

**Next Generation Team:**

Attendee: Darlene Davis  
Event: Youth Health Conference.  
Dates: 7-9 November 2018.  
Photo Position: 2<sup>nd</sup> from the left.



The Youth Health Conference held between November 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018 on the Gold Coast Queensland, was the first conference I have attended. As a community Navigator (with the Next Generation Team) and my status as a 4<sup>th</sup> year Bachelor of Education student, I found the conference offered a diverse selection of presentations, beneficial to my ongoing acquisition of knowledge and development as an Educator with an interest in child and youth health, wellbeing and empowerment.

One thing that particularly resonated was the lack of dedicated health services, support for the 16 to 25year old's who were described by Ms Christina Heris (Next Generation) as the "forgotten", in a complex and fragmented health system according to Ms Fiona Robards discussing Intersectionality and marginalised young people. Prior to the conference I had not given specific thought to this age group, simply because I had considered them as independent and therefore younger age groups as dependant and reliant on parent/ carers for their everyday needs.

Although the younger groups are dependant, they are a group that has attracted significant attention over recent years, whereas our youth have remained on the fringes of dedicated funding and services when research presented throughout the conference revealed our youths' mental health and wellbeing have also never been more threatened. The conference highlighted the paradox between the competing scenarios, because many workshops layered the evidence and overwhelming need to dedicate our attention to this vulnerable group that have never felt more disconnected from society and misunderstood by their parents and the media.

Also, a number of workshops also alluded to the power and influence the media as a catalyst for body image and mental health problems, because it is socialising them into a world of unrealistic expectations and distorted definitions of success. The conference provided the awareness which leads to momentum needed to bring our youth and futures to the forefront of societies minds. Particularly given the 16 to 24year age cohort is currently the largest growing sector of our population, which I was previously unaware of.

I particularly enjoyed the workshop promoting Drama as a means of training youth workers. The facilitators (Peter Chown and Lisa Apostolides), guided the attendees through real life scenarios, interactions' and conflicts that many youth would encounter on a daily basis. Through drama each one of our workshop group were able to re-enact and work through events by placing ourselves in 'the drama' to experience the issues from a first-person perspective. Although the experiences evoked strong emotional arousal and discomfort for the participants and audience, I have witnessed 1<sup>st</sup> hand Dramas potential in bridging understanding between youth and older generations.

The same Drama group provided a live theatre performance at the end of the conference, which explored sexual health and many other issues that are not often openly discussed. Therefore, it allowed conference attendees to connect with issues that often many would not otherwise engage with on an everyday basis. I initially found some of the 'acted' content quite confronting, however this is what is sometimes needed to catch a person's attention as it did mine. I stayed on throughout the performance and I am glad I did. I am grateful and humbled by the generosity of spirit, passion and genuine concern for our youth that was expressed by both facilitators and attendees. Several collaborations and new relationships were formed, which I will be endeavouring to consolidate over the coming months. Thankyou for providing me the opportunity to attend the Youth Conference. Sincerely, Darlene Davis.