

Wall Boy

A short film by Shark Island Productions



POLLY AND ME short film

THE OASIS documentary

SHARK ISLAND PRODUCTIONS

© ATOM

A **STUDY GUIDE** BY KATY MARRINER



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PLEASE NOTE: TEACHERS ARE ADVISED TO PREVIEW THE FILM BEFORE SHOWING IT TO STUDENTS. STUDENTS SHOULD ALSO BE BRIEFED ABOUT THE CONTENT AND PURPOSE OF *WALL BOY* PRIOR TO VIEWING.

WALL BOY

WALL BOY is a sensitive account of the issues facing vulnerable young people in contemporary Australian society. The film is both unsettling and brave in its dramatisation of the fractured world of a vulnerable adolescent. Some students may find the references to sex and drugs too confronting and the dimensions of the narrative too upsetting.

This study guide accompanies the short fiction film *WALL BOY* by Shark Island Productions, makers of *THE OASIS* documentary. It has been written for senior secondary students and practitioners, and provides information and suggestions for learning activities in English, Drama, Health and Human Development, Media, Religion and Society, VCE VET Community Services and curriculum projects exploring social justice issues in contemporary Australian society. *WALL BOY* could also be shown to teachers as part of professional development sessions addressing student welfare and pastoral care. Some of the questions and activities in this study guide will be of use to organisations, community groups and counselling services that support vulnerable young people.

WALL BOY is the story of a vulnerable sixteen-year-old boy forced to work as a male sex worker at a notorious spot in inner city Sydney called The Wall. A youth worker from the Salvation Army's outreach bus tries to reach out to him, but the boy won't speak or even make eye contact. One night the boy takes a risk and leaves a message on one of the laptops in the outreach bus. His cry for help sets a daring rescue plan into motion.

WALL BOY has a running time of 17 minutes.

About the filmmakers

Shark Island Productions is an award-winning Australian documentary production company based in Sydney. The company's films include *THE OASIS*, *IN THE COMPANY OF ACTORS*, *ALONE ACROSS AUSTRALIA*, *POLLY AND ME* and *WOODSTOCK FOR CAPITALISTS*.

The company's films have extensive education and outreach components and are developed as part of broader initiatives to make a significant social impact. The company states they create strategic partnerships with the philanthropic and not-for-profit sector, to educate and bring about social change.

WALL BOY is part of the ongoing outreach and education program based around the award-winning documentary *THE OASIS*.

Following the release of *THE OASIS* in 2008, the directors Ian Darling and Sascha Ettinger Epstein have written and directed two short fiction films, based on some of the untold stories that came out of their three-year documentary experience. *POLLY AND ME* (Dir. Ian Darling) and *WALL BOY* (Dir. Sascha Ettinger Epstein) have been made as companion pieces, and deal with a wide range of social issues that have affected the lives of many young homeless kids.

These short films should ideally be seen in conjunction with *THE OASIS* documentary, in order to provide a broader context for the two stories. The two fiction films deal collectively with issues around addiction, physical and mental abuse, and neglect. They provoke much discussion about dealing with complex social problems, and raise issues about the adequacy of service levels surrounding prevention and response programs in the community.

Partnerships were formed with charitable organisations for the outreach and education component of the initiative, that deal specifically with the issues raised in the films on



FOCUS PULLER, 16 MM CAMERA

a daily basis. These organisations will be using the films as part of a program to raise awareness about the issues they are all involved in, when young people's lives are in crisis. The film can be used at fundraising events to generate discussion and raise awareness.

Key messages

Vulnerable young people frequently run away from their problems at home and end up with much bigger, more serious problems out in the world.

The grim reality of Tom aka Wall Boy's life since running away is frighteningly common, and its graphic depiction on screen sheds light on the very real, and often life-threatening, danger that young people face when they naively enter the world of the streets.

The film also shows the true value of intervention services in turning lives around and the importance of outreach workers having a presence in the darkest, most dangerous locations of the city – places where most of us do not want to go.

The statistics overwhelmingly show that involvement in drugs and experience of physical harm are often the harsh reality of life on the street for young people.

WALL BOY puts a human face and story to the statistics. There

is a story behind every person.

The filmmakers hope that the film will act as a powerful deterrent for vulnerable young people thinking of running away from home, and inspire them to seek other options.

OASIS Youth Support Network

The Oasis Network gives homeless and disadvantaged young people hope, help and opportunities to access relevant education, training, jobs, counseling, and drug/alcohol programs.

Oasis cannot effectively undertake this intensive work until young people are off the street and in a safe, stable environment. On any given night, Oasis Surry Hills helps to accommodate and feed more than 100 homeless young people.

StreetConnect bus service run by Oasis Youth Support Network

The StreetConnect outreach bus features laptop computers, wireless broadband connection and mobile phone access. Homeless young people are able to use this technology to search for accommodation and other support services, send and receive emails and at times reconnect with family and friends.

USING WALL BOY IN THE CLASSROOM

Teachers may select from the following activities to support students' viewing and close analysis of *WALL BOY*.

BEFORE VIEWING

- What images come to mind when you think of a young person described as a street kid or 'at risk'? Ask students to share their thoughts with the class. Afterwards, provide students with the following information: The term 'youth at risk' is used to describe or identify young people who, faced with particular difficulties and disadvantages, are thought to be likely to fail to develop sufficiently in their adolescent years in a way that would provide a sound basis for a satisfying and fulfilling adult life.
- What stereotypes/attitudes do some people have about street kids?
- Discuss how the media, particularly film and television, portrays street kids. Are these portrayals sensational? Clichéd? Authentic? Constructive?
- Share your opinion of the role the following institutions and people should play in supporting young people who are 'at risk': local, state and federal governments; charities; churches; community groups; individuals.
- Make a list of the organisations that support young people who are 'at risk' in the area in which you live. What do you know about these organisations? Invite representatives from these organisations to speak to your class or your year level about their mission and support programs, as well as about the challenges that face them and their achievements.
- Can you become part of the solution, at least on a local level?

Fact sheet: Missing Persons in Australia

A missing person is defined as anyone who is reported missing to the police, whose whereabouts are unknown and about whose safety or welfare people are concerned.

- 35,000 people are reported missing each year in Australia – one person every fifteen minutes.
- 95 per cent of missing persons are found within a short period of time (usually within a week), however, there are currently 1600 long-term missing persons (people who have been missing for more than six months).
- There are three primary groups at risk of going missing: those suffering from a mental illness, young people (particularly females aged between thirteen to seventeen years) and the elderly. Out of the estimated 35,000 missing persons, 20,000 are under the age of eighteen.
- Approximately one third of missing persons go missing more than once.
- Most children that are reported missing are located safe and well within twenty-four hours.
- For every missing person reported, it is estimated that twelve other people are directly affected whether it is emotionally, psychologically, physically or financially.
- Going missing is not a crime.
- People usually go missing to remove themselves from something that isn't making them happy. Reasons for going missing include anxiety and depression, misadventure, homelessness, dementia, domestic violence, becoming a victim of crime, drug/alcohol abuse.
- For young people, family dysfunction and conflict, miscommunication, issues associated with puberty and peer pressure, mental health issues, child abuse/neglect, poor coping skills and drug and alcohol problems are among some of the reasons for going missing.
- Common reasons for children going missing include a breakdown in communication, family conflict, domestic violence, mental health issues, peer pressure and drug/alcohol abuse. Only a small percentage of missing children are the result of stranger abductions.
- In Australia, anyone can be reported as missing if their disappearance is out of character and there are concerns for their safety and welfare.
- If you have concerns about a missing person you can visit your local police station to file a missing persons report – even if the missing person lives in another state or territory.
- You do not have to wait twenty-four hours to report someone as missing. If you have serious concerns for the safety and welfare of a person, and their whereabouts are unknown, then you may immediately report them as missing to your local police.
- All details about missing persons are kept confidential and are not made available to the public unless permission has been granted by the family of the missing person and investigating officers.
- When located, a missing person must give permission before their whereabouts are released. In the case of a located missing child or adolescent, information and decisions regarding their circumstances and their location may be made in consultation with relevant agencies.
- By being a missing person you may put yourself in an unsafe position, making you sensitive to becoming a victim of a crime, or forcing you to commit a crime to stay 'missing'.
- If you believe you may have seen a missing person, please submit a sighting report. Information can be treated confidentially upon your request.
- The National Missing Persons Coordination Centre (NMPCC) is funded by the Australian Government through the Australian Federal Police and aims to reduce the incidence and impact of missing persons in Australia and to educate the Australian community about this significant issue.

Source:
<<http://www.missingpersons.gov.au>>.



NOKIA STREETCONNECT BUS

Fact sheet: The Salvation Army

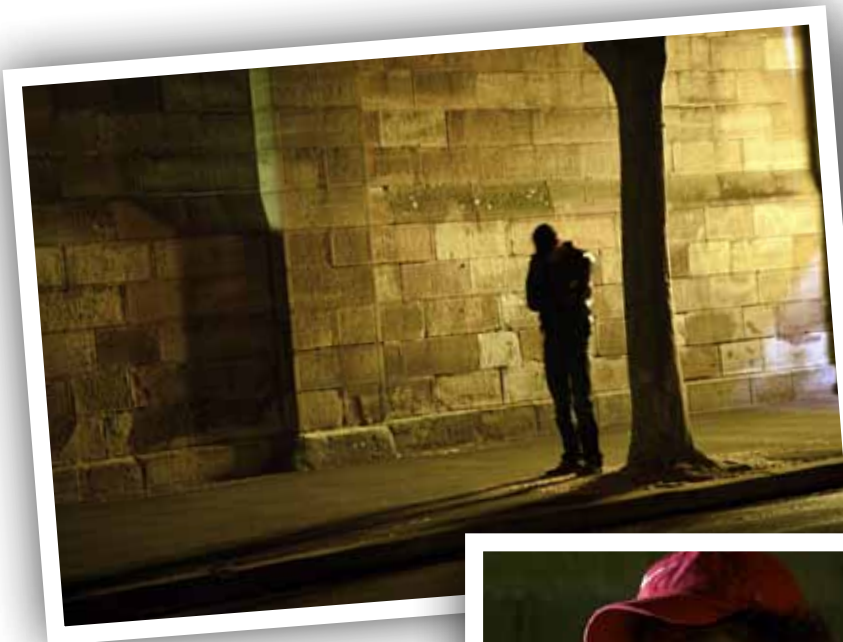
- The Salvation Army is one of the largest and most diverse social welfare providers in the world.
 - The Salvation Army names its values as: human dignity; justice; hope; compassion and community.
 - The Salvation Army's core social issues of concern are: homeless people; abused women and children; addictions – drugs, alcohol, gambling; government policy toward refugees; youth problems and issues; family problems and issues; unemployment; aged care; and government decisions that affect people of low income.
 - The Salvation Army has been operating in Australia for almost 130 years. There are currently more than 6500 officers and staff delivering in excess of 600 specifically designed social programs across Australia.
 - The Salvation Army helps more than one million Australians every year.
 - In a typical week, The Salvation Army in Australia will provide 100,000 meals for the hungry; 2000 beds for the homeless; 5000 to 8000 food vouchers; 1000 people with assistance in finding employment; refuge to 500 victims of abuse; assistance to 500 people addicted to drugs, alcohol or gambling; several thousand people with counseling; 3000 elderly people with aged care services; forty people in the court system with chaplaincy services and will locate forty missing family members.
 - The Salvation Army Family Tracing Service endeavours to locate family members whose current whereabouts are unknown and who are being sought for the purpose of reuniting the family. This service involves finding the relative, reconciling any past differences and reuniting the family.
 - The Salvation Army was the first charity to hold a national door knock, the first to have a national advertising campaign – 'Thank God for the Salvos' – and the first to have a national television campaign. The results in terms of donations, change in awareness and attitude to The Salvation Army and its clients were outstanding.
 - There are many ways everyone can participate in The Salvation Army, including attending a local Salvation Army church and participating in various worship activities for children, youth and adults; volunteering to assist in a Salvation Army social program, such as a soup kitchen or family welfare centre; door knocking for the Red Shield Appeal once a year; being employed by The Salvation Army in a professional capacity and by making a donation to Salvos stores or to the Red Shield Appeal.
 - The Salvation Army tries to provide services within the local area where they are needed, yet frequently struggles with members of communities who do not want to have rehabilitation centres or youth crisis accommodation in their neighbourhoods.
 - The Salvation Army operates more than 300 stores throughout Australia, selling predominantly pre-loved goods donated by the public. Much of the Salvation Army's community and emergency service work relies heavily on the funding generated in Salvo shops around the country.
- The Salvation Army website at <http://www.salvationarmy.org.au> provides further information about the organisation's work in Australia.

AFTER VIEWING

- Make a list of some of the reasons why young people may find themselves 'at risk'. Why would a young person run away from home? Where would a young person end up when they run away from home? (eg. couch surfing, boarding houses, youth hostel ...)
- See YFoundations myths and fact sheet about youth homelessness at <http://www.yaa.com.au>.
- Why is it important that outreach services exist to reach young kids at risk?

Given the dimensions of the story, students may have questions that need to be considered. Spend time as a class discussing students' questions and concerns.

- What are the central concerns of *WALL BOY*?
- We don't know what caused Tom to run away from home. Do you think he would have run away if he had known what would happen to him on the street? What other alternatives could he have considered? What services exist that he could have turned to?
- It is known that many young people who end up on the street get involved in drugs. Why do you think this happens? Why do you think Tom uses drugs?
- Society often judges young people addicted to drugs without thinking how they may have become involved in that situation. What is a better alternative to passing judgement? Do you think it is important to understand and empathise with these young people in order to help them?
- The Salvation Army StreetConnect Bus is a real service that operates around Sydney. Investigate the other outreach services provided by The Salvation Army and other organisations, eg. Missionbeat, St Vincent de Paul. Are these services important?
- Which adjective do you think is the most fitting description of *WALL BOY*? Why? What other adjectives would you



add to the list? Why?

- » challenging
- » inspiring
- » brave
- » confronting
- » honest
- » harrowing
- » raw
- » stark
- » hopeful

- To whom do you think the film is trying to communicate its messages?
- Why is it important to tell stories like Tom's?
- Imagine that *WALL BOY* is to be screened on television. Write a synopsis of the film for publication in a television guide.
- Has *WALL BOY* changed your perception of what it means to be a street kid? In what way?

Scene by scene

Allow students to work as individuals or in small groups to create an analysis of the plot, portrayal of character(s), production values and purpose of a scene of *WALL BOY*.

Discussing key scenes

At The Wall

The Wall is a real place in Sydney which is known for male street sex work.

- What is the atmosphere at



The Wall? What emotions does it stir up for you? Does it look like a place where young people should be?

- What moments in this scene reveal Tom's vulnerability?

Thursday June 26

- Tom is working as a male sex worker. Is he doing this of his own free will? What is his relationship with the man in the car? Why would Tom stay in this situation?

Thursday July 2

- Describe the way the people on the street interact with each other and with the outreach workers.
- How does Tom's behaviour differ?
- Why does the outreach bus offer free internet to the street people? How is technology being used to connect with people?
- Why do you think Tom decides to visit the missing persons website. How does he react when he finds he is listed as missing?
- Why don't we learn Tom's name until this scene? How

does knowing Tom's name change our opinion of him?

- Why doesn't the outreach worker take immediate action to remove Tom from the streets if he knows Tom is in trouble? (he needs to ask for help; it could be dangerous).

Friday July 10

- The youth worker is sorting through clothes and other goods that have been donated. A young mum who wants clothes for her baby interrupts his work. She is ungrateful and belligerent when he does not have what she wants. Why do you think the filmmakers included this scene?
- How does the youth worker attempt to build Tom's trust?
- Why doesn't Tom take the rollerblades from the youth worker?
- Tom visits the missing persons website. He finds his profile. His profile reveals his personal details and the details surrounding his disappearance. He disappeared aged fifteen and is now sixteen. Why is Tom's profile significant to the story?
- Does the fact that Tom doesn't realise he is missing mean that he believes no one cares about him?
- Why do you think Tom has lost touch with his parents?
- 'The computer's broken.' Discuss the significance of Tom's decision to communicate with the youth worker.
- 'HELP. Can't talk. He's watching. Will kill me. NO COPS.' What does Tom's message reveal about his circumstances



and his desire to change his current way of existence?

Thursday July 16

- 'Ready to hit the front line?' How does the other outreach worker view his role and responsibilities?
- The headline in the *Wentworth Courier* reads 'Young Sex Worker Raped at Knifepoint'. Why does the filmmaker draw this reality of life on the street to our attention?
- 'Use the computer down the end, mate.' How does the youth worker make it easier for Tom to trust him and to tell his story?
- 'Tell me what's going on. I can help you.' What does Tom's reply to the youth worker's typed message indicate?
- Under the influence of an illicit drug, Tom escapes into a dreamscape. What do the images of his dream reveal about his past and present ways of existing?

Saturday July 25

- Were you aware that the anonymous pickup car was part of the youth worker's rescue plan? Or, like Tom, did you become alarmed

- when the driver locked the car doors, preventing Tom's escape?
- Why do you think the filmmakers decided to make us fear for Tom's safety in this scene?
- 'You're out of here mate. It's all sorted. They'll look after you at the other end.' What kind of emotions would Tom be feeling when he realised he was being rescued and sent to safety? How would the youth worker be feeling after having delivered Tom to safety?
- What do you think is next for Tom. What steps will he have to take to rehabilitate himself from the experience of life on the streets? Look at services that help young people – what kinds of programs are available?
- Why do you think the filmmakers cut back to *The Wall* rather than end *WALL BOY* with the shot of the plane taking off? Does this show that other young people out on the street are still in danger? How should we help them?

Themes

- Innocence
- Vulnerability

- Trust
- Exploitation
- Dreams
- Secrets
- Loss
- Freedom
- Security
- Communication

- What words do you think should be added to the list of themes?
- What does *WALL BOY* tell us about each of these themes? Ask students to endorse their responses with specific evidence from the film.
- Select one of the themes explored by *WALL BOY* and work with other students to develop a multimedia presentation offering your group's story about this theme.

Characters

- Who are the main characters of *WALL BOY*? Who are the minor characters?
- How do the minor characters contribute to the telling of the story? How do they shape our understanding of the main characters?



ABOVE L-R: TOM; THE YOUTH WORKER; THE PIMP

Tom

- What words would you use to describe Tom?
What are the things shown in the film that reveal that, before life on the street, Tom was once a normal young boy?
- Tom is a missing person.
What factors may have contributed to Tom becoming a missing person? Who might have reported Tom as missing? Find out more about missing persons in Australia and internationally by visiting the Australian Federal Police missing persons MySpace profile and the 'Don't You Forget About Me' YouTube channel.
The National Missing Persons Coordination Centre produces a bi-annual national missing persons' poster. The poster is published in March and October and is distributed to state and territory police services, search organisations, community services, public libraries and public hospitals.
What role does this poster play in Tom's story?

The youth worker

- How would you describe the character of the youth worker?
- How does the youth worker perceive his role? What makes him feel so responsible for Tom's welfare?

- Spend time as a class discussing the role and responsibilities of outreach workers like those portrayed in *WALL BOY*.

The pimp

How would you describe the character of the pimp?

- Which scenes reveal that the pimp is predatory and controlling?
- What other words would you use to describe the pimp's attitude to Tom?
- Why do you think the pimp has so much control over Tom?

Setting

WALL BOY uses the settings of The Wall in Darlinghurst, the interior of the bus, the Salvation Army refuge, the interior of the pimp's car, the interior of the car used to rescue Tom and the exterior of the airport terminal.

- Discuss the use of these settings and explain what each setting contributes to the telling of the story.
- The Wall is a real place in Sydney. Originally it was a popular location for male street sex work. In recent years due to police activity and changes in mobile technology allowing liaisons to be pre-arranged, street work has declined and The Wall has become more of a venue for homeless people to gather as food vans still frequent

the area. It is still however used as a last resort work location for desperate young people.

- The Salvation Army StreetConnect bus actually exists. Sponsored by Nokia Australia, it provides a service to hundreds of homeless and disadvantaged people each week. It features laptop computers and wireless broadband connection to allow the homeless and disadvantaged to access accommodation and support services, send and receive emails and, at times, reconnect with family and friends. Refreshments are served by the Salvation Army volunteers.
- The Nokia StreetConnect bus operates seven days a week in locations including the inner-city of Sydney, western and outer-western Sydney and the NSW Central Coast. Read about this outreach venture at <http://www.nokia.com.au/about-nokia/community/community-involvement/nokia-street-connect>.

Imagery and symbolism

- What images establish Tom's innocence and vulnerability?
- What images establish the nature of the relationship between Tom and the Salvation Army worker, and between Tom and his pimp?
- What images establish the plight of the people who live on the streets of Kings Cross? What



NICOLA DALEY,
16MM CAMERA

images of the street people did you view as positive?

As a class discuss the use of symbols to tell the story, portray characters and establish the concerns of *WALL BOY*. For example, what is the symbolic meaning of the rollerblades, the StreetConnect bus, the laptop, the missing person's poster and the pimp's binoculars.

Production values

- What expectations does the opening sequence create? How are you positioned as a viewer?
- *WALL BOY* is a short drama. Its running time is 17 minutes. As a class, discuss the demands of crafting a film for such a format.
- How are production values designed to influence your response to Tom, the Salvation Army workers, Tom's pimp, the other wall boys and the street people who depend on the services offered by the StreetConnect bus?
- When do we see things from the pimp's perspective? Identify camera shots that offer the pimp's point of view. What do these camera shots allow us to think and feel?
- Watch *WALL BOY* again and listen to the soundtrack. What sounds are used to tell the story? Why? Draw students' attention to the sound of police sirens, the bus engine, the conversations of the street people, passing traffic,

the calendar clicking through the weeks, the crying baby, the clicking of computer keys, the car doors locking and the plane taking off.

- How does music contribute to the telling of the story?
- Should we feel hopeful after viewing the closing scene of *WALL BOY*?
- *WALL BOY* is based on a true story. Why is this information included in the closing credits of *WALL BOY*? Did it change your opinion of *WALL BOY*?
- What does *WALL BOY* tell us about the filmmakers' priorities? Visit their website at <http://www.sharkisland.com.au>.

Discuss

The following topics could be discussed via written responses, debates, panel discussions and online forums.

- 'The statistics on youth homelessness – there are 32,000 homeless youths on any given night in Australia – are easily glossed over. To understand what they really mean, we need to watch films like *WALL BOY*.' Do you agree?
- What does *WALL BOY* tell us about an individual's need for security?
- 'Reducing youth homelessness is everyone's responsibility.' Hold a class debate. Divide the class into two teams. The affirmative team will agree with the contention. The negative will disagree with the contention. Appoint team

captains. They will be the first speakers for each team. They will introduce the team's case. Every speaker in the debate must speak for at least one minute. Ask a staff member to adjudicate the debate. Invite students from another class to listen to the debate.

- Do you think *WALL BOY* has the power to influence social change?
- 'WALL BOY is a story of survival.' Do you agree?
- 'WALL BOY takes us from hurt to hope.' Discuss.
- 'WALL BOY reveals that circumstances can change for the better.' Discuss.

Create

- Make a short film that tells a story of a youth facing circumstances that place them at risk. All elements of the production should be undertaken collaboratively. Submit a production design plan that indicates your intention; audience; style and/or genre; storyline and/or outline of content; techniques of engagement; location and/or setting; dialogue, narration and/or interview questions; camera: framing, position and movement; edit details and transitions; lighting; music and/or sound effects. Your film should be five to ten minutes in duration, including titles and/or credits sequences. When the films are finished, organise a screening and invite other members of the school community to attend.
- Write and perform a monologue for your Drama class. You will need to decide whose story you want to tell. Will the subject of your monologue be a missing youth or a young person who is facing the hardships of being homeless or a youth worker. Before you begin writing the monologue you will need to create a character profile. Draw on *WALL BOY* and your close analysis of the film. Draw on the information that you have gained from completing some of the discussion and research tasks that are part of this study guide.

- National Youth Week takes place in the week beginning 1 April 2012. National Missing Persons Week occurs in August 2012. International Missing Children's Day is held on 25 May 2012. Design a poster to promote one of these events. Display the posters around the school campus.
- Write and publish a feature article about one of the issues raised by *WALL BOY*. Draw on *WALL BOY* and your close analysis of the film. Draw on the information that you have gained from completing some of the discussion and research tasks that are part of this study guide. Before you begin writing, decide on the publication that will feature your article. Are you writing for a newspaper or magazine? When you have made your decision, think about your likely audience and the format of your article. Use vocabulary and adopt a tone that best suits the publication that you have chosen. Download appropriate images from the Internet to include in your article.



Research project 1: Someone cares

Find out more about an organisation that supports young people who are at risk.

Choose an organisation from the list below or choose another organisation that you are aware of.

Working with a partner, use the internet to find out more about the organisation. Use PowerPoint to share your findings with the class. Limit your presentation to ten slides. Make sure that you include words and images in your presentation. You may include audio.

- The federal government Department of Families and Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs runs the Reconnect program, which provides assistance to young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Reconnect provides community-based early intervention services

- and helps young people aged between twelve and eighteen years to talk about family reconciliation. Reconnect may assist in resolving some of the issues relating to a young person going missing. See <<http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/housing/progserv/homelessness/reconnect/Pages/default.aspx>>.
- THE OASIS Youth Network is the Salvation Army's response to youth homelessness in Australia. THE OASIS centre in Surry Hills, NSW offers innovative support programs and services to help homeless, disadvantaged and disconnected young people turn their lives around. <http://www.salvos.org.au/oasis>
- MensLine Australia is a unique telephone support, information and referral service, helping men to deal with relationship problems in a practical and effective way. <http://www.menslineaus.org.au>
- The Inspire Foundation is a national non-profit organisation that aims to create opportunities for young people to change their world. The Inspire Foundation also operates Reach Out, which provides information, support and resources to improve young people's understanding of mental health issues, develop resilience, increase coping skills, and facilitate help-seeking behaviour. <http://www.reachout.com.au>
- Yfoundations is a peak body that seeks to end youth homelessness. The organisation provides support

- to youth workers and the sector through training, policy and structural advocacy research and sector development and raising community awareness. <http://www.yaa.com.au>
- Kids Help Line provide a national, 24-hour confidential telephone support service with trained counselors for young Australians aged between five and eighteen years. <http://www.kidshelp.com.au>
- Talking Works is an interactive website for young people aged fourteen to seventeen years; its purpose is to raise awareness and assist young people to identify those potentially at risk of going missing and to learn how they can help each other. <http://www.talkingworks.com.au>
- Kings Cross Youth at Risk assists young people who have become involved in a high-risk lifestyle in Kings Cross. <http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/community/YouthServices/YouthPrograms/KXXYouthAtRisk.asp>
- What are the benefits of becoming involved in volunteer work? Are you involved in any volunteer work, or do you know anyone who is? What sort of organisation would you choose to volunteer for and in what capacity? What sort of commitment would you be prepared to make?

Research project 2: Youth homelessness

The National Youth Commission Inquiry into Youth Homelessness is only the second inquiry, specifically focused on homelessness, to be conducted independently of government. The first was the landmark Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Inquiry headed by Brian Burdekin in 1989. As a result of the Burdekin Report, youth homelessness became an identifiable community problem and impetus was given to some important new initiatives.

The National Youth Commission held twenty-one days of hearings in 2007 across all states and territories. People gave formal evidence and written submissions were received from community organisations, individuals and government departments.

The National Youth Commission's findings have been published in Australia's Homeless Youth Report. The report is available to download as a summary or in chapters at <<http://www.nyc.net.au>>.

- Working as an individual, spend time reading a chapter of Australia's Homeless Youth report. Make a dot point summary of the chapter.
- Working as a class, organise a forum discussion about youth homelessness. Invite the principal, school counsellor, careers coordinator and other

staff who may have expertise and experience to contribute to the forum. Invite students from other classes and year levels who have participated in outreach work to speak at the forum. You will need to appoint one or more students from the class to moderate the discussion. It may be useful for the class to watch a program that uses a forum approach to discuss contemporary issues such as Q&A on the ABC and *Insight* on SBS.

- Do you think the current federal and state governments have made youth homelessness a priority issue?

Watch

THE OASIS (2008), by Shark Island Productions, is a documentary about the youth of Oasis, a grimy brick youth refuge in inner-city Sydney. They are tough kids from tough backgrounds living dangerous lives. No story is too horrific, no circumstances too dire, no kid too damaged for its tireless director, Salvation Army Captain Paul Moulds. See <<http://www.theoasismovie.com.au>>.

POLLY AND ME (2009), by Shark Island Productions, is the story of one little girl who has fallen between the cracks. Polly's story reminds us that just because we don't see her, it doesn't mean she isn't there. The short fiction film is a companion piece to *WALL BOY*. See <<http://www.pollyandme.com.au>>.

Links

<http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/community/YouthServices/YouthPrograms/KXXYouthAtRisk.asp>

<http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/housing/progserv/homelessness/reconnect/Pages/default.aspx>

<http://www.kidshelp.com.au>

<http://www.missingpersons.gov.au>

<http://www.nokia.com.au/about-nokia/community/community-involvement/nokia-street-connect>

<http://www.menslineaus.org.au>

<http://www.nyc.net.au>

<http://www.reachout.com.au>

<http://www.salvationarmy.org.au>

<http://www.salvos.org.au/need-help/youth-issues>

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