



An Australian, State, Territory and Local Government Initiative



Tamworth Regional Council 2008 Youth Forum Report

Tamworth Regional Council Youth Forum

Location: The Youthie, Tamworth Youth Centre

Date: Wednesday 9th April 2008

Time: 9.30 am – 2.00 pm

The forum is intended to be an avenue of communication focused at providing young people and other stakeholders/interested persons with the opportunity to generate discussion and communicate the issues and concerns experienced by young people in the community, and to then investigate possible solutions, recommendations and courses of action to address these issues. The forum will be facilitated by Tamworth's Young Citizen of the Year for 2008, Belinda Williams.

Format:

Arrive 9.30 am for morning tea & introduction

10.00 Welcome to Country – Gomeroi Dance Group

10.05 Introduction – Belinda Williams

10.10 Ice Breaker

Open Forum – The Issues

10.20 Community Participation – Belinda Williams and Stephen Blanch

10.50 The Future - Education and Employment – Chris Powers

11.20 Social Interaction and Safety – Stephen Blanch

11.50 – 12.50 pm lunch provided

12.50 Well being – Annette Slater

1.20 Identity – Paul Ying

1.50 – 2.00 pm wrap up / closing comments / feedback evaluation (online information and newsletter sign up).

Introduction – Belinda Williams

Welcome everybody to the Forum, being held as part of Youth week 2008.

The reason for the forum is for the youth to come along and express their ideas, so people that are involved with youth in our community can listen to what these young people have to say.

National Youth week is held every year and is the largest youth celebration of its kind in Australia. Its aim is to get young people to celebrate what it is to be a young person within our country.

The theme for this year's Youth Week is Shout, Share, Live and Unite. And what is this really about? When we apply it today, think about it. Shout – we are here as young people to shout out to our community, to have our voices heard. We are here to Share – both as young people and people who are involved with youth services within our community, so that all of our ideas can be shared. We are here to Live, to promote a more prosperous lifestyle in which we can interact in our community. And we are here most importantly to unite, we are looking at people from different schools and different educational facilities, different backgrounds, different cultures, but we are here together as one person today, as one group of people, to come together to express our opinions and ideas.

I've been to a number of functions in the last few weeks and so many times they introduce the young people that are there, and they say something where they are the youth of the nation, they are the young people, they are the future, they are the leaders of the next generation. We've heard it all before but when you think about it, we are and it is so important that we come together and do have our voices heard, we are the future leaders, we are the future of this country and in doing that we need to be confident in putting forward our opinions in making sure that we guide this country and our communities in a way that is expressing what we actually feel. So it is time for us to stand up and be counted.

The program for today most of you have it, we split it into 5 different focused areas. We have Community Participation, we have The Future which is going to be education and employment, we have Social Interaction and Safety, we have Well Being and we have Identity. Now to make this run a bit more smoothly so everyone knows about each of these subjects we've invited a number of guest speakers to come along. What they are going to do is at the start of each of these focused topics the guest speaker is going to give about a 5- 10 minute introduction about what they feel to be the issues so that everybody is kind of at the same place today, so we know what we're talking about. Then the forum is going to be opened up to so that everyone here can express their opinions. Our guest speakers today we have Stephen Blanch, we have Chris Power, we have Annette Slater and Paul Ying. I'll tell you more about each of them as they come to present their actual presentation. On the program it does say that Adam Marshall is supposed to be here, unfortunately he has been called away to meetings at the last minute so he's unable to attend, and Stephen's going to take over that section for us today. There's no ground rules for the forum but what I want to say today is make sure you do respect everyone's opinions, don't be afraid to come forward and tell us what you think about it, to tell us how your feeling about the issues that are being discussed, because I

want everybody to take on board what other people are saying. You don't have to agree with them, I am just asking you to understand. So don't shoot anyone down and say something you don't agree with, there are no wrong answers today, I just want everybody to have their say and feel confident in what they are saying. And basically have fun, we are here, some of you it's a day off school, but really it is to come together and have a great time. Now we are going to have a couple of icebreakers before we actually start the forum off.

Icebreakers conducted.

The Forum

Community Participation

Belinda Williams. We are going to open the forum now. And we are going to start off with our first topic which is community participation. Here with me in the hot seat, our guest speaker today is Stephen Blanch. I think your official title is Youth Services Coordinator with Tamworth Regional Council, so he has a lot to do with youth and he is going to start off with talking about the ways in which we can get involved within our community.

Community Participation Introduction - Stephen Blanch

Thanks Belinda. I will just make a comment quickly on the format of today. Previously we've gone through the topics and talked about issues. Today we've got some speakers who are going to introduce the topic. Today I am talking about community participation. As Belinda just mentioned, I operate out of the Youth Centre. Out of everybody who is here, who is here for the first time? So if you look around there is quite a few, so if you sort of gave it a mark out of ten, just hold up how many fingers as compared to what you thought about the youth center prior to coming here. Can you think about whether it exceeds your expectations, in which case it would be quite a big five? I am interested in any feed back on that, most people who come here for the first time sort of go "wow". Something I try to deal with on a daily basis is actually getting people to come in the door to see for themselves the quality of the facility. This Youth Centre is funded by the Tamworth Regional Council and that's another thing that's a bit tricky, because we are located in the PCYC building most people in the community just assume that this facility is run by the PCYC. But in fact this is all financed by Tamworth Regional Council. The bottom line is that it is a community facility; it's effectively everybody's to enjoy. I think then the challenge for me is to actually try and get people in the door.

Now when your working at a community level there is a lot of perceptions around and these perceptions grow over time. So for example, because we are located in the PCYC, the PCYC has a very long history of community involvement and to actually try to get the community to understand that we are not the PCYC and that we are actually the Tamworth Regional Council is very tricky, and it's almost to the point where I don't think that I can affectively counteract that, because I am talking about hundreds of years of community participation by PCYC.

So the challenge for us is actually getting people in the door and creating our own identity, and as I said before, people have perceptions of what a place is, or community center is, I guess the bottom line is for me and the thing I like to put out there is that perception actually is a very individual thing and it comes back to you, it depends on what you want from the situation.

Getting people through the door is the first step in breaking down those barriers. When you come in and see what's available you get a sense of things that you can do here. There are pool tables, we do live band nights, and disco's, there's all kinds of stuff. This is not particular to this environment either, I mean, a lot of community services out there struggle with trying to break down perceptions. So really it comes back to you, and I throw a challenge to everybody here to approach participation in community events and activities on your own level and terms. We create perceptions and sometimes prejudices that can stop us from accessing things that are ours to use. I am talking very abstract here today, what I am trying to get across, trying to get you to think a little bit about, is that community participation really comes back to how much you put in to it. It is this thing about talkers and do'ers and whether you are going to talk about these things or you are going to get in and do it. And at the end of the day the only thing that's really stopping you is you making that choice. The perceptions and all that kind of stuff, it certainly puts up a barrier but you have the power to break that down as well. So hopefully that'll start a little bit of discussion around community participation, I don't want to make it too particular to the Youthie either, if you can think a lot broader, and I know there's a lot of different services represented here and no doubt there be some other input from other people as well.

Community Participation – Belinda Williams

Thanks Stephen. I am just going to talk quickly based on what Stephen said about getting involved within the community in ways other than just the Youthie. This is our Youth Centre but when you think about it, I mean students here don't want answers necessarily, but think about how many of your friends or your self who actually come here, who actually think to use the Youthie as a place to come together as a group of young people. Other ways in which to get involved is something that I would like to address today, as Stephen said, there are a lot of people from youth services who are here today. Also think about the ways in which young people are involved in the community within such places as the Council. A lot of places have youth councils and things like that in which people actually come together once a month or once every few months to express their views. To represent the young people, is there or do you think there is a basis for something for that to exist within Tamworth so that we do have more involvement? And what other ways are there to be involved? So we are going kick off the discussion, if you want to have something to say we're going to start off with talking about community participation, basing not necessarily around the Youthie, but as a general whole. What ways do you think there are to get involved? Do you think there affective ways to become involved and are there institutions or organisations in which you or your friends would become involved in?

Community Participation - Discussion

- Ok well I went to the forum you had here two years ago and you were thinking of ways to promote the Youthie and one of those was sending posters to schools about the bands and stuff. I know Oxley puts them around the school and I know that had a positive effect on the Youthie. I know since then I have been in here to check out the bands and some of my friends have come so I think in that aspect it's been really good, I know that more people are aware that it is here.
- I think coming together as a group every few months would help with any issues within the community that you think needs to be helped out or addressed.
- Same as the previous speaker, it's the notification. My father actually works here Brad Sutherland and he's very involved with Peel High School. I am here to represent Peel today. We have a lot of involvement with the Youthie, most of our kids here drop in when their down town. Mostly people say 'meet us at the post office or meet us at the clock', now at Peel high school it is 'meet us at the Youth Centre'. So I think that sort of respect and involvement from Peel high school has increased with the support of the Youthie.
- I think that within the schools I do a lot of organisation for the band nights, maybe there are some kids who kind of have this idea that 'aw it's a band night', like what Steve said, its just like the prejudices and the sort of assumptions people have of the Youthie and a lot of people sort of don't come along to any event for that matter. I think that maybe we need to find a way to sort of breakdown that barrier, there is an event in the park this Sunday, I think that if maybe some people came along to that and saw that it is more then just a bunch of kids hanging out at the Youthie. They will see that people do put their time and effort into these sorts of things; I think kids would kind of appreciate it a lot more.
- I agree with the previous point and also I think that we need to get actual kids in the place because I think there is a misconception that it might be dirty or grungy or just not as nice as this place is. And we have people coming in and seeing the facilities and how nice it is I think it'll really improve.
- Yeah I think what everyone else has said is very good and I really don't have much to say.
- Yesterday I was working to about 1 o'clock and then my mates rang me up and their like 'aw yeah come around". So I went around and I went up to my mate's house and we we're sitting there trying to think of things to do. And to tell you the truth, the Youthie really didn't come to mind. I don't know that my mates really wanted to come here but one of the m was saying 'right, let's go get drunk in the park and kick the football". I don't see the point, I have got my P's now, and I thought, I don't want to drink anymore because it sort of wrecks my driving. So that's what they wanted to do, they wanted to go get drunk and play footy in the park. But I don't see the point in going and doing something like that when you've got places like the Youthie. It didn't come to mind, I was throwing out things like, let's go to tenpin bowling or let's go to watch a movie, but boys like that they just don't want to do that stuff, they think that's for the younger kids, that's for girls and yeah it is soft, but I don't know how we can get kids to come here. We could put in the news but what are you going to say when you do that. But if you do want kids here you need to pick it up and make sure kids are aware that this is a place you can come to. You've got people here you can talk to, I know I used to

come here and I used to talk to Brad and used to talk to Steve. I came over here even when I hurt my leg and they just rang the Ambulance and said 'yeah, come and pick him up'. But we need some way to show kids that this is here and this is for them, it's not just for the thirteen year olds that come here, it is for kids, all youth.

- I think that the only way that you're going to get this happening is if we have young people coming in here and spreading the word. The only way to get people to know is having more young people come here and use the facilities so that it filters out that way. Something I am concerned about is why some of the independent schools in Tamworth aren't represented here today. Was the invitation extended to them? I find that a bit concerning because generally I think there is this misconception that the Youth Centre is for a certain type of cliental, and I think that certainly some of the independents schools like McCarthy, Calrossy or William Cowper, I am not sure that students from these school's are using the centre. I think that perhaps that type of awareness, and I know that the Youthie does have a regular column every week in the paper that lets people know what's going on, but I think that's quite telling also that some people have chosen not to be involved in that and it kind of reverberates about what the issues are. I think it would be a really good idea to have some sort of youth day here with 5-6 students from each school and just have activities. Just let people see what the facilities are here, see what is available. There's stuff going on here and that's a way you're going to filter it out and spread it out to the other schools, it would be a really positive move.

- I wasn't aware of this organisation until I read about it in the paper only about the middle of last year. I had no idea because the only time I'd ever be into the PCYC was upstairs in the dance studio, because some of my friends dance there. But I read about it in the paper and thought it was a really positive thing, and I think that a lot of other people have been saying some schools think it's not very cool, "I don't think I will go there, it is for people that have nothing else to do". I think we really need to advertise it, probably the best way would just be people coming here and telling their friends and things like that. I just think that it needs to be advertised more because I think that it's a really positive thing to do.

- Well I am friends with a girl who is involved with the band nights. Every so often I get a message from her saying come to the band thing that she's organized. I bring it up to my friends and they just shut it down because I think that they have a stereotype that when they come to the Youthie for a band, that it is just a new fashion emo's sitting everywhere, out drinking over the skate park, but when you come inside everyone's just smiling and stuff, so it's a good environment and I don't think the school's have a problem with mixing. It is just because you go out on a weekend, there are parties everywhere that every school is at and it is not a problem. They just think the stereotype is the emo's and they won't have a good time. I think just having a positive attitude and just arranging something more then just the bands just so that there is more of a bit more of a variety for different kind of people.

- As was said just then with the variety of activities to reach out to more people. You could have a sort of a showcase day where you offer events for every kind of demographic, you target people to watch movies, listen to bands, and play sports or what not. Get representatives from each school to come here because first impressions, this is a good place. This is the first time I have been here and I am very impressed. With word of mouth you get people saying, "yeah just went down there, do you want to come along

next week?" They'll say, "Nah I am not really into that". If you had a kind of showcase day, people come along and say this is offered this day, and another day something else is offered, people would say, "Let's do this here, lets go there and have a great time".

- I think having representatives from each school to come together would be the best way to advertise what the Youthie is about, and get it all across the schools to get more students involved. Because not many students are aware and this is the first time I am here and I am really impressed. I think that representatives from each school coming together would be a really good idea.
- I am a long time resident at Tamworth and I would have to admit that I didn't realise that you were separate from the PCYC. That's been a learning thing for me. I am impressed by some of the young leaders I can hear here today, and I thought that it was a great idea having the function in the park that was associated with the Youthie but external to being housed here. I thought your comment was really good, I thought along the idea also of some representatives to from each school would perhaps form a leadership group. Being an older resident of Tamworth, sometimes for me the concept of youth is much younger, 13-14, and I really have problems with the word youth. I would perceive most of you young people here today as young adults, and I think as things have changed, the concept of youth is much younger. I see you as more young adults and it's a great centre.
- I just had a thought for community participation that's outside of the Youthie. Volunteering with youth. I don't think it is promoted enough within the schools as a viable career path, a lot of students don't know which direction they want to head for work wise, how to get into University, where they want to go, and I think that promoting volunteering more would be a good avenue.
- I find the Youthie absolutely great, I did my work placement here through the school holidays and it was really good. I really enjoyed working with Steve, Brad and Mark. I found that it's a family atmosphere here; it is encouraging for the kids to be able to mingle amongst each other and get to know each other. My daughter came down here through the school holidays for the first time and she made some good friends. My son's friends usually come in the band room and practice. They're one of the bands that come here regularly. I wish that there was something like this when I was a kid. I just find it's a really great place and atmosphere for kids to meet here. It's a great opportunity for them to learn socialising skills and to be able to get to meet different people. When they do the pool competitions and table tennis competitions it teaches them good sportsmanship. I feel as far as promoting the Youthie, maybe getting some representatives from the Youthie here to go and talk to each of the schools maybe is a good idea to do. Maybe have some of the kids that usually come here talk a bit at their school about what the Youthie's all about, what activities they have here and to promote the place.
- I have always found it challenging, I see youth as someone younger than me and I have never been too sure about the age restrictions. Sometimes I have been invited in and I am like, I am a bit too old. This is from the age of 18 and I personally have some friends that could probably come to the Youthie and always have had a bad perception of it. They always say stuff like, "I go to the Youthie and I get rolled", and that's taking money. I dearly think it would be good to get all the schools together, but realistically I don't think that's going to happen because you are always going to have rivalries between schools.

- There is a lot of misconception and prejudice against the Youthie. Brad's from the Youth Centre that used to be in Darling Street. I don't know if any of you remember that. I am not sure what it was called but it was some sort of Youth Centre that was similar to this. That misconception still holds today for a lot of people, that what sort of happened over there happens here, so maybe rather than trying to target youth, perhaps try and target the parent, invite a parent, get together to explore the Youthie, find out what its about and then they can make an informed choice about their children coming here, that might extend the involvement.

- I have been involved with the Youth for quite some time, particularly in scouting. My personal thought is that we should open up the Youth Space and invite some other youth groups such as the scouts and Interact clubs such as those at Tamworth High. There are various youth groups that may not necessarily know about the Youth Centre here. Great place, invite groups for weekly meetings to promote the facility.

- When I was young like most of you people here now, we used to have a local hang out called the sports centre, which more or less did the same things, but not as well as Steve is doing here. I think above all the profile of the Youthie needs to be raised, but, at the end of it all, it needs to be a safe place for anybody to come to. It needs to be safe for the kids so that they feel comfortable. If you feel comfortable going somewhere, then it's going to get around a lot better than organising meetings and visiting days. Maybe that's a way to look at it as well.

- Think about what service the Youthie could offer that's not being offered at the moment? Tamworth VET network, which I chair, is an organisation basically meeting people each month and doing nothing, and we gave it a focus and a direction. Careers Inc. does the same. They have a clear direction where they are going. What does the Youthie do that no-one else does? What service can they provide to the youth of Tamworth, to the parents of Tamworth, to the schools of Tamworth, which nobody else is providing? What service can they own? What service can they promote? And if you can find that service then you've got a great market of young people to be able to supply that service to.

- I am one of the dancers. I am a regular here, I always come to the Youthie and I find that it has always been a safe place. It is just that some people get the wrong perspective of it and people listen to other people. I think the people that are listening to the other people should come here and find out themselves what this place is like. You come here and Brad welcomes you and says "hi, how you going?" Everyone says, "Yeah, what's your name?" and gives you a hand shake. Go around and see everyone else so if you haven't met no one they take you down and you meet someone and start talking to them, and meet other people and eventually you know everyone. I just think it's a really good place to come cause the youths these days they have a lot more than what other people did, but still there's not enough and their going out thinking there's nothing to do so I will just go and get drunk or I will just go and rob a shop or something, or may as well go and do something bad because they think there is nothing else to do, there's no more opportunities for them to do. But you come here and there's plenty to do, and there is plenty of people to talk to, and if not you've still got the internet and hopefully it's a place to come a place where you can feel safe.

- *Stephen Blanch.* Just a couple of things. Coming back to what was said about what we do. Our main focus is as a social place for young people, a place where you can

come and just interact. We might just say “hi” to a kid, that might be it as long as they aren’t causing any problems while they’re here, we’re not necessarily trying to solve any problems, not trying to work anything out, its just a place where young people can come and hang out. Often young people come to us with problems and a big part of our job is informal mentoring and providing a listening ear and advice which involves having conversations and making a suggestion based on experience, and saying something that reflects on the conversation and a bit of wisdom if you can call it that. The main focus of what we do is as a social place to interact, that’s drug and alcohol free and a safe place. I am aware from time to time there have been issues outside of here. The record we have here is strong, I can recall two incidents where there’s been physical violence in this facility and I’ve been here for close to 5 years. You’d be lucky to find any school around that doesn’t have two a day, so it is not a bad record. I am aware that stuff that does happen outside but obviously we need to have that information in order to deal with it. This is not the extent of the activities; I’ve done discos across the region since Tamworth Regional Council amalgamated to include other areas. I organize activities in Manilla, Barraba, we have done events in Niangla, Woolomin and Nundle, and so we get out and about. Pretty much all outreach activities come from community member’s who will contact me and say we need to do something in the community. Then my first response is yes, I can help you, but for this to work there must be local involvement, I can’t just drop in and do something and expect it is going to work, because I’ve tried that and it doesn’t. What really works is when local people get involved, that is what community participation is about. A relation to the use of the Tamworth Youth Centre, we have been averaging over twelve thousand young people for the past 4-5 years, that comes out to 250 kids a week, so there is quite a considerable use of the facility. We estimate that about 80% of our kids are local Murries, local Indigenous kids, that is a statistic we are very proud of, there’s not too many services around that can state that they have that kind of involvement or participation with the local Aboriginal Community, that’s something we hold up as a bit of an achievement.

- Yeah just listening to some of the comments there. I go past here a lot and there is a lot of Aboriginal kids here, and to me they’re getting out of home and coming here to do something. People somehow think that they are trouble. Well it’s not, you’ve got to get out and have a look for yourself and meet people, because if we continue to just go past that all the time, well, we are just going to cause more trouble for ourselves. So get up, come inside and have a look.

- *Stephen Blanch.* Might just cut that off there. I just want to tell you something very exciting thing that’s happening here, some people maybe aware, some not. I have a situation where I’ve had a group of young Aboriginal people who have been coming to the Youth Centre for a long time and I recognised significant potential with all these young people. I scratched my head for a long time, the past sort of couple of years, thinking how can I engage these young people in something that’s going to move forward in the future? Over time we looked at a bit of stuff and identified some funding through an organisation in Melbourne called The Foundation for Young Australians. We put an application in for funding with this group of young people which is made up of boys and girls. A couple of the dancers are involved in the group. To cut a long story short, we have secured funding of \$40,000 and we are going to create 2 full time youth work traineeships. They will work here full time as youth workers and then at the end of twelve

months, obviously they'll have the qualifications, they'll have some experience and hopefully be quite employable in the future. I see this has enormous potential in terms of empowering some of our Aboriginal young people to actually work in our communities in a meaningful way. I'd love create a workforce of 20 young people to do this stuff, it would be great, but we'll see what happens.

- *Belinda Williams.* Ok we're going to wrap up this session now so we can go on to our next one. I just want to respond to a few things that have been said just to clarify. An invitation was sent out to all high schools in Tamworth, Calrossy and William Cowper have had to put in an apology because of exams and excursion week, Carinya are an apology because they're on school holidays already and weren't able to get anyone here, McCarthy were supposed to be here, I went out to their Principal but they haven't managed to make it today and Farrer we didn't hear back from I don't think. I understand what's been said about the rivalries between the schools and the need to get representatives from each school here, to actually see what's going on and to look at not just what's at the Youthie, but what we can do as young people within the community. So possibly, I mean, I've seen inspiration here today and the people who possibly would like to back something like that, if you can keep that passion going, if the people who are here can actually say "yeah I do want to get involved", as Stephen said, don't just be a talker, be a do'er, actually get involved and that's really where we are going to see a dramatic increase in the involvement at the Youthie and the involvement in the community.

- I just wanted to say that I've heard a lot about high school's, but I haven't heard anything about Primary school's, and if you are looking at a future, a local future with local students, I think that you also need to include Primary Schools. This facility is being funded by the Council, Council are involved in a lot of ways with the Primary schools, and if your looking at a future prospect with young Indigenous or any young student, then we should be concentrating on the Primary schools as well as the high schools, and not neglecting the younger ones and their parents, who can be informed through the Principals of the schools, through support groups, through P & C associations, all that type of thing, promoting their future with the Youthie.

- *Stephen Blanch.* To clarify the age group, the Youth Centre is for young people 12 to 18 years of age, that's the focus/target group for access to this space. One project that has been taking place recently has been organised school tours of the Youth Centre facility. McCarthy was involved in this project. Funding was provided through the Ministry of Transport to bus groups of school kids to the centre for a short tour. This is something the Youth Centre will be looking at doing with a number of the Primary Schools, focusing on year 6, towards the end of the year, as an introduction to the Youthie before the Christmas School Holiday period and onwards. The age group for Youth Week across Australia is 12-25 years of age. That may clarify a few things, I know that youth are seen as very young people, but it is actually a much bigger demographic.

- *Belinda Williams.* So we are going to wrap that session up now and go on to our next session.

The Future: Education and Employment.

Belinda Williams: We are going to bring Chris Power into the hot seat and he is going to talk to you about the future: education and employment.

The Future: Education and Employment Introduction – Chris Powers

I will sit back down and keep it informal. My background, I guess, like a lot of people here. Grown up in Tamworth, been away a couple of times and come back. I love the place, I think it's great. I have 2 boys, one at University, one a tennis coach in Tamworth, was captain of Tamworth High. I think since Mitch was captain they brought in a rule that there must be some academic achievements by Captains otherwise they don't get the job. But he was a sports person and did a great job in the time that he was Captain of Tamworth High. I have worked in a number of organisations in the last 18 years, I have managed Peel Valley Exporters which is a lamb processing plant, Baiada Poultry Processing plant, Carey's Freight lines, and I have been actively involved with the Chamber of Commerce and employment areas. Basically the background is saying that I have worked with recruitment for a long time and I have done a lot of work in Tamworth on the skills shortage and the fact we can't get skilled people in any area. My recruitment background from Peel Valley was really scary. I will just give you an understanding of how it happens; these are positions in a meat processing works. They pay great money, are suited to some people and not others. Reality was that for every 50 people that actually applied or put their hand up for one of those positions, 1 or 2 would actually get through that process or get a start in that plant, and at the end of the week there would be lucky to be one left. 50 people working in a basic industry where you just have to turn up to work, get there everyday etc. and we couldn't recruit 1 person every week as a permanent employee. And that started me thinking, what are the problems with our education system, our employment system and what has changed since when I was a boy. What's changed from when I could go out and get a job anytime and get help and assistance along the way? At Peel Valley I used to say to people, now Peel Valley was the same as Baiada and Carey's Freight Lines, at Peel Valley I used to say to people when I was interviewing them I need you to do 4 things to have a job here:

1. You need to turn up to work everyday. Can you do that? Can everybody do that here? Put your hand up if you can.
2. Could you turn up to work on time every day?
3. Would you be willing to learn?
4. And would you be able to communicate? And communicate means to be able to listen and understand, and if you don't understand, to ask a question, to say I don't understand that, can you explain it to me? Would you be able to do that?

And so did 50 people that I interviewed every week. And at the end of the week, the reason that they didn't turn up, didn't have the job, was, because they didn't turn up every day, couldn't get there on time, and usually the excuses were brilliant, like, wasn't my fault, I was standing out the front looking for the lift and he drove straight past me. I don't like the business, and if you don't like the business that's fine, not everybody likes to be up to their elbows in blood every day of the week, so it only suited certain people. And some said, you don't know what you are doing I don't want to be here. So those 4 basic things of getting a job which go across the board, across the board, if you go and

work anywhere you are expected to turn up to work every day, on time, be willing to learn, be willing to communicate, are missing in lots of people. And we are mainly talking about young people here.

I, through my work with Tamworth VET Network, which is just a group of Tamworth people, school teachers, Department of Education, TAFE, interested people; through my work with them we are doing a lot of work on things called employability skills. Which is basically communication, problem solving, planning, organising, things that you take for granted in people but unfortunately don't exist with lots of people who are going into the work place. So we started looking at that, in conjunction with Careers Net we started looking at how we can change that. And we shook a few sacred cows around, and came up with the thought that at the present time our education system doesn't cater, does not cater for kids who don't want to go to University. In fact, the school system through to Year 12, and the push to have 90% retention through to year 12 in schools, pretty much caters for those young people that want to go onto University. And anybody that doesn't want to go to University and wants to remain in school till the end of year 12 gets a watered down version of what the others are getting. So at the present time the schools don't teach any of these employability skills, they don't assist young people on how to find work, they will tell you they do, and in fact they've got great systems, but what we did at Tamworth VET Network was sit down with the school teachers, and in the end the teachers said, you're right, we don't have time, our system doesn't allow us the time to be able to spend with people and teaching them how to be employed. And yet, you spend some time with the Department of Education people and they say, yep that's great, it's all under control, we've got these you-beaut systems coming through. They are not filtering through to the people on the way through, so, people like my eldest boy went through to year 12, and spent 2 years in year 11 and 12, had a great time, ended up school captain, but learnt nothing about employment. It was left to him when he got out into the workforce to understand what employment was all about. So the education system is failing about 60-70% of the young people who stay at school in years 11 and 12. They are not getting the assistance they need, because, I will ask you this question. If they don't want to go to University and they are looking for a job after school, you know, there's a sort of a thing there, end of year 12, leave school and go to work, and nothing is happening to teach them how to get work and go to work, is the school system working? Well, obviously not, because they need that assistance somewhere on the way through. The other part of the school system is that it locks parents out. Parents are pretty much locked out of the school system unless you take a very, very active involvement in your children's education, you're not needed. Now, part of that locking out come from the kids themselves, you know, when they get about 15 or 16 they enter a pipeline, they talk to you through a wall until they get out the other end around 20, that's the reality of being a parent and being a kid. Part of that is that, but the schools also lock you out, they don't want you to be involved with the education of their kids. And a lot of teachers at school will tell you, it's our job to educate. And I go; if they want to go to work doesn't education involve learning how to work and what's needed. No, that's not our job, our job is to educate. What's that, to teach someone who wants to go and get a job at the end of year 12 history and etc, etc. Yes, that's our job. So the school system has, in fact, failed a lot of our people on the way through. What about the future? Well, I think the future is pretty much going to remain the same unless we do something about it.

And I guess I thought of this, that's the next bit isn't it. That's the beef, there's the gripe, and the thing on the way through, what do we do about it? So instead of using the word revolution, you know, which is used as a youth word, we need an education evolution. We need to evolve our education system past the needs of only the students who want to go on to formal education. We need, one, education that meets the needs of higher education, there is no doubt about that because we do need more people in Australia going through to higher education and gaining qualifications. We also need training within the education system that addresses the employability skills needed by students and these can be taught. Last year Tamworth VET Network ran a very successful program with 120 students at the end of year 10 basically teaching them how to look for work and what's involved in working. And it was very, very successful. We will do some more of that this year but that's only a pilot program. We are only touching the surface, we are not getting anywhere into the mass of people that need to be educated this way, both public and private schools. We need involvement from parents along the way, so the system has to open up to do that. And we need to change employer attitudes, people that employ, so they are able to accommodate the needs of young people as they move into the workforce. Because things aren't as they were when I was leaving school and going to work, so, employers have to change their attitudes too. They do have to provide training for people on how to work, and they do have to provide assistance to young people on the way through. That has to be balanced against the employers needs, that as soon as they put somebody on the payroll they are paying them money and they have to be productive. There's not as much time left these days to spend time on bringing people up to speed. From day one they pretty much have to be effective. So, there's some thoughts there, there is some minor work going on addressing this, the future for education and employment is that education has to meet the needs of employers more than it is at the present time. I hold no hope that that will happen under the public education system because it is such an autocratic system, I can't see it changing. So it leaves opportunities for organisations other than the schools themselves, organisations to partner with the schools to provide the services that are going to allow this to happen. I have got to say, the Youthie, has got a great opportunity there with its market and its facilities to actually come in and be part of that. When I said, own something, you know, pick something that you can own in Tamworth, just as Tamworth VET network has, in terms of helping, of doing this transition from school to work. Why couldn't this facility and its ready supply of customers, young people, be able to tackle and address this particular concern that I have, and throw it open to you, and is that what you have?

Belinda Williams: Okay, thanks Chris. What Chris has done is put forward his concerns about the issues which he sees in relation to the education system and employment. What I want you to do now is respond to this, or to also raise your issues, the issues which you see, or are a problem within our school system. Or just respond about what you think of the education system or the future of employment for young people especially for young people especially within the Tamworth community. I know we have got school students here; we've got teachers, deputy principals, and people from TAFE, both teachers and students. So we've got a wide range of backgrounds and experiences here to so we want to put forward all of these ideas, what do you see as the pros and cons of employment and education in the future.

- I am from Oxley and I actually think Oxley has a pretty good thing about the employment. Because, where I work now I work at Milestone Childcare Centre, and I actually got that job through our careers advisor. I went to her and asked her if there was anything in that field, and she helped me and taught me. She looked at my resume and said yes that's all good, and she taught me the ways to present myself and everything like that. I know on an individual note that it's pretty good for me and I know how to get out there, but, I know Oxley has careers class, which is like a class that we have to go to, and you learn about things like that. And you learn how to do something. I don't know if many other schools have that, but maybe if other schools did have that you wouldn't have that problem. But I think Oxley's pretty good like that so I haven't really experienced bad employment from that aspect.

- Oxley's pretty good and everyone has a go, if you need help they will help you. It comes back to the attitude of the person who wants the job or whatever, because honestly, if they don't want it they are not going to look for it? I think we just need to be aware of that.

- I agree with what Chris was saying about teaching, about employment in schools. I am an ex-Peel student and I am over there being an in class tutor at the moment. Since I left school in 2005 I did my HSC over 2 years. And I have also done a Cert. 4 in Business Admin. Over 2 years. I just can't see the motivation at all in the kids that I work with. I am not sure what you can do about it, like whether you can get a program going or something within the schools. It's good that you (Oxley) have a good Careers Advisor. I never went to my Careers Advisor, and I don't know any of my friends that did. But also, they never came looking for use either, with jobs that are going. Other than the Careers Expo once a year we didn't have anything to do with them.

- I also agree with Chris. Not only am I school Captain but I received a school based traineeship through the AES, the Aboriginal Employment Strategy in 2006. So I can compare being in the workforce and being at school as well. Once a week and half the holidays I am working at the Commonwealth Bank on Peel Street. And before I got my traineeship I had only developed my skills, as in turning up on time, knowing my responsibilities through the SRC, which every school has. Peel High only has 400 students, so it is a small base, there is only about 10-20 people on the SRC, and there is only 2 Captains and 2 Vice-Captains. So about 20-25 people out of 400 only develop the skills. The ones that class tutors help are the ones that do have a bit of trouble with work and their attendance. We have 1 year advisor per year, and throughout the whole school we have 1 Careers Advisor. Developing skills are hard. We do have people come and speak to us; the traineeships are for, year 10 students and year 11 and 12 students. I think all schools have the opportunity to get traineeships. As a Captain I have taken on a program with 10 students, 5 of which are indigenous, where I sit down with them twice a term, which is only a small amount, and we go through how they can share their ideas on how they can be more active in their youth. So it is not an SRC, it is not an AECG, it is not a SIPP Committee, its just student based where students talk and students listen, you listen to your friends, you listen to their ideas. So I think I want more involvement from the students, not only just the SRC Reps. But more productive students who can take a

leadership role, not just leaving it to the teachers and to the people that are in the field, like Chris, to teach them the skills. They are there to go to school, most people are there to finish Year 10 and get their HSC Certificate. They are looking for a job afterwards, so it is not their schools responsibility to teach them it is the attitude of the student and I just think that you cant change somebody's attitude, if they don't want to be helped you cant help them. So we just need to put that idea across to them that if they want a job after school and if they leave after year 10 or 12 that they need these skills to actually put on their resume, or no one will want to pick them up.

- I guess, as a case manager at an employment agency I would see quite a number of the results of the students who leave school early and students who aren't taught the correct way to complete resumes and job preparation tasks. I guess too that a number of younger students who are unable to complete school for a number of reasons, don't use the facilities that are available at school, such as career advisors and teachers, they just leave school. And from that scenario, comes this series of children who are unable to gain employment because of the barriers that they face, and the number 1 barrier obviously is leaving school early. So if there was a program that was available in the schools that could support the students who are having difficulties earlier on, I think that would prevent these students from leaving school and having to come to employment agencies and be taught the skills necessary to be able to obtain employment in an area that they are very limited to.

- I just have a question. You have some support in schools through teachers; you also have the ability to be able to access some out of. Are any students here aware of the availability of accessing career opportunities or career information or employability skills outside of schools? Just a show of hands from students, would you be interested in a career information centre? Something like that that you could access on your own time outside of school? (ed. Majority of hands signaled yes)

- Well I left finished year 10 in 2006 and I left for a year, and was thinking, you know, I am a pretty smart kid, I thought I had my screwed on pretty straight, and I thought, yeah, I'll go out and get a job. That didn't happen, went to TAFE, fell ill, and couldn't finish that, basically for the whole of last year I wasted a year travelling and trying to do different things, basically I couldn't get a job because I just wasn't trained enough even though I did have a lot of things I thought I needed. So I came back to school this year, and basically wasted a year of my life. I could have finished my HSC; I am in year 11 now. And I have a friend who did the exact same thing, and ended in the same spot, couldn't get employment. Now I am doing work experience here at the Youthie and I think there used to be a system where students could access work experience through the high schools (ed. still in operation). I mean I got work experience at the Youthie basically through going to an entertainment course outside regular school hours. And I think that a lot of kids think that's that what they have to do is that they have to put in extra hours at school to be able to have these sorts of opportunities. And I think that, I have only been at Tamworth one term but, I have not heard a single thing about a Careers Advisor or anything like that, so I think maybe, there needs to be, even like just meetings, you know, fortnightly or monthly, where groups of kids can get together with a

teacher or a careers advisor and discuss it. Because when it comes down to it, girls have already said before, that it's the attitude of the people. And basically if we put a focus group together like that, not just my school but all the schools, if they did a similar thing, you would see the kids who are really keen and who really do want, if they want to leave school, get a job. And I think you would get a much better response that way, rather than just having a careers advisor in the school. I think the students have to approach, because it often comes down to confidence. The kids who aren't confident aren't going to go hand out their resumes, aren't going to try and get a job.

- The day I turned 14 I wrote out my resume, and the next I went out and I put my resume at Shoppingworld. I remember how terrified I was because I had no idea what I was doing and I went up and talked to different people. And they were like, we don't need any juniors, and the constant knock down is really hard. I was fortunate to actually get a call back that afternoon. I have been working at a pharmacy for the last year. In that time we have been through 5 juniors and at least 4 seniors. Working in a pharmacy is really hard work because you have to do additional kind of school work on top of your school work. You need to know about medications because you are talking about someone's health and well being. My work environment is a very nice place, it's clean. Because there are lots of females there it tends to be a rather bitchy, if you will. And that makes it harder on the juniors; we are there 2 days a week. We work 16 hours a week, the pays not great, but, it's not that hard a job. I have talked to the juniors when they have left, again and gain and again, and they are like, it is too hard work, the people are too mean, the pay is not enough. They don't want to work for it, they don't want to do it – their father can buy things for them. I had my own cousin quit after 3 weeks, and she came in and got her father to quit for her, she sent her letter of resignation via fax, because she didn't want to face the people. And I think that as a way of quitting a job and getting employed its like people don't understand how to go out there and do it the right way. I find that if you want to quit you should go up to your bosses face, give them the appropriate 2 weeks or however long they need to train a new person, and not send your father in to do it for you. As a youth working in a trained workplace, because I am working with pharmacists, people who have gone to University for years and done all this study. And then there's the pharmacy assistants, we are actually doing a S2 and S3 diploma, that means we can sell medicine that's actually only for pharmacists only medicine, or not only, we cant actually sell it without the pharmacists permission but we are allowed to handle this medicine. Our boss is paying for this; they are giving us these opportunities. They are paying for this diploma and some people have quit half way through this diploma not even sticking it out because they don't like working there, and I don't want to be in pharmacy my whole life but while I am there I want to do every thing I can to learn. I am actually trying to get work experience at Prime at the moment and I have talked to the careers advisor, and as soon as I said I wanted to work in media he basically said that's going to be a tough time, that's a hard field to crack. So I think we need more support and more people to know what's out there. We need to work on the mindset; we need people to go out there with a positive attitude and trying, rather than quitting half way through. We need to have some kind of class or group or anything that will help people become more positive and want to work for it.

- Just touching on what Chris said about when his son was at school they didn't get the opportunities. After I sort of sorted out where I was going, when I leave school I want to go to University and do architecture, that's sort of where I am heading and I have based my school work around architecture. So this year I am in year 11 doing design and technology, industrial technology, math's, the compulsory subjects you have to do to get into that course. I know they don't really teach you much about when you go out into the workforce what you need to do, but, if we could get something going. Like your careers advisor does tell you this is what you have to do, that's what our careers advisor does anyway. I am working with Joblink Plus at Youth Pathways as well at the moment and they are sort of helping me out to get another job, I have just left my first job that I had. Then again I have got other people trying to help me too. So I have got all these people trying to help me. You need someone around to push you through to make sure that's where you are going at.

- Where are the mothers and fathers of these kids? We all seem to be blaming the education department, but why aren't the mothers and fathers helping these kids at home as well and trying to point them in the right direction?

- Well, where to start with that? First of all, listening to Chris's comments I found myself becoming increasingly defensive of certain things there and very thought provoking. Sometimes I think it is way too easy to blame the education system, and I am coming at this from different angles, I am coming at it as a young person myself who has very recent memories of the education system for me, and coming at it from the angle of a teacher, and coming at it as a coach and a mentor for other young people, being involved in other welfare activities throughout the community, and I don't think it is good enough to just say the education system is not offering it. I mean, our curriculum is absolutely cram packed with all sorts of things and overcrowded. And I think a lot of it comes down to, and I don't know how this has arisen, there seems to be a general sense of apathy within some young people, they don't want to work. They don't have the motivation to get out there and get a job, because they don't have to get a job to have money. And a lot of kids come to school and say, I don't want to be here, what's the point in being here. Just being at school we are teaching them those 4 things you were talking about; turning up on time, being uniform, being able to communicate effectively, and being willing to learn. That's what we are trying to do in schools, that's why you have to come to school, that's why you have to wear a uniform, that's why you have to be there in the morning or have some excuse why you are not. We are trying to create a routine whereby young people can go out there and successfully function within the workforce. Just within our school, and I guess that why I am a bit defensive, we do have young people involved in Youth Pathways and Joblink Plus are up at the school every week doing that. I know at Peel High School they started the Planet Youth Mentoring Scheme that is being rolled out through other schools, and that's extremely effective. Mentoring by older people in the community, parents, people in the workforce that are willing to be involved in that and give back. Taking on one young person, spending time with them, just talking to them, getting to know them, making them feel valued, working through how to write a resume with them, and asking them what is it that they want to do? Creating opportunities to go out and have experience in that employment field and

have the successful tools to be able to go out and get a job. And I know that that scheme has worked particularly effectively and that it is being implemented through out other schools in the community. But all these things do come back to funding, and as we say, doing. It is really easy to sit here and say the education system is not working; it is really easy to sit here and say parents feel locked out, well I know that at our school and I have worked at other schools, parents are involved, parents who want to be involved are involved. Lots of parents do not want to be involved. They like the idea that kids come to school every day and that they are looked after there and they don't have to worry about them. That's a problem in the community as well that I don't think we can blame one group, we all need to work together. And I can say that that is done particularly well at Oxley, I can say that when I went to school I went to a different school within Tamworth and no, there careers advisor there wasn't particularly effective, but the careers advisor at our school is now, and actually has meetings with all senior students. What do they want to do? She gives them individualized information on that and has appointments. So it needs a whole community, a holistic approach, but not just that, we need to address that kids don't want jobs. They don't want to have to work and work hard for 7 dollars an hour. They want to be getting 15 and 20 dollars an hour for not doing much, and they don't realize that they need to get these skills at school in order to get those better jobs. And they can't see long term. They need to be able to go to TAFE, go to University, in order to have the job that they can have a long term career in. And I know that we do have VET courses, TAFE courses at schools, so kids in year 11 and 12 that don't want a HSC in terms of a TER, a UAI. There a lot of kids there who don't want a UAI, so we are not just providing for kids who want to go to University, we are also providing for kids that want other opportunities but are there to still learn and to communicate effectively and to turn up on time in their uniform.

- Just a comment about what Chris said with the education system tending to block out parents. I don't think it is the education system, it is more based on what the parents and the children are like, if parents want to get involved they will. It is also dependant upon the children because, if I went home and I didn't tell my parents anything, and I didn't want to tell them anything then they probably wouldn't get involved. I think it is really reliant on kids and not really on the education system on how parents, and if parents get involved.

- I completely agree with a previous statement, most kids don't want to work and I am sure that all the young people in this room have jobs or are reliable people, but when I first started in the workforce I was getting \$5.26 at McDonalds and I didn't really see the point of working. I am a completely different person to my brother who isn't the nicest child. He does not want to work; he doesn't see that there are any opportunities for him because he is not the brightest candle in the box. I think he relies on if he doesn't get a job the dole will always be there for him. So there is no motivation for the kids to be working. At our school each year has a Careers Advisor and we also have a Careers Person who is fantastic. Most people at our school will agree that we have to seek help rather than it being provided to us. So with books we have to go to his office to get them rather than those being delegated at our year meetings. So maybe a solution would be a meeting, as mentioned earlier, maybe every 2 weeks when Tamworth High has our year

meetings, just to run through opportunities that are involved or available. So I think the motivation for the students in our year, especially the ones from years 9-10 they are very confused. Whereas in years 11 and 12 we kind of have an idea as we have to pick our subjects. I also love the idea of having the kind of bonding sessions. As prefects we have been going through bonding sessions every Friday to just to get to know the year sevens. So even if all of our schools made an organisation that could get together with the year 7, 8 and 9's, even the year 11 and 12's, and even the teachers. And just run through things that we think they could be doing or things that they could possibly achieve.

- I have been in employment since 1962 and only left a full time job last year to go back and study. I think a lot of factors have changed in industries these days. When I started as a junior you started on a very low wage and you were given the opportunity to be trained and mentored by experienced staff. And I think this has changed tremendously in industry these days. And I think that puts young kids who are not career minded at a huge disadvantage if the education system doesn't meet their employability needs. I don't think employers are doing that today. And that has been my experience having 20 years at a leading bank recently. The only young people I saw that were advantaged were those that had traineeships. And young people that were coming were expected to be productive, and they weren't, and it was very difficult for them in those situations. And I have worked in the banking industry since 1962. I really feel that if the education industry doesn't address this, then our youth are going to continue to be without those employability skills. I have witnessed this very recently.

- My son is at Oxley High and is in year 12 at the moment. And I find that he has been given good information by the year advisor, but I find that he is one of those quiet achievers, he does want to go to University, but I find there probably does need to be a program in the schools to teach them about employment skills, so they can actually go out there and know that if they go to a job interview, what am I actually going to say, what am I supposed to do. And I think they are things that should be probably taught in schools. I also find the Planet Youth Mentoring Program is good, I have been involved in that last year myself. So I feel that is a good program for students to go in to. I know that this year I think they have just started at Oxley High, so I think once that's sort of advertised through the schools it is something that will benefit students. Yes I do feel that school should teach more skills as far as once they do leave school, or they do want to go and try and get a job. What are they supposed to do?

- Everyone really wants to go to University these days. Going out and earning \$5 or \$10 an hour really isn't that much of a goal. I personally, all through my year 12, walked into a job, and I think there was no real reason for doing that.

- A word of warning when we are talking about secondary education at this point in time, I understand there will be a lot of young people being prepared to go to University, but you have to expect that after you graduate from University that doesn't mean that you will be well prepared to be able to seek a job.

- Talking about starting off with low paid wage, or low paid work, that happens every generation, that is not symptomatic of you guys, it was the same when I was a young bloke, and I wanted to earn the lot. But, you know, it is a bit of life experience, you have to go through some of the bad to get to the good stuff, unless you get the higher education that allows you to get the higher job. But for 80% of kids they are going to have to start to understand that they need to do the lower end stuff before you can get to the good stuff. That is a part of life experience, and when you get through that you feel a damn sight better having worked through that way, rather than some of the kids that have come in at the other end of the scale and perhaps gone to University and got higher jobs at the same age.

- I find it interesting to listen to the comments here; I did have some concerns about generalizing education systems and youth. I think there are many pathways for people and sometimes it takes a little while to find the pathway for you. I think with our education and developing new employability skills, there are a number of groups that have responsibility in that area, including the individuals themselves. And I don't think that there is one coat that will fit all, I think it requires a multiplicity of approaches. I think we need to be looking at partnerships from the main educational areas, and I know at TAFE we do have some partnerships with a number of the schools and I hope to see that develop further. We also have students that find the school system, for whatever reasons is not for them. And so they may mover over to TAFE and finish off their education during years 11 and 12. And I think we need skilled trades people, we need people with skills that doesn't necessarily require University qualifications, it is not the be all and end of everything having University qualifications. I think that in today's society, who is driving the education system? Is it the employers who are saying this is what we want? And we are talking with employers, in the welfare industry which I teach in the actual curriculum is driven by industry, so I think that when our students leave after completing our courses, they are employable, they have developed those skills.

Belinda Williams: Okay, so we are going to get Stephen to have a quick chat about our next topic and we are going to start in the middle and continue working around the circle.

Social Interaction and Safety – Stephen Blanch

Stephen Blanch: Adam Marshall is Deputy Mayor for Gunnedah Shire Council, also a former staffer for Peter Draper, was invited to come to the forum and talk about social interaction and safety, but unfortunately Adam is an apology for today's forum. I guess I am not too badly placed to talk about social interaction and safety. I will try to keep it short so we can get some discussion in before lunch. Social interaction, there is a couple of strands I would like to touch on; the first one is a relatively new phenomenon, bebo, myspace, facebook. I think social networking has totally changed the social interaction for young people, and it is not only young people using these technologies. I use it myself for various things, and I know I am not the only person my age, and I am sure there are other people too. There are many platforms out there, for various specialties like music or vide, like youtube, or flickr for photography or deviantart, there are heaps of them. And

they all incorporate different ways to communicate. I have had lots of conversations with different people around this subject and a lot of the alarmist or reactionary people are, you know they freak out, how are we going to stop this, how are we going to shut it down. It all concerns around safety and the pedophilia thing comes into it quite a bit. I guess,, I think the whole paradigm has shifted, I think the internet and computers have totally shifted the whole thing together. The challenge for us is how we are going to structure it and respond to it so we can use it effectively. One example is music, there is a lot of discussion about the sharing of music and the market is changing. I mean it is just indicate of the bigger picture. I would be interested to hear the views of young people here today. The computers here at the Youth Centre are used every day all day. You know, they have a screen of MSN going, they have another chat window open, they have another myspace going, and bebo, and all that stuff. Some of the stuff is fantastic; on the other hand, some of the themes I see in bebo are pretty far out and challenge the sensibilities. That social interaction is a big challenge, how are we going to deal with that? The safety aspect, if we bring it back from cyberspace and bring it to our immediate environment and communities, the biggest issue I see with young people I come into contact with, is not surprisingly, alcohol and other drugs, alcohol being the biggest. The reality is that a lot of young people are going to try stuff and do things. The biggest issue I see is not necessarily that they are doing these things; it is the situation they get into after they have consumed. Because, in that situation you have lost your power to think rationally and make reasonable judgments on how you deal with situations. The effect, from the situation they quite often get into, then has a lasting effect, meaning juvenile justice, sexual interactions, unwanted sexual interactions, violence (which can be tied up with the juvenile justice system as well). I would like to get some input from young people in relation to this. It is almost a rite of passage for many young people, you know, to drink and to hang out. I know a lot of kids go and do it, but do many kids actually think about what happens? Do they think, if we go to the park with 3 or 4 other kids to the park and have a drink, do they think, Bob has a set of car keys in his pocket, do they think before they get into that situation how they are going to deal with it? The feeling I get is that when some young people are in that situation and there is a set of keys it's, let's go for a drive. Not a great deal of planning and thinking ahead.

Belinda Williams: Okay, so what I would like to bring up in this topic is what Stephen has been talking about. Do the issues that arise as a result of social interaction young people and the community, and young people with each other. And I would like to address this in relation to the work environment, the school environment, but most I importantly the social and community environment. What are the issues facing us with drugs and alcohol? But more importantly, how are we going to counter the negative effects of these? And the same thing with bebo and facebook and myspace, I know it is a big issue with bullying in some cases, with especially younger people in school. So what are your thoughts on trying to make it a safer, a more appropriate use of these technologies.

- I agree with a lot of the points you have just raised, because, coming from a Deputy Principals position in a large high school, unfortunately I do get to see most of the negative aspects of students and their social interactions, their lives. And

unfortunately, I will make a couple of generalizations, a lot of poor social interactions that do occur with teenagers are occurring after hours on weekends. And at a school level, and I guess this would come from virtually all schools, we see a lot of falling out from these poor social interactions Monday, Tuesday or Friday afternoon as a lot of people are planning their events and weekends. A vast majority of disciplinary action that we have to take at Tamworth High School is purely as a result of these poor social interactions that are occurring between students, and the vast majority of these are occurring outside of school. Unfortunately, bebo, facebook, a lot of those, msn, which is probably less used now, and unfortunately the well known text message is not enabling students to have some down time. I know if you were speaking to a lot of people here who are probably my generation or older, you had down time. You left school and if there was an argument or disagreement, you would go home, there were no mobile phones, your parents monitored phone use very carefully, and there was no communication. You then got back to school and the issue was either over or you saw it out. Now the issues leave school at a minor level and by the time they come back to school the next day they are 15, 20, 30 times worse than it was the day before, because it has just bounced around between 40 or 50 friends, they have all given their input, their whines, their complaints, their bitches. And this has made a situation that was a very minor thing, extremely exacerbated, and very dangerous in a lot of situations. And I will honestly say that we have situations in which we have a large majority of people involved in unsafe practices that, had they been dealt with more appropriately on an initial basis, a lot of poor interactions between students wouldn't have taken place. Now, it is a very difficult thing to monitor because the, my job, apart from dealing with discipline, is also dealing with what lies behind the behaviors of students, and a lot of information that comes across my desk, and through the phones and interviews with parents and concerned family members, is very scary. A lot of things I won't repeat in a forum like this because it would be quite stunning to a lot of people, the sort of things that young people are now, as part of their lives, needing to deal with and are not emotionally ready to do so. There is a lot of availabilities in society, people are given a lot more options to do things, but unless they learn the skills to be able to deal and confront these social interactions. We get the results, local crime prevention get the results, juvenile justice get the results, and that is not where our youth should be. Our youth need to be learning these basic skills, and it is a wider community responsibility. Schools can do all we can do, parents need to do what they can do, community, Council, everybody needs to "chip in" to help kids learn these responsibilities. I personally, if it was up to me, I would like to put a mobile phone blocking tower in the middle of Tamworth High School. I think I would cut our arguments down to 50% if I did so. Many verbal communications between students is not good. Students need to be able to face each other and talk issues out, because you know yourselves from past experience, from life experience, that, messages can be misinterpreted, unless you see and hear the person telling you exactly what's going on. A message read on a screen can have a thousand different interpretations and of course, in the course of 1 night, a thousand different people will see that message, because it will be bounced around, and a lot of the students, probably all of the students at some stage, have received messages from friends having arguments with so and so, or so and so has had interactions, or gone out with so and so's girlfriend or boyfriend, or this has happened, or there is a party on, it happens every night, night after night, whether

parents know about it or not it is happening all the time and its very scary what's is going on out there in terms of communications. Its getting students and the youth of today a lot of positive experiences, they are learning to say their piece, but not learning where the boundaries are, and not learning to, if other people have a discussion, let them sort it out, don't become involved in things that don't involve you. I don't have the answers, and a lot of schools don't have the answers, we get the fallout of a morning, personally speaking, a lot of the suspensions from Tamworth High School have come from an over reaction. This year alone, things from, you slept with my boyfriend, you drank my drinks at that party on the weekend, I wasn't invited to your birthday party so I am going to punch you for it. Poor social interactions a very common and I am sorry to say the last, I have been teaching for the last 20 years, I have been an executive in the school for the last 9, and deputy for the last 3 or 4, and I can honestly say in the last 3 or 4 years we have seen a generational change, and I know event coming from the Seniors at Tamworth High we are seeing a change again in juniors coming through the school. And we need to as a whole community look at ways of working with these youth, and I think that is something the Youthie can really help and be involved with as well, Primary students coming in with a more open attitude towards each other, is a polite way of putting it I would say, but that is enough from me.

- Just adding on from what was just said, as seniors we have been at school for 7 years, we've seen some good things, some bad things, and everything in between. As was just said, we have seen a generational change this year, the year 7's we have brought in are somewhat below the par of what you would expect of respectable social stature. Like, I come out of class, whack you in the face, I run away, sort of thing. I actually saw that coming out of an ITP class, which was quite amusing to say the least but, startled me. And as he also said, he cops a lot of what is behind these actions, and my personal belief is it is a sort of social conditioning. With our generation, we have grown up around technology, to embrace it, I have to say, I am a techno person, and I love it. It has made the world a smaller place now; we can talk to people in the US like that, talk to a person over in Sweden, have a conversation with them, and get to know them. It's that distance that is broken, and it brings us closer together in a way, but it also distances us because we do not develop those conversational skills that you would learn whilst interacting with a person, in a face to face level. As was stated, interpretation is everything, body language, eye contact, tone of voice; principal components of communication are missing in MSN conversations, over bebo, over facebook, myspace, whatever. MSN tries their best to mimic that with smilies, but does not work. Technology is advancing so fast, sure, face to face with mobile phones you can have video conversations, that will bring some of that social interaction back, but you have to value the face to face more.

- I just want to add one more thing. I want to make perfectly clear that this is not a Tamworth High situation; this is not a Tamworth situation. I have been in conversation with a number of schools in Tamworth, and a number of schools in the New England region, and a number of schools across the state. It has been raised at the DP's Association, of which about 20 representatives go to Sydney to talk about issues in schools. And also the Secondary Principals Council that meets quite regularly in Sydney. It is a State wide issue and the vast majority of schools across the state have realised that

a change of students coming through this year. And they are seeing a lot of negative aspects coming through, especially with a lot of the younger students now in years 7 and 8, some of the year 4 and 5's as well. We are definitely seeing changes right across Australia. It is not just here, don't think it is just us; it is a big generational change.

- With this new year 7 bunch we have coming through, the prefect group have been getting together with them every Friday afternoon for about a half an hour to develop that social interaction, getting them to sort of have respect for us, and in return we have respect for them, do unto others as you have them do unto you, as it may be. We have also, at Tamworth High, adopted the PBL program, which is Positive Behavior for Learning. And what that is, is instead of saying do not do this, you can't do this, it says this is what to do. Don't say not what to do because that gives examples, it sparks ideas, they do it anyway. GI have them something to follow, something that is respected and encourage them to do it with positive reinforcement. I can say I have done some suspect things in my life and with positive reinforcement I wouldn't have done them, but we all go through these things, we learn from our mistakes, but some of these mistakes are needed to be able to learn this sort of thing. Some of it is just through observing what other people do.

- I agree completely with what has been stated about the whole technology side. Also with the alcohol and drug issue, not only are as we are seeing a new generation coming through like we are seeing in year 7 we are also seeing the drinking age going down. I know a lot of people that are starting to drink, even in year 7. Now we get education about drugs and alcohol, but we mainly start in year 9. I think we need to start showing the effects and the consequences of going to start drinking alcohol and trying drugs at a younger age from year 7 because the age is getting younger.

- I am an involved, committed grand mother of a 13 year old boy, and I know there are times when he would love me out of his life, but sorry I am there. So he has his opinion and I have mine but I am in there for the long haul.

- As a parent of 2 teenagers, I have got a 16 year old who is nearly 17 who is in year 12, and a 12 year old who is in year 7 up at Oxley. I have noticed more the change of girls over the generations. I am concerned because I think the younger girls are trying to be older than what they are, kids aren't staying a kid anymore, that's the problem. You see them putting all this makeup on every day to go school like it's a fashion parade and you kind of think, why? Why can't you just be accepted for who you are and what you are? You know, why do you have to go looking like everybody else and trying to fit in? People should accept you for who you are. So that's my concern as a parent, but I think, especially girls are trying to grow up too quickly. This Bebo is also a bit of a concern for me as a parent, I mean my daughter says you can't get other people coming in its only the people that you know that you talk to, but I kind of wonder is that true or is she just telling me that. So as a parent these are the concerns too, who are your kids talking to on the internet? There are a lot of predators and sickos out there. And I think we as parents should keep the lines of communication open with our kids, I think that's the most important. I feel that I have a good communication with my kids, they seem to be able to

talk to me about things, and I think that is good considering that I never had that when I was a teenager with my Mum. So I think its important for the youth that they should try and talk to their parents because we were all teenagers at one stage, so we all do know what you go through, we have all been there, we have all done that, and I would just like to encourage the youth, maybe if you are having problems or difficulties just talk to your parents. Ask them, what was it like when you were my age or something, you will probably be surprised that they will say exactly the same thing as the issues that you are going through. And I also just encourage you to try and be yourselves and not try and grow up too quick because you have the rest of your lives to grow up and do all those things.

- I just have 2 points. I think society as a whole relies way too much on technology. I think we should actually go back to sending a letter in the mail or something like that. And the second point, with the alcohol stuff I think that society needs to change, not just the younger generation needs to change. Society has valued alcohol as an accepted drink so if we change that value then maybe the younger generation wouldn't be drinking that much and there wouldn't be that problem.

- I personally see Jackass; most people may know that, most people may not, as funny. Its things where people get punched in the face, or hit in the back of the head with a skateboard. And the kids these days are just expressing their own ideas of entertainment and stuff every day. Also there is talk about senior responsibilities with drinking and everything, me and my friends have just started the "if you are drinking you are not driving" thing with everyone. So it is going across the board. I cam across from a trial and error sort of thing, where there was a lot more error before we decided to inverse that and start looking after each other. With the technology thing, it has just kind of stopped now; it has come to a place where it is calm. I think that progression will be the solution rather than trying to stop everyone from being able to talk to each other. Because I see talking to someone in Sweden as mentioned, or talking to someone in America, as a better thing rather than a worse thing. And also with the improvement in technology we are getting video conversations straight away. You are soon going to be getting the face movements, the body movements, the pitch and tone of someone's language, But that is just taking a little while to come in, that is still waiting for technology to catch up with what us as people want.

- I think a really good point was made in the last subject. Where are the parents? As a parent I think we need to spend a bit more time with our kids. Sit down with them and find out what Bebo is, find out what is on there. And instead of running off with our own lives, try and spend a bit more time with our kids and try and build a better relationship, and not be like, do as I say not as I do. Not to say to your kids you can't drink when you have a beer in your hand. We have just got to be a bit more understanding and try and spend a bit more time with our kids.

- If you think it is bad at the moment, wait for another couple of years. It is just going to be horrendous because technology is brilliant and it is just going to get better and better and the lives of young people growing up will be enhanced by it. It's come a

long way since my first year at University we used slide rules. In the second year at University we were able to use calculators, now that is not a long time ago and now we are at the stage where we are. GI have it another 3 or 4 years it is just going to be fantastic, so, get used to it.

- I agree with nearly everyone, bits and points about the whole thing, but I am a person who has Bebo, I have MSN, I have MySpace, I have facebook. I am sure that lots of other people here have at least one of them. I agree when it was said you see year 7's coming in and they are like, we went and got drunk on the weekend, and you are like whoa, like how old are you? But that is what our generation is like. I have a pretty close relationship with my mum. And I do remember in year 7 when she was like, don't try and wear makeup. But I do think that girls are trying to be older than what they are, and I do think that peer pressure has a role in that, but that is another whole different thing. We try and be like the cooler kids. When you are in year 7 you look up to the year 11's and you are like, I wish I could do that. I had a sister and she was kind of a wild one, so my mum saw different aspects of that. My mum kind of knows about our generation, a lot more than many other people would. And I think that comes back to communicating with your parents. So I think that in a couple of years time, mobile phones are a massive thing, I use mine like every day, I am not going to lie, and on MSN you do have the conversations, and on bebo you find people ripping on other people for different things and then you hear about that at school, so it does go around. But that is what our generation is all about now and I think it's going to be really hard to stop that. In P.E. you learn about the alcohol and stuff, people also think that is kind of cool to be able to do that, so that is just a whole other thing in itself. That is what our generation is like now, I have seen some of my sisters and my brother, my brother is a bit of a study freak and he doesn't really go out that much, but on the other my sister always went out, my mother knew but that was never going to stop her. A place like the Youthie would also help that, people do come here and they interact with other people, which is on the social side of things, but in a few more years it is going to be a whole other thing and we are going to be having the same conversation.

- I agree with what everyone is saying, I agree with the parents, I was brought up in a very open, friendly environment, two older brothers, one is very wild. So I have seen most of it, Dad being a youth worker he brought his work home. I have seen a lot of kids come to our door step very confused. I have seen a lot, I pass it on through my people but I think with parents, even if they do have an open relationship, there are still some things kids don't tell their parents, they would rather tell their friends. And their friends support and help reflects on, "let's go get drunk, let's just forget about it". I had a lot of issues as well, I was open with my parents, told my friends I don't drink and they do. Their way of dealing with it was let's go get drunk and forget about it, let's go get whatever. But being strong headed as I have grown up, I think it's the individual as I was saying before; it's their way of seeing things. At Peel, the technology, it's the same thing as Tamworth High, we have a ban on all Bebo's and MySpace. We have a policy now on bullying through texting, phones off during the day; I think Oxley has that as well. I think the education department has put down their foot; you can't get away with it. But then after hour's school can't do anything, like you said, it spreads like wildfire, everyone knows

about everything, these stories get twisted around and come back to school the next day and they want to just clash. The technology I find, there is 2 ways, it is moving very rapidly, it's good and bad, the good side is that we do have the opportunities to get what we want when we want it, it is a good way of communicating. Going back to a letter would be a good idea but I don't think its going to happen. The bad side is that it is a way of miscommunication as well. I went on to MySpace once and thought I was talking to someone which wasn't the person I was talking to. And if it wasn't for the knowledge behind me I would have fell into the same trap that most young girls do. So I think the schools understand what we are going through, so I praise you for talking about it. For employment, I know the harassment, the technology, everything is banned at my bank, you are not allowed to talk about anything, and everything is confidential. We have a system when I was in year 8 in P.E. class we got to pick what the teachers taught us, I know they have a lot to teach us in a short period of time. Our teachers were able to wrap around what we wanted to learn as examples. When we talked about drugs, sex and alcohol in P.E., the students actually ran the practical theory where they got to discuss their experiences without actually telling them and they actually said we got drunk and this is what happened, you know, this is the wrong thing to do. Students talk to each other and that is the only way to get through to them.

- I went to a party on the weekend, I can't remember if it was his 15th or 16th birthday party. His Mum and his family were inside, by the time I got there at 7pm he was absolutely off his face, and I knew there were kids in the back yard drinking. I am 17 years old and I don't drink. I will admit I had 1 sip of his drink because he wasn't going to get off my back until I did. Also, I spoke to a lot of kids at the party, I hang out with some older kids, and there were kids inebriated, you know, 15 and 16 years olds, past the point I have seen some 19 and 20 year olds drinking. I was absolutely dumbfounded by it and I asked these kids, "Do your parents know where you are? How are you getting away with this?" "Oh, they took my phone so I talked to them on MSN about it", or "I snuck out", or "they think I am at someone else's house". I am 17 and live with my grandmother and often she is not there, but I have only just been allowed this year to go out and do what I like. I was kept on a very short leash and showed that I could be trusted, I think that a lot of kids, that's what they need I there parents around to have the chance to prove that they can be trusted. And I mean this whole internet thing, you know sneaking around; Mum and Dad will go out and plan it all on Bebo or whatever. There have been times I have been abused on Bebo, someone telling me they were going to smash my face or something heinous like that. And there have been times when I have seen that person down the street and I have crapped my pants, I was really scared. And I have been approached by them, I was by myself, one particular time, and I just said that nothing I said on the internet can justify you taking physical violence out on me and I was out the front of my house and I got punched in the face, and I was like "what the hell?" I think that kids need to be monitored on the internet, I now have my own internet connection in my room but that is still monitored. I am only allowed on it at certain times, I think parents need to step up, I know its only a minority, but the parents do really need to step up and say where is my 14 year old son, I should ring up this house and see if they are really staying there, because when it comes down to it, kids lie a lot. Because they think if I am smart enough to lie about it I am smart enough to get away with it. And

most of the time they are not because they end up in hospital getting their stomachs pumped or in a fight and their parents find out.

- A few weeks back I went to a party, it was my 17th over at one of my mate's houses. I went, got absolutely drunk, got home, and my mum went off at me, my mum is the sort of lady if I tell her what I am doing she will let me go and do it, she buys me alcohol, used to buy me alcohol. I got into a big fight with her in the past couple of weeks, we have been fighting a lot and I have now moved out of home. I don't really want anything to do with my mum and it's been caused by me going out and getting drunk. I can't really touch on Bebo or any of that. I am not really into it, I mean I got Bebo in January, that's how long it took me to catch on to it. I don't really use it; I don't have a clue about computers. I know how to get on the internet and look up Google and stuff, but for anything else don't ask me. I think what we need to do is talk to kids about it. I repeated year 8, in my second year of year 8 I got sent to Parry school which is a school for behavior. They taught me a lot and I came back to Oxley as a changed person. I think what we need to do is get out there and let them know what is going to happen, now with my experiences and knowing what has happened, I wish I never went out and done what I did, so I think we need to let them know what is going on and how this is going to effect them.

- About the internet, there is this boy at my school, I discovered him last year and I suppose you could say I am obsessed, I only told a few people how I was obsessed and now I think the whole school knows, the 1500 people that go to our school. I am not sure how everybody knew but obviously it got around. I didn't tell my Mum and I didn't tell my parents, there is one thing with my Mum, even if it is just me and her she gives some pretty embarrassing talks, I will say to her this is really embarrassing and she will say there is no-one else around so I can't see how this can be embarrassing. I do have Bebo account, at one stage I went through this seriously scared phase where I got freaked out that a pedophile is going to go on my page and stalk me and I am probably one of the most easily scared people you will ever meet, I refuse to go to public toilets by myself, it is just not what I do, I just will not do it. If you know me well I talk a lot about rape. I am just scared sometimes, I went through a really weird phase, and every night before I went to bed I would check the cupboards and make sure no one was there. I never talked to my mother about this, but what I am trying to say is that parents do need to get involved. My Dad, when I don't talk a lot he thinks that something might be going on at school, that I am getting bullied or something. Sometimes there are problems at school that I don't talk about with my parents, and sometimes my parents do think that something is going on, but if I don't tell them they understand kind of, but they still would like to know. What I am trying to get at here is that parents do need to be involved because they probably have the biggest effect on their kid's life out of anyone and it is really important they know what is going on. My parents would have no idea of what Bebo is, they have heard of MySpace and know I go on MSN, but Bebo they have no idea what that would be. I have a certain time, it's "my time", that I get to go on the net and do whatever I like, and I think that's probably pretty good even though I had a fight with my Mum the other night in which I told her that I hated her, but we got over that, parents do really need to be involved.

Belinda Williams: Just to wrap that session up, I think that what has been said about parents being involved is a really important thing; I know that young people are like, no you are a different generation to us, you don't understand, but, they have been there before. As has been stated already, older people were once teenagers and they have gone through similar things, they are not the same they are similar, so their experiences can be drawn upon. About the social interaction, and the different generation gaps and the differences in the respect shown to older people in the schools that we are seeing now, I know it is something that my friends and I were talking about the other day at school, and it is that difference in the social interaction and the effect that technology has had upon the way in which we converse with each other and the standards in our society has started to change and we need to address ways in which that can happen. Through things like education in schools, through having better relationships with your parents and a really important one is talking to your friends about it. It was said before that if someone's friends are drinking they are not allowed to drive, sitting down and talking about it with your friends is really going to help because they are there with you, and experiencing the same things, and if you can work through things with them and look at better ways to interact then the safety is going to go up dramatically.

Identity - Mr. Paul Ying - Tamworth Citizen of the Year 2008

Belinda Williams: Mr. Paul Ying - Tamworth Citizen of the Year 2008. Mr. Ying has been very involved with Rotary and the Scouts over the years and has had a lot to do with young people and the community.

Mr. Paul Ying: Thanks Belinda and good afternoon all. When Belinda asked me to speak for the Youth Forum and the topic she gave was identity. This is a topic that is quite strange to me because I do not know exactly what I should talk about, although she has given me some guidelines on what I should talk about. But I thought the first thing that I need to do is just to find out what the definition of identity is. Well I got a very simple Oxford dictionary and it tells me identity is who a person or thing is. So I thought well that's not good enough, I don't know what to talk about with that topic. So I went to the library and I found a Collins Dictionary and it added on some other definition, such as the state of being, a special person or thing, or the individual characteristics by which a person or thing is recognized. Okay, I had a bit more, but I thought, in order to widen my talk a little bit then I needed to keep on searching and I found from the Macquarie Dictionary, identity is being an odd, interesting or famous person. Well, being a new Australian if you like, so I thought I should look up a bit on what an Australian person would think and identity is. So I went and looked at the Australian National Dictionary. It said, an identity is a citizen who is a long standing and well known resident of a place, and it had a few different citations, and I found it interesting, one little quotation they put in to provide substantiation for the definition and illustrated the history of the word used, he was actually concerned about a meeting with the head guy in Werris Creek. And I quote, "I was in a pub having a quiet beer with a few Werris Creek identities and this bloke came up and started picking a blue". So there are a few different definitions of identity. So with that, it means we are all different, we all have our own identity. But

does our identity keep the same all the time? I don't think so. There are some characteristics that can never change. For example, being a Chinese, I can't change myself to become a white Australian, or an indigenous person. Because my genes have already fixed me up I can't really change what I am, but, there are a lot of things that keep on changing when you start to grow up. I suppose when you start off every young person is like a piece of dough that is up to your parents, people around you and the people you meet, you learn from school and all that sort of thing, and eventually that moulds that piece of dough to whatever you are. But that also keeps changing you know, because when you get on and when that piece of dough is new and fresh like a young person it would be quite easy to change. But by the time you get on to my age that dough becomes very stiff, you get stuck to it, and then that will probably become your own identity. Well, in today's world, it seems that the world is getting closer and closer and we tend to meet a lot of different people and things happening every day, and every time is new and different, you hear a lot of conflicts here and there, and a lot of this that is happening affects you, and in turn it would mould and change our own identity. It would give you a thought and consider, is this right, or is this for me, whatever happens, it is extremely objective to yourselves. Perhaps I might say a little bit about myself. I suppose I have been lucky because in my life I have been living in different places and meet a lot of different people. I was born in China where I finished my Primary School and my parents then sent me to Hong Kong where I finished my Secondary Schooling. I then came here to Australia and completed my Civil Engineering Degree in Melbourne and did a bit of research back in Sydney specialising in Water Engineering. I came to Tamworth in 1974 to take up a position as District Engineer with the then Water Resources Commission. And that organisation today has changed to a lot of different names, in other words they have changed identities and have different people in the organisation, and some of the functions they are doing are quite different from what they used to be. As Belinda mentioned earlier on, I was directly influenced by 2 organisations, in my younger days I was lucky to be a scout, and I enjoyed that very much, and it teaches me a lot of things, how I handle various situations when it comes to mine. The aim of the Scout Association is to encourage physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual and social development of young people so that they may become a constructive member of the community. So with that sort of background it helped me quite a bit to make it easier to mix with people, relationships with people and try to accept the other people as they are. And later in my life I was lucky to be invited to join the Rotary Organisation. Again the object of Rotary is quite similar to Scouts. The Object of Rotary is to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of a worthy enterprise and in particular to encourage and foster the development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service, high ethical standards in business and professions; the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations; and the dignifying by every Rotarian of their occupation as an opportunity to serve society, the application of the ideal service by every Rotarian to their personal, business and community life and the advancement of international understanding, goodwill and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional people united in the ideal of service. I mentioned a bit earlier that I am lucky, because with that sort of background it helped me a lot to become quite tolerant of whatever happened to me. I suppose you can imagine that the time when I arrived in Australia there was still not a lot of Asian or any migrant apart from Anglo-Saxon

heritage. At that stage we still have a White Australia Policy here, I was quite aware of that, I was lucky that I did not suffer any discrimination because my color is different. Today there are a lot more migrants, you will meet people of different color and different race day to day, and you will hear them on the news. In the last few days you will probably have learned about the Olympic torch relay and it creates a lot of controversy because of the Chinese people reckon that they should use their own security guards. Rightly or wrongly I think that in this day and age a lot of people are getting a lot more aware of the different identities, different heritage, different color and different thoughts in their minds. As far as I can see, this sort of conflict I don't think that any politician or anyone would have a good answer on how to deal with it, but as a Rotarian, you will find that Rotary is able to get into a lot of different countries to do their service work. For example, for the last 20 years Rotary has had a program to eliminate Polio and other preventable diseases, no other organisation is capable of doing that, and today we are nearly there by eliminating the Polio disease. I suppose my answer to handling the discrimination would be you have got to accept the person for what they are and you've got to be tolerant, you sit back rather than having a confrontation with other people. With that, I hope that it will help you young people to deal with people with different identities. I think I will just leave it at that, thanks.

Belinda Williams: Thanks Mr. Ying. So from here I want to move on and I want to hear your thoughts about the importance of shaping identity as a young person, the factors that do influence the way a young person's individuality and the way a young person conducts themselves is formed. I also want to touch upon the importance of accepting this identity, accepting each individual person's beliefs, their culture, their heritage, their background, as Mr. Ying said, and looking at the issues that are faced in terms of racism and discrimination in the Australian community from a young person's perspective.

- I am of Aboriginal descent and I find through school, Primary school was the worst for me, discrimination and racism, because me and my younger brother Thomas we were the only Aboriginal students in the whole school out of about 200 people. Me and him was the only Aboriginal students and we just got, besides about 5 people from that school treated us like normal people, and the rest of them, teachers, everyone, looked at us like we were a different creature. To try to go to school and get an education whilst people were like that was very hard, and it was very hard for us but, in a way it helped us to be who we are today, because after all that it just made us stronger. They said, you know, oh yeah, you Abo, or some real derogatory terms, and we just said oh yeah, right, smiled and walked away. Sometimes we would yell at them, get in fights. But then we would go home and see Nan and Pop, Mum and Dad and they would turn around and say, no don't do that, they just want that to happen, they just see you as black people that are just going to get up and fight, drunk people that want to fight, and just fight among each other and fight against people, that's all they see you as. So we just thought, all right we go to school, people yell at us, push us around, we don't do anything, laugh, walk away. In a way that just helped us be stronger, they got really frustrated, they got angry and thought why aren't they doing anything, and then they realized and turned around and started treating us with respect because we weren't going to stand up to them, we had no point to stand up to them. And then I moved from that Primary school and came into

town and it was a lot better, there was a lot more Aboriginal people at the school which was good, besides me and my brother, and then I went to High School and it was good. Still a lot of Aboriginal people in the High School, not a lot of them, a minority of them wagged and did this, did that, and there was Non-Aboriginal people doing it too, and people saying oh they are just going with them fullas, they are doing this, they are doing that. All it is is that there is a minority of people doing the bad things in the community. It is not a majority; it is a minority making the majority look bad, stereotypes. And people are just saying; look at them drunks blacks, all of them are like that. Just because of 2 or 3 of them, it's just not right. I try as an Aboriginal youth, I see kids down the street and they will say, you got \$2, I say, yeah I got \$2 and I will go get them a feed, get them a drink, I will even walk around with them for a bit if they have no one to walk around with, just to help them feel good about themselves, to have confidence. That's all it is, if you can go up to someone and say how are you going, or if they come up to you and you talk to them, you don't just say what are you doing – don't talk to me, get away from me, or just walk away and stop them. You talk to them, you treat them with respect and it helps them feel happier, and just think that is one good thing you have done in the day. And that's all it comes down to, little things you do go up to big things, and then you can do bigger and better things just by helping people, and plus it makes you feel good.

- Identity to me is “knowing” who you are, and at Peel High School we have about 85% of Indigenous kids out of 400, and it is very stereotyped, we are on the other side of the tracks. So at Peel it is multicultural, we have a lot of cultures there, and we actually have classes that if they have problems with their identity, if they are feeling uncomfortable, they are being bullied about their race, if they are unsure about how to communicate with other people, to stop racism and prejudice.

- I think, just going off what you guys are saying, the classes we have got at Peel have a really good teacher doing integrated learning which is helping the young Aboriginal kids realize what their identity is and to look further into their culture and learn what its all about, because a lot of them are Aboriginal but do they really know what being Aboriginal is? So I am helping tutoring in those classes as well, and me being torn between being Aboriginal and White Australian, so I have always kind of been in the middle, hearing racism from both sides, from black and whites towards each other. So I think that is really good that they are bringing that into the schools now and helping them realize who they are.

- Basically I just think that having an identity means that you are sure of yourself, you know where you are going, what you are doing, who you are. These days that isn't as common as what it used to be, people lack self respect and respect for other people. So this is just not good.

- I think self identity comes down to what you sort of define as identity. I did a survey a few weeks ago for a Society and Culture class and you say to people, who are you, and they say things like I am a Doctor or something like that, or a teacher, they always define themselves as their occupation, what they have educated themselves to do, a lot of people in schools say who are you, and you say your name, and they say what do

you do, and they say I go to school, not a lot of people have an idea beyond the compulsory parts of life who they are and I think it comes down to a lot of this labeling crap, you're a goth or a skank or an emo, you know, someone's always something, and I think in a society where everyone is like, no you got to respect each other you go to accept everyone for who they are, we are not doing a very good job because, even me saying that just then is stereotyping people and people don't realize just by saying that to one person that is still carrying on, they go I only called her that because she is that. You know, you are not doing much to fight this prejudice world that we are trying to dig ourselves out of. A lot of the time people are only what magazines, TV, movies, media tell them to be, see these girls all look the same, or you know, these guys all dress the same, drive the same sort of car, do the same sort of things day in day out, its not who they are but it is what they define themselves as. I think people need an outlet, people need to realize that you can do what you want and if people are going to discriminate and get a hate against you for it, they are not your real friends, the people whose opinions you care about wont say crap about you anyway.

- Up at Oxley I am a mentor for 5 students in years 8 and 9 and I have 1 kid in year 7. 3 of them are Aboriginal and 2 are white Australians, they are all friends, they all get along, they will stick up for each other, they wont go over and if someone says, oh yeah you're black, whatever, they wont go over and fight because the way I have figured out how to do it is, cause I have come from Parry and over there we have had a lot of discussion about how to work things out without fighting people. And that's what I am trying to teach these kids but the also have to realize that if they are Aboriginal, that's what they are, you can't go and change your skin color to become a white Australian, it's impossible, you can't do that. They have to realize that is who they are, they have to respect their culture, and I think a lot of people need to realize that this is life; this is one chance you get, that whoever you are, what skin color you are, whatever your name is, that's you. You can't do anything about it.

- I think identity is probably one of the biggest things with everyone. We all go through a stage where we want to fit in, we want to be accepted, we don't want to be that weird kid who doesn't dress like the rest of us, or who doesn't do the same thing as the rest of us. I know when I started high school I was scared, I did everything I could to fit in with everyone else, I just wanted to be normal I suppose. I didn't want people to make fun of me or anything. It's not just based on race or culture, it is everything.

- I think everyone changes their identity sometimes whether they like it or not because people change to fit in and it's just the way it happens. People at our school, I know this sounds really mean, but people say they are the nerd group and they are the popular group but they are just trying to fit in so whatever makes them happy I think that's how that should be.

- I basically think identity is who you are and what you believe in; stand up for, everything like that, whether it covers all of that. And I know most people in here, I am friends with different people who are entirely different yet you still respect them. We look around this room and I think that most of us here will respect other things and

maybe that's where we need to, like, where it was said you do something good and it could turn into something bigger and better things, we should show examples that everyone should be treated the same and be respected. Maybe that will help people, everyone does change, I know through being a teenager would probably be the hardest time because you go through all the different stages and maybe you don't know what is happening and you don't know who you are. And you just want somebody to help, and I know like when the person previously mentioned that they went to Parry, and he came back and he would have found out who he was and would have learnt a lot more stuff. People like that is an inspiration because you admire them and they did do that. I just think identity is who you are and you should just believe in it no matter what because you will always find someone out there that respects you.

- I think what was said before was pretty much on the mark, you stood up being the better man of it all, you walked away from it, turned the cheek, that's really admirable of a person to be able to do that. Identity, we have a couple of different schools here, we are all brandished with that schools reputation as well, in our identity. I am from Tamworth High; I wear this blazer with pride because it has probably been the best 7 years of my life so far. I am proud I went there; I could have gone to Oxley or Farrer, I would have had a different education, a different experience, either way it would have change me into a different person, that's neither here nor there. We are pretty much the same, we all bleed, we cry, we grow, we learn. That is who we are, that is what we are here to do. Our education may be different but that doesn't make us lesser people. Coming from different schools certainly shouldn't make us lesser people because we are all here to do the same thing, that's to get through to year 12, if we decide to et into the workforce so be it, if we decide to go to University so be it. We are all here to grow up, to grow old, to get a job, a wife, have kids, and eventually one day get into a retirement home and have a good old time. Getting on to a personal identity, who we are, is really who we are, I mean you need to be accepted for who you are and not what you look like. From a glance around the room you could make connotations of people but until you go up to them and talk face to face you do not know truly who they are. They could be a person that you would not normally approach in the street, but at the end of the day, you mightn't be a person somebody else would approach on the street. Some people have a very unapproachable manner about them, that's not their fault, I mean you have got to break down that boundary, that 4th wall and get to them, get to know them; you might have something in common.

Belinda Williams: Just to wrap that one up, it is not about what you do, it is not about who you know, its not about what school you go to, who your parents are, its about who you are as an individual and that is the most important thing. Next up we have a new face that wasn't here this morning, we have Annette Slater who is from the Sexual Health Service and she is going to be running a session on well being. And she is going to draw picture for us too.

Well being – Annette Slater

Annette Slater: Yaama. Happy Youth Week to all. And I would just like to acknowledge that we are standing on my home nation of Gomerioi country. I have got well being and so that it gives you some food for thought and I don't sound too boring I am going to draw a picture and you will see how much of a famous Aboriginal artist I am, and you can ask my autographs after okay? With well being I want to give you what well being means to me in my work role and as I draw my little picture it will show to you that you might only be focusing on one little part of your life, but that one little part you may be focusing on you probably don't realize how much repercussions it has for the rest of your life and environment around you, so when I draw my little person you will see what I am going on about. And then hopefully that will give you enough food for thought. And then I will put up a couple more headings and then hopefully you can think what that means for your well being from those headings. So I say to young people, and I say to other people who don't understand my way of thinking, I am a very creative person, I am a left hander, if I am going to the Optometrist, what part of my body am I looking after? If I am going to the Orthodontist? Going to the Audiometrist? If I am going to have a mammogram? Going to a hairdresser? Going to the manicurist or the podiatrist? If I am going for a sexual health checkup what part of my body am I looking after? What's your name for it? I just call it my private parts, and I am not going to draw anything because that's about as best as I can draw down there anyway. So my work focuses on that one little part of your body. But if I want to look after my body and look after my wellbeing, I have not only got to look after that little part, I have to look after everything that that little part can damage or hurt. So I am also going to put my heart in here, and I am going to draw a little baby in my belly, see I told I was a neat artist, who would like to see this on your lounge room wall? So we are going to look at this person as a whole person from a sexual health perspective and keep in mind my 3 R's that I like, I like the words Respect, Responsibility and the most important one Rights. So when I talk to people about sexual health and well being around sexual health I say to people, be greedy, always make yourself number 1, and make sure you look after your own rights, have respect for yourself and be responsible for yourself first. If you can maintain that and look after yourself you are going to be a benefit to yourself and others. So looking at sexual health we have this little private part, but what comes off there? I like to ask teenagers, and I have got as house full of them, anybody that knows my family, what do the 3 wise monkeys say? See no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil. You think about those 3 wise monkeys and you think about school yard talk and weekend socializing talk. Are we always respectful, responsible and looking after peoples rights, considering sometimes the negatives that we hear about peoples relationships and how they try and define each other, as was said before the identity stuff. Who fits into what group, why they don't fit in and that kind of stuff. A lot of bitchiness and negative things can happen around those 3 wise monkeys. A lot of that still comes from sexual health as well. We have youth we are talking to around sexual health and education, and people are developing at different stages of their life quicker and slower than others. The amount of negative speaking about other people and talking about other people, observing what you think you've observed and what other people are doing. It can be really quite negative speaking about other people and for what other people can put on them. That is good food for thought for

you to think about what you are doing, how you treat yourselves and how you treat others. With sexual health, here I am I am going to draw a bit of grey matter for the brain, so if negative stuff is happening for you or your friends around sexual health we would know that is going to be an intrusion on our mental health, don't we? But also I would like to point out in that grey matter there the brain that can also be an intrusion on your cultural well being. And we always talk sexual health from, as you know being an Aboriginal person, around what is cultural and what is sensitive around men's business, women's business and all that kind of stuff. So with this little part of your body you can start to see what's happening around the body, around just 1 little part. Come over to the love heart, which is the heart, around sexual health with your heart, what do you equate with your heart? Emotions? So your well being around your emotions and just coming back to this little part about sexual health is it good or is it negative, what's happening for you? We have that thing and some people would know, that thing, a message that used to come out a few years ago, it's not black love, it's called domestic violence. So that was a big campaign that went throughout the Aboriginal community about getting out of negative relationships, relationships that were very damaging and people thought they had to put up with those relationships because they were married to that person or they had children to that person or they had cultural connections to that person. And so you have got to look after your emotions around happiness and well being. Who can guess what this is I am trying to draw? And I will put a little hook there and keep this thing going across here. What is it starting to look like? Hand cuffs. So I want you to think about and tell me your well being around the legal implications, around sexual health and well being. What are some of the legal things around well being and sexual health? Consent, that's a good one, probably the most important one. Everyone know the legal age of consent? This is 16. But we all live in the real world and sometimes we hear stories contrary to that. What other legal considerations around sexual health are there? What about homophobia and sexuality? Not everyone's black and white, not everyone's gay, not everyone's straight, bisexual. Always there are people trying to fit everyone into boxes and not every person in the world fits into a neat little box. But, once again, it comes back to the identity stuff that was discussed before, how do people identify themselves as individuals? They may be in that group there as well and they have a place in society like everybody else. So you can see that I have gone around the thing, we have talked on just one little thing around sexual health but you can see how many other things that we have got to consider, and I won't forget my baby in the middle, because that little baby in the middle, my well being if I am that person with that little baby in my tummy, my well being is not only for myself but it is also for my unborn child. And around sexual health we have to think about what risk practices we do, how we maintain our health, how we value the importance of having well persons health checks, not only to look after the health and well being of our own body, but also that of the unborn babies. And that would also go for young guys when they are partnering as well, with your support of your partner, with you as a new parent to be coming along, its how you treat your partner, whether or not all that stuff that is in you relationship as a male partner that you are helping to create a positive and a good well being relationship. So those 3 headings I wanted to put up was social, emotional an cultural, those are quite good headings to think about for well being discussions, and maybe that little person I have

drawn and some of the stuff I just talked about might help you. So I will just leave it there.

Belinda Williams: Thanks Annette. So we have now got about 10 minutes to run this discussion and what we want to talk about is, lets look at those headings that Annette on the board, the social, emotional and the cultural implications that arise around well being and the issues which effect youth. I mean, Annette talked about sexual health and things like that, what is there that we can do and what ways can we improve our well being as young people.

- With social well being, today's youth, like how you were saying, hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil, well being, if you say something to one person you might no think that it is going to affect them but it does. Their culture isn't like a major one that can affect their well being. And emotional, we are all here in life to enjoy life. As an individual we need to treat our well being, we need to look after ourselves, but also we need to consider other well beings. If you are going to say something it can easily impact on their well being. We all have a journey in life and we shouldn't impact on someone, you really have got to look after your well being because if you hurt someone that is going to affect them socially, emotionally and especially where they come from and what they believe in.

- I just wanted to say that identity crisis; I found that every age, it doesn't just belong to youth. I feel a common denominator of us all suffering, and having the courage to face each crisis and have self respect.

- I think about sexual well being is probably not feeling that pressure of having to do something when you are not ready to do it. And I think that is probably a thing that teenagers find is the pressure in relationships. That you know it's the norm to maybe have sex or do this or that. And it was sort of the same when I was a teenager. Nothing much has changed but I think you just have to stand up for what you believe in and just be your own individual and have your own identity, and have that self respect. And then if you have self respect then you want someone else to respect you. Don't feel the pressure of having to feel that you have got to do something that you are not ready for, and if that person really respects you and cares about you then they are not going to pressure you into doing something that you are not ready for.

- Well I think it's about putting your needs before everyone else's, but not hopefully infringing on everyone else's just so you get what you need to sustain yourself.

- I think the previous person made a point, you should put your needs first, but also you should respect other people's needs. Say you want to have sex with someone, and you say do you want to have sex? And they say I don't know I want to think about it. And then you get angry and say no I want it now. That's not the way to go. You should just respect them and say alright then I will wait, it's up to you. I will wait for you, and that's it.

- Just with the sexual side and the consent of being 16, I know youth today seem to be having sex at a younger age rapidly. I have just had a conversation with girls at our school about, even if you want it and you are still under 16 and if they are over it is a problem, even if you don't say anything it is up to the parents because they are not 16. They thought, for example 14, they thought they are only a couple of years older than me, I want it, they didn't understand that, even if it is 2 14 year olds they don't understand the impact, they should wait. And I think that is where the parents should come in also from the sexual side.

- I am not sure if Annette said, but just for people in this room that are sexually active and may not have support of parents and friends, whatever age that you are, that the Bligh Street Clinic are very supportive and non-judgmental, and they are really good to just go and get check ups and to talk.

Belinda Williams: So we have reached 2 o'clock which is the end of our forum now, just to wrap things up today I would like to thank everyone for coming and participating. I think that the conversations and the ideas that have come out of today are things which are really valuable. I have seen a lot of passion within the young people who are involved, and also a lot of support from the older people who are involved in the organisations who are represented today, to really push to make youth within our local community people who can really be involved, people who can express their ideas. So I urge you all to, if you've got an idea, if you've got something that's come up today, make sure you follow it, don't ever let anyone tell you that you're idea is not going to work, if you believe in it then it does have the power to go somewhere. So we have got the email list, tell all your friends about it, get them to sign up and get the emails and things, we want to try and create as big a network as we possibly can. And if you have any other feedback, or if you want to get involved here at the Youthie make sure you see Stephen or Brad, or someone who are here and really move to get involved. So thank you and I declare this forum over.

Stephen Blanch: And just a quick couple of thank you to the speakers, and also a big thank you to Belinda for doing the facilitation today. Thanks to everybody for coming, support from the schools, teachers, services and young people. Good luck!