



Tasmanian youth forum

Antidote Statewide Forum on Discrimination

Introduction

On 12 August 2011, around 130 young people (aged 12-25 years) from across the Tasmania gathered together to discuss their concerns about discrimination, as they had personally experienced or witnessed in Tasmania. They also discussed the impact discrimination has on young people, and strategised how they could decrease it in their own communities. The Antidote Forum was held at the Door of Hope in Launceston, and was facilitated by TYF members, with the support of Michael O'Meara (Mo) of MoHow Consultancy. The Antidote Forum was opened by Tasmania's Attorney-General, the Hon Brian Wightman MP, and also featured presentations by the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner Robin Banks, as well as the launch of Launceston City Council's Anti-Bullying Campaign by Launceston Mayor Albert Van Zetten.

The aims of the forum were to:

- Provide an opportunity for young Tasmanians to discuss discrimination as they had witnessed or personally experienced in Tasmania.
- Provide an avenue for young Tasmanians to take their main issues and priorities in relation to discrimination to Government and other interested groups.
- Assist young Tasmanians in developing their own strategies to combat discrimination in their communities.

At the start of the forum participants discussed what discrimination meant to them, including participating in an anonymous survey. Later, participants took part in workshops around particular issues relating to discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of race, gender, and sexual diversity. In these groups participants discussed the forms of discrimination, as well as the impact that discrimination can have on the lives of young people. The workshops were facilitated by TYF members, as well as members of community groups relevant to the topic. These 'community experts' were from organisations such as Colony 47, Mission Australia, Speak Out Advocacy and Outright Youth. We would like to thank these organisations for their support, as well as acknowledge a number of individuals such as Shadow Minister for Community Development, Hon Elise Archer MP, youth workers and other individuals who assisted during the day.

The TYF Antidote Statewide Forum on Discrimination was supported by the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Community Development Division and Launceston City Council.

This communiqué outlines the main ideas and issues raised by the young Tasmanians present at the forum. It also outlines some of the practical strategies and initiatives proposed by participants to combating discrimination. It also includes an analysis of the anonymous survey participants completed during the day.

Brainstorming and Vision Casting

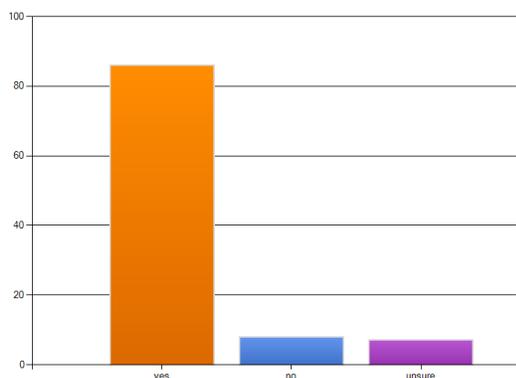
At the start of the forum participants were invited to reflect upon discrimination, the forms it may take, and its potential impact on the lives of young people and the community. This session included participants completing an anonymous survey.

The results of the survey provided many interesting insights into the lives of young Tasmanians. Firstly, it should be stated that 41.7% of the participants identified as 12-15 years, whilst 32% identified as being 16-18 years. Also worth noting is that there was an even distribution of participants across genders, although a slightly higher response rate of 51.5% from young males, as well as comparable numbers of participants from the North West, South and North of the State.

One of the questions (Q4) asked participants to describe, in their own words, what was meant by discrimination. There was a lot of commonality between participants, with most explaining discrimination in terms of

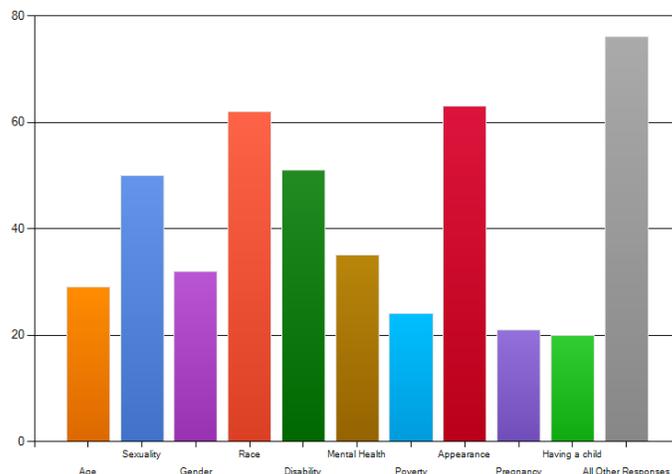
“Singling someone out because they are different, or have different opinions/beliefs”
 “Making people feel different and like they don’t belong... because of their race, gender or sexuality”
 “Putting someone down for who they are, what they like, what they believe in and where they come from”
 “Prejudice...exclusion”

Fig 1.0 Q5. Witnessing of discrimination by participants



One of the most concerning issues raised by the survey was that 85% of participants suggested that they had witnessed discrimination in their communities (Q5). The following Fig 1.0 denotes this.

Fig 2.0 Q6. Factors inciting discrimination witnessed



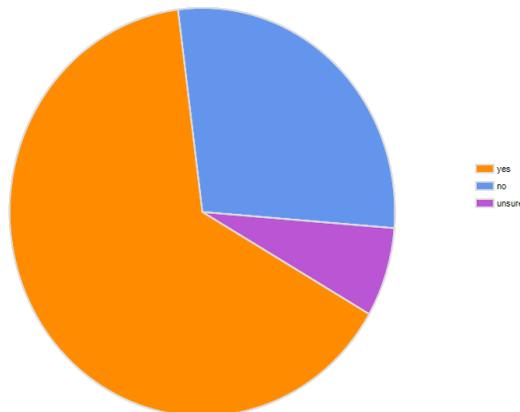
In reference to this question, participants were asked (Q6) what they believed the discrimination witnessed was related to. Fig 2.0 highlights that participants considered appearance, race, disability and sexuality (this term referred to being from Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex communities) to be the most important factors. The large grey column denoted ‘All Other Responses’ included various factors not included as options, such as discrimination on the basis of being overweight and breast-feeding in public. It should however be noted

some participants in this section ticked 'Other' without identifying what 'Other' referred to.

The participants who said that they had witnessed discrimination, were then asked (Q7) what actions they had taken after the incident. The most common responses included that they 'felt powerless', and 'ignored it', or worryingly,

"Sometimes I've stood up, but ... I sometimes think, what if this makes me the target for bullying?"

Fig 3.0 Q8. Personal experience of discrimination witnessed



We also asked participants if they had personally experienced discrimination. A concerning 64% (as seen in orange in Fig 3.0) indicated that they had, whilst 28.3% said they had not, and 7.1% were unsure. Again we asked (Q9) what factors they thought the discrimination had been related to, and again the most common responses were appearance (58.8%), racism (25.0%) and sexuality (20.6%). Religious views, which had not factored as significantly in Question 7, was also identified as an important factor (26.5%).

In Question 10 participants were asked how they felt about experiencing discrimination. The most common answers were "angry", "frustrated", "hurt", and "powerless". When asked (Q11) whether they had done anything about being discriminated against, only 58.0% said that they had acted. The lack of willingness to act was discussed in the responses to Question 12, including "I just ignored them", "lack of self confidence" and "it felt like there was nothing I could do". However, of the participants who were willing to act (44.3%), reasons for this included "people need to stand up for themselves" and "it is not fair".

The last question (Q13) asked participants to share ways that they thought discrimination could be stopped. Most of the responses to this question were unsure it could be stopped, but highlighted that perhaps "if people were more educated on the different forms of discrimination there would be a lot less of it" and the importance of "[seeing] someone about it".

What would your ideal community be?

Following the individually-focused survey session, the participants were brought back into a large group to be challenged by the facilitator Mo to embrace the opportunity to come up with solutions to discrimination.

Mo asked participants to reflect on their ideal Tasmania, one free from discrimination, and describe what it would look like.

- Share a time that you have been treated really well. What were the features of this experience?
- If everyone were to work together, what would you like your community to be known for?
- How could your community work together to achieve this vision?

Some of the ideas generated by participants included "acceptance and being treated equally", "respect and choice", and "feeling welcome".

Refining Our Ideas

During the next part of the forum, participants were split into workshop groups to focus on certain aspects of discrimination – the forms it could take and concerns participants had about particular issues. Participants were introduced to the ‘community experts’ and TYF members that would facilitate the workshops.

Disabilities

Scott Robson, Speak Out Advocacy

Danni Murfet, TYF member and carer in the Disability sector.

Anti-social behaviour

Wendy Newton, Community Development Officer, Launceston City Council

Eilse Archer MP, Shadow Minister for Community Development

Regional Issues

Matt Hill, Youth Development Officer, Derwent Valley Council

Alysha House, Youth Development Officer, Circular Head Council

Sexual Diversity

Mike Cain, Advisor to Minister for Community Development, Cassy O’Connor MP

Ricky Meerding, Josh Brown and Julian Partis of Outright Youth

Gender

Amy Murphy, Community Development Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Chloe Turner, TYF member

Racism and Ethnic Diversity

Fiona Calvert, Coordinator, Aboriginal Information & Referral Service, Colony 47

Wan Hoe Goh, Ng Sze Hsiung, Benny Dieh, Malaysian Students’ Council of Australia (Tasmania)

Mental Health

Richard Muir Wilson, Youth Development Officer, Waratah-Wynyard Council

Jack Brown, Mission Australia

Nathan Gelston, TYF member

Young people

Griffin Blizzard, Rural Health Youth

Class and Poverty

Karli Reeves, Youth Development Officer, Burnie City Council

Chris Edwards, TYF member

Door of Hope

Sam Tilly, representative of the Door of Hope. The Door of Hope ran a workshop on how they can use their venue as a youth centre to engage with Launceston’s young people.

Metika Claxton, TYF member

The workshop sessions were structured so that each participant could share their concerns in two topic groups, having 40 minutes of discussion time in each. The focus of these workshops was for the young people to discuss honestly and openly their concerns about the above topic areas, brought from personal experience or what they had witnessed. During the discussion participants were again asked the following questions by Mo:

- Why am I passionate about this?
- What does discrimination look like when thinking about this issue?
- What is the impact of discrimination on the community?



Top concerns

The following is a summary of some of the ideas presented to the audience after the first workshop session.

Age

- Many older Australians have a lack of tolerance for young people and different groups
- Young people commonly seen in terms of 'antisocial behaviour'

Class and Poverty

- People judging you because of the amount of money you or your family have

Gender

- Men getting paid more than females
- Stereotyping around gender roles

Race and Ethnic Diversity

- It shouldn't matter what country you come from, we are all human
- People are scared to approach people from multicultural backgrounds

Sexual Diversity

- Exclusion from marriage laws
- feeling excluded in community

Disability

- Not getting employed
- Judged and made fun of everyday
- Looked down on where really should be admired

Positive strategies

Following these workshops, participants listened to addresses by the Anti-Discrimination Commission Robin Banks and the Mayor of Launceston. After these presentations participants were invited to brainstorm strategies to address the concerns they had highlighted in the earlier workshops, and make positive change in their communities. The ideas were discussed in the same workshop groups as before.

The following is a summary of the ideas presented to the audience after the conclusion of this session. They are presented in the order of the most popular. Ideas were graded depending on the amount of 'dots' they received from participants, and each participant was given three dots, which they distributed amongst the ideas as they saw fit.

Festivals celebrating Multiculturalism (117)

Young people expressed their anger and frustration at the lack of understanding and tolerance amongst the community for newly arrived migrants and refugees. One way that they thought the gap could be bridged was through more festivals and celebrations that showcased the best foods, dancing, culture of new groups, so that everyone could share their stories and passions and learn from each other.

Sexual diversity (105) – 'Fighting back'

This idea of 'fighting back' was not focused on physically attacking the people who discriminated against young people from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) communities, but about being resilient and becoming a more proactive advocate for anti-discrimination. Participants talked the need to help their peers to believe in themselves, and develop a positive and courageous attitude – so that they could be proud of who they were, and take this message to the community on issues such as marriage equality. Those participants who not from the LGBTI communities, but who supported them, talked about the need to educate and encourage their peers to be more welcoming and understanding. This idea also mentioned that when young people do feel threatened there should be 'safe places' in schools where young people from the LGBTI community could 'hang out'.



Promoting Gender Equality (49)

Another of the big issues at the forum was gender equality. Young people passionate about discrimination against women talked about how it was unfair that gender stereotypes and gender roles, in the home and at work, still existed. Some of the strategies developed by participants about promoting gender equality included providing more help to women to enter the workforce, as well as promoting the gender equality message amongst their families, friends, and peers.

Ending rural and regional discrimination (29)

Young people passionate about ending discrimination in rural and regional communities talked about issues like a lack of services, lack of public transport, lack of social and work opportunities. Participants had ideas about promoting positive messages about rural and regional life through having guest speakers at schools and more school concerts.

Stop Anti-Social Behaviour – Youth Police (19)

Many participants were concerned with the perception that young people were considered troublemakers by many in the community. They thought it was unfair and targeted by shopkeepers and police. However, some participants acknowledged that some young people are involved in crime, and this was not acceptable. There was discussion about how to promote positive behaviours that young people would relate to. Participants interested in this issue talked about introducing 'Youth Police'. 'Youth Police' would walk around with actual police to make the police appear less threatening, but also to work with police to make sure they engage with young people in a way that works with them, not against them.

Promoting disability advocacy (19)

Participants interested in this issue were concerned about the inequality experienced by people with disabilities. They discussed how there needs to be more education in schools with young people to promote understanding of the difficulties faced by people with a disability. They also advocated for the National Disabilities Insurance Scheme to go to the Government. They also thought there should be more general awareness raising in the community.

Removing the stigma against poverty (17)

Participants concerned about poverty and discrimination based on people's amount of money and 'class' talked about the importance of raising awareness about the practical difficulties faced by many people in the community. They talked about the need to make public in newspapers the real situation experienced by those in poverty, and holding governments to account. They thought that schools and community centres should be hosting more forums so that people can discuss this issue.



Progress

Since the TYF Antidote Statewide Forum TYF members and YNOT staff have progressed the issue of anti-discrimination in a number of ways, including:

- TYF Project Officer Naomi Marsh has met with the Federal Minister for Justice Hon Brendan O'Connor MP and his staff, to discuss the ideas discussed at the Antidote Forum.
- TYF PO have meet with Mike Cain, advisor to the Minister of Community Development Cassy O'Connor MP about the outcomes of the forum
- The Human Rights Week Committee have expressed interest in the survey developed at the Antidote forum, and are using it as a basis for further research into discrimination as experienced by young people.
- Following the release of the Communiqué TYF will organise meetings with politicians, community organisations and individuals who work in areas relevant to discrimination in Tasmania. If you would like to be a part of these meetings, please contact TYF Project Officer Naomi Marsh.
- YNOT participated in Tune In Not Out (TINO)workshop and made a video about Marriage Equality, stemming from sexual diversity group, to be displayed on the YNOT and TINO websites.

Written by

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