

Jasper Declaration

This statement was accepted at the first National Youth Workers Conference in 1977. It was originally put together by a group of 8 people over dinner (at Jaspers Restaurant). Like the NABSW Code of Ethics, it is an example of an ideologically-based ethical code. Why does it not have the same status as the NABSW statement, originally developed in 1968 and still current today? Perhaps its disappearance into oblivion can be explained by the non-organic way in which it was developed? Or, the possibility that many workers did not fully understand/agree with it? Or worker self-interest or lack of shared experience with young people? Or, the fact that it was not backed up by a professional association to police its implementation? Whilst some of the details and language are outdated, it remains a useful tool for discussing the place of an ideologically-based ethical statement for the youth sector. As a wise person once said ... *Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it!*
(Reproduced from YSTC-SA 1991:17)

We confess that as youth workers we fail to act as initiators of social change and in effect we are just reactors to circumstances dealing with 'bandaid' situations that often just help in preserving the status quo structures.

We confess that we are content to deal solely with the casualties rather than delving deeply into the cause of those casualties.

We confess that we disregard the enormous limitations imposed on youth and often attempt to make youth content with their basic life situation, ignoring the conflicts which clearly exist by distracting them with some well-chosen structured spare time activities.

We seek a commitment to a new direction in the philosophy of youth work. We will no longer be content to offer programs which merely gratify immediate wants. We are concerned for the fulfillment of individuals over a total life span. We recognise that our commitment to this philosophy will operate within a local context. This legalised process will involve facilitating:

- *people to become aware of themselves and others in the community;*
- *people to engage in human transactions with others;*
- *people to think through issues (consciousness raising);*
- *people to conceive contradictions, the level of manipulation and limitations of their local area, and the scope of their power and the possibility for change.*

The implications of this are:

- *that the changing of attitudes is more important than exclusively providing leisure pursuits;*
- *that the process of 'bandaiding' will be challenged because it is perpetuating the present system and aiding its preservation;*
- *that such a model will bring us into conflict with the existing structure of society and often the underlying philosophies of many of the youth organisations/agencies to which we belong;*
- *that such conflict will involve risks and we must be prepared for the type of commitment that may involve costs in terms of economics, position, reputation, time, relationships, etc;*
- *that there will be for us disturbing confrontation with many ethical problems and questions; this confrontation will be particularly great in terms of our degree of compromise and participation in the operation of the system.*

What we have experienced through this conference is this process in operation.