

AYPAA

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LOWDOWN

YOUTH PERFORMING ARTS IN AUSTRALIA



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THE DEATH OF AYPAA . . .

BUT LOWDOWN AND A NEW NATIONAL OFFICE LIVE ON!

The editorial of the last edition of *Lowdown* indicated that AYPAA may be near the end of its life, because of severely depleted funding. A scheme has now been devised to keep the major functions of AYPAA going (including this magazine) but to close down the organisation itself. The proposal will be discussed at AYPAA's Annual General Meeting, which will be held at Carclew on Sunday March 7th. AYPAA President Andrew Bleby outlines the situation . . .

Many people throughout Australia have been either confused or ignorant about the Australian Youth Performing Arts Association and its activities. This is largely because AYPAA has often changed the way it operates and the direction in which it is heading. It has tried many different ways of achieving its aims (which are extremely broad) and often it has not been clear what the organisation was trying to do. Since it began as a small collection of committed individuals around Australia, it has surveyed the field and published a report and directory, undertaken national projects, offered resources and assistance, and lobbied on behalf of youth performing arts.

In 1980, a three year plan for expansion and development was adopted, concentrating on the provision of services and information to practitioners in the field. Six months later it was obvious that the amount of government and other support for the organisation would not be sufficient to carry out this plan. The structure of the organisation was inefficient and the funding squeeze was on, particularly for support organisations.

When AYPAA moved from the University of Sydney to Carclew in North Adelaide in 1980, part of the attraction was the proximity to an organisation with similar concerns. Carclew wanted to spread its resources nationally, and AYPAA was struggling to maintain an efficient and useful national office with a staff of one and a half. Funds have now slipped even further, and AYPAA is no longer able to afford even one full time officer. The AYPAA Council (comprising a representative in each state) does not want to oversee the dismantling of the various services provided by AYPAA, however, so an alternative has been proposed which sees the dissolution of AYPAA as a separate organisation, and the simultaneous setting up of a national office in Carclew itself.

The new proposal is summarised below. It has already been accepted in principle by Carclew's governing body, the Youth Performing Arts Council, and is being presented to the AYPAA Annual General Meeting on Sunday March 7th, 1982.

AYPAA has been operating since 1975. In that time it has undertaken several different projects aimed at furthering the development of Youth Performing Arts across Australia. These include: Australia 75 (a festival in Canberra); a Directory of Youth Performing Arts; a Scripts Directory and Index; the Inroads Project, which took arts events to isolated areas around Australia; *Lowdown*, the national magazine of Youth Performing Arts; a Theatre-in-Education tour to Wales; the Richard Davey travelling fellowship; the National Theatre-in-Education Study and the maintenance of International contact as the Australian Centre for

"The structure of the organisation was inefficient."

ASSITEJ (The International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People). AYPAA's Executive, or Board of Management, has always comprised a delegate from each state and territory of Australia — an awkward arrangement which required intensive (and expensive) meetings which could never adequately cover the business at hand. Until 1980, each delegate was appointed by an 'accredited organisation' in each state, such as the Victorian Youth Theatre Association, Brown's Mart in Darwin, and state-based AYPAA organisations in several states. Constitutionally, AYPAA had only eight members —

the eight State Delegates. This was altered in 1980 to grant membership to all Lowdown subscribers, with State Delegates being elected or nominated from the readership in each state.

Until 1981, AYPAA maintained an office (first in Sydney, then in Adelaide since 1980) with one paid officer (Ann Godfrey-Smith, Margaret Leask and, from 1978, Geoffrey Brown). A shortage of funds forced the position to be terminated in May 1981. No formal meetings of delegates have been held since that time, and the operations of AYPAA have been minimally maintained under a small Steering Committee consisting of the President of AYPAA (Andrew Bleby), the Director of Carclew (Roger Chapman), and the Carclew Administrator (Rob Dowling). The major activity has been the publishing of Lowdown, edited by Andrew Bleby and Sue Averay on a voluntary basis.

These drastic cuts in activity were forced by a sudden downturn in grant funds from various government sources, and by an over-expenditure in 1980. It was quite clear the organisation could not continue to support its anticipated level of activity, and would have to reduce its budget by almost two thirds. AYPAA's anticipated income for 1982 is \$17,000 only.

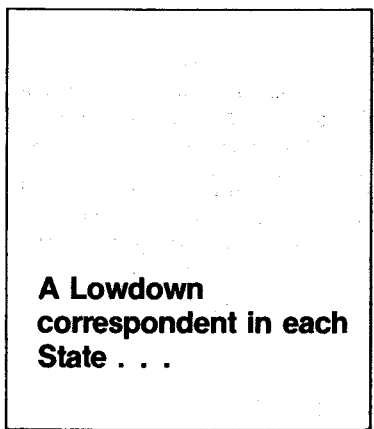
AYPAA'S ACTIVITIES ABSORBED AND CONTINUED

While AYPAA's ability to operate effectively has declined, new developments at Carclew Youth Performing Arts Centre since the appointment of a new Director have included a policy which sees Carclew developing a national role (within its financial capabilities) and becoming a central reference point for the development of Youth Performing Arts throughout Australia. The Carclew organisation is in a far stronger position to do this than the beleaguered AYPAA.

AYPAA would not be fulfilling its constitutional objectives, however, if it were to casually give up the ghost and withdraw from the initiatives it has considered to be important. AYPAA must therefore be sure that its major activities are retained in some form.

THE SCHEME

The Youth Performing Arts Council in South Australia has already agreed in principle to the scheme outlined here. The idea is to dissolve AYPAA as a separate organisation at the AYPAA A.G.M. on March 7th, to pass its assets to Carclew, and to set up a replacement committee which oversees Carclew's function as a **National Centre** for Youth Performing Arts. Carclew then becomes responsible for the national activities which AYPAA has operated in the past, and it also becomes the Australian Centre for ASSITEJ.



A **Lowdown** editor is appointed, either at a fee per issue or as part of any future re-structuring of Carclew staff. As well as editing the magazine, this editor would be responsible for attracting advertising and subscription revenue, in an attempt to make the whole operation more self-supporting.

In the place of the current AYPAA Council members (one in each state and territory) a **Lowdown Correspondent** would be appointed in each state, and paid a small honorarium per issue for providing material for the magazine, such as articles, news, coming events, interviews etc. In this way **Lowdown** should be able to improve its coverage of events and opinions across Australia, instead of relying only on whatever a single editor can get together. Any readers interested in becoming the correspondent in their state for a small fee should contact the Carclew Director.

The National Committee at Carclew would meet bi-monthly to guide Carclew's national role, act

as an editorial committee for **Lowdown**, maintain national contacts, initiate national gatherings, conferences and so forth, and act as the central contact point for ASSITEJ.

Each year, a national meeting would be held to discuss guidelines for the coming year.

The advantages of this whole scheme are that the struggling little organisation formed seven years ago to help with the development of youth performing arts can now become part of a solidly-based organisation instead of spending half its time battling for its continued existence or administering its own existence. **Lowdown** is able to develop and guarantee comprehensive nationwide input and projects are undertaken as ideas arise and project funding allows. A secure future for a national communication, co-ordination and lobbying organisation will have been achieved.

The biggest problem facing this kind of scenario is the danger of the National Office becoming too isolated from the needs and feelings of practitioners in other parts of the country. Hopefully, however, the combination of the **Lowdown** correspondents, occasional national gatherings such as TIE directors' meetings, forums etc. and the annual meeting held during a major festival (either the Adelaide Festival or the Come Out Festival) will guarantee that Carclew's National Office will be truly representative and able to assist youth performing arts throughout the country.

There will be teething problems, no doubt, and the new National Centre will have to adjust to the demands placed upon it and the limitations it finds. I am confident that a revised, secure national office has far more potential than the ailing organisation which has preceded it.

Thanks, by the way, are due to the Office of Youth Affairs, the Community Arts Board of the Australia Council, and the Government of South Australia who have contributed (along with other governments and agencies) towards keeping AYPAA alive enough to make this next major step.

ANDREW BLEBY
President, AYPAA