

**TRANSCRIPT****Broadcast Monday 7 April 2008****A Learning Society****Commentary****National Youth Week - Peta****Tony Ryan**

National Youth Week falls this year from 5 to 13 April. Peta is a Year 12 student at Wilderness School in Adelaide – she has prepared this commentary on her life as a young person coming to the end of her school days in Adelaide.

Peta

When I was a kid I wanted to be a whole string of things, from author to zoo keeper and architect, and now that I'm almost done with school, all the year 12 clichés are coming true. Now I have to think about life outside of the bubble I've lived in for most of my life, being at school is like stepping into a pressure cooker, and the work keeps stacking up, especially for the disorganised like me.

On the upside, year 12 has given me the chance to choose the handful of subjects I am most keen on, and to really work with some of my interests in depth. In drama studies I've decided to write my own play as my major project, which is unlike any other tasks I've done at school over the years. The plan is for an adaptation of a picture book into a piece of colourful children's theatre.

There is lots of new material to figure out in Chemistry and Biology, but we're learning some astonishing stuff that I think would be so hard to get without year 12 and the school environment. The main challenge in Modern History and English Studies is to become a really academic writer.

It's a great advantage I think, that my year level at school is so close- we get into big fusses together and whinge all the time, but we always end up surviving to tell the tale.

Most of my friends don't have clear ideas about what they'll do next year, once school is over, let alone plans for the long term - and I feel the same way. It seems that this uncertainty we all live in bothers the surrounding adults more than us!

As far as further education goes, I love Adelaide, but want to do something exciting and challenging on my own. I'm thinking about applying for uni in Melbourne or Sydney, although I'm not sure how I'll afford it! I'm excited to become more independent than I've ever been, to earn my own money and look after myself. The lifestyle change is something that many teenagers look forward to, and have often been dreaming about for years.

Last year I found the Australian election a really lively time. I was old enough to observe the process with interest, I was happy about the change of government and am still optimistic about how Australia can evolve as a result. Before the campaigning really kicked into gear, I hoped that a big fuss would be made over our responsibility for environmental care, because it's been a concern of mine for years. In the current mood of green awareness and increased publicity over global warming, I find myself thinking about little water and energy wastes all the time...long showers are a no-no and leaving the lights on in empty rooms makes me edgy!

Still, I don't feel like I'm doing enough personally, or that the necessary revolution towards stopping environmental damage has really begun yet - that will take a complete lifestyle change for everybody. I've said to my parents that 'we really should install solar power at home, or build an eco-friendly house'... but of course it's just too expensive for us while there are so many other things to pay for. I really hope that the day comes soon when lots of families can go green relatively easily.

It's my view that change of the 'big wide world' has got to start with the individual, but there are things that I'm fairly pessimistic about. The global issues of war, poverty, overpopulation and the disagreements always popping up between societies and political systems won't be easily resolved... although I'm told it's the younger generations that need a positive outlook to start improving matters.

I usually feel quite unaware of politics and economics, all the serious news that passes me by... I think it is due partly to the fact that I'm busy inside my own little world of school, home and friends, and partly my own fault for being lazy and not seeking out the things I need to be informed and responsible in the wider world. It would be great if important news came in some interesting, really accessible form that would make people want to hear it.

Maybe the new round of reality TV should feature: 'So You Think You Can Pass Laws'... One problem in this area of awareness is that there's too much information to get through! With the Internet at everyone's fingertips it's hard to take in the really worthwhile and discard the useless and time wasting information.

Usually the young people I know just use the Internet for fun and dreaded school research, rather than accessing the topics we don't realise are interesting or relevant: like politics, movements promoting youth action, and stories that will take us outside of our own experience. Incorporating news of the outside world into the school day in the future would be really beneficial to kids of all ages, I think. It might foster a passion for being part of local, national and global affairs or provide the incentive for young people to learn in a way that they wouldn't kick off for themselves.

It often seems like the people with power don't share my values, but I don't believe that they're impervious to the opinions, complaints and suggestions of the people around them. I'm sure the rule-makers in my life, from parents to teachers to politicians, have the ability to be flexible. The feeling that lots of my friends and I share is that if you want something to change, you really have to get up and say your idea, your belief and don't stop without making sure you've been heard - even if being heard is as far as you get!

Overall, there are lots of things I'm looking forward to, like travel and university for myself and the improvement and enrichment of the society I live in as time goes on. I'm not exactly certain about where I'm headed, BUT I am hopeful and fairly sure that my life so far has prepared me to have fun, stay satisfied, continue learning and find a path that is rewarding and in keeping with my morals.

Tony Ryan

Peta is a Year 12 student at Wilderness School in Adelaide. This commentary on her life as a young person coming to the end of her school days in Adelaide will shortly be online as both pdf and mp3 audiofile – www.learningworksradio.com