



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Standing Committee on Social Issues

YOUTH VIOLENCE

Issues Paper

The purpose of this Issues Paper is to provide the basis for written submissions to the Standing Committee on Social Issues and for public hearings to be conducted by the Committee

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FUNCTIONS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES

The functions of the Committee are to inquire into, consider, and report to the Legislative Council on:

- any proposal, matter or thing concerned with the social development of the people in all areas of NSW
- the equality of access to the services and benefits provided by the government and non-government sector to the people in all areas of NSW
- the opportunities available to the people in all areas of NSW to attain their optimum level of personal development
- and the role of government in promoting the welfare of the people in all areas of NSW.

OPERATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

Matters for inquiry may be referred to the Committee by resolution of the Legislative Council; a Minister of the Crown; or by way of relevant annual reports and petitions.

The Committee has the legislative power to:

- summon witnesses
- make visits of inspection
- call upon the services of government organisations and their staff, with the consent of the appropriate minister
- accept written submissions concerning inquiries from any person or organisation
- conduct hearings in public

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Terms of Reference	x
Chairman's Foreword	xi
SECTION ONE INTRODUCTION	1
SECTION TWO DEFINITIONS	5
2.1 INTRODUCTION	5
2.2 YOUTH	5
2.3 VIOLENCE	5
2.3.1 School Violence	6
SECTION THREE CONTEXT	9
3.1 INTRODUCTION	9
3.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	9
3.3 ADOLESCENCE AND YOUNG ADULTHOOD IN THE LIFECYCLE	10
3.4 SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT	10
3.5 PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS	10
3.6 THE MEDIA	11
3.7 YOUTH AS VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE	11
SECTION FOUR INCIDENCE OF VIOLENCE	13
4.1 INTRODUCTION	13
4.2 ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH DETERMINING THE INCIDENCE OF VIOLENCE	14
4.3 INCIDENCE OF VIOLENCE AMONG 10-17 YEAR OLDS	15
4.4 INCIDENCE OF VIOLENCE AMONG 18-24 YEAR OLDS	17
4.5 RATES OF VIOLENT CRIME AND OLDER ADULT OFFENDING	19
4.6 GENDER DIFFERENCES	21
4.7 GEOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES	21

Contents

4.8	DIFFERENCES RELATED TO ETHNICITY AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND	26
4.9	SCHOOL VIOLENCE	27
4.9.1	Bullying	31
4.9.2	Harassment	31
4.10	YOUTH AS VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE	32
 SECTION FIVE FACTORS RELATING TO YOUTH VIOLENCE		35
5.1	INTRODUCTION	35
5.2	FAMILY-RELATED FACTORS	35
5.3	SOCIOECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE	36
5.4	MARGINALISATION	37
5.5	GENDER	38
5.6	RACISM	39
5.7	HOMOPHOBIA	39
5.8	THE MEDIA	40
5.9	SPORT	41
5.10	USE OF WEAPONS	42
5.11	USE OF PUBLIC SPACE	43
5.12	THE POLICE	43
5.13	GANGS	44
5.14	INSTITUTIONALISATION	45
5.15	DRUGS AND ALCOHOL	45
5.15.1	Alcohol	45
5.15.2	Illicit drugs	46
5.15.3	Prescription drugs	47
5.16	SCHOOL-RELATED FACTORS	47
5.17	BIOLOGICAL FACTORS	48
5.18	PERSONALITY FACTORS	49
5.19	MENTAL ILLNESS	50
 SECTION SIX GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS		51
6.1	INTRODUCTION	51
6.2	YOUTH AFFAIRS POLICY	51
6.3	NSW GOVERNMENT POLICIES, PROGRAMS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS	52

6.3.1	Youth Affairs Policy Primary Objective: Identifying Issues and Coordinating Responses	52
●	Relevant programs and services	52
●	Future Directions	53
6.3.2	Youth Affairs Policy Primary Objective: Increasing Education Opportunities	53
●	Relevant programs and services	54
●	Future Directions	57
6.3.3	Youth Affairs Policy Primary Objective: Assisting Youth with Further Education, Training and Employment	57
●	Relevant programs and services	57
●	Future Directions	58
6.3.4	Youth Affairs Policy Primary Objective: Providing Transport for Youth	58
●	Relevant programs and services	59
●	Future Directions	59
6.3.5	Youth Affairs Policy Primary Objective: Assisting Youth with Accommodation	59
●	Relevant programs and services	60
●	Future Directions	60
6.3.6	Youth Affairs Policy Primary Objective: Providing for the Health and Well-being of Youth	60
●	Relevant programs and services	61
●	Future Directions	63
6.3.7	Youth Affairs Policy Primary Objective: Justice and Criminal Law Relating to Youth	63
●	Relevant programs and services	64
●	Future Directions	66
6.3.8	Youth Affairs Policy Primary Objective: Assistance for Specific Groups of Youth	68
●	Relevant programs and services	68
●	Future Directions	69
6.4	JOINT STATE/COMMONWEALTH PROGRAMS AND SERVICES	69
6.4.1	Accommodation	69
6.4.2	Health	69
6.4.3	Specific Groups of Youth	70
6.5	COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT POLICIES, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES	70
6.5.1	Education	70
6.5.2	Further Education, Training and Employment	70
6.5.3	Health and Wellbeing	71

Contents

6.5.4 Justice and Criminal Law	72
● Examples of relevant policies, programs and services	72
● Examples of future directions	73
6.5.5 Assistance for Specific Groups of Youth	74
SECTION SEVEN NEXT STEPS IN THE INQUIRY	75
7.1 THIRD STAGE OF THE INQUIRY	76
BIBLIOGRAPHY	79
APPENDICES	
Appendix 1 Number and rate per 100,000 age-specific population of alleged offenders for violence against the person for Sydney statistical sub-divisions in 1992	85
Appendix 2 Number and rate per 100,000 age-specific population of alleged robbery offenders for Sydney statistical sub-divisions in 1992	87
Appendix 3 Local Government Areas in NSW Statistical Divisions	89
TABLES	
Table 1 Number and percentage of alleged violent offenders aged 10-17 years for 1990, 1991 and 1992	16
Table 2 Number and percentage of offences proven by the Children's Courts 1983/84 - 1991/92	17
Table 3 Number and percentage of alleged violent offenders aged 18-24 years for 1990, 1991 and 1992	18
Table 4 Number and rate per 100,000 population of alleged violent offenders aged 10-17, 18-24 and 25+ years for 1992	19

Table 5	Number and rate per 100,000 population of youth for violent offences proven by the Children's Court in 1986 and 1991	20
Table 6	Number and percentage of male and female alleged violent offenders aged 10-17 years and 18-24 years for 1992	21
Table 7	Number and rate per 100,000 population of alleged offenders for violent offences against the person in 1992 by statistical division	23
Table 8	Number and rate per 100,000 population of alleged robbery offenders in 1992 by statistical division	25
Table 9	Violent offences by ethnicity/cultural background for residents of juvenile justice centres between 1/1/91 and 31/5/93	26
Table 10	Number of recorded violent offences that occurred on school grounds	27
Table 11	Number and rate per 100,000 school population for recorded violent offences committed on school grounds	28
Table 12	Number of recorded violent offences that occurred on school grounds in 1992, by time and date of offence	30
Table 13	Number and percentage of victims of 10-17, 18-24 and 25+ year old alleged violent offenders for 1992	32
Table 14	Number and percentage of male and female victims of alleged violent offenders aged 10-17, 18-24 and 25+ years for 1992	33

TERMS OF REFERENCE

That the Standing Committee on Social Issues:

- collect and analyse data on the occurrences of youth violence, including violent incidents in schools, and its underlying causes;
- examine the policies, actions, research, and proposals of relevant Government Agencies and the impact of racial tension, unemployment, family breakdown, media portrayal of violence and any other relevant factors in relation to youth violence; and
- make recommendations to the New South Wales Parliament to assist all relevant Government Agencies to develop the most effective strategies to deal with youth violence.

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

In 1992 the Standing Committee on Social Issues examined juvenile justice and undertook a very extensive and thorough review of the state's Juvenile Justice System. Given this background in the area of youth, the Committee was very pleased to be asked by the Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs, the Hon V Chadwick, to inquire into youth violence. We are particularly grateful to the Minister for providing the research resources for the preparation of this initial Paper.

We recognise that the issue of youth violence is a complex and sensitive one. This Issues Paper has been prepared as the first step in the inquiry process. It is anticipated that the Paper will be a tool for gathering further information on youth violence. The Paper is therefore a compendium of information for people who would now like to propose appropriate strategies to address the issue of youth violence. These proposals can be put to the Committee by way of written submissions and public hearings. Details of these further stages of the Committee's inquiry are given at the end of this Paper.

As the inquiry is in its early stages, it should not be assumed that this Paper reflects the opinions or views of any Committee members, nor does it analyse or evaluate current policies and initiatives. The Committee considers it more appropriate to hear from experts and the community before it forms its views.

In conducting this inquiry, the Committee wishes to stress that it in no way encourages the public to conclude that youth are necessarily more violent than the rest of the community. It is also very aware of the distressing fact that youth are frequently victims of violence.

I would like, on behalf of the Committee, to express our gratitude to the cooperation provided by the Office of Youth Affairs in the preparation of this Paper. Ms Karen Paterson and Mr Peter Connelly provided invaluable assistance. I would also like to thank the Secretariat for their efforts in the preparation of this paper: Jennifer Knight, Committee Director, Alex Shehadie and Glen Baird, Senior Project Officers, Heather Crichton, Committee Officer and Assistant Committee Officer, Annie Marshall for their administrative support to the Committee.

It is now with pleasure that, on behalf of the Committee, I call upon all those interested in the issue, particularly the youth of this state, to make written submissions forwarding views and constructive suggestions.



The Hon Dr Marlene Goldsmith, MLC
Committee Chairman

