

# Newsletter 03

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## in this issue

- > Back to School 2009
- > Celebrating National Youth Week 2009
- > Guest writer – Elizabeth Shaw, Australian Youth Ambassador to the UN

# Back to School



...tell  
your story

Back to School 2009, is a nationwide campaign in May that celebrates the incredible role public schools play in Australia's success. People from all walks of life are encouraged to go back to school to tell their stories and provide positive role models for young people. Now in its seventh year, Back to School is a campaign by Education Foundation, a division of The Foundation for Young Australians, in partnership with Coles.

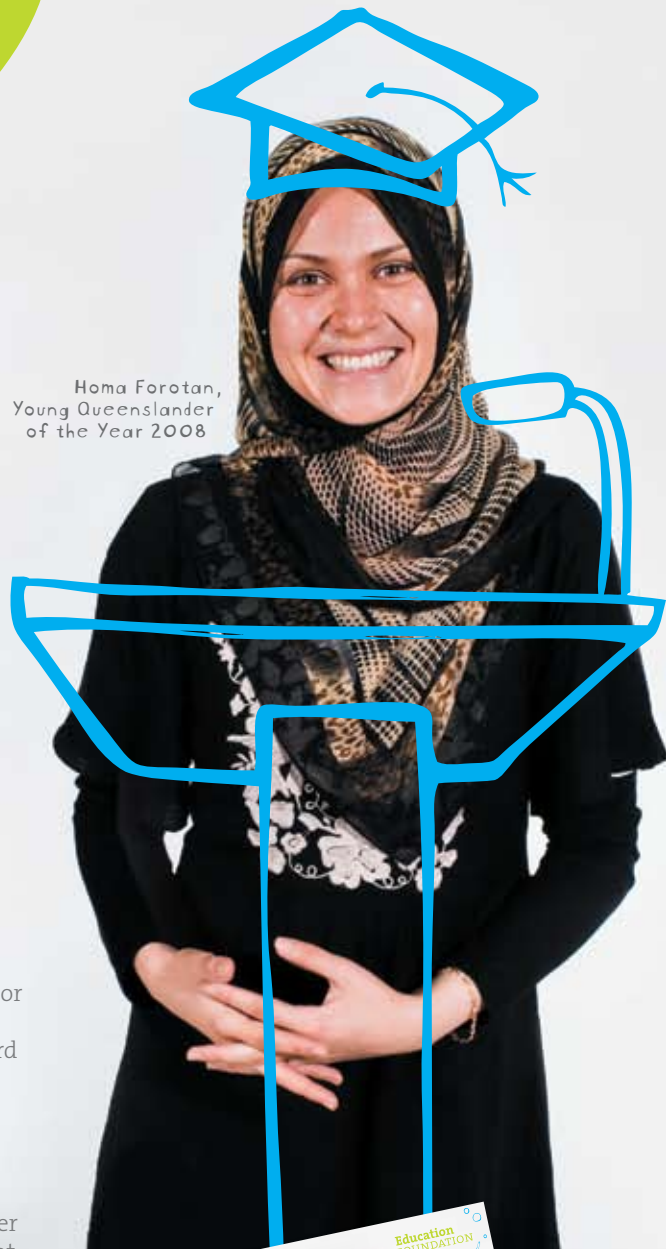
FYA's CEO Adam Smith says, "great public schools are vital to building Australia's future prosperity and productivity. They educate and care for all young people no matter the circumstances and are at the heart of all communities. Since 2002, Back to School has been connecting schools with the wider community and inspiring students to succeed."

"Students and teachers love hearing from people who went to their school and role models can help young people gain insight into their own purpose, passion and pathway in life," says Adam.

In support of Back to School 2009, a diverse group of well-known Australians along with Coles team members will be among those who return to their former public schools. This year Back to School role models include; Lisa Wilkinson, co-host of the Nine Network's TODAY Show and one of Australia's most admired and respected journalists; Adam Cooney, AFL player with the Western Bulldogs and 2008 Brownlow Medal winner; Homa Forotan, Young Queenslander of the Year 2008; Matthew Mitcham, Queensland Olympic gold medal winner; David Wirrpanda, AFL player with the West Coast Eagles and Director of the David Wirrpanda Foundation; and Shannon McGuire, model and third place winner on Foxtel's Australia's Next Top Model. Back to School is also supported by state education departments across Australia.

As a teacher, principal, parent or former student you can help support this great campaign in 2009 – make sure your school, business or community gets involved.

For more information check out:  
[www.backtoschool.org.au](http://www.backtoschool.org.au)



Homa Forotan,  
Young Queenslander  
of the Year 2008



# Celebrating National Youth Week – March 28 to April 5 2009

National Youth Week is all about young people – the week celebrates the contribution young people make to their communities and provides an opportunity for them to have their voices heard on issues that are important to them.

NYW is coordinated by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, in collaboration with the state and territory government departments responsible for youth affairs. The NYW National Planning Group has representation from each state and territory.

FYA is proud to highlight four projects that have recently received support from us and are making a real difference.

#### LAPA BUMMERS Youth Haven

The LAPA Bummers Youth Haven project provides a safe meeting place for young aboriginal people of La Perouse, NSW to interact and discuss issues that impact on their lives. The project focuses on the need to address issues such as alcohol and drug abuse, disengagement from school, teenage pregnancies and suicide in order to divert young people from anti-social behaviour.

Educational and cultural workshops, camps and education programs are used to help 10 – 24 year olds with everything from homework and computer skills to sexual health.

Volunteer parents and community members are incorporated as activity leaders to increase the community involvement with young people, and help break down the barriers between generations. Young participants are also given the opportunity to become mentors themselves, through training and support groups.

#### Multicultural Youth Northern Territory – MyNT

MyNT is the premier multicultural youth body in the Northern Territory. Designed to be a non-political avenue for young people to have their voices heard, it focuses on sustaining and developing multiculturalism in the Northern Territory.

MyNT hopes to be a catalyst for positive social change in the Northern Territory and is committed to finding ways and means of improving community life and amenities for young people. By offering workshops and activities, the project aims to unite the youth of the area in a discussion of the issues that affect their area.

#### Creative People's Collective

The Creative People's Collective uses hip-hop as a catalyst to engage and educate young people in the communities of Northern Rivers, NSW. Taking a fresh approach to education, the project will use the popularity of hip-hop as a means of education, literacy and social engagement through skills development opportunities and events.

The Creative People's Collective aims to engage young people in the arts in order to foster and maintain a regional arts council and network, whilst also improving the perception of young people in the region.

## Announcing FYA takes up social networking:

So, FYA has taken its foray into the world of social media and is now on Twitter. Our URL is [www.twitter.com/fya\\_org\\_au](http://www.twitter.com/fya_org_au) and we are excited about posting the opening of opportunities as they happen. If you're familiar with Twitter please feel free to become an FYA follower, if you're not, now is the time to learn.

#### Youth Digital Cultures

The Youth Digital Culture project brings young people from culturally diverse backgrounds together through creative workshops, projects and mentoring programs. Based in Western Sydney – arguably Australia's most diverse region – the workshops aim to give the young people of the region the skills to become a generation of creative social leaders.

The creative projects are designed to help young people voice their responses to issues that affect their lives, whilst simultaneously creating social networks that cover a broad cultural spectrum.

With the help of established partnerships with the University of Western Australia and various local councils, Youth Digital Cultures have offered countless opportunities including industry tours, excursions, community and school based talks and digital art workshops.

[www.youthweek.com](http://www.youthweek.com)



MyNT Workshop

# UN Ambassador

**Elizabeth Shaw is one of two Australian Youth Representatives to the United Nations, along with Melanie Poole. FYA was a principal supporter of the program which allowed them to consult with young people around Australia and take those voices to the UN in New York.**

Giving a speech in front of the UN General Assembly is a bit daunting at the best of times. After travelling around Australia for five months, collecting the views, ideas and issues that are the most important to young Australians, the pressure only intensified. I'd met so many incredible young people who were moving mountains in their communities to effect important change – working on issues like climate change, the environment, 'by youth for youth' education, youth homelessness, sports, health and wellbeing, youth advocacy, and giving young people something to do. The responsibility I felt to these young leaders was immense.

I remembered young indigenous people I'd met in the Northern Territory who placed health and safety as their priorities, above all else. Issues like alcohol abuse and domestic violence tore apart their communities far more than I'd ever imagined. I remembered the huge positive difference young indigenous Australians seemed to experience when they had indigenous teachers and community leaders, mentors who could guide them through the search for identity in vastly different worlds.

I thought about all the schools I'd spoken in around the country, but also all those young people I'd met who weren't in schools. We chatted in homeless shelters, music halls, skate parks. I sought inspiration from all the young people who helped the government develop the Australian Youth Forum and participated in the 2020 Youth Summit, outlining a blueprint for a creative, inclusive and dynamic Australia. I thought about young people all over Australia taking part in Youth Advisory Councils, Youth Parliaments and a whole host of other community groups, channelling their energies into creating a lasting, positive change.

I wondered what united us as 'young people', if there were any commonalities amongst us, apart from our age. I began to feel that it was our hope and idealism and our courage to question that defined us as youth.

Young people have always been at the forefront of social change, leading key social movements in areas such as civil rights, women's rights, higher education and the anti-war movement. We have always sought opportunities to participate within communities and have blazed trails where there were none before.

Social inclusion and civic engagement are basic tenets of a democracy. We need governments to facilitate opportunities for us to lead. As former Secretary General Kofi Annan has said "No-one is born a good citizen, no nation is born a democracy ... young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline..."

As I addressed the UN that day about youth participation, climate change and the Millennium Development Goals, I felt that it was not the voice of one young Australian, but thousands uniting in a call for action.



Elizabeth at UN, New York



Addressing the UN

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## How can you get involved?

Please contact FYA if you'd like to:

- get more information on our grant programs
- register your school for one of our education programs
- get your organisation involved
- donate to FYA

**We print using environmentally friendly inks and paper, however if you would like to receive our newsletter by email please contact [info@fya.org.au](mailto:info@fya.org.au)**