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Article for Service to Youth Council 'Caring'

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The young people of today are having to accept greater responsibilities at an earlier age than ever before. Many of the pressures of modern industrial society affect the young more than anybody else. There is, for instance, the strain caused by the emphasis placed on educational attainment within a rigid and inflexible structure. Then there are advertising pressures and job responsibility, which push the young towards socially-acceptable conformist goals, many of which they resent.

These things pose a tremendous challenge to young people. They are struggling to find their own identities at the same time that they are first subjected to the pressures of contemporary life. The majority accept the challenge and act with considered responsibility.

It is because of this clear acceptance of responsibility by young people that I believe the age of majority should be lowered to 18 years. It is very difficult to act responsibly when one is not trusted with responsibility, not allowed to exercise judgement, and not respected for one's opinions.

Young people therefore must have the opportunity to act as full members of this society. My Party proposes to give them this opportunity.

However, society must also provide for those who have been slow to learn or recognise its demands.

The State and Commonwealth Governments are involved in the provision of youth and welfare services, but there is still a great deal to be done. And then again, many young people refuse to avail themselves of the facilities provided, or are ignorant of their existence. Again, young people beyond a certain age cannot be compelled to use these services.

It is here that the Service to Youth Council plays its part. All those in the care of the Council come to it because they want to, because they know that here they will find help and will not be subject to paternalistic judgements.

The Council plays an invaluable role in assisting those young people into leading productive, responsible, and happy lives.

The Service to Youth Council recognises that Australia's future lies with its youth.

I trust that it will be able to carry on its valuable work for many years to come.

DON DUNSTAN.