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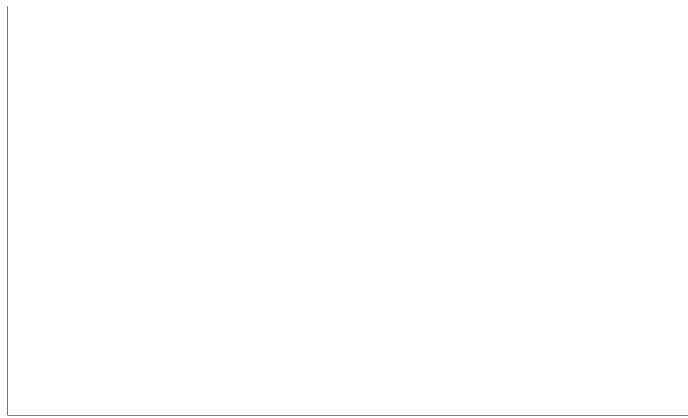
BoysTown

Fresh start.
New hope.

BY: ...ATSIA...

R.G.

**House of Representatives
Inquiry into the High Level
of involvement of
Indigenous Juveniles and
Young Adults in the
Criminal Justice System**



Executive Summary

This submission specifically responds to two of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference relating to the need to identify evidence based approaches that reduces Indigenous offending. It is based on BoysTown's extensive work with Indigenous children and young people across our services including Kids Helpline and our regional youth employment and personal development initiatives.

BoysTown is of the view that effective prevention strategies need to address the current social disadvantage experienced by Indigenous youth, if the systemic issues causing offending are to be tackled. To support this claim an analysis has been undertaken of the issues presented by Indigenous children and young people to Kids Helpline, Australia's only 24/7 telephone and online counselling services for children and young people. Indigenous children are more likely to present to this service issues associated with abuse, bullying, homelessness, grief, drug misuse and the impacts of domestic violence. Consequently the Australian Government needs to continue its commitment to reduce the social exclusion of indigenous youth, if inroads into reducing the incidents of offending behaviour are to be achieved.

BoysTown also believes that the causes of Indigenous offending behaviour are interactive. Consequently community development approaches that are accountable to Indigenous need to be implemented to reduce the incidence of offending. An example of such an approach is provided through a description of our partnership with Indigenous people living in the Balgo community and the key processes being used to ensure that this work is undertaken in an accountable manner to the whole community.

Furthermore it is proposed that work integrated social enterprise initiatives have a proven track record in reducing Indigenous offending behaviour. In this report research data from a current Australian Research Council sponsored project being undertaken with Griffith University, is presented that demonstrates the reduction in offending behaviour by Indigenous young people participating in BoysTown's social enterprise projects.

Based on this evidence BoysTown makes three recommendations to the House of Representatives Standing Committee which we believe will make a difference in regard to improving the living conditions of remote Indigenous communities.

Recommendation 1:

That the House of Representatives Standing Committee examines the possible implementation of Service Alliance Agreements within Indigenous communities in relation to crime prevention strategies to enhance the local accountability of initiatives and services.

Recommendation 2:

That the House of Representatives Standing Committee review the adequacy of current coordinating mechanisms between the Commonwealth and State Governments in relation to services to regional and remote Indigenous communities.

Recommendation: 3

That the Commonwealth Government enter into collaborative partnerships with Not for Profit organisations currently managing work integration social enterprise programs to increase the availability and participation rate of Indigenous young people in these programs.

About BoysTown

BoysTown is a national organisation and registered charity which specialises in helping disadvantaged young people who are at risk of social exclusion. Established in 1961, BoysTown's mission *is to enable young people, especially those who are marginalised and without voice, to improve their quality of life.* BoysTown believes that all young people in Australia should be able to lead hope-filled lives, and have the capacity to participate fully in the society in which they live.

BoysTown currently provides a range of services to young people and families seeking one-off and more intensive support including:

- Kids Helpline, Australia's only national 24/7, confidential support and counselling service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years. Since March 1991, young Australians have been contacting Kids Helpline about a wide range of issues: from everyday topics such as family, friends and school to more serious issues of child abuse, bullying, mental health issues, drug and alcohol use, self-injury and suicide.

Children and young people have direct access to a counsellor and can choose to speak with either a male or female counsellor. They are also able to arrange to speak again with the same counsellor to work through their issues. No other organisation speaks with as many young Australians.

- Accommodation responses to homeless families and women and children seeking refuge from Domestic/Family Violence;
- Parenting Programs offering case work, individual and group work support and child development programs for young mothers and their children;
- Parentline, a telephone counselling service for parents and carers in Queensland and the Northern Territory;
- Paid employment to more than 300 young people each year in supported enterprises as they transition to the mainstream workforce;
- Training and employment programs that skill approximately 6,000 young people each year, allowing them to re-engage with education and/or employment, and
- Response to the needs of the peoples of the remote Indigenous communities of the Tjurabalan in Western Australia.

BoysTown works in close partnership with Indigenous communities. Since 2004 Kids Helpline has provided over 3,524 counselling sessions to Indigenous children. Of these counselling sessions, 1,874 were with Indigenous children living in regional and remote communities.

In 2007 BoysTown entered a partnership with remote Indigenous communities in the Tjurabalan–Kutjungka area in Western Australia to implement a holistic community development strategy. The key objectives are to improve community housing standards, increase employment opportunities through the establishment of social enterprises and skill development and reduce Indigenous people's level of disadvantage.

In 2008 work commenced in Queensland to promote Parentline services within four remote Indigenous communities.

Subsequently BoysTown's experience in partnering with Indigenous communities and in delivering services to Indigenous young people informs this submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

An Overview of Issues Impacting on Indigenous Children and Youth

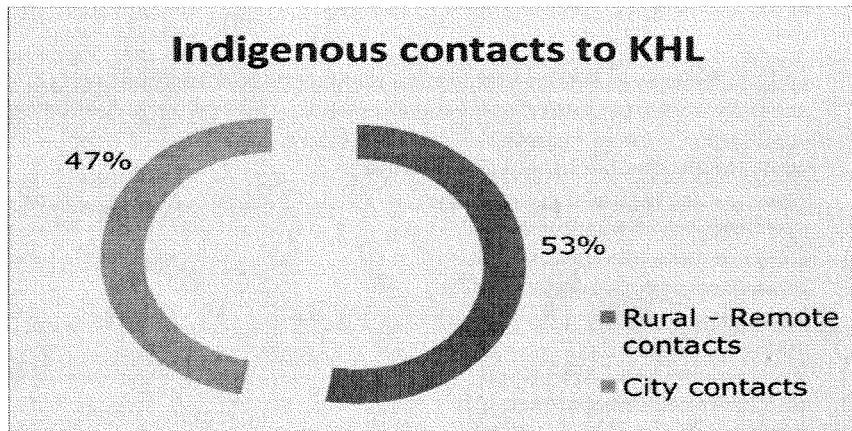
In considering policy responses to the involvement of Indigenous young people in the juvenile justice system, it is important to reflect and recognise the predisposing risk factors in the social environment of these young people that leads to pathways of offending behaviour.

Kids Helpline collects and evaluates information on a range of issues presented by children and young people to the service. Counsellors record demographic data as well as classifying contacts according to a defined set of problem types. In some instances, counsellors may also gather qualitative information from the child or young person in order to provide further assistance to the young person and/or to give voice to their concerns within the Australian community. This information is unique in that it provides an understanding as to how young people label the issues impacting on them. To inform the Select Committee on the needs of Indigenous children and young people an analysis has been undertaken of information recorded in this database concerning counselling sessions provided by Kids Helpline to Indigenous young people since 2004.

In the five calendar years since 2004, Kids Helpline has provided 3,524 counselling contacts to Indigenous young people aged 5 to 25 years. In relation to these counselling contacts 1650 (47%) have been from Indigenous young people living in cities and 1,874 (53%) with young people from rural and remote areas. These figures may be an underestimation of contacts from Indigenous young people. Kids Helpline is an anonymous and confidential service, subsequently service users may not always identify themselves, their cultural background or community. These 3,524 contacts have been counted when children have identified themselves to counsellors as being of Indigenous origin.

As stated, most of these counselling contacts were from Indigenous young people in rural and remote areas. This is graphically displayed in the Figure below:

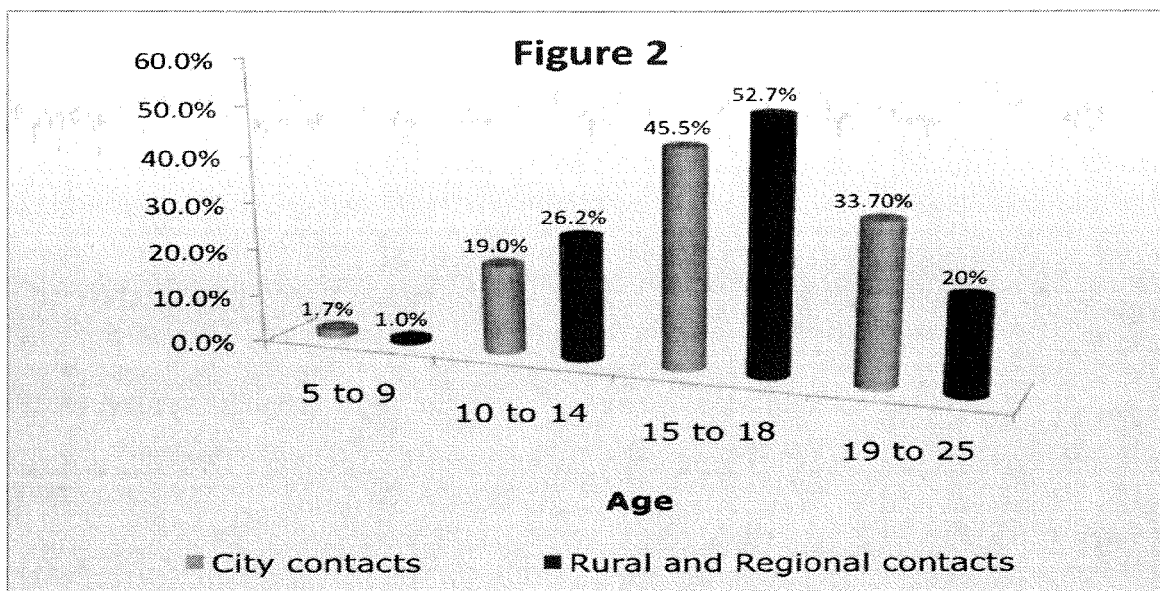
Figure 1: Proportional Representation of Indigenous Counselling Contacts by Location



The gender breakdown of Indigenous contacts to Kids Helpline is similar between city and rural/remote areas with about 82% of contacts being from young women and 18% being male. This gender profile of Indigenous young people who contact Kids Helpline is similar to that for all counselling contacts. For instance in 2008, 78% or nearly 40,000 (N=39,395) of all counselling sessions provided by Kids Helpline involved young women. This gender imbalance in counselling contacts reflects the difficulty in promoting help seeking behavior by young men regardless of their cultural background.

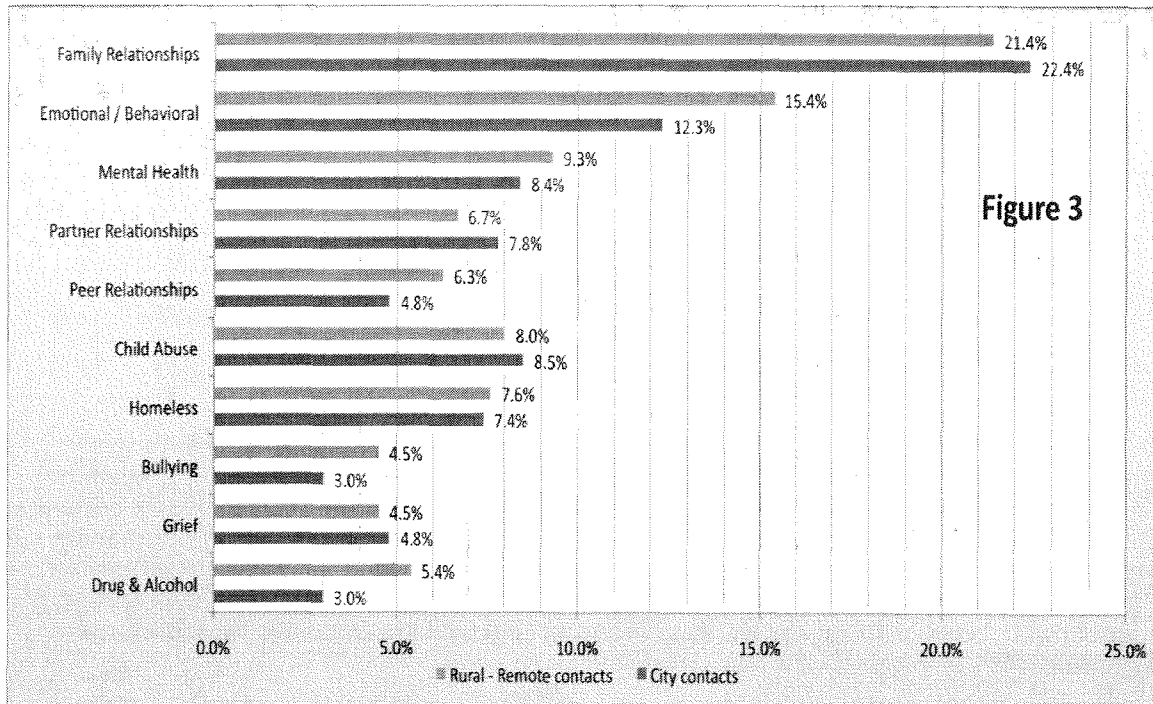
Interestingly there is a slight age difference in Indigenous contacts from city and rural/remote locations. The Indigenous young people who contacted Kids Helpline from rural and remote areas tended to be slightly older in age. Figure 2 graphically demonstrates this age difference.

Figure 2: Age of City and Rural/Remote Indigenous Contacts: 2004-2008



A comparison of the top ten problem types presented to Kids Helpline counsellors from Indigenous youth living in cities and remote locations is outlined in Figure 3.

Figure 3: The top ten problem types among Indigenous contacts to KHL: by rural-remote and city status: 2004 - 2008.



There is no statistically significant difference in the kind of presenting problem types between Indigenous young people living in city or remote regions. Subsequently a further analysis has been undertaken comparing the presenting problems of Indigenous youth to Kids Helpline with that of non-Indigenous youth. This analysis is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: An Analysis of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Counselling Contacts

Indigenous Top 10			Non-Indigenous Top 10		
Problem	Freq.	%	Problem	Freq.	%
Family Relationships	629	18.2	Family Relationships	14417	17.7
Emotional/Behavioural Management	394	11.4	Emotional/Behavioural Management	9033	11.1
Peer Relationships	273	7.9	Peer Relationships	8845	10.9
Partner Relationships	241	7.0	Partner Relationships	7526	9.3
Bullying	202	5.9	Mental Health	6410	7.9
Mental Health	194	5.6	Bullying	4122	5.1
Homelessness	178	5.2	Homelessness	2544	3.1
Grief	124	3.6	Developmental Issues	2094	2.6
Drugs	119	3.5	Grief	2076	2.6
Physical Abuse	106	3.1	Suicide	2014	2.5

A statistical analysis has been undertaken of the above Table to determine whether any of the differences are significant. The results of this analysis are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: The top six* problem types of Indigenous contacts that were significantly higher than all non-Indigenous contacts to KHL: 2004 – 2008

Indigenous Top 6 Significant		
Problem Type	Indigenous (%)	Non-Indigenous (%)
Child Abuse (Physical, sexual, emotional & neglect)	6.2	4.9
Bullying	5.9	5.1
Homeless	5.2	3.1
Grief	3.6	2.6
Drugs	3.5	1.4
Domestic Violence	1.7	0.5

* Calculated using Chi-square test of independence. The order of significance was determined by the degree to which the observed contacts for each problem type was higher than the expected number of contacts.

This analysis proves that Indigenous young people are more likely to contact Kids Helpline concerning issues related to child abuse, bullying homelessness, grief, drug misuse and domestic violence than non-Indigenous youth. Apart from grief issues, the other factors are all highly correlated with poverty and increased risk of offending behaviour in contemporary research literature. Consequently the predisposing factors contributing to offending by Indigenous youth are all embedded in the current levels of social disadvantaged confronting these young people in our community.

Effective policy responses to Indigenous offending need to address the root causes of this behaviour which relates to the impacts on young Indigenous people from poverty and social disadvantage and in particular their experiences of child abuse, bullying, drug misuse, homelessness and domestic violence. Consequently the effective implementation of strategies that are designed to reduce the social disadvantage of Indigenous youth such as COAG's National Indigenous Reform Agreement and the new National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children is critical to the long term reduction in offending behaviour by Indigenous youth.

Terms of Reference:

- The effectiveness of arrangements for transitioning from education to work and how the effectiveness of the 'learn or earn' concept can be maximised;
- Best practice examples of programs that support diversion of Indigenous people from juvenile detention centres and crime, and provide support for those returning from such centres.

1. The need for a Community Empowerment and Development Focus

The factors associated with offending behaviour are complex, interdependent and interactive and also relate to the general social disadvantage experienced by Indigenous young people. Subsequently a 'whole of community' intervention model is required to reduce crime. However current Government administration processes inhibit the development of 'whole of community' interventions.

BoysTown's experience in working with remote Indigenous communities supports recent findings from the Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities that the complexity of Government arrangements has a negative impact on service delivery to remote communities. As noted in other evaluations of services delivered in remote communities, Indigenous people in dealing with community issues are expected to liaise with three tiers of Government, each with their own policy silos.¹ This complexity in the governance of services can result in piecemeal responses to social issues such as crime and reduces accountability to service users and their communities as there is confusion regarding portfolio responsibilities. Furthermore this situation can lead to a sense of loss of power, amongst senior community people.

As previously noted, in the Tjurabalan-Kutjungka region of the East Kimberley, BoysTown is partnering with local communities to implement a holistic community development strategy with the objective of improving community housing standards, increasing employment and reducing Indigenous people's level of disadvantage. This strategy involves a range of different interventions including strategies to encourage school retention, vocational training, social enterprise development as well as family support initiatives.

As part of this initiative, BoysTown is in discussion with the Community Council and other service providers about the development of a Service Alliance Agreement. This community governance model involves:

1. The development of a Service Alliance Agreement between local services and the Community Council specifying expected outcomes and performance standards. Local services are accountable to the local community through the Community Council for meeting these performance standards.
2. Joint local planning and the delivery of services to respond to 'joined-up' complex community issues
3. Review and evaluation of the Service Alliance Agreement against performance standards on a yearly basis by all signatories.

¹ East Kimberley COAG Trial Formative Evaluation. 14 September 2006. Final. 2

The Service Alliance Agreement is a mechanism to ensure the direct accountability of services to the local community.

It is BoysTown's view that the development of Service Alliance Agreements in individual Indigenous communities that included strategies targeting crime and its prevention would be an effective response to offending behaviour by Indigenous youth. The concept of local community sponsored justice initiatives is not new. However the Service Alliance Agreement concept may provide a valuable framework for these projects as it will enhance the direct accountability of these initiatives to the local community, thereby increasing their effectiveness.

Furthermore BoysTown's direct experiences in being a service provider to remote Indigenous communities as outlined in this section supports the need for Commonwealth and State Governments to focus greater effort towards coordinating their policy and service delivery functions with each other.

Recommendation 1:

That the House of Representatives Standing Committee examines the possible implementation of Service Alliance Agreements within Indigenous communities in relation to crime prevention strategies to enhance the local accountability of initiatives and services.

Recommendation 2:

That the House of Representatives Standing Committee review the adequacy of current coordinating mechanisms between the Commonwealth and State Governments in relation to services to regional and remote Indigenous communities.

2. The use of Social Enterprises to promote education, work and to reduce crime

An emerging trend in the UK and Europe has been the development of what are known as 'work integration' social enterprises (WISE). These types of enterprises are also known as 'intermediate labour markets' (ILMs) because they provide long term unemployed and marginalised people with a transitional period of paid employment in a genuine work environment, combined with supervision, coaching and mentoring to assist them in making a successful transition to the mainstream labour market (BSL 2007; Finn & Simmonds 2003). The concept is based on evidence based research about the benefits of engaging marginalised unemployed people in productive, paid employment as a means of promoting social inclusion. In addition to providing income, paid work helps disadvantaged people to build self esteem, status and personal identity, to develop on-the-job skills and to expand their social experience (Spear & Bidet 2005). WISE also produce longer term benefits for the local community which would otherwise experience the negative impact of high crime rates, skills shortages and increased public health and social security costs (Nyssens 2006). In Australia this concept is increasingly being used by not for profit organisations as a response to social exclusion. For example, St Vincent de Paul, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Mission Australia, the Salvation Army and BoysTown use social enterprises as a strategy to assist in facilitating the social inclusion of their clients.

An example of a work integration social enterprise is a project currently operating in the Balgo community. With the support of the Community Council, BoysTown has secured contracts with the Department of Housing (WA) for housing upgrades and housing maintenance. Negotiations are also occurring in regard to

environmental health and produce supply services. These contracted activities are being undertaken by Indigenous young people with mentoring and supervision provided by qualified trades people and other staff.

These contracts provide local young people with the opportunity to learn and earn. Vocational and non-vocational training is provided to increase their work skills and to provide accreditation. Some young people in these communities feel an overwhelming sense of hopelessness about the future. Consequently, Indigenous young people participating in these programs are also being supported by the provision of case management, counselling and personal development programs that focus on key issues currently impacting on the quality of their lives such as anger, drugs and alcohol and relationships. A literacy and numeracy program is also embedded into this social enterprise program as it has been found that the lack of these skills are a major barrier confronted by these young people in securing employment. This is also an empowerment strategy as Indigenous young people are open to exploitation in the wider community due to their lack of numeracy skills in regard to financial matters.

The outcome of these social enterprises is that young people will gain accredited qualifications that they can use to either continue this work within their community on an independent basis or to enter other open employment. It is our view that the development of social enterprises around real work opportunities in communities, linked to vocational training and further education can make a positive difference to the sustainability of Indigenous communities, provide employment opportunities and reduce juvenile offending behaviour.

Research being conducted by Griffith University in partnership with BoysTown indicates that work integrated social enterprise programs, if supported by personal development and counselling reduces offending behaviour by Indigenous youth.

BoysTown with Griffith University Queensland are conducting an Australian Research Council sponsored project investigating the most effective strategies to reengage marginalised young people with employment and further education. The educational, personal development and work outcomes of young people who are participating in BoysTown's social enterprise programs are being monitored as part of this research project. Across BoysTown's sites, 63 Indigenous young people have participated in this ongoing research into the effectiveness of these services in assisting personal change and the achievement of educational and employment outcomes. Of this sample 49 are male and 14 are female, with an average age of 18 years. Most of these young people were referred to BoysTown from income support services (e.g. Centrelink), accommodation support services (e.g. Marist Youth Care), correctional services (e.g. Juvenile Justice) and employment services (e.g. Aboriginal Employment Strategy).

These young people are also offered services consistent with the BoysTown Social Inclusion Model – refer to Appendix 1.

The demographic profile of this sample of BoysTown's Indigenous clients provides an overall picture of disadvantage. Of these young people, 29% were raised in a household where the main guardian did not work, while a further 21% grew up in a family where the main income earner was mostly in and out of work. In addition, 46% of Indigenous clients commencing at BoysTown had no work experience. Of the Indigenous young people leaving BoysTown, 75% had gained work outcomes.

In relation to the accommodation situation of these young people, 32% live with a single parent while 28% live with both parents. A further 10% live with other relatives while 13% live either in foster care or supported accommodation. Half of our Indigenous clients live in public housing accommodation while a further 9% live in boarding houses or hostels. Further data from this sample indicates that the social exclusion issues experienced by Indigenous young people are multi-faceted and ongoing (see Table 3 below).

The educational and personal development outcomes being achieved in these social enterprise programs are summarised in the Table below:

Table 3: Educational, Employment and Personal Development Outcomes of Indigenous young people participating in BoysTown Social Enterprise Programs

Barriers	Entry into BoysTown (n=35)	Participating in BoysTown (n=42)	Exiting BoysTown (n=12)
Offending behaviour			
Time in detention	45%	3%	0%
Anger management problems	55%	37%	0%
Physical fighting	65%	61%	8%
Trouble with the police	48%	54%	25%
Substance abuse			
Illicit drug use	48%	32%	17%
Alcohol	65%	49%	17%
Difficulties at work	29%	24%	17%
Wellbeing			
Poor decision making	33%	13%	8%
Not facing up to problems	60%	48%	8%
Constant stress	33%	13%	0%
Feelings of loneliness	48%	17%	8%
Main source of income			
Work	27%	46%	75%
Centrelink payments	55%	44%	8%
Weekly income level			
Less than \$200	67%	46%	17%
Between \$200 and \$400	23%	37%	42%
Over \$400	10%	17%	42%
Lack of accredited qualifications	76%	78%	42%
Literacy			
Poor talking skills	29%	22%	0%
Poor listening skills	16%	7%	0%
Poor writing skills	29%	34%	33%
Poor reading skills	29%	17%	17%
Difficulties with daily tasks	38%	36%	9%
Numeracy			
Poor numeracy skills	45%	51%	33%
Difficulties with daily tasks	62%	52%	46%
Social participation			
No connection with friends	7%	10%	0%
No connection with family	16%	7%	0%
Unable to go out to a movie	26%	37%	8%
Unable to eat out for a meal	19%	17%	0%
No participation in social groups/clubs	58%	51%	42%

Barriers	Entry into BoysTown (n=35)	Participating in BoysTown (n=42)	Exiting BoysTown (n=12)
Future orientation			
Lack of optimism	32%	20%	17%
Lack of goals	54%	33%	9%

Offending behaviour decreases amongst Indigenous clients as they participate in BoysTown's social enterprise programs. Most of the young people who had spent time in detention had stayed out of detention by the time they exited BoysTown. Furthermore, the proportion of young people getting into trouble with the police halved by the completion of their program. Additional data shows that two in three Indigenous young people were getting into physical fights in the early to mid stages of their participation in BoysTown's social enterprises, which then decreased to 8% upon exiting BoysTown. Consistent with this finding, 55% of young people reported having problems with anger management, which then decreased to 37% midway through BoysTown. None of the young people exiting BoysTown indicated that they have anger management issues.

Substance abuse is also a major concern amongst young people entering BoysTown programs, with 48% of Indigenous young people recently using illicit drugs and 65% drinking alcohol. Decreases in substance abuse are seen as more time is spent in BoysTown's programs. Specifically, the use of illicit drugs and alcohol had been reduced to 17% of the young people exiting BoysTown programs.

Offending behaviour and substance use can be linked to poor wellbeing. The proportions of young people experiencing feelings of loneliness and difficulties facing up to their problems decrease proportionally by 6-7 times by the time they exit BoysTown. Furthermore, one in three Indigenous young people experience constant stress when they come to BoysTown. In comparison, Indigenous young people exiting BoysTown do not indicate being under this constant strain in their lives.

As part of BoysTown's service delivery, Indigenous young people are given the opportunity to gain work experience and other life skills through experiential learning, case management and personal development workshops. The main source of income is Centrelink payments for 55% of Indigenous young people commencing BoysTown. For 75% of Indigenous young people exiting BoysTown, work is the main source of income. In addition, the proportion of young people who have accredited qualifications almost doubles.

Literacy and numeracy skills are also addressed through BoysTown's literacy and numeracy strategy and also through experiential learning. Indigenous young people report improvements in oral communication, numeracy skills and the application of literacy and numeracy skills to everyday tasks.

The development of aspirations and optimism is another important component of BoysTown's engagement process with young people and their personal development. The proportion of Indigenous young people exiting with defined aspirations and goals (91%) is double that of young people commencing BoysTown (46%). Optimism also increased from 68% of Indigenous young people starting BoysTown to 83% exiting BoysTown.

The other flow-on effect for young people with improved wellbeing, oral communication, anger management and optimism is increased social connectedness. For example, Indigenous young people report having more

contact with family and friends as well as being able to participate in more social activities.

Based on this data, work integration social enterprise programs are effective in reducing offending behaviour of Indigenous young people. Consequently the Commonwealth Government should engage in collaborative partnerships with Not for Profit organisations to develop social enterprise programs for Indigenous youth across Australia.

Recommendation: 3

That the Commonwealth Government enter into collaborative partnerships with Not for Profit organisations currently managing work integration social enterprise programs to increase the availability and participation rate of Indigenous young people in these programs.

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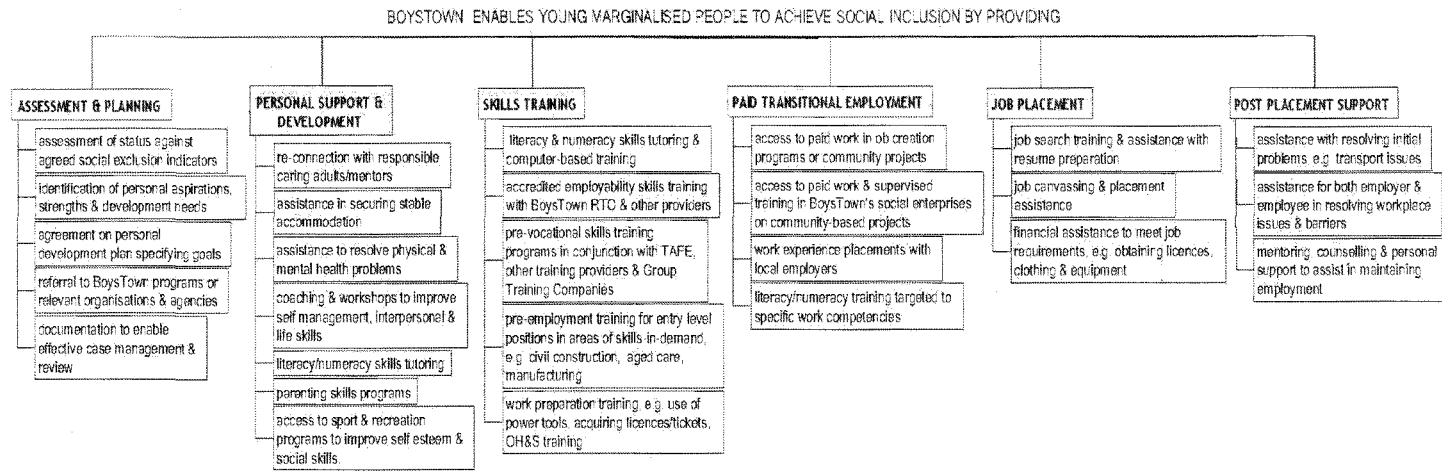
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BOYSTOWN SOCIAL INCLUSION MODEL



WHILE INVOLVED IN BOYSTOWN PROGRAMS, ALL YOUNG PEOPLE RECEIVE INDIVIDUAL CASE MANAGEMENT AND YOUTH WORK SUPPORT AND HAVE 24/7 ACCESS TO PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLING.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS: changes in status against key indicators as measured at point of entry, progression through programs, exit from Boystown & longitudinal surveys. Key indicators include: accommodation status; level of dependence on welfare benefits; physical & mental health status; incidence of offending behaviour; level of participation in valued social activities; literacy/numeracy levels; educational qualifications; level of information retrieval & exchange skills; level of employability/vocational skills; level & range of work experience; employment status, decreased dependence on welfare.

Boystown works in close partnership with regional stakeholders to optimise resources, support and opportunities for marginalised young people. Stakeholders include: government departments, community groups, welfare agencies, medical and legal services, youth welfare agencies, education and training providers, employers and industry groups and employment services providers.