

IYC 2012 YOUTH SUMMIT REPORT

Australia's first National Co-operative Youth Summit
24-26 October 2012, The Glasshouse, Port Macquarie NSW

Introduction

The IYC 2012 Youth Summit was held in conjunction with the National Co-operatives Conference. It was attended by 25 youth delegates representing the Australian co-operative sector, from industries as diverse as co-operative housing, community-owned renewable energy, mutual banking, artisanal crafts, food retail, community organisations and environmental activism.

The majority of the youth delegates were sponsored under the IYC 2012 youth bursary program.

Rationale

The future growth of Australia's co-operative and mutual business sector relies upon engaging the members of tomorrow. The National Co-operatives Conference posted the first National Co-operative Youth Summit in order to bring young Australian co-operators together to discuss their future in co-operatives.

The Youth Summit also provided the co-operative sector with the opportunity to engage with co-operative youth, to hear their ideas and recommendations on:

- Engaging the Future members of tomorrow – succession planning for membership
- One in one billion – promoting co-operatives and mutuals to the youth market

The Youth Summit was part of the Future Leaders Program, celebrating and connecting Australian youth with other young co-operators nationally and internationally.

Youth Summit Program

Co-facilitators: **Dr Jo Barraket**, Associate Professor, QUT Business School and **Donnie Maclurcan**, Co-founder, Post Growth Institute.

Guest speaker (industry breakfast): **Mikel Lezamiz**, Director of Co-operative Dissemination, Mondragon Corporation: "How co-operatives stand up for the young"

24-25th October

Youth delegates attended the main conference program as full delegates.

25th October, 3.00-5.30pm: “Co-operatively minded: engaging the members of tomorrow”

Youth delegates attended a standalone session entitled about how co-operatives can engage young Australians on the value of co-operating.

26th October 7:30-9:30am: “Co-operatively minded: Report from the Youth Summit”

Delegates were invited to an industry leaders’ breakfast to report their conclusions and thoughts to industry leaders in the Australian co-operative sector.

Areas of Action and Recommendations

The Youth Summit identified four key areas of focus:

Education

- Education at all levels is essential to the progress of the co-operative movement in Australia.
- Delegates expressed concern that the co-operative model is not explored extensively or at all within mainstream business syllabuses.
- Educating through positive experience is the key to engaging young people - Whilst we as co-operators understand the benefits of the model, lay people must be approached in ways that give them a true understanding about what makes co-operatives important.
- Sharing our co-operative stories and experiences was identified as a key method of educating people about the positive role of co-operatives and why they are an important alternative to investor owned businesses.

Recommendations

1. Advocate for co-operative business education as a part of mainstream business education.
2. Provide opportunities to educate the general public about co-operatives through positive experiences NB: young people can be the agents of change – the educators as well as the educated.

Co-operative Youth Programs

- We need a youth ambassadors program.
- Many of the delegates already act in this role in their communities, but a commitment to formalising this process will lead to more uniform engagement.
- Opportunities for mentorship, was identified as a key need for young co-operators - facilitating engagement between generations was seen as an important process in allowing our young co-operators to flourish.
- All co-operators, young and old, need to be committed to breaking generational divides so that each can benefit from each other's knowledge.
- Above all, young people should feel confident that they can come to their seniors, superiors and their leaders for professional guidance and the benefits of their experience.
- Reciprocity – the need for mentorship to flow both ways was acknowledged (youth to senior and vice versa).
- Youth need dedicated youth focussed events such as an annual summit, but in the interests of accessibility, the costs of attending should be mitigated through a bursary program.

Recommendations

1. Establish a youth co-operators ambassadors program as an ongoing youth development initiative.
2. Establish a mentorship program to bring youth co-operators and mentors together.
3. Ensure that there are youth focussed events e.g. youth summit, touring road show, youth streams at conferences

Responsibility to share resources and skills

- The co-operative sector has a large number of cognitive resources and utilising the unique skills and knowledge of our younger co-operators is essential in moving forward.
- As young co-operators we must share our resources and skills: we have shared values and together we can advance these values through collaboration – it is our responsibility as the new generation of co-operative members to do so.
- Social media can be a valuable tool in spreading the cooperative message and engaging young people on cooperative ideas and values.
- Social media shares a similar collaborative ethos with the cooperative movement. However it should be recognised that successful social media campaigns are often

underpinned by dedicated resources and a well-articulated social campaign. It must also be noted that whilst it is a powerful tool, it should not be the only method of communication.

Recommendations

1. Establish a network of young co-operators using the Youth Summit and its attendees as a springboard.
2. Establish a youth representative position on any board or council formed as part of the 'Social Business Council' of Australia IYC 2012 legacy initiative.

Mentorship

Offers of mentorship were made at the industry breakfast on 26 October, by the following organisations:

bankmecu
Community Mutual Group
The Co-operative College UK
The Co-operative Bookshop
International Year of Co-operatives Secretariat Australia
West Belconnen Health Co-operative
Woolitji Co-operative

Contact Mitchell O'Gorman for further information on how to be connected with one of these organisations and the prospect of mentorship.

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International Youth Co-operative Statement

United Nations Closing Ceremony of the 2012 International Year of Co-operatives

Australian youth co-operators humbly submit the following statement to the United Nations to be considered during the drafting of the International Youth Co-operative Statement at the official closing of the UN International Year of Co-operatives at UN headquarters New York City, 19-20 November 2012.

Australian young co-operators recognise:

- The power of the co-operative model to contribute to a more positive future;
- The fundamental importance of young people to a sustainable co-operative sector in the future

Our messages are:

- Co-ops are member owned; valuing people first, capital second
- Co-ops are the most resilient business structure for growth
- Co-ops are about social need, not about power and greed

Our national focal areas of action are:

Education

Education at all levels is essential to the progress of the co-operative movement, and educating through positive experience is the key – sharing our co-operative stories so that lay people can come to understand the importance of the co-operative model as an alternative to investor owned businesses.

Co-operative Youth Programs

Opportunities for mentorship is an important process in fostering a new generation of co-operators and giving them the opportunity to reach their potential for the benefit of themselves and the co-operative movement.

Co-operators young and old must be committed to breaking generational divides so that each can benefit from the other's knowledge and experiences. Young people must feel confident that they can come to their seniors, superiors and their leaders for professional guidance.

Responsibility to share resources and skills

Utilising the extensive cognitive resources of our young co-operators is essential. Young co-operators must recognise the importance of sharing our resources and skills to meet our shared values, advancing our common goals through collaboration.

Recommendations:

1. Advocate for co-operative business education as a part of mainstream business education.
2. Provide opportunities to educate the general public about co-operatives through positive experiences - noting that young people can be the agents of change (the educators as well as the educated).
3. Establish a young co-operators ambassadors program as an ongoing youth development initiative.
4. Establish a mentorship program to bring youth co-operators and mentors together, and taking into account the value of reciprocity.
5. Program co-operative youth focussed events and provide bursary support to ensure widest accessibility.
6. Australia's youth co-operators will look to establish a network of young co-operators.
7. Australia's youth co-operators ask for a youth representative to sit on the national body representing the co-operative sector when it is established (2013).

This statement was drafted by the youth delegates attending 2012 IYC Youth Summit held on 24-26 October 2012 in Port Macquarie, NSW Australia.

Australian Contact:

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