groups, barriers may be created for other groups. Therefore, a decision to target a particular group should be reflected in the agency's mission statement, strategic plan or funding submission.

##### **Commonality and diversity**

Terms like disability, migrant, young women etc are umbrella terms for very diverse groupings of people. For example, young people from non-English speaking ethnic groups do not all have the same needs. Neither do all young women. People with one particular disability may have quite different needs to people with another disability.

At the same time, these young people share with all other young people many of the common needs of the young, regardless of attributes such as their disability, their gender or their ethnicity.

Therefore staff must work in ways which respect all young people as individuals with their own unique set of needs, while inevitably generalising about the needs of young people and the needs of particular groups of young people.

### **Assessing needs and planning**

Needs assessment and planning processes must address inclusiveness issues.

Identify the target group and the priority groups within that target group before deciding on activities and services.

Discuss with priority groups how the agency can increase the accessibility and appropriateness of its activities and services.

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Identify appropriate methods of service delivery in order to include a wide range of groups of young people. For example, you should consider:

- **what** activities and services you provide
- **when** each activity takes place (daytime, afternoon, night, weekend, school holidays)
- **where** each activity takes place (at your premises, outreach, school etc)
- **who** can participate in each activity (eg. in order to effectively include one group do you need to exclude another such as a particular age group or sex)
- **who** will run each activity (eg. consider the sex or ethnicity of particular staff, a joint venture with another agency with relevant experience etc).

### **Getting input**

A wide range of young people should have input into your planning. It is not sufficient to rely on one or two young people on the management committee as the only youth input.

A youth advisory committee which advises the agency on its activities must represent, as much as possible, the diversity of the youth population which the agency aims to work with.

### **Avoid research bias**

Ensure that research methods you use to assess needs (eg. a survey) are not themselves overly weighted towards certain groups of young people. For example:

- if you mainly survey the young people already using the agency, you may perpetuate existing barriers
- if you only survey young people at school, or only street-frequenting young people, it is likely that some groups will not be represented in your results
- if you only use a written survey then young people with poor English literacy will not be represented.

Use multiple methods to overcome the built-in bias in any one method.

### **Working for change in the wider community**

Wherever possible staff should take steps to promote non-discrimination and inclusiveness in the wider society. Such steps might include:

- run activities so young people can learn about and experience other cultures
- participate in consultations, networking and lobbying to improve how government, non-government and business agencies deal with different groups in the community.

### **Access strategies**

Take all reasonable steps to reduce or eliminate barriers, such as the following, where appropriate.

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### **Communication:**

- provide multiple methods of contacting the agency such as phone (including toll free where appropriate), SMS (texting), email, and in person
- ensure the agency's website meets disability standards (contact YAPA for advice)
- ensure all written materials meet plain English standards (contact YAPA for advice)
- translate written materials
- use interpreters

### **Transport and physical access:**

- provide transport to activities for all young people
- arrange for disability services or community transport to help bring disabled young people to the activity or service
- use transport (including agency and hired vehicles, and public transport) which is as accessible as possible to people with mobility disabilities
- use venues which are close to public transport
- use venues with greater safety for young people waiting for transport at night
- use venues which are wheelchair accessible

### **Needs of young carers:**

- use venues which have baby-changing rooms and plenty of room for prams
- advertise your venues and activities as "breastfeeding welcome here"
- provide childcare, or provide services close to occasional childcare centres

### **Other:**

- acknowledge the agency's commitment to diversity through posters, flags etc
- advertise the diversity of staff and volunteers (eg. male and female, different cultures)
- provide opportunities for young people and/or their family to visit the agency or meet the staff before they decide to use the service
- provide services in ways which allow for convenient medication storage and use
- provide foods which suit a range of cultures (eg. include vegetarian choices)
- don't charge fees for services. If you must charge fees, offer exemptions in cases of hardship and advertise these exemptions everywhere you advertise and promote the service.

### **Special projects and activities**

The agency may decide to provide special activities and services to meet the needs of particular groups of young people, if it is not possible to meet those groups' needs within mainstream activities and services. If this is necessary, the agency should not wait until it can gain additional funding, but should divert existing resources to address this need.

If possible, such special activities and services should be a temporary measure, while the agency works towards meeting the needs of these particular groups within mainstream activities and services. However this is always achievable. For example, you may need to run certain activities for young women only because of certain religious beliefs.

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Advertise these strategies in promotional materials where appropriate.

### **Promoting and running activities and services**

#### **Promoting agency activities and services**

Make use of varied and specialist channels of publicity where appropriate to ensure information reaches a wide cross-section of young people, families and agencies.

These channels might include:

- Aboriginal organisations and media
- disability services and support groups
- mental health services
- alcohol and other drug services and groups
- ethnic and refugee organisations and services
- gay/lesbian youth groups and services
- legal, court support, conferencing and post-release services
- family support services, community health, young mums/parents groups
- Intensive English Centres in high schools
- TAFE programs for disadvantaged young people
- church and religious groups
- different suburbs and towns, and hangouts for particular groups and sub-cultures of young people
- youth media, websites and email groups.

As much as possible, use a combination of written/pictorial promotion (eg. posters, flyers, website) and spoken promotion (talks).

Where appropriate, ask for feedback on draft promotional material from young people in special groups being targeted and/or workers in agencies with experience working with that group.

#### **Avoiding dominant groups**

Ensure that some groups of young people do not have less opportunity to enjoy particular events, activities and spaces than other groups of young people because one group dominates. For example:

- do not let boys dominate an activity so that girls cannot participate equally (or vice versa)
- one ethnic group or subculture must not be seen to "own" a venue or activity.

Use your authority and if necessary put in place rules for particular activities to ensure everyone gets a fair go.

If, despite the efforts of staff, everyone is not getting a fair go, report this situation to the Manager so that this information can inform future planning. See also the policy Inclusiveness: Eliminating harassment, vilification and excluding behaviour.

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### Statistics & personal information

Collect a set of statistics about young people using the service or activity, to allow the agency to assess its performance on inclusiveness issues. Those details might include, when appropriate:

- sex
- age
- suburb/town
- language spoken at home, country of birth and year of arrival in Australia
- indigenous Australian or not
- special access issues (disabilities, parent/carer, ability to pay fees, transport etc).

Avoid invading privacy or collecting too much information about young people. Where the information is for statistics only, make it clear to young people that providing these details is purely voluntary. (See the Privacy policies).

**HIV AIDS information:** A person's HIV AIDS status has special legal protection in the NSW *Public Health Act*. Staff must not record in any document, or disclose to anyone else **including team members**, a person's HIV AIDS information, unless that information is strictly necessary in order to provide care, treatment or counselling to that person. (So for example you must not record or disclose HIV AIDS information solely to protect other people from infection eg. in accommodation or recreation programs). See Privacy policies for more details.

### More information

YAPA publishes a range of resources on access and equity, with more to come in 2005. Go to <http://www.yapa.org.au> or ring for details:

- *Access & equity guide for services working with young people: How to develop and implement your own access and equity policy* (2002) YAPA
- *YAPRap* (August 2004) YAPA. Special feature: young refugees
- *Working with young refugees* (2004) YAPA fact sheet

Another useful resource:

- *Working with young gays and lesbians? A legal guide for health, youth and community services in NSW* (2002) by Sara Blazey & Nick Manning, Hawkesbury Nepean Community Legal Centre 02 4588 5618

### Background to this policy

This policy helps the agency to fulfil the requirements of:

- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975, Sex Discrimination Act 1984, Disability Discrimination Act 1992, Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Act 1986*
- *NSW Anti Discrimination Act 1977*
- Australian & NSW government policies promoting access and equity
- NSW Department of Community Services Service Agreement 2004-2005 (sections 4.1, 4.4, 4.5, 15.1, 16.1)
- NSW Department of Community Services Service Standards 2004 draft (sections 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1)
- Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services 2004 draft Youth Program Guidelines (sections 1.1.6, 1.3.6, 4.3.1)

# Inclusiveness: Expression of religion, culture and lifestyle

This policy belongs to a set of policies on inclusiveness. See the policy Inclusiveness: Developing an Inclusive Youth Service, for background to this policy.

## Procedure

### Staff expression

You can exhibit (eg. via jewellery or clothing), and discuss with young people, your own:

- religious and spiritual beliefs
- culture and lifestyle
- sexual preference and marital status

if you wish, but only:

- when these don't conflict with agency policies
- when appropriate to the service you are providing and to future services the young person may need you to provide
- in ways which encourage young people to exercise their own choices and develop their own identity.

This must be in moderation, and you must not:

- promote any particular religion, spiritual belief, culture, lifestyle, sexual preference or marital status
- create an impression that you or the agency promote any particular one of these
- do this in a way which creates a barrier for any particular groups of young people
- provide unequal service according to the young person's interests, beliefs, commitments and actions (eg. about religion).

Discussion should generally be initiated by young people and be driven by their needs and interests, not yours.

If a young person is especially interested in a particular religion or spiritual tradition, refer them to a faith practitioner (eg. a priest, imam etc) or a religious youth group.

### Religious occasions

The agency can celebrate or mark religious occasions (eg. Easter) which are significant to staff or young people, however:

#### 4. Inclusiveness:

##### Inclusiveness: Expression of religion, culture and lifestyle

- use sensitivity given that some young people or staff may not belong to that religion
- acknowledge or celebrate the special occasions of other religions represented at the agency where appropriate.

##### **Religions expo**

If young people are interested, consider running workshops or a special event where a wide range of religious and spiritual groups can provide information to raise awareness.

#### **Dress**

Dress in a way which strikes a reasonable balance between the expectations of:

- young people
- parents and community members
- yourself

given the cultures and attitudes in the community you work in, the young people you are working with, and the services and activities you are providing.

#### 4. Inclusiveness:

Inclusiveness: Eliminating harassment, vilification and excluding behaviour

## Inclusiveness: Eliminating harassment, vilification and excluding behaviour

This policy belongs to a set of policies on inclusiveness. See the policy Inclusiveness: Developing an Inclusive Youth Service, for background to this policy.

### Procedure

#### **Sexual harassment**

Sexual harassment is when someone behaves sexually towards you when you don't want them to. Depending on the circumstances, it includes:

- sexual jokes
- staring and leering
- sexual propositions, such as asking you out or asking for sex
- sexual or physical contact, such as touching, slapping or kissing
- sexual insults or taunts
- sexually offensive gestures
- sexually explicit or offensive material displayed in public (including on clothes and bags), sent to someone or put in someone's bag etc
- any of these things in music, art, graffiti, via computer or mobile phone etc.

### **Harassment, vilification and excluding behaviour**

Staff, young people, and others in the agency must not:

- sexually harass other people.
- harass, bully, or ostracise (ignore and exclude) other people.

Staff, young people, and others in the agency must not:

- vilify (put down), or make jokes, comments or actions which may offend or hurt other people
- play music or display material (including on clothes and bags) which may offend or hurt other people.

This includes:

- people at the agency
- women, men and transgender people
- pregnant women and carers
- gay men and lesbians
- refugees
- any ethnic group
- any religion or spiritual belief
- people with disabilities, mental illnesses and learning difficulties.

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### **Staff response to this behaviour**

Staff must never condone, ignore, or appear to condone or ignore harassment, bullying, vilification or offensive or excluding behaviour.

There are a range of interventions and consequences for such behaviour by young people, depending on the specific behaviour, the effects of the behaviour on others, the intent and the degree of awareness behind the behaviour, and whether it is a first or repeat occurrence:

- a quick comment by a staff member to let the young person and everyone else who is aware of what happened know that such behaviour is not OK
- a longer discussion with the young person, by themselves or with all young people present, discussing the behaviour and the issues involved
- provide support to anybody affected by the behaviour, and inform them that they can make a complaint using the agency's complaints procedure or make a complaint to the Anti Discrimination Board (see Complaints policy). If necessary refer them to a community legal centre for advice on their options
- any appropriate procedures and consequences in the Rules and Consequences policy.

As much as possible staff should take an educative and persuasive approach rather than a purely punitive approach, remembering that the young person may be repeating behaviour learnt at home or behaviour common in their own environment. Only exclude the young person from activities in cases of repeated behaviour where other interventions and consequences have failed and other people are being seriously affected by the behaviour. (See Rules and Consequences policy).

At the same time, the agency is legally obliged to take all reasonable steps to eliminate discrimination against and harassment of many groups of young people. Staff must report to the Manager any patterns of such behaviour regardless of whether the offender or victim is a young person, a staff member, a volunteer or anyone else in the workplace.

#### **More information**

- NSW Anti Discrimination Board  
<http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adb>
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission <http://www.hreoc.gov.au>