

Issues of the Day  
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Welcome to the NSW Olympic Academy which will focus on the subject of 'The Olympic Games for Gen Y ... Reconnecting with Youth', an event staged jointly by the Australian Olympic Committee and the Australian Centre for Olympic Studies at the University of Technology, Sydney. I would particularly like to welcome students from the University of Western Sydney and UTS as well as and other visitors.

This is the second NSW Olympic Academy hosted by UTS. The first was on the Olympic brand and the marketing of it. The Academy raised many topics for further discussion but, unfortunately, left no documentary legacy. We have attempted to rectify that situation and there will be some internet material posted on the website of ACOS after today's event. This will include a summary of the issues and findings of the day as well as the powerpoints of the speakers.

The staging of the first Youth Olympic Games in Singapore from 14–26 August 2010 is a starting point for this Academy. The Games will attract some 5000 athletes (aged from 14 to 18) and officials. Andrew McAlister, AOC General Manager Australian Youth Olympic Festival & Events, will discuss the Youth Olympic Games and pose the following questions.

Why is the IOC staging these new Youth Olympic Games?

Is the IOC trying to reconnect with Youth?

Such questions raise some further interesting issues.

If the IOC is trying to reconnect with Youth, is there a problem of a lack of connection or even disconnection?

And, if so, what is the problem? Why has it occurred? What are the solutions?

Three aspects of a possible problem will be explored during the day.

### *1. Is it a media/communications problem?*

Should the IOC communicate with youth through new media such as facebook, twitter, YouTube, mobile telephony and the internet? Is the IOC too wedded to the old media of print, radio and television?

There is an interesting further question to consider here. How does the IOC currently communicate its messages—its vision and sports values—to its various constituencies? Do the ways of communicating need to be updated?

### *2. Is it a problem of the sports program?*

While the Olympic Games program has been modified to include some sports that are popular with young people, such as triathlon, bmx snowboarding, many traditional sports, such as modern pentathlon, that have limited appeal to youth remain on the program.

### *3. Is sport under threat?*

A recent issue of the *Olympic Review* suggested that young people now have many alternatives to sports participation and as a result see less value in sport. Because sport requires hard work and discipline over a long period it may be that some members of Gen Y prefer less-demanding and instant leisure and entertainment based on the many new forms of technology.

The discussion today needs to be placed in the broader focus of the character of Olympic sport, core brand values and how the Olympic Games fit into the global sporting market. James Edwards will address such issues in the initial presentation.

Because of an increasing number of mega sporting events and festivals, the Olympic Games compete for audiences with other events such as the FIFA World Cup and various other world cups and competitions. The sporting events industry is forever chasing new constituencies in order to advance the and maintain the status of a particular event.

There are various types of constituencies including:

- geographic

Both the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup have moved into Asia but FIFA is the first to move to Africa with the 2010 World Cup to be staged in South Africa. The Rugby World Cup will be staged in Japan in 2019 thereby promoting the game in Asia.

- gender

The Olympic movement has an improving record in terms of gender equity (events for women and the appeal of the Games in general to women) though it has some way to go in terms of female administrators.

- age

I will look forward to discovering today what evidence exists to suggest that young people are less passionate about the Olympic Games than say those from middle or mature age groups.

I suspect that every generation of youth has to reconnect with the Olympic Games. That is, the commitment of generation x to the Olympic Games doesn't

mean that generation y will follow suit. Generation y lives in a different world to generation x.

If this is indeed the case the organisers of the Olympic Games, like the organisers of the FIFA World Cup, have to engage in continuing reconnection with their various constituencies.

My hope is that during the day we may hear the voices of younger people. There will be opportunities for questions and discussion during the day. I trust that you will find today both illuminating and stimulating and that you will obtain plenty of material for essays that you write on youth and the Olympic Games and related subjects.