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Lost in Transition

Institute of Child Protection Studies
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Lost in Transition: Exploring young people's experiences of transition from youth detention in the ACT

A report by Tim Moore, Vicky Saunders and Morag McArthur of the Institute of Child Protection Studies, ACU National for the ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services

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Institute of Child Protection Studies
Signadou Campus
Australian Catholic University
PO Box 256
Dickson 2602

Australian Capital Territory
icps@signadou.acu.edu.au
Phone 02-62091225
Fax 02 62091216
Website <http://www.acu.edu.au/icps/>

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Project Team

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The project team consisted of: Tim Moore, Morag McArthur and Vicky Saunders with assistance from Lorraine Thomson (ICPS) and Tracy Cussen (DHCS).

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Glossary of terms and acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACU	Australian Catholic University
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ACTCOSS	ACT Council of Social Services
AIC	Australian Institute of Criminology
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AOD	Alcohol and Other Drug
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CYJ	Community Youth Justice
DHCS	ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services
ICPS	Institute of Child Protection Studies, ACU National
JACS	ACT Department of Justice and Community Services
MHACT	Mental Health ACT
OCYFS	Office for Children, Youth and Family Support, (DHCS)
YSAAP	Youth Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
YSP	Youth Services Program, OCYFS
Quamby	Quamby Youth Detention Centre
Bimberi	Bimberi Youth Justice Centre

Terminology

One of the challenges in exploring issues for young people engaged in and exiting out of the justice system is the varying language and terminology that is used both in the literature and within practice. For the purposes of this report we will adopt the definitions provided by the Australian Institute of Criminology in their report *Interventions for Prisoners Returning to the Community* (Borzycki, 2005).

Re-entry: a single *moment in time* when a prisoner is released from custody. It can also be a *process* by which prisoners move from custody to independent community living. The re-entry process can be formal and mandatory, such as in the case with parole supervision, although at present, not all Australian prisoners are subject to formal re-entry programs.

Transition: is the process of re-entry. *Transitional* services are those that aim to assist in this process, and these can be any formalised supports provided just before, at the point of, or following release. They can specifically refer to *transitional / pre-release centres*, which are supervised residential settings that bridge the gap between community and custody, allowing inmates substantial interactions with the outside world (e.g. outside employment or family contact).

Aftercare: is less formal support following formal service delivery, such as ongoing contact following structured drug treatment. Because interventions can be delivered to prisoners at any point in a custodial term, aftercare need not always occur in the community. However, if informal community support follows in-prison treatment programs, this support could be classified as aftercare.

Post-release: refers to the time following custody. *Post-release interventions* aim to minimise re-offending during this time, by managing risk and promoting rehabilitation. Some interventions delivered *before* release into the community can

be considered post-release because they aim to ensure post-release adjustment. Aftercare, post-release and transition can refer to similar processes, and to some extent will be used interchangeably for any treatments, programs or services aiming to assist in the transformation from prisoner to law-abiding community member.

Continuity of care: describes the philosophical commitment to providing consistent services and supports to prisoners within and beyond prison, with this holistic program of rehabilitation ideally commencing at first contact between the offender and the justice system.

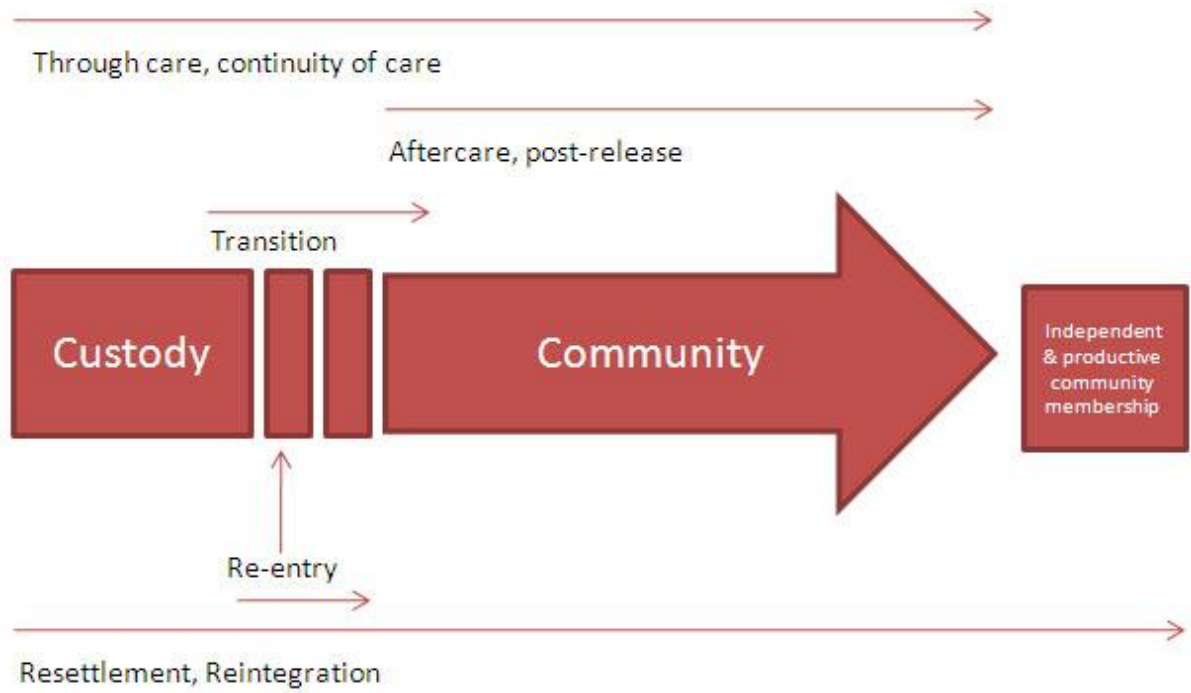
Throughcare: defines the process of delivering continuous care.

Reintegration / Resettlement: describes the desired aims of throughcare – independent and productive community membership – as well as the processes required to achieve this aim. The appropriateness of these terms have been debated, because some argue the majority of prisoners have never been integrated or settled in the mainstream community and so logically cannot return to these states. The terms nonetheless capture the idea of offenders actively participating in their re-entry process rather than just passively receiving services.

Reintegrative confinement: was developed with respect to throughcare for juvenile offenders. It refers to a correctional philosophy in which the custodial experience is oriented towards successful re-entry, with formal surveillance and support in the community to achieve this end (see Altschuler and Armstrong, 1999).

The relationship between these terms can be understood in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: The relationship between terms related to prisoner release



1. Introducing the project

This study, funded by the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support (ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services), attempts to develop an understanding of the way that young people experience detention, their transitions back into the community and the ways that the system may achieve better outcomes at each stage of their reintegration. Ultimately, it attempts to answer the key research questions:

- How do young people experience the transition from detention back to the community?
- What are the challenges that limit the success of their reintegration?

1.1 Research context

This project was conducted within the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) with young people who had been on a committal at the Quamby Youth Detention Centre (Quamby) sometime during 2007 and 2008.

Quamby Youth Detention Centre was ACT's low to medium security facility for children and young people aged ten to eighteen who had been refused bail or sentenced to a period of detention. It was managed by the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support (OCYFS) (ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services) and operated within the legislative requirements of the Children and Young People's Act 1999 (DHCS, 2009).

The facility was closed in 2009 and was replaced with Bimberi Youth Justice Centre, the first youth custodial facility in Australia designed, built and operated under Human Rights legislation (DHCS, 2009).

In planning to move to the new Centre, the OCYFS commissioned the Institute of Child Protection Studies to consider the nature of young people's transitions from Quamby into the community to help inform the development of new policies and programs for the new Bimberi centre. Throughout the course of the research, staff from OCYFS were briefed about emerging themes and issues. ICPS were informed that many of these findings were considered when developing new policies at the Centre.

1.2 The nature of this report

In 1974, Robert Martison wrote one of the most influential papers on the effectiveness of offender rehabilitation programs in which he found that after drawing together the results of evaluations of 231 outcome studies, "with few and isolated exceptions, the rehabilitative efforts that have been reported so far have had no appreciable effect on recidivism" (p24). Although this finding was later rejected by Martinson himself and a number of others, a pervasive view that 'nothing works' became popular and was instilled in policy and practice responses.

Over the past 30 years, however, a more accurate view has developed which suggests that interventions to reduce re-offending generally lead to an overall positive net gain when treated groups are compared to non-treated groups.

In one of the largest meta-analytic reviews, Lipsey and Wilson (2003), found, in fact that most intervention programs produced positive effects, equivalent to a 12 percent reduction in recidivism. They argued, however, that there was significant variability: with some interventions only achieving negligible effects and more effective interventions reducing recidivism by as much as 40% which they viewed as "an accomplishment of considerable practical value in terms of the expense and social damage associated with the delinquent behaviour of these juveniles" (Day, Howells, & Rickwood, 2003)

From this meta-analysis and others, researchers have been able to develop a better understanding of 'what works', which can help explain why particular programs with certain characteristics have better outcomes than others. This 'what works' approach to offender rehabilitation has become popular and informs much of current policy and practice in juvenile justice internationally.

The 'what works' approach is characterised by five basic principles of good practice including:

- **The Risk Principle:** recognises that there are a number of variables associated with reoffending including those risks that are static and not amenable to change and those that are dynamic and can change over time. Offenders have shown to be more likely to reoffend when there is a cluster of these risks in their environments and when the protective factors do not minimise their affect. Programs have shown to be more effective when they accurately identify these risks.
- **The Needs Principle:** recognises that effective programs take into account and respond to the dynamic risk factors (described as criminogenic needs) and provides interventions that target young people with high needs with supports that meet their individual needs.
- **The Responsivity Principle:** recognises that a number of factors can influence the effectiveness of programs and focuses attention on how client and program characteristics influence the offender's ability to learn and change. Effective programs identify and minimise the affect of these factors.
- **The Integrity Principle:** recognises the need for programs to be built upon good evidence and for them to be delivered as intended in theory and design, while having enough flexibility to meet individual need and any crises that may arise in a young person's life.
- **The Professional Discretion Principle:** recognises professional judgment and allows professionals to make decisions on the basis of other characteristics and situations not covered in other principles.

The report is structured in the following way: first an analysis of the existing literature about young people's experiences in the juvenile justice system is

provided. We then present our research approach and the research participants are described.

The next three parts make up the findings of the study. Part one uses the 'Risk and Needs Principles' as the organising framework for this analysis. It explores how young people describe their lives prior to, during and after their time at Quamby through a discussion of their family lives, their friendship groups, their educational experiences, and their alcohol and other drug use. How these domains of their lives influenced their criminality and re-entry into the community is explored. Each section ends with a brief discussion of how the system might be improved based on participants' suggestions and the evidence identified from the literature.

Part Two applies the 'Responsivity Principle' to explore the factors that appear to influence the effectiveness of young people's reintegration. In particular, we will focus on: young people's level of preparedness, readiness and willingness to change; on the community's preparedness to support the young person's re-entry; and some of the ways that services are provided to maximise on young people's participation and positive outcomes.

Part three describes the young people's experience in the juvenile justice system, particularly their contact with services, case management and informal support. The enabling factors and challenges encountered by the young people and those of the workers, programs and system that aim to support them are highlighted.

The final part of the report summarises the findings and offers a discussion of what the implications are for policy and practice

As Quamby did not, at the time of writing, use an evidence-based model of intervention we have not utilised the final two principles (the Integrity Principle and the Professional Discretion Principle) as they are aimed at understanding how programs are implemented.

1.3 What we know

Nature of the available literature

How to best assist young people who leave secure youth justice facilities and re-enter the community has been under-researched in Australia. We were able to identify only two significant studies, carried out in 1997 and 2003 that document existing approaches and support services for young people during and after periods of secure care, and identified those services that would be required to respond comprehensively to their needs (Day et al., 2003; Keys Young Pty Ltd, 1997).

This small amount of research sits within the wider context of a dearth of knowledge about what works in reducing juvenile recidivism in Australia and elsewhere (Chen et al 2005). Most of the international literature is from the United Kingdom and the United States of America. It consists of literature reviews and meta-analyses, refereed articles, conference papers, reports for government and non-refereed articles. There are some examples of empirical studies.

The literature focusing on young people's transitions from detention and their reintegration back into the community is also limited, particularly in the Australian context. Although each Australian jurisdiction identifies strategies for reintegrating young people into the community, it would appear that there have been few attempts to ascertain whether these strategies have positive impacts for the young person or whether they have been effective in reducing recidivism (Keys Young Pty Ltd, 1997). In 1995, McGuire and Priestley noted that

The single most commonly reported finding is that many programs are never evaluated at all and that numerous opportunities for providing information that would be valued by practitioners and researchers alike is simply lost (in Keys Young Pty Ltd, 1997, p8)

Little appears to have changed since this report was released. As Mears and Travis remark:

Unfortunately, even a cursory glance at the research literature and the policy landscape reveals just how little is known about the transition of young people from prisons to the community or how best to increase the likelihood that the transitions are successful (Mears & Travis, 2004b, p4)

In addition, there is a significant gap in understanding how young people themselves experience the justice system, what they think about this experience and implications of this for practice. Existing studies that have engaged young people directly tend to focus on their incarceration experiences (D. Wilson & Rees, 2006) and with police (Hurst, Frank, & Browning, 2000). Besides the 1997 Keys Young report and a project currently being conducted by Dr Mark Halsey from the University of Melbourne, we could not identify any Australian studies that ask young people about their experiences of transition from juvenile detention and their reintegration back into the community.

What we know about young people's offending behaviour and contact with the juvenile justice system

Research suggests that young people are more likely to commit crime than other age cohort and are over-represented within the justice system (Artz, Nicholson, Halsall, & Larke, 2001). This is due to a number of inter-related factors.

Firstly, adolescence is often characterised as a period of significant change and growth and as a phase of experimentation during which a moderate amount of risky behaviour may be developmentally necessary, statistically normative and psychologically adaptive (Moore and Parsons, cited in Day et al., 2003). Although most young people fail to escalate from 'experimental' to 'chronic' (or addictive) risk-taking, young people often commit (minor) crimes as a way of testing boundaries, rebelling against systems and asserting their independence. Secondly, for a number

of political and social reasons, young people's adolescence is highly scrutinised and restricted by legislation which criminalises behaviours that are considered appropriate for their adult peers (such as drinking, driving cars, having sex, not attending school). Thirdly, young people are more likely than adults to be caught committing crimes because they most often perpetrate them in groups, in public and in gregarious and attention-grabbing ways. Their criminal behaviour is more likely to be episodic, unplanned, opportunistic and close to home. Because of these reasons and because they experience greater levels of surveillance than other groups of individuals, young people are more likely to be caught than adults (Cunneen & White, 1995; Day et al., 2003; Day, Howells, & Rickwood, 2004).

Although large groups of young people participate in criminal behaviour, young people often 'grow out' of crime. It has been argued that these 'adolescent-limited' offenders commit crimes only when they view them to be socially beneficial and will desist when they recognise that more rewards are available when adopting more prosocial views and behaviours (Moffitt, 1993). Those who continue to commit crime have been described as 'life course persistent offenders' and continue offending through their adolescence and into adulthood.

Rates of recidivism and most at-risk groups

Although most young people 'grow out' of it, there is a small group of young people who are responsible for a significant amount of crime and are often engaged in the system over extended periods of time.

In their 2005 study, Chen and others (2005) found that 43% of young people in their NSW sample who had appeared for the first time in 1995 reappeared in either a juvenile or adult court at least once in the following eight years. However, this increased to 63% when they also included the young people's subsequent reappearances in a NSW adult court during this same period. In fact, they found that 57% of young people who had been before a children's court had at least one

subsequent appearance in an adult criminal court within the eight year period, and that almost a quarter of these received a custodial sentence. In other words, they discovered that 13% of young people were imprisoned by an adult court within eight years of their first appearance (Chen et al., 2005pp 3,4 and 6).

This research concludes that particular groups were more likely to reappear both in child and adult courts than others. They found

- that the younger a person (i.e. 10 years to 14) who appeared before the court the more likely they were to reoffend
- Indigenous young people are more likely to progress to the adult system even if they only have one children's court appearance,
- young people who appeared before the courts for something other than a property or violent crime were less likely to reappear and that those who presented for those crimes were highly likely to reoffend

This important study suggests that some younger adolescents don't 'grow out' of crime as soon as others, Indigenous young people are significantly over represented and that those aged over 17 are at relatively low risk of reappearing.

The juvenile justice process in Australia

In most jurisdiction in Australia, children aged between the ages of 10 (when they are deemed to have criminal responsibility) and 18 (when they are deemed to be an adult) can enter the formal criminal justice system for having committed or allegedly committed an offence. Once engaged in the system, (as demonstrated in Figure 2: The juvenile justice process in Australia (based on Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2007, p3)), young people may or may not appear before the court, be proven guilty, be sentenced, require juvenile justice involvement or receive a community or detention based order.

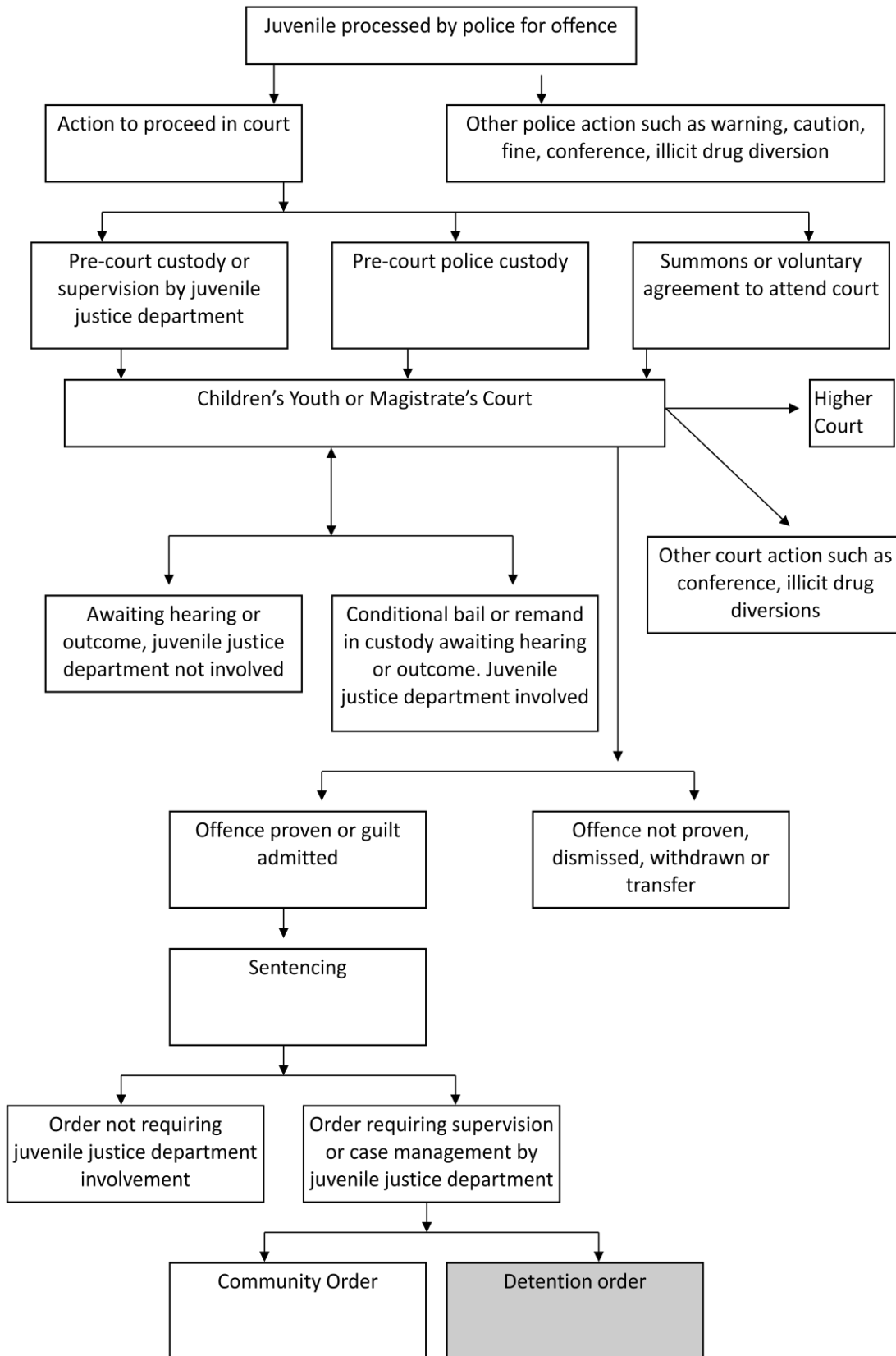


Figure 2: The juvenile justice process in Australia (based on Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2007, p3)

Over the past three decades, much of Australia's juvenile justice policy has attempted to divert young people away from the criminal justice system and to reduce the numbers of young people who receive custodial sentences. This has been driven by evidence which strongly suggests that incarceration, in and of itself, has limited positive influence over rates of recidivism and, in fact, may have a negative impact (Andrews et al., 1990; MacKenzie, 2000; UK Home Office, 2005).

Psychosocially, incarceration by itself has also proved to be problematic. By removing young offenders from their communities, important connections are broken or diminished sometimes leading to family dislocation and conflict. Young people may also experience prolonged periods of unemployment and disengagement from education; be more at risk of mental health concerns (Lennings, 2003), drug and alcohol problems (Prichard & Payne, 2005) and general poor health (NSW Department of Juvenile Justice, 2003). It has also been shown that when incarcerated for extended periods of time, young people may experience institutionalisation (a decreasing ability to live independently), poor self concept and negative attribution to crime (Borzycki, 2005). Finally, young people can strengthen criminal social networks and be socialised into deeper criminal lifestyles.

These negative affects seem to be worse for detainees with mental health issues, female detainees and Aboriginal detainees whose experience across the continuum is further problematised.

This diversionary policy has been successful, with many young people exiting the system, with relatively small numbers of young people receiving community-based orders and fewer still receiving detention-based orders. The following table presents AIHW statistics for 2006-7.

In 2006-7:

- 258 young people were under juvenile justice supervision in the ACT, of whom:
 - 237 had a community-based order
 - 143 had a detention-based order
 - 198 (76%) were male and 60 (24%) were female
 - 45 (17%) were aged under 15 and 213 (83%) were aged over 15
 - 50 (19%) were Indigenous and 208 (80%) were non-Indigenous
- 36.7 percent of the young people on juvenile justice supervision were under the age of 15 at the time of their first supervision (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008)

Although this diversion of young people from the system has been applauded, attention to how those young people who are detained for periods of time are protected from the negative affects of incarceration and achieve positive reintegration into the community is required. Due to their limited resources, capacity and scope, writers suggest that juvenile detention centres cannot meet these needs alone and, as such, must be part of a process that engages the young person, their families, communities and the broader service system for sustainable positive outcomes to be achieved. Influential writers Mears & Travis (2004b) argue that the whole juvenile justice system must, therefore, be reoriented towards achieving successful reintegration.

Borzycki and Makkai (2007) also identify a number of broader reasons why it is imperative for correction systems to focus on (adult) prisoner reintegration. Firstly, there has been a steady increase in prisoner populations with concomitant significant incarceration costs. These costs continue when offenders return to the community and continue to commit crimes: the costs to victims, of policing, of adjudicating new offences and of administering new sanctions. They argue that when positive reintegration is achieved these costs are reduced as the recidivism rates drop, the level of services needed to sustain offenders diminishes and the level of monitoring required is also minimised.

Although there is an increasing interest in reintegration, much of the research on young people's post-release experiences is focused narrowly on rates of recidivism and the links between these rates and the effectiveness of detention centre-based programs in responding to criminogenic need. There has been limited attention to the effect that community-based interventions and supports can have on a young person's reintegration. The role that assistance during periods of incarceration and post-release plays in sustaining any positive affects achieved has also not been comprehensively examined.

As most justice systems separate periods of incarceration from periods post-release (historically services have been seen as either Prison or Probation), there has also been limited exploration regarding the interaction of these two parts of the broader justice system or how this fragmentation might affect outcomes for offenders during their engagement with the system and beyond.

As such the evidence related to the effectiveness of the broad system in responding to the needs of young people throughout this process is limited and does not reflect the fact that the success of interventions often rest upon offenders being able to integrate back into the community (Borzycki & Makkai, 2007).

2. The Study

2.1 Scope of the research

This project was conducted within the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) with young people who had been on a committal at the Quamby Youth Detention Centre (Quamby) sometime during 2007 and 2008.

In an attempt to develop a broad understanding of the lived experiences of the young people in the study, the project team conducted a number of discreet qualitative research tasks which engaged young people, those who they identified as being important to them and the service system that existed around them (with whom they may or may not have interacted).

The study focused on those who were on committals at Quamby as they were generally incarcerated for longer periods than their remanded peers. As such, it was felt that these young people were more likely to have engaged in a range of planning activities that prepared them for release. Our research approach

Theoretical approach to the project

As discussed above understanding how young people themselves make sense of their experiences of the juvenile justice system has had limited attention from researchers. To develop this understanding we have taken a qualitative approach to the research project. Broadly, qualitative research focuses on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meaning out of their experiences. It aims to understand complex, interrelated and / or changing phenomena by seeking to gain a deeper knowledge of lived experiences. The use of in-depth interviews is particularly well suited to exploring questions that relate to the meaning of experiences and to deciphering the complexity and contradictions of human behaviour (Darlington & Scott, 2002).

We designed this research project to reflect two important elements. The first relates to the principles which underpin all of our Institute work which include: the direct participation of children and young people in projects about their lives and the commitment to ensuring that research is carried out and written in ways that can affect change to policy and practice.

The second element that frames the research is our assumptions about the purpose of the juvenile justice system. Each of these elements is briefly discussed.

Research directly with children and young people

Over the past two decades researchers have asserted the need for children and young people to be engaged in research that focuses on issues that affect their lives (Bessell, 2006; Moore, McArthur, & Noble-Carr, 2008). Recognising that they understand and experience the world in ways different to adults, researchers, policy makers and practitioners have argued that young people's views and observations also need to be considered when developing programs and services with which they interact. To be fully responsive to need, programs and services must be able to identify and address young people's felt and expressed needs as well as those identified by adults making observations for rather than with young people themselves (Christensen & James, 2000).

Despite this recognition, there has been a limited exploration of how young people transition through the juvenile justice system internationally and even less about how young people themselves understand and reflect upon this experience (Abrams & Auilar, 2005).

Halsey (2006) argues that this is because

juvenile offenders have been rendered by experts (read adults) as immature, unreliable and incapable of truth-telling, ... [and have, as a result] been cast permanently under a web of suspicion (p148).

He goes on to argue that even when they are engaged, research and policy makers shy away from reflecting their full content for fear that their contributions may dissuade rather than encourage useful dialogue. He suggests that when promoting detention as 'easy time' or their criminality as being solely their responsibility, these young voices may act, unintentionally, to promote rhetoric of justice and punishment calling for more punitive and coercive responses to juvenile crime. As a result, he observes that young people's voices have often been excluded from discussions and consequently service providers are unable to respond effectively to their needs and issues.

For the service system to best respond to children and young people, it must continually develop its understanding of their needs, experiences and understandings and it can best do this by hearing directly from them.

Research for change

Our commitment to hear from children and young people directly is linked to the second principle; that of carrying out research that aims to directly influence change. There have been recent calls for new forms of research that more directly contribute to the formulation of policy, that are strategic in nature and more problem solving in orientation (Howard, 2008). This research, through the involvement of multiple stakeholders has aimed to develop new knowledge about young people's experiences that can be applied directly to improving the system's response.

It is increasingly being recognised that collaboration in research is an effective strategy for ensuring that research is useful to policy makers and practitioners (Gaskill et al., 2003). This project was initially conceived as a research partnership between OCYFS and the Institute and it included the establishment of a Research Reference Group of broader interests and an internal Steering Committee made up of members of the Quamby, the OCYFS & the Institute. It also involved a policy officer from OCYFS being co-located in the Institute for six months. Tracy Cussen

worked with the Institute team to develop a series of background discussion papers based on the nature of juvenile justice policies and practice in a number of the other states and territories.

Unfortunately, due to staff resourcing issues this arrangement was terminated and the Institute was contracted to take over responsibility for the project at this time. However we are committed to exploring different models of working closely with policy practitioners in collaborative ways.

Theoretical assumptions - Treatment and Rehabilitation

There are at least three different ways of conceptualising the purpose of the criminal justice system including juvenile justice (Hollin, 2001). The first is that it delivers punishment (Retributionists). The second perspective has the purpose of reducing offending, rather than just delivering retribution (the utilitarian approach). The final approach focuses unconditionally on the need to rehabilitate offenders (humanitarian approach). Dowell and colleagues (2003) argue that the utilitarian and humanitarian approaches are not mutually exclusive and that both approaches should be applied to young offenders.

We agree with this position and therefore the assumptions that underpin this project are: young people who are clients of Juvenile Justice are particularly vulnerable and have multiple needs. Rehabilitation therefore is the key aim of the juvenile justice system and intervention must be focused on the factors that are known to both cause and are correlated with crime (Dowell, et al 2003).

Ethics

The Institute of Child Protection Studies is committed to ensuring that its direct research with children and young people meets high ethical standards. As part of the research process, the Institute sought and obtained ethics approval from Australian Catholic University's Human Research Ethics Committee. In conjunction with this the research team also considered ethical issues such as choice, parental consent, non-

maleficence, beneficence, confidentiality, power imbalance and integrity. Further detail is provided in Attachment 3.

2.2 The nature of young people's involvement in the project

Young people's involvement in research design

In line with its commitment to supporting young people's active involvement in the design and delivery of research projects, the Institute had hoped to engage a young people's reference group early in the life of the project. Although a number of young people were approached and agreed to participate in such a way, each of them left the ACT before a formal meeting was possible.

However, three of these young people met individually with the research team prior to the design of the interview schedule and provided feedback on the research question and methodology. These young people were all ex-residents of Quamby Youth Detention Centre and had been on supervision orders with Community Youth Justice. In addition, two of the young people who were interviewed early in the project also gave the researchers some informal feedback about the interview process and changes were made as a result.

2.3 Data Collection

As can be seen below the project included the use of multiple data sources, which included young people (individual interviews), workers (individual and group interviews), parents (individual interviews) and file data (content analysis). This was done not to get a 'complete' picture of young people's experiences, nor to adjudicate between different participants' versions but rather to situate and understand the similarities and differences of perspectives (Silverman, 1997).

Data provided for this study was collected from the following sources:

Young people

Young people residing at Quamby were given the opportunity to participate in three semi structured interviews. Twelve young people consented to participate. However one young person only completed the first interview. Further information regarding these interviews is detailed in Attachment 4.

Support people

Young people were asked to identify someone in their lives who they believed could make observations about them, their involvement with the juvenile justice system and some of the factors that they believed influenced the young person's transition back into the community. Three young people identified a family member with eight identifying a support worker from either YJ or an NGO. Two of the three families consented to be interviewed and all YJ and NGO staff participated.

Family

Young people were asked to consent to the research team contacting their parents or another family member to participate in an interview. Ten young people agreed to have their parents or family member contacted, however only four families consented to participate. Further information regarding these interviews is detailed in Appendix 2.

Government and non government organisations

To develop a better understanding of the key issues and challenges that the service system encountered when supporting young people transitioning from detention, focus groups were conducted with workers from organisations who had some involvement with young people before, during or after their involvement with the juvenile justice system. These organisations include statutory and non- government agencies as detailed in Appendix 2.

File review

Consent was obtained from the young people and DHCS to review all case management files (Quamby and CYJ) concerning the young person. It was anticipated that a review of these files would provide a richer context of the young person's life and give understanding to the case management process of the assessment of risk and protective factors, responding to identified challenges, the planning for release and the young person's subsequent transition and reintegration.

2.4 Data analysis

The aim of data analysis is to find meaning in the information collected. Therefore the process requires a systematic arrangement and presentation of the data. In qualitative research data collection and analysis often occur concurrently. As young people were interviewed more than once an analytic induction method allowed ideas to emerge as the data are collected and these ideas could then be tested specifically in later interviews with young people or with other participants (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 2000; Silverman, 1997).

More specifically the semi structured interviews were first analysed for common themes across 12 domains. These domains included: attitudes about offending, experiences of case management, culture, drug and alcohol issues, education, employment, engagement with families, experiences of support (government and non government), health and mental health issues, peers, positive daytime activities, and organisational issues. Each domain led to the development of sub-themes. The themes were checked against the transcripts and with the young people for robustness of interpretation.

The data were also analysed across time for common experiences to emerge, before during and after Quamby. Finally data were analysed against the literature on risk

and protective factors and the application of the two key principles from the 'What Works' literature.

Files were analysed for two purposes. The first reason was to gather a chronological narrative of the young person's experience from the time of their first incarceration. The case files were also analysed using a framework developed from current literature, elements of the ACT Case Management framework and the acknowledged risk and protective factors influencing criminal activity acknowledged in the influential work 'Pathways to Prevention' (Attorney Generals Department, 1999)

2.5 Limitations

There a number of limitations or constraints to this project. The first is the sample size. The research was ambitious in its extensive data collection while still remaining fundamentally a small qualitative study. If the funding arrangements had been different ideally we would have collected the experiences of more young people. However what we have sacrificed in the size of the group has been made up in the depth and richness of the data sources. We believe although the sample is relatively small we have, through the use of multiple sources of data and more than one interview with young people, built a robust description of the experiences of this group of young people.

This group of young people constitutes a sample population i.e. all young people in Quamby on committal for more than three months during a designated time. However, due to our reliance on Quamby staff to refer young people to the project there were approximately four or five young people we missed.

A further limitation is the number of parents in the study. Although young people readily provided consent for the research team to contact their parents only four families were prepared to be involved in the study. It was decided by the research team that parents would be contacted directly by phone to invite them to participate in this study. Two families did not wish to participate, identifying that they were too

busy. Two families did not respond to the three answer phone messages left and the remaining two families agreed to participate but did not turn up to the interview. When the research team followed those families up with a telephone call the families identified that they were still keen to participate. Another interview time was arranged however again the families did not attend. A follow up phone message was left with each of these families but with no response. Knowing that the families could contact us if they so wished, the research team decided at that point to no longer pursue those families.

The decision to focus the study on young people on more than three month committals rather than including young people on remand meant that the group was older than the average detainee, possibly more entrenched in their interactions with the system and reported similar experiences to each other. More diversity of experience may have been evident in the remand population. The experiences of those on short-term and long-term remands may need to be the focus of a future study as many of the challenges that affect young people who were serving periods on committal appear to be experienced by those who are remanded also.

Finally the design of the study assumed that the young people would be followed up between 3 – 6 months of leaving Quamby allowing for the documentation of their experiences post release. We are unable to make any meaningful comments about extended post release experiences because all but three young people had returned to Quamby at the time of the third interview.

2.6 Research with young people

Young people were approached by case management staff at Quamby who informed them about the project and gave them the option to participate. These young people gave their consent to participate in each of the interviews, for their files to be examined and for a key support person to be interviewed by researchers.

Young people were directly engaged in a series of three semi-structured interviews that focused on their lives prior to, during and after their incarceration at Quamby. Each of the interviews was structured differently and built upon previous interviews. The interviews focussed on young people's views about family; school; employment; engagement with services; communities and other formal and informal supports; risks and challenges that may exacerbate and prolong their criminal behaviours; and any strengths, opportunities and protective factors that mitigated their engagement in crime and influenced their re-entry post-release.

The first of these interviews was conducted in an interview room at Quamby. Although it was hoped that this initial interview would occur within the first few weeks of their incarceration, the length of time young people had already served prior to the interview ranged from a matter of days to a matter of months. The initial interview focussed on the young person's life prior to their incarceration and attempted to gauge their level of connectedness with family, community and the formal service sector. Young people were asked to reflect on the stressors and issues that may have led to their criminal behaviour and what kinds of things might have prevented them from committing (or continuing to commit) crime. They also answered questions relating to their goals for their time at Quamby and what things they thought would help them when they eventually were released.

It was anticipated that the second interview would be conducted at Quamby in the fortnight leading up to the young people's release back into the community. Due to the often uncertain nature of their sentences, however, three young people had their second interview within the fortnight after their release into the community at a place convenient to them. One young person absconded and another went interstate to an alcohol rehabilitation centre and, as such, were not interviewed for some months after their release. A third young person was incarcerated in a detention centre outside of the ACT and, although numerous attempts were made to follow him up, dropped out of the study at this point.

The second interview focused on young people's experiences during incarceration and attempted to gauge how they had been supported during their time at the Centre, both by Quamby as an organisation and by external formal and informal supports. They were also asked to talk about the preparations that had been made for them in transitioning back into the community, how confident and comfortable they felt about their return to the community and some of their hopes for the future.

The third interview was generally conducted with young people within the community between 6 and 12 weeks after they were released. This final interview focused on how successful young people felt their transition from the Centre to the community had been, some of the things that had positively affected their experience and some of the challenges and risks that they had encountered. Three of the young people participated in this third interview after being detained for further crimes or for a breach of their conditions. These young people were asked about the reasons they believed their transition was not successful and what they would like to happen next time. Two of these young people participated in a fourth interview which focused on the positive aspects of this experience when they eventually re-entered the community.

In a number of situations, the researchers would 'check out' some of their initial observations about a young person's experience that had arisen from previous interviews to ensure that they had been understood correctly and to also ensure that their views were still similar. This was important as a number of young people observed that during their incarceration they thought and talked about things quite differently to the way they did so on the 'outside'. They observed that while incarcerated they needed to promote an image of themselves that was confident and 'doing OK' both to cope with the challenges they encountered but also so that people would treat them differently to how they perceived they would if they felt they were not 'doing OK'. In analysing the audiotaped interviews, the research team

easily noted a difference in language, tone and level of engagement in discussions about particular issues.

The Nature of the Cohort

All the young people in this study were incarcerated on a committal between July 2006 and July 2008. Generally, they include young people who are at the highest end of the offending behaviour with most of the young people having been previously remanded and incarcerated both in the ACT and elsewhere. Young people were aged between 16 and 18 at the time of their first interview. Two females and nine males participated were interviewed on three occasions, with another male completing the first interview only. The data from his interview was excluded from this study.

Of the sample, four young people identified as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and three from a culturally or linguistically diverse background.

To protect the identity of young people in this project we will not provide a description of any particular participant but instead make some general observations about the cohort. As will be seen, there was some divergence in experience amongst the young people: particularly in regards to family background, but the challenges that young people encountered were often not dissimilar in nature.

Over half of the young people had lives that were characterised by chaos and instability from an early age. These young people had family members who had their own alcohol or other drug problems, who were engaged in criminal behaviour, who were unable to provide children with safe, stable and positive home environments. By late primary school these young people had begun to drop out of education, drink heavily and commit petty offences. Some of these young people had parents who tried to protect their children from the negative influences in their home environments while others failed to do so. Most had some involvement with Care and Protection services, with at least four spending some time in Out of Home Care. These young people began to appear before the courts around the age of 12 and the

experienced constant recycling through the juvenile justice system – escalating their crimes from petty theft and misdemeanours to car thefts and aggravated assaults. Each time they exited Quamby they failed to develop strong connections with schools, positive peers or support networks and often returned within 12 months of release. One young person had been remanded at Quamby 15 times before being interviewed for this project.

Other young people lived in homes that were more stable and in families where risk-taking was not condoned or seen as normal. But most of these young people dropped out of school early, hung with groups of offending peers and began using drugs and alcohol before they turned 15. Like their peers, their risk-taking often began with small misadventures (such as truancy) but got more involved as their social groups stepped up their behaviours. They reported that their parents were often unaware of what they were doing or were unable to manage them in any effective way. Each had been remanded to Quamby at least three times prior to being involved in this project, for similar reasons as those in the first group: for aggravated burglaries and car theft. Although these young people were more likely to be involved in ‘normal’ and positive activities outside of their criminal behaviour, once incarcerated they were less likely to reconnect to positive peers or lifestyles. Adopting negative labels, young people often felt more connected to peers that they had met inside and the scene into which they had become entrenched.

Although there was evidence that various parts of the service system had attempted to make some contact with young people and families, they remained disconnected from both formal and informal support networks from an early age. These young people sometimes had tacit relationships with positive adults but did not turn to them for advice or guidance and did not identify them when asked how they dealt with challenges.

Over the eighteen months of this project, only three young people spent any significant time outside of the justice system. This group said that they enjoyed the support of their families, were being helped by strong friendship groups and were actively looking for work. Two felt that the involvement of a worker who spent considerable time with them had helped their success. All three believed that they had 'given up' on their criminal lives and had taken positive steps in disconnecting themselves from people and places that might distract them from their goal: of staying outside the system and getting on with their lives.

The majority of young people, however, reoffended or were remanded for breaching their orders after serving their committals. Two young people were incarcerated in other jurisdictions, two went 'on the run' and two were committed to an adult facility. These young people talked about how they had 'stuffed up' this time but believed that things would be different when they were next released.

How the young people are presented in the report.

As this is a small group of well known young people we were keen to protect their identities as much as possible while ensuring that the true essence of their stories remained. As such, we have changed or omitted specific details that would lead to young people's easy identification such as the nature of the crime or their family backgrounds. As there were only two young women in this study we have also disguised their identity by referring to all participants as young men.

PART ONE: UNDERSTANDING RISKS AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

3. Introducing Part One: Risks and Protective Factors

International studies have consistently identified a number of predictive factors which influence the onset and persistence of offending behaviour, the development of “criminal careers” and ultimately, the desistance from crime.

Recently resilience theorists and others have recognised that groups of young people who experience the same risks go on to have significantly different outcomes from each other. It is theorised that a series of other factors such as personal attributes, their family, community background and their capacity to engage with a broad range of community resources may explain the differential outcomes. As Carr and Vandiver (2001) note, “[m]any individuals raised in adverse circumstances, with early criminal records, have transcended the limitations of their environment and have developed into productive, well-adjusted adults”. The factors that protect young people from being influenced by risks are called ‘protective factors’ and those that mitigate against the negative impacts that might otherwise occur when risks are present are called ‘compensatory factors’. It has been recognised that these are not merely an absence of risks but factors that actively influence the effects of risks (Hoge, 2002; Hoge, Andrews, & Leschfield, 1996).

Two principles identified in the ‘*what works*’ literature are key to the following discussion. First the Risk Principle assert that effective programs recognise these risks and protective factors and how they influence the young person’s life (Day et al., 2004) The Need Principle points to how the system can respond to those risks most amenable to change through intervention.

The following sections explore a number of aspects of young people’s lives and the way that certain risk and protective factors interplayed to influence their early criminal behaviour, their involvement in the justice system and their transition back into their communities. After a brief discussion of what the literature identifies as the risk and protective factors and those identified by the young people themselves, a

more in depth look at young people's family lives, their peers, involvement with education and their alcohol or other drug use is provided.

How the various risk and protective factors were (or were not) identified throughout their involvement with the system are explored and some observations about how they might better be recognised are made.

3.1 Understanding the extent and nature of risks

In their seminal work, Andrews and Bonta (1988) distinguish two types of risk factors: those that are static and those that are dynamic. Static risk factors are those that cannot be altered. Some static risk factors that are consistently highlighted in the same literature include past and early criminal behaviour, cultural background, gender and low socioeconomic status.

Dynamic risk factors (sometimes referred to as criminogenic needs), on the other hand, are those that are more amenable to change. Studies consistently highlight unemployment, drug and alcohol misuse, poor education, limited social networks, pro-social criminal associations, poor emotional management, negative attitudes and mental health issues as the key dynamic risk factors that may influence a young person's propensity for criminal behaviour and the nature of their reintegration. Most studies have found that offenders usually have between 3 and 5 of these factors at any one time.

The level of the risk associated with these various factors varies significantly. For example a meta analysis of international studies (mainly with adults) showed that criminogenic needs, criminal history, social achievement, age / gender / ethnicity and family factors were significant risks while low intelligence, personal distress and low socioeconomic status of the family were less robust factors (Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996).

Although much is known about what factors are significant, the causal nature between these risk factors and criminal behaviour remains, in most cases, relatively unclear. For example, Taylor (1999) concluded that although criminal history was a strong predictor of reconviction it was because this history acted as a proxy for social and behavioural problems. Similarly, there is strong evidence to suggest that unemployment is a significant risk factor, but writers such as Farrington (et al 1986) argue that unemployment may be an indirect rather than a direct risk with the stability and quality of that employment along with the level of satisfaction expressed toward it being more influential than having a job (or not).

The interplay of these risk factors has also been left underexplored. For example, substance misuse is often recognised as a key risk factor for offenders in all age groups but the impact of this drug misuse on employment, on maintaining positive connections to others and on minimising other risk-taking behaviours has not been fully explored nor has the role that peers play in drug-taking and criminal offending.

What do young people say about risk and protective factors?

To understand the life worlds of young people prior to their involvement in the criminal justice system young people were asked to identify some of the factors (both risk and protective) that they believed might have influenced their early criminal behaviour. We asked young people both open ended questions (like “tell me about what life was like for you before you started committing crime” and “do you think there were particular things that led you to start committing crimes?”) and specific questions about whether particular risk and protective factors, identified in the literature, were evident in their histories. The analysis showed that young people’s lives were characterised by significant risks within their families and communities which were further complicated by significant alcohol or other drug use, poor self esteem, limited connections to school and positive social activity. As one young person reflected:

There was nothing good... it was just a bad phase, pretty much, everything was bad

Some of the identified risk factors included:

- **Negative family relationships:** including those that were affected by family conflict and breakdown were apparent for 7 of the 11 young people
- **Adverse family environments:** was an issue for 6 of the young people who had a relative with a mental health AND alcohol or other drug issue or gambling problem
- **Negative peers associations:** were influential for ten of the eleven young people who believed that their exposure to peer pressure and risk taking behaviour influenced their early criminality
- **Poor links with the community and the service system:** Part 4 of this report shows the poor connections young people had to formal and informal support networks prior to their incarceration.
- **Mental health issues: (including ADHD, ODD and diagnosed depression and anxiety)** was identified by four young people who believed that these conditions affected their ability for self control and their likelihood of becoming involved in risky behaviours
- **Alcohol or other drug problems:** were raised as being of significant concern to 9 of the young people and appeared to influence much of their early difficulties
- **Poor and low self esteem:** was an issue for 8 of the young people who believed that this had led to a lack of confidence and an inability to stand up to peer pressure earlier in their adolescence
- **Attitudes and beliefs about aggression and crime:** was identified as an issue for 6 of the young people who when younger thought criminal behaviour was a 'normal' part of their family and peer lifestyle.

- **Cultural discrimination:** was raised by each of the young people who identified as being from an Aboriginal or other culturally diverse background. They reported that bullying and harassment played a part in their early school leaving and their eventual involvement in criminal behaviour
- **Unstable accommodation / homelessness:** was an issue for 5 of the young people who had been homeless at some stage before being incarcerated. This includes two young people who had stayed in SAAP services for a short period and three who had lived rough, had 'couch surfed' and had been in and out of youth refuges. These young people reported that they began committing crime or increased their criminal behaviour after becoming homeless or being housed in supported accommodation
- **Low finances:** Eight of the young people mentioned that they and / or their family had experienced financial difficulties before entering the system. Five young people talked about how they had committed crime to pay for things that they wanted because they could not otherwise afford them, including two who committed crime to pay for their alcohol or other drug habit.
- **Disability:** Two of the young people reported having a learning disability which they believed influenced school leaving and their involvement with criminal behaviour

Young people could identify multiple challenges and felt that the interplay of these challenges led them to commit progress and sustain their criminal behaviour. A table summarising the presence and coexistence of risk factors can be found in **Error! eference source not found.**

3.2 Understanding the extent and nature of protective factors

As discussed above it is only quite recently that researchers have shown that particular protective and compensatory factors significantly reduce the impact of risk factors for particular groups of young people. For example, having positive peer groups, good educational performance and effectively using leisure time has been shown to buffer the effects of family conflict and poor parental functioning, particularly for younger offenders (Hoge et al., 1996).

Protective factors such as personal (e.g. feeling happy, believing they get on with others), familial (e.g. having structure and rules within their households, family support and guidance, and few siblings), social (peer selection, having many rather than few friends) and academic (such as positive attitudes toward school rules and authority) are seen to play an important role in decreasing recidivism. (Carr & Vandiver, 2001, p424)

Recognising the value of such protective and compensatory factors is therefore vital in better understanding and responding to the needs of young people prior to and after their engagement in juvenile detention. The young people in this study identified a number of protective factors that they believed existed in their lives prior to and after their time in detention. It is important to note (as has been done in the literature) that some of the factors that might be considered risky (i.e. peer groups) can also be considered protective at different times in a young person's life. As such there is some cross over between those identified under 'risk factors' and those under 'protective factors'.

Some of the protective factors that were identified included:

- **Positive adult role models:** assisted 6 of the young people who valued having adults outside of their families who could assist them in times of difficulty
- **Formal connections to services:** were present for 6 of the young people although their involvement seemed to be short-lived and limited

- **Informal connections to the community:** were only present for 3 of the young people who reported being involved in sporting activities
- **Skills and talents:** were identified by 5 of the young people as having a protective affect earlier in the childhoods. 3 of the young people, however reported that these skills and talents (for skating, music etc) were 'dropped' when they began their involvement in crime
- **Positive identity:** helped minimise the pressures for 5 of the young people
- **Positive attitudes and beliefs:** including feelings of remorse, responsibility and positive views of the future was identified by 5 of the young people
- **Hopes and aspirations:** existed for 10 of the 11 young people, with most having dreams about who they wanted to be and what they wanted to become
- **Constructive use of time:** was enjoyed by 5 young people who reported that being involved in activities kept them from committing crime
- **Stable accommodation:** was available to 8 of the young people who believed that even when homeless they had somewhere to stay if they needed it
- **Financial stability:** was only identified as having a protective affect by one of the young people (although 5 did not talk about this aspect of their lives at all)
- **Cultural identity:** was valued by four of the six young people who identified as being Aboriginal or otherwise coming from a culturally diverse background

Young people could identify multiple protective factors that they believed positively influenced their early behaviour. However, they also recognised that the many risk factors that were also present in their lives often countered their positive influence. A table summarising the presence and coexistence of protective factors can be found in **Error! Reference source not found..**

3.3 The Needs Principle: responding to risks most likely to change

As noted elsewhere, many young people with small numbers of risks and / or high numbers of protective factors 'grow out' of crime and return to the community with some success. These young people are those the 'what works' literature argues are not in need of significant intervention. By sustaining them in the juvenile justice system is both ineffective and potentially counter-productive as they continue to grapple with the stigma and to develop the label of 'delinquent' unnecessarily.

Realising this and the strong influence that risk factors have on a young person's behaviour, good practice would include the early identification of young people's risk factors so that assistance prior to their engagement in criminal behaviour can be given. This early intervention would avoid the long-term negative and costly impacts for the young person, their families and the system (Day et al., 2003).

An effective assessment of risk should not be restricted to prioritising and targeting services to those most at-risk but should also respond to specific *needs* related to those risks. The Needs Principle indicates that the most effective rehabilitation efforts are focused on the most influential risk factors, but those most likely to change through intervention (Day et al., 2004). As noted in the previous section, some risk factors are static and some are dynamic and it is these dynamic risks (criminogenic needs) that should be resolved through rehabilitation for it to be effective.

Day et al, describe a list of criminogenic needs for young people who have already committed crime at the individual, familial and educational level. These are summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Criminogenic needs of young offenders

Potential criminogenic needs of young offenders				
Individual	Poor problem-solving	Beliefs about aggression	Poor social	Low self-esteem
	Lack of empathy	Alienation	Impulsivity	Ineffective use of leisure time
Familial	Substance abuse	Conduct problems	Non-severe pathology	
	Current physical or sexual abuse	Significant family problems	Frequent changes in out-of-home care placements	
Educational	Poor attachment to school	School failure	Bullying	Deviant peer group

The following section explores aspects of these criminogenic needs in relation to family, peers and educational experiences and the influence that a young person's AOD use has on their behaviours including their criminal behaviour.

4. Family

Families play an important part in the lives of young people and can either protect them from future criminality or not, depending on the levels of family functioning and support.

In a 2003 study, Brown, Killian and Evans found, for example, that "a family that can communicate well, solve problems, provide affective responsiveness, and regulate behaviour can help recently released adolescents be successful" (p536). They found that such young people were more likely to be optimistic about their futures and less likely to re-engage with negative behaviours. Other studies suggest that parents who are able to spend time with young people can reduce delinquency by limiting opportunities for misbehaviour, for modelling positive law-abiding roles and in limiting the young person's association with deviant peer groups (See: Perkins-Dock, 2001).

Although families can positively affect young people's lives and reduce recidivism, it is important to note that they can also negatively influence them.

4.1 How families influence young people

Families protect young people

Young people in this study overwhelmingly stressed how important families are in their lives. Firstly, they believed that at key moments parents and siblings kept them from participating in crime and from progressing to more serious criminal behaviour:

My Mum and my brother. My brother isn't a support person but he makes sure I'm not doing anything bad".

[Support] My sister and my best mate. Always kept telling me 'don't do this, don't do that' but me, I'm too stubborn.

A number of the young people reported that having siblings and their own children also kept them from participating in crime – they shared that they wanted to be good role models, to be able to spend time with their loved ones and to share positive experiences together. When separated, young people grieved the loss of opportunities to spend time with these people and identified that this motivated them to 'keep their nose[s] clean next time':

Having a little brother – makes me not want to do anything wrong. I want to be a good role model for 'em.

*[What's it been like in here?] F**ked. I can't wait to get out. I've missed my son's life. I really wanna get out to be with him. I've been pretty much locked up for his whole life.*

Analysis of all of the interviews with parents, agency workers and support persons identified that families are considered extremely influential in the lives of the young people. Parents discussed the many strategies that they had used to help the young

person both before and post incarceration. Employment, counselling, money and transport were some of the more practical supports that families provided, however families also discussed the time and commitment that they gave to the young person by attending meetings, visiting them during incarceration, going to court and generally providing emotional support.

Risks associated with family

Although families can positively affect young people's lives and reduce recidivism, they can also negatively influence them. Family 'dysfunction' is a predictive factor for criminal behaviour and incarceration, while physical abuse and aggressive and harsh discipline experienced during childhood increases the likelihood of a young person committing violent crimes in later life. Childhood neglect resulting from family disruption or stress can increase the risk of delinquency by around 40% (Perkins-Dock, 2001).

Most young people in this study came from families who lived with a range of internal and external pressures. In some instances, young people saw a direct relationship between their family's experiences of poverty, of family discord and dislocation and their criminality. However, most were reluctant to suggest that these factors directly led to their criminal behaviour. They argued, instead, that they were solely responsible for their situation and believed that they should not use their family background as an excuse for their behaviour, as demonstrated in this example:

The first time I got locked up It was pretty stupid... With the influence of other people, but I did it. No one forced me to do it...

This young person recalled that on the day in question his parents were involved in a domestic violence dispute and that it was during this dispute that he committed a crime that he knew he would be caught committing. He shared that he hoped that

the police might come around (as they had done when his older sister had been in trouble) and that this would make his father stop bashing his mother.

In the first interview, the young person reflected that this strategy for dealing with family pressures continued beyond the first period of incarceration and had almost become a learned behaviour:

When I [next got in trouble] my family [had] started to fall apart. My sisters got put in Family Services and stuff like that. That's when I went and did the taxi. I think that played a big part in it. I was just so upset and that... I went 'screw it all'.

Other young people talked about how other events influenced their decision to commit crime, or more accurately, to change their minds about not committing crime. One young man, for example, talked about how he had resisted pressure from friends and extended family member and had not participated in crime because he had seen the destructive impact that his cousin's criminality had had on his extended family. However, he observed that due to the death of a family member, the impending family pressure and his own grief, his commitment to desisting crime diminished and he got involved as a way of 'escaping' from life's challenges:

I didn't have much [criminal behaviour] going down. After my [family member] died I took care of my Mum for a while before I started getting in trouble, mixing with the wrong crowd... I got caught up with mates who were doing the same kinds of stuff then I got in here [Quamby]... It was cos I just didn't care anymore.

Analysis of the interviews with workers and support people finds that the majority of families are identified as 'risks' rather than as protective in their relationship with the young person. Workers generally consider families as a problem in that they sabotage interventions; manipulate workers and young people for their own benefit;

do not possess skills or knowledge to protect the young person or provide a safe environment pre or post incarceration.

Support people also acknowledged the risks that families present to young people. Unstable accommodation, child abuse and neglect, chaotic lifestyles, poor attachment and crime perpetrated by other family members are all events that support people had either witnessed or been told about by the young person.

Both NGO and statutory workers identified significantly more risk factors concerning families than they did protective factors with mental health, drug and alcohol, intergenerational family dysfunction and familial criminal behaviour being the most frequently identified risk factors.

Family Loyalty

Despite the often serious consequences of the harm that young people experience within their family, support people reported that the young person's love and loyalty for their family endured. However support people and workers were also of the opinion that this 'loyalty' also presented as a risk for the young person.

In order for young people to 'go straight', some of the support people thought that the young person's loyalty to their family needed to be redirected. To have any hope of changing their behaviour, young people needed to remove themselves from entrenched family issues and without doing this, support people indicated, that there could be no hope for the young person. This was because many families were seen to be either colluding with the young person or the cause of the young person's behaviour:

Like with all these families there are too many secrets, there were other things happening in the family. It's really hard to penetrate this. Mum was always really careful with what she said, she wasn't always honest. It was quite

evident that mum had been covering up for him for her own advantage – you were never going to make changes with him (Support person)

Family conflict

The parents interviewed indicated significant family conflict occurring between the young person and their parent and, less frequently, between the young person and their siblings prior to incarceration. They felt this conflict was often caused by the young person not meeting their expectations, not responding to reasonable requests or the impact of the young person's criminal behaviour.

As well as family conflict, parents also identified that during the lead up to their child's incarceration they had experienced a great deal of stress. This stress came from a number of sources; their other children's criminal activity, drug use and care and protection issues. Families felt that this had negatively impacted their relationship with the young person and their capacity to support them. Added to this, families discussed that not knowing where the young person might be, the young person 'being in trouble all the time' and watching their child change due to their use of drugs was particularly difficult and added to the conflict already experienced at home.

Experience with the Care and Protection System

Young people who have had multiple placements in out of home care are also at greater risk of committing further crime post release. In a recent study, Abrams and others suggest that this may be because these young people are more vulnerable and because they are more likely to face disappointments and challenges that impede not only their successful reintegration but also their capacity to mature into independence. They argue that this is due to the instability in family structure and living situations and the resulting increased transition stress and disruption caused by the absence of a stable adult in their lives (Abrams 2008).

Four of the young people felt that their criminal behaviour was as a result either being taken into care or leaving home early where they had met other young people with whom they committed crime. One young person, for example, reflected that his involvement with the juvenile justice system began when he was 12 after his mother 'kicked' him out of home and began to progress as he spent more time in youth refuges and then at Quamby. He believed that if he had been placed in a secure foster placement earlier his criminal behaviour would have ceased or, at least, been reduced significantly:

They put me in foster care but not till I was nearly 15. It was too late, I was already in the pattern, I'd already done a committal... Mum didn't have me.

I was in refuges: Beleden, Lasa, Marlow, Outreach... They weren't trying [to find me a place], but they just dumped me... That's what they should do with people who are in Family Services, get them into a foster family real quick or get them out of Canberra... In the long run, the kids gonna say 'thankyou' cos they've got a new life and they're not in it.

I know that heaps of kids who've been taken out of Canberra have done real good. At that age, there's a pattern that starts to happen and that's when you got to stop it, pull 'em out of that life, you know... Canberra's a small town, there's not much to do so people get into stuff. Steal stuff, get into crime, get into fights, robberies happen, all that stuff.

A number of support workers also identified that if care and protection services had acted earlier and removed young people at a younger age then the outcomes for may have been different.

To be brutally honest if Mum was taken out of the picture from an early age then he would have been OK and proof of that is his sibling.

Workers also identified that care and protection services' involvement usually meant that the young person received more support and funding. One family identified care and protection as helpful when their child had absconded and reported that they were instrumental in helping to find the young person and supporting the young person's return home. However a number of young people (five of the seven young people who had been clients of Care and Protection services) and their workers also stated that they believed that young people referred to care and protection services did not always benefit from involvement in the service. They believed that sometimes care and protection services did not provide adequate support to the young person. They believed that this was due to a lack of staff to manage the number of cases that required assistance and sometimes because the range of responses that were available to them were not always appropriate or responsive.

Families and key support workers who engaged directly with families felt that their views were not always taken into account and that the approaches that care and protection services took to working with their young people were not conducive to positive outcomes. For example, one support person reported that after an altercation with a young person a foster carer requested that care and protection come to help the family resolve the conflict. The support person said that care and protection requested that the family place the young person in a taxi and send him to a residential care facility. They felt that this did not help resolve the family's issues but instead placed the young person in an environment where he felt even more vulnerable. The irony of the situation was that the young person was returned to the family within a matter of weeks.

Family criminality

Research in Australia and abroad shows that young people who have family members (particularly parents) who commit crime are more likely to engage in criminal behaviour than others (National Crime Prevention 2000; Murray 2007). One NSW study found that 11% of juveniles in detention had a parent in prison on the day

of the survey and that 40% had a parent who had been in prison at some time in the past (NSW Department of Juvenile Justice 2003). Other studies have shown that a sibling's engagement in criminal activity has a significant influence during a young person's early adolescence and that is greater than during earlier stages in childhood (Farrington in Perkins-Dock, 2001).

In addition to being more likely to commit crime, young people with criminal relatives are also at greater risk of experiencing a plethora of other negative psychosocial outcomes including poor mental health, increased behavioural issues, poor educational outcomes and an impaired ability to overcome future trauma (see for example Murray, Janson et al. 2007; Murray and Farrington 2008; National Crime Prevention 2000.) Each of these outcomes have shown to influence criminality and may, therefore, exacerbate and prolong their engagement in crime.

Seven of the twelve young people in the study said they had a parent, an older sibling or an extended family member who engaged in criminal behaviour. Although they were often reluctant to suggest that their family member's criminality caused their own criminal behaviour they did believe, that because of their early exposure to crime, they grew to see it as a normal experience and were more likely to participate than others who did not see it in this way. Some of the young people expressed respect and admiration for their incarcerated older siblings or parents and participated in crime because it was something that they could have in common, while others reported that their relatives actively encouraged them to participate in criminal behaviours together:

My older brother, he got done for armed robbery and that. He's on the run...

The second oldest... was in here for two years and then got out and went back in for another two years. My oldest... has been at Goulburn jail for three years. He got out three years ago. He's out now.

My older brother he was in and shit. He was in for 22 months and that was the main reason I got into it. To be like him.

It was just part of our family, everyone was getting into it. It wasn't like we were all doing it together all the time, its just that you don't see it as a big thing like other kids do. It was just what happened in our family.

A number of the young people recognised that having family members who engaged in and normalised crime was problematic and that they themselves were therefore a risk for their younger siblings. As a result, some of these young people actively distanced themselves from their brothers and sisters, hoping to deflect them away from the criminal lifestyle:

I don't hang out with family much. I hang out with my older brother but not the younger ones because I don't want to be a bad influence. My older brother has done some stuff.... My Mum is really pissed off and shit. She understands why my older brother gets in crime because his dad has been in and out of jail. My dad works and everything and stuff and my older brother he used to be my role model and shit and that's why I got into crime. But with my little brothers, that's why I don't see them that much so that I can make sure that they're good.

Like my brother's been in here and then gone to adults'(prison) and I'm worried my whole family is going to go that way. We've gotta keep 'em out of here.

No parent interviewed indicated any personal involvement in criminal behaviour that may have influenced the young person; however they did discuss older siblings' criminal activity and the affect that this had on the young person. Parents believed that by getting 'caught up' in sibling's criminal activities and friendship groups, the

young person was encouraged to commit crime, assist siblings criminal exploits and have access to and use of alcohol and other drugs.

Crime perpetrated by parents is identified in interviews with support people. Parents with a long term criminal history were seen to involve their children in some way.

*Mum was a huge influence on his offending. Mum has an extensive criminal history herself and has coached the children in criminal behaviours. She used to use the children as decoys and look outs for her own criminal offending.
(Support person)*

Support people who were 'YJ workers' said that they had worked with other members of the family, usually siblings and very often this is how they had got to know the young person participating in this research.

I knew his older sibling from being in custody – I didn't really know much about his family but I knew his two older siblings in the system (Support person)

Having prior knowledge about the family's criminal history and functioning, whilst useful for some workers also presented as a risk for the young person. One worker acknowledged that they had engaged in a relationship with the young person based upon beliefs developed from previous contact with the young person's family and siblings. The worker reflected that they had assessed the young person's ability to stop offending and rehabilitate on the outcomes achieved by their siblings already in the system.

A lot of the kids when they get older move out of it, but a lot of the time they don't and if they are entrenched in it like X then they are just stuck there and there's no hope . I think X because of the influence of his brother and the way his siblings have gone – there is no hope. (Support person)

Young people were also aware of this, believing that workers and the police often scrutinised them for no apparent reason:

*When I first came in here, they knew about my Mum and they kept saying to me and my sister, "We're gonna get you, we're gonna get you". They used to say this, and I'd be going "F**k you, dog, you ain't gonna get shit on us".*

Family mental health and alcohol or other drug issues

Having a parent with either a mental health or an alcohol or other drug issue can present young people with a broad range of challenges and difficulties and, that alongside a number of related and intersecting issues (such as poverty and social exclusion) can lead to a number of poor psychosocial outcomes (Moore, 2005; Odyssey Institute of Studies, 2004)

Five of the young people in this study said that their parent had an alcohol or other drug issue *and* a mental health condition. They reported that their parents most often used marijuana or alcohol but in a small number of cases also used heroin, ice and prescription drugs. They shared that their parent's mental health conditions included anxiety and depression and psychosis.

As with other aspects of their lives, the causal link between these parental issues and the young person's own criminality and, in fact, their own mental health and drug and alcohol issues was not clearly understood or articulated by the young people. However many felt that these issues had some impact on their home situation and may have influenced their criminal behaviour.

For some of these young people, having a parent with a mental illness and / or a drug or alcohol issue meant that their parent was not always able to 'look out' for them as children and were not always approachable when the young people needed support.

Other young people talked about how having a family member with an alcohol or other drug issue also influenced their own use. They observed that the way that other family member's viewed alcohol and other drugs, and whether they encouraged or failed to discourage young people from using early in their lives

influenced when, how much and what type of drug they used. As we will see in the following section, many of the young people in this study began using drugs and alcohol early in their lives and felt that this early drug use influenced how and why they committed crime.

As a parent's mental health or drug issue affected the young person's criminal behaviour, so did the young person's criminal behaviour affect their parent's mental health or drug issue. Three young people believed strongly that their parents had developed depression and anxiety as the result of having multiple children with challenging behaviours and that this had got worse when they entered the juvenile justice system:

That's cos we do crimes and she gets all worried and upset and stuff and she uses it so she doesn't have a nervous breakdown and shit cos of us kids. She doesn't touch pot or nothing, she doesn't believe in that shit, but it [alcohol] helps her through, you know.

No parent identified a mental health issue, although two parents did describe experiencing 'incredible' stress and sadness about their children's criminal behaviour and how this put pressure on other relationships and on other areas of their life. No parent identified drugs or alcohol as an issue for them either, however one parent did allude to their own drug taking by identifying that their child had taken stuff that they 'hadn't even tried before.'

Contrary to the parent interviews, NGO's, Quamby, CYJ and support people did identify parents' mental health issues and their use of alcohol and drugs as significant risk factors for many children and young people. However for the young people participating in this study workers mostly identified siblings as having difficulties with these issues rather than parents.

Family poverty

Research has shown that poverty can have a significant impact on the lives of young people and place them at risk of a series of poor outcomes including increased engagement in criminal behaviour (Ludwig, Duncan, & Hirschfield, 2001; Weatherburn & Lind, 1998). This might be because increased stress on the family may reduce parent's capacity to effectively parent or supervise their children; because families are less likely to afford things which lead to young people's offending or because young people in clusters of families living in poverty are more likely to be exposed to criminal behaviour and antisocial groups than others (Weatherburn & Lind, 1998; White, 2003)

The majority of young people identified as coming from families on low income. The data collected in the interviews with workers and support people illustrates that young people in low income families are particularly disadvantaged in their ability to participate in and around their community and in their ability to obtain family support.

Families and workers also report that support for the young people is also jeopardised in families on low income, as often parents are working in low paid jobs that they cannot afford or are unable to take leave from. This compromises a parent's ability to attend meetings, court, transport the young person and fundamentally provide support to young person on release.

One parent described how being employed as a casual meant she would receive a call and would have to be at work within half an hour. She said that she could not afford to turn down work and therefore she could not be relied on by her son to take him to supervision. However she recognised that if she didn't take him then he probably would not get there and be breached. A number of the young people in the study reported that they sometimes committed crime because their families couldn't afford things such as clothing, entertainment (i.e. computer games) and

KEY FINDINGS: risk and protective factors related to families

- Young people generally regarded their families positively and valued their ongoing support
- However, many of the young people identified a range of family-related risks that may have influenced their criminal behaviour. These included:
 - Family criminal behaviour
 - Family alcohol or other drug misuse
 - Family conflict and breakdown
 - Parental mental health
 - Family poverty
- Many of the young people identified multiple risks within their family context that appeared to interact with each other
- Young people did not believe that these factors caused their criminal behaviour but, instead, identified that they existed alongside and may have furthered their involvement in risk-taking and criminal activity.

music. They felt that other young people had these things and that because their parents could not afford to buy them that they needed to commit crime. Although not stated, two of the young people alluded to the fact that they stole money to help their family pay for basic essentials such as food and clothing.

4.2 The value of family involvement during incarceration

Young people often identified family as the key support during their periods of detention and reflected that family members were often the only people from the outside world who maintained contact with them throughout their stay, providing

them with encouragement and support. Young people talked about how they valued these visits and about how other residents would be excited for them when they came into the Centre:

My Mum she usually comes to visit me... Just my Mum and sometimes my sisters... No workers, no. No one like that comes in.

He [Dad] comes to see me all the time, every second day. It's a big help.

*Seeing your family is number one. Hectically. Fair enough your friends can't come in because of the rules and stuff. But when you're family doesn't come in, it really f**kin brings you down. I'm saying when the family comes, it's really cool. Everyone gets really excited for you. They're like 'yeah yeah yeah, mad, mad, I wish my Mum'd come in'. We encourage each other. It's good like that.*

However, a number of young people felt that the family visits were difficult, particularly when their parents became upset or expressed the sadness they felt because their child was in prison. Many reported feeling significant shame and regret and, in some cases, asked family members to stop visiting because they could not handle the guilt that they experienced knowing that their families were suffering as a result of their behaviours: or they did not believe they could cope. Instead these young people said that they 'battled along alone' disconnecting themselves from family as a coping mechanism.

I don't like people seeing me in here. They went through stuff. Two times she [my Mum] came in and she cried and shit and that made me feel bad.

[When I get out I'm going to stay at home] Look after my brother. He keeps me distracted. He's only 4. He doesn't really understand it. It's screwed up to see his face when he walks in a place like this. My sister understands it. She hates

*it. She gets over it and comes in here but it f**ks up our relationship. She looks at me different. I wanna just go on with life and not do anything wrong.*

Although often unsuccessful, young people talked about how their love for their families and the thought of upsetting them was a key motivating factor for them:

I love my Mum, so I'm keeping out of trouble for her. I don't want Mum to be visiting me in a couple of years in Goulburn or Brisbane. So I'm going to try my best for her.

Impact of incarceration on families

For some families incarceration is what happens for young people and that it is just another life event. There is an acceptance of the consequences and whilst the family would like some things to be different they did not articulate significant affects of the young person's incarceration. Other families reported that they had experienced a number of significant effects from the young person's incarceration.

Relief: - Parents spoke of the relief that they had felt when the young person was incarcerated. Incarceration meant they no longer had to worry about where the young person was and what they were up to.

When he's in it's a great relief, you can relax. When he's in jail – it's like thank goodness he's out of trouble. Otherwise he would have been doing all those robberies up in Gungahlin - that was his mates. Everyday you are looking in the papers for stories of the eighteen year old. People who don't have kids in jail just don't understand it (Support person).

Parents also advised how relieved they were that Quamby enabled the young person to detox and maintain a drug free existence whilst they were in and provided education to enable them to get work on their release.

I thought he was much better in Quamby, he was clean. He was better physically and mentally. He was getting positive affirmations from staff and he was in an educational program. It's like a compulsory vocational training

centre. He was much better off inside than out here. He got his year 10 which was a relief for the family because he could apply for jobs. (Support person)

Disappointment: - As a result of the young person's incarceration, parents felt disappointment with both the young person and the system. One parent described how disappointed she is with her son and how there is a lack of trust that now characterises their relationship.

He was saying he was going to come home and everything was going to be fine and it's all positive, but you're caught, because you want to say 'listen mate you're stuffing it up. You're stealing cars and hurting people' and I'm just caught. (Support person)

Disappointment derived from systems failure was evident amongst all families. Families felt let down by services that had 'given up' or had 'dropped off' working with the young person. They also felt that services responded inappropriately at times:

The system has worked against us. Imagine having your fourteen year old saying they were going to leave home and just when they needed some firm boundaries and consistency Centrelink offer to give him \$150 a week and a room at a refuge, where he met goodness knows who. When he turned eighteen they gave him \$6000 that he blew in five days on drugs. He could have overdosed. (Support person)

Broken Relationships: The effect of incarceration on family relationships is also identified by families. Lost relationships between siblings occur because of the length of the young person's incarceration or the number and frequency of the incarcerations. Parents also stated that they did not want siblings to maintain close relationships with each other because of the potential negative influence.

Relationships between partners are also affected. The parents that were interviewed are a mixture of sole parent and couple headed families. Couple families identified that the young person's offending and incarceration had placed a great strain on their marriage. Often it was the female parent who was left to support the young person as the male parent had either 'washed their hands of him' or just didn't provide the support that their partner wanted.

For a long time it's been a strain on our marriage. My partner isn't that supportive. A long time ago X took his hands off the wheel. He can't do this. (Support person)

We have a good relationship but he and his Dad don't get on. His Dad thought that he would have learnt from his older brothers mistakes (Support person)

Shame: Although parents did not directly speak about the shame associated with having an incarcerated child, a number of the young people shared that their families felt ashamed of their situation and sometimes felt that the system believed that it was because of their failures as parents that the child ended up that way. This seemed to be a particular issue for those young people from a culturally diverse background.

Families engagement during incarceration

The majority of parents and support people who had contact with the young person whilst in Quamby reported that Quamby staff had facilitated continued contact and as a result felt connected with their child whilst incarcerated.

I went and saw him but the only thing that upset the apple cart so to speak is that I wouldn't be in with his wanting me to take him cigarettes and stuff. I would take him lollies and soft drinks. We would sit and talk for about an hour (Support person)

They said that their engagement with their child was limited as was their involvement with the planning processes around their child's release. Review of the

case files found that few case conference minutes recorded the attendance of parents at case planning meetings and parental involvement in any case planning appeared to be mostly instigated by the parents.

Only two of the families attended case conferences with one family not recalling being invited to any case conference whilst their child was at Quamby and another choosing not to attend.

Sometimes X (young person) would call me and ask me to come and meet them. I didn't go to those big group meetings they had – don't really know why. (Support person)

Another family recalled that they had had to actively seek out contact with Quamby case management staff to ensure they remained engaged.

We would be the one actively seeking contact, we would be phoning up Quamby. I don't think they ever called us. We don't know what went on. They might have said ring your mum and dad. We just don't know what went on inside.

Many highlighted a series of organisational barriers that made this ongoing contact and involvement difficult. These included:

- **Difficulty in accessing**

For some families getting to Quamby was problematic because they had to work, because of the extra cost of getting to the Centre for contact visits, or because of poor transport options. However all families identified that they would try to visit at least once a week.

- **Families engagement not formally built into case planning**

The case workers from Quamby also noted that during periods of incarceration, the engagement of families was limited to their formal involvement in case conference meetings. They reported that even this was limited because they sometimes forgot

to invite families until it was too late, because they did not have the time or resources to organise parent's participation or because they were unable to contact parents to invite them to participate. Although parents sometimes had considerable interactions with operations staff, it was felt that their engagement in identifying needs and planning for reintegration was not at an optimal level.

- **Family's lack of awareness about the planning process**

One young person directly requested their parent's participation however involvement for the others was limited due to either their lack of awareness of the planning process or limited contact with Quamby staff. Exit planning meeting minutes recorded a higher number of parents attending however parents' reflection of their involvement and their knowledge of the plan was limited. All parents described themselves as being unhappy with the transition process.

- **Procedural issues**

The level of ongoing engagement with families during periods of incarceration also seemed to be mitigated by a number of organisational procedures that restricted their access. In one instance, for example, a grandmother and other family members were not granted permission to visit a detainee on his birthday because it was not his day for visits.

Young people also reported some frustration because they were not encouraged to maintain relationships with siblings who had also been involved in the youth justice system. One young man, in particular, said that this was detrimental because he saw the relationship as being important for his mental health. He believed that his brother was the only real link that he had to his broader family because they were unable to visit regularly as they lived in other parts of the country.

- **Case planning and implementation is not family focussed**

Parents reported and workers acknowledged that the case planning process was not particularly family-friendly, sensitive or focused. As has been noted, families were often viewed as being risky rather than a possible resource for young people. As such, families reported feeling excluded from planning processes and their needs and wishes ignored when planning occurred.

Conversely, young people felt that the system failed to recognise the positive affect their families had on them and the resources that they could provide. For example, three young people talked about extended family members who lived out of Canberra who they believed could accommodate them post-release who were not contacted or invited to participate in any decision-making. They believed that this was a significant oversight and one that led to them being inappropriately supported. When the family of one young man asserted the positives for this young man leaving town (and paid for him to do so) positive outcomes were achieved – even though they remarked that the system was resistant for him to leave the jurisdiction and was reluctant to change the young man’s bail conditions to allow this to occur.

It would appear that both government and non-government services failed to adequately consider the needs of families in service planning or delivery. As such, families felt disempowered and ill-informed about what had been organised for their child and consequently unable to help these organisations help their children. This lack of engagement with families seems to occur because services see themselves as primarily responsible for the young person and engages them as ‘the primary client’ and because they have not allocated resources to working with families holistically. This approach has been challenged recently by Jesuit Social Services who advocate that youth services adopted what they refer to as “Family-Aware” service delivery which recognises the fundamental role that families can play in the lives of young people and the fact (which was echoed by young people in this study) that young people will most often turn to their families for support when experiencing difficulty (See: Robinson & Pryor, 2006).

KEY FINDINGS: Families experiences during periods of incarceration

- **Young people identified that families were often the only support that they were provided during periods of incarceration and highly valued their ongoing support**
- **However, a number of factors limited their involvement. These include:**
 - **Accessibility to the Centre**
 - **Limited capacity (i.e. time and staff) for Quamby to engage families**
 - **Family's lack of awareness about how to engage with the planning process (even that a planning process occurs)**
 - **Organisational procedures that restrict family access**
 - **The services fails to adopt a family focussed approach**
- **Families were often affected by their young people's incarceration (both positively and negatively). Some of the affects included:**
 - **Feelings of relief**
 - **Feelings of disappointment**
 - **Family relationship strain and breakdown**
 - **Feelings of shame**

4.3 Families post release

Young people stressed the important role that families played through their transitions and reintegration back into the community. On re-entry into the community, a number felt that it was their parents and their families (rather than their formal workers) who most helped them steer clear of risky situations, deal with their temptation to reoffend and manage their time:

I dunno where I'd be without my family, you know. Because they really help me. Like last night she [my sister] told me, like if she wasn't here I would've forgotten that you were coming. She goes 'remember that he's coming tomorrow' and I went 'oh yeah, I'd full on forgotten'. That's what I'm saying, you know, my family's important.

And Dad's gone in and got it all ready. He's put in a queen size bed in there for me. Set thing up for me, got me an x-box, dvd player and everything. Sorted it out.

They put me in the right direction too, encourage me, talk to me. My Dad's not really much of a talker. So like, we don't have that kind of relationship. But it's still good.

Parents also tended to help their children find jobs, get involved in sports and community activities and stick to their reasonable directions. Although young people sometimes felt overwhelmed by these family members constant monitoring, they also appreciated the fact because it reflected the fact that their families were committed to keeping them safe and out of trouble's way.

When I get out I'm going to go work with my Dad. He's not the boss but he works with someone else. That'll be set up – but by my Dad. He'll handle it for me.

My Dad said to me 'you've got your work to do, finish your apprenticeship, hang around at home and if you go out go with your brother and his mates

and people will have to deal with it, forget about it, and you can get on with your own life'.

Although this engagement was often considerable, it would appear that the service system had limited involvement with families.

Cultural

Young people highlighted how the challenges that face families post-release were often exacerbated by cultural issues. The Pacific Islander boys, for example, talked about how there was not a juvenile justice system in their traditional communities and that responding to a young person's offending was both a community and family responsibility.

Yeah, it's like if one guy, a son, gets in trouble in a family and the family has a breakdown. They all go, 'OK, What do we do from there?'

The young people reported that unlike 'back home', family members felt quite disengaged from the process and for cultural and language-based reasons often found it difficult to understand:

My Dad comes from a different culture and he doesn't know to act with this kind of thing... And you deal with it different, like in the community not like the way it's done here.

Parents don't know what to do because it's so different to what happened when they were growing up.

No, I dunno. My Mum just thinks that YJ is being this place you just have to report to. She doesn't really understand it, what's actually happening. She just thinks you have to report there and come back home, once a week or something. She doesn't know that I have to report to things, like there's conditions or that I'll be sent back if I'm not doing it properly.

Young people from Aboriginal and Islander backgrounds reported that their families experienced significant shame when the children were involved in the juvenile justice system and that workers needed to know that it was often more difficult for their families to be involved in the system.

*That's what people don't understand. In culture, when you go out on the street, you're out and about you're not just f**king up for yourself – you've got a name that you've got to carry on. You've got to think about it. You're not f**king up your own name, you're putting your whole family into it, and everyone caught up with the name. That's what I think, anyway. There's more pressure.*

They believed that it would be helpful to have specific Aboriginal and other workers and 'supporters' from culturally diverse backgrounds employed to liaise with their families and communities to help them navigate their way through the system.

I think it would be heaps better if there was an Islander worker who can explain things to families. Cos at the moment they don't get it, don't know what to do.

For my Mum, the way she deals with it, her sister, she lives over on Northside. She's really good with Islander culture and that. She's really good, she understands English and Australian culture. My Mum usually goes over there and talks to her about whatever. And they talk and Mum comes back and knows what to do.

Young people also valued the opportunity to be linked with workers from a similar cultural background as themselves both during incarceration and then back into the community.

It's been alright in here. There's some workers who sit down with you and shit, talk about what you want to do with your life and shit. I've got this other worker who

*came in the other day. He's Aboriginal worker for Aboriginals. And he's f**kin awesome! Talking about my life and stuff and how I'm letting crime f**k it up and stuff.*

Half way through this project Quamby employed an Indigenous worker to support the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and that post-release supervision was provided by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Support Unit. However, due to staffing issues it would appear that there was still limited engagement with Indigenous families through the periods of incarceration and back into the community.

Young people also valued having a culturally diverse staff team at Quamby but noted that these workers were only employed as youth workers and were therefore unable to formally support families or assist young people once they returned to the community. Although this often occurred informally, due to the fact that these workers often shared similar families, community activities and relationships with young people, some more targeted assistance may also be helpful to ensure that the cultural needs of these young people continued to be met throughout the reintegration process.

For a number of families and young people discrimination has become a familiar part of their life. Discrimination identified in this study is perpetrated by a variety of sources including those organizations that are there to support families and young people.

One family described feeling judged and blamed for their young person's behaviour and because of that their involvement in the system was tokenistic. They reported that they were judged for the way they parented their children and how many workers identified their issues as a 'cultural thing'.

So many workers see it as a black /white issue that's why he is as he is – 'it's a cultural thing' no one takes into account the attachment disorder or his background.

4.4 Difficulties young people face in working with families

- ***Families not being available or willing to support***

Although young people generally believed that their families were going to be available to them post-release, this did not always occur either in the short or long term. Some young people found that their home lives were not suitable: were filled with too many risks or where previous conflicts were reignited. They decided to leave home because they didn't believe that they could 'keep out of trouble' when staying with family. Other young people talked about finding, on release, that their parents no longer wanted to be a part of their children's lives and that they were unable to provide them the assistance that they had promised. In both of these instances, young people reported significant frustration and disappointment:

My Mum was here and she said she didn't want to have anything to do with me anymore...I rang my Dad and he said that he felt bad for me but I couldn't go and live with him. Not even for a short time. Both of em had said they'd help me but they're not. It's all too much and I've got no one I can depend on. I'm all alone.

- ***Young people feeling frustrated by parent's involvement***

Although most young people talked about how they understood what their family members were trying to do, they said that they often found their hyper vigilance and lack of understanding frustrating and the cause of ongoing conflict. One young person, for example, talked about his father's frustration regarding his drug use. He reported that his father just didn't understand why he would use the substance, particularly as he had seen how drug use had affected his mother too. He said that for some time he tried to hide his use from his father and that when his father

discovered how much he was using his concerns about how his father would react were confirmed. Adopting a 'tough love' approach, he felt that his father became quite controlling and monitored his every move. He believed that this did not help but only increased his levels of anxiety and eventually led him to leave his home and become homeless. He understood his father's motivations and was actually heartened to know that he cared significantly but felt that if further support was available to them both that more useful strategies for dealing with his drug use could have been adopted.

- ***Young people feeling conflicted about sharing information***

As noted elsewhere, young people felt quite ashamed of their behaviours and sometimes felt that they could not talk to their parents about when they had or were tempted to participate in risky or criminal behaviours. Rather than disappoint their parents, young people reported that they tried to hide their behaviours and temptations and, as a result, recognised that they were missing out on their parent's guidance and support when they needed it the most. This was particularly destructive, with many realising that their parents were the only people around them who could have helped them work through their issues and minimise their crime-taking behaviours. Young people in this study were quite aware of the inherent contradictions and felt that others downplayed or were ignorant of this complexity. As such, being given directions to talk to parents when they felt tempted to use drugs or to commit further offences as a key strategy had limited effectiveness for young people struggling with these competing issues.

4.5 Difficulties families face in supporting their child

Parents, young people and services noted that there were a number of difficulties that families faced when trying to maintain contact and provide ongoing support to young people during their incarceration. These included:

- *Families not knowing what to do*

It appeared that families felt often conflicted about how to best support their children. Young people, workers and parents reflected that one group of parents attempted to express their love and concern for their children by downplaying their child's participation in crime and in colluding with them by lying about their whereabouts or their activities. Others adopted a harm minimisation approach, particularly in regards to alcohol or other drug use, by allowing their children to use drugs or alcohol in their homes and under their watch to make sure that they were not out on the streets committing crime with others. A third group, however, believed that a more forceful approach was required to help their child learn responsibility and to move away from their criminal lives. Some constantly 'checked in' on their children to see where they were and what they were doing (one young person, for example, was called three times during the course of a 90 minute interview) and others rang the police or youth justice when their children broke curfews or when they were aware of further criminal behaviour. Young people reported that parents from each group often felt significant concern and frustration, often 'giving up' when their strategies failed.

Young people had an interesting take on the different approaches that their parents took. Many saw their parent's behaviours as an expression of their love for them. "It must've broken her heart to call the police," reported one young man who stated that although shocked he could understand why his mother might feel that she needed to call:

I think it's better for their parents to ring up and tell them what they've done. That's what my Mum did. All of a sudden, they rock up to your door and 'bang' they lock you up and stuff. I didn't feel bad or nothing, I was just 'yeah, whatever. I know I was gonna get done sometime'... I was real angry to start with but at the same time it made me feel closer to her, just because I know that if she'd do that

for me then she really cares about me, you know. Cos it must be hard for her to call up.

Parents also described how difficult it was to provide their children with emotional support post release, particularly when they were put in the position of monitoring the young person's behaviour:

We kept saying that we didn't want to be the police but they gave him a curfew and basically we were the ones who had to say whether he kept this and do him in. I hated being put in that position and I was the one that had to call up his YJ worker. It made me a police person not a support person. I wanted to support him going back to school but suddenly I had become his welfare officer as well. We wanted to remain the family, the memories, the loving support. We didn't want to be the people making him do all that stuff. (Support person).

- ***Young people's resistance***

Young people also shared that they sometimes chose not to take their parents advice and got involved in risky behaviour nonetheless. They reported that this was particularly the case in their earlier teens when they were more interested in being with their peers than doing what their parents wanted them to do. This attitude is not uncommon amongst young people – with developmental psychology suggesting that during this period young people are more likely to detach from parents and to place more value on peer relationships (Mears & Travis, 2004b). Obviously for this group this detachment had significantly negative impacts:

*He always wanted to be in my life. But I just took off from home, on the run... and he knew I was on the drugs and he wanted to help me. But I didn't want any help. I just kept telling him "get f**ked, get out of my life". Now me Dad's, he's really pleased I'm not getting back on the drugs, you know, he's seen what it's done to me Mum and shit and doesn't want me to do it.*

Parents reported feeling relatively powerless in enforcing their rules or expectations. They observed that when their children were determined to participate in risky behaviours or in breaking their orders there was little that they or the system could do to stop them from doing so. Although the system could breach young people for non-compliance, parents did not believe that this was a disincentive for young people and that it did not change their behaviour. They often felt frustrated and disempowered and felt that they needed other strategies for working with their children.

- ***Worker's perceptions of families***

Whilst parents reported that the contact that they had with the staff was always positive and appreciated the same could not be said for the workers contact with families. Workers generally perceived families to fall into three categories. Families were either 'over the top' in that they contacted Quamby 'incessantly' about their child and thought that they could 'fix' everything; disinterested in that they never attended anything or, those they considered sabotaged any plans put into place.

The way that families engaged with the system also seemed to affect the way that the system responded to the needs of the young person and the family. One worker, for example, identified that if the family was involved with the young person then he was more likely to work more closely with the young person:

Some parents want to be involved and want to know every little thing with their kid and then there are those that don't want to know anything. I think that affects your case management because you know there is someone watching you closely and you make sure everything is done properly – I don't think it's done deliberately – it's just the way. If you have 15 kids that need work – you seem to do a lot more work for the kids who have their parents involved. (Support person)

KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO FAMILIES' EXPERIENCES POST-RELEASE

- Families are the primary source of support to young people after exiting detention.
- However, families felt that they were not always able to support their children effectively because:
 - They were not aware of what they should be doing to support their children
 - Their children were resistant to making change
 - Their relationships with children were strained because of the conflicting role (support vs. supervision)
 - They sometimes had to manage multiple siblings with multiple needs
 - Workers often viewed families negatively and did not actively engage them as a result
- The challenges facing families can be exacerbated for those from culturally diverse backgrounds.

4.6 What could help

- *Effective early response to possible risk factors*

Families in this study had often been engaged with multiple agencies within multiple systems beginning early in the life of the young person. However, it would appear that their involvement with services had often been short-lived and had focused on narrow aspects of a young person's life (i.e. their engagement with education, their care and protection or their behavioural problems) without identifying or responding to their broader needs (including possible criminogenic needs). Because the range of risk factors that existed in the young person's early life and that of their family's were not adequately assessed, interventions appeared to be limited in scope and therefore limited their success. Although young people were reluctant to make a causal link between their family's experiences and their criminality, it would appear that these issues did at least exacerbate or further their involvement.

In talking to families and in reading case files it became clear that many of the families had had early involvement with care and protection services. Although children in these families may not have reached the threshold requiring formal intervention, the opportunity to identify the child and the family as being in need and in providing service support was missed due to a number of administrative and organisational roadblocks. Although the care and protection system has changed markedly in the 10 years gulping the young people's childhoods and today, the need to equip such services to link families to supports that might alleviate the impact of static risks and respond to criminogenic needs continues. Recognising that there are limited resources available to the statutory child protection system, it would seem that families presenting with high criminogenic risks be referred to non-statutory services as a matter of urgency. This may require services to be encouraged to prioritise the needs of these families and to be resourced to provide ongoing assistance.

- *Better engagement of families during incarceration and post-release*

Although families can be a positive support for young people during their incarceration, it would appear that a number of organisational barriers restricted their capacity to do so.

More thorough family assessments would help workers better identify the potential risks but also protective factors and resources that might be built into case planning for the young person's release. In particular, it would appear that identifying positive influences in the young person's families (i.e. aunts and uncles) who could visit the young person through their incarceration and support them back into the community would be helpful if parents are not available or are absent from the young person's life.

As a matter of urgency, the organisational barriers that restrict family's access need to be redressed. For example, it is imperative that adequate public transport options are available to families in times that are accessible and for procedures that limit family's access to be reconsidered (i.e. days that families can visit).

Families' engagement in case planning and delivery should be seen as standard operational procedure and adequate levels of resourcing allocated to ensure that the necessary time to involve families is provided.

A number of young people and workers also suggested that families might best be supported by an external service that provides families with information, advocacy and assistance throughout their engagement with the broader youth justice system.

- *Strengths-based approaches to working with families*

It would appear that although the system purports to adopt a strengths-based approach to working with young people, most government and non government programs fail to recognise the important role that families play and the value that young people place on these. We would therefore advocate for more training and for

the development of tools that capture and build upon the strengths within a young person's ecology, particularly within their families. Ongoing skilled supervision would also help workers reflect on the challenges that they have encountered in assuming a strengths-based approach so that these might be overcome.

- *Family counselling and restoration*

Parents and young people called for more family counselling, mediation and support and argued that this assistance needed to be provided in a respectful and appropriate way if their families were to engage and maintain their involvement for any length of time. Young people felt that this support could assist them in reducing family conflict, in resolving pressing interpersonal issues and in negotiating the way that they might best work together post-release.

Restoring families after periods of incarceration and facilitating positive re-engagement does not appear to occur in the current framework. Although family is often described as an "issue" in case plans, strategies for dealing with any problems that might arise are limited. For example, transition plans might include "to maintain good relationships with families" as a goal for a young person but will only suggest that the young person "be respectful towards mother and stepfather and listen to advice". Although being respectful will undoubtedly help in maintaining relationships with family members, young people felt that some support in being able to raise issues, deal with conflict and find alternatives is also needed. Links with family support agencies and supports such as family group conferencing (which has been shown to be effective in other jurisdictions such as New Zealand) might help facilitate better outcomes.

Two families identified that they would have appreciated some family therapy during the young person's incarceration and after release.

We would argue for some kind of family counselling system once they had settled in Quamby way before transition out: for staff to understand family dynamics. (Support person)

Young people felt that this would be helpful, recognising that their relationships had been quite positive with family members during incarceration because they had time apart, because they didn't experience the stresses of living together and because their parents weren't responsible for them or their behaviours. They were anxious, however, about returning home believing that some of the old unresolved issues might 'flare up' again if processes did not occur to identify and resolve them.

Some young people felt that their families were not able to change and that the best support they could receive, therefore, was assistance in being able to cope in less than conducive environments.

What could help

Our research highlights the need for:

- *More effective early response to possible risk factors*
- *Better engagement of families during incarceration and post-release*
- *Strengths-based approaches to working with families*
- *Family counselling and restoration*

5. Peer groups

Developmental psychology highlights the important role that peers play in the lives of young people, particularly during the early adolescence (Greve, 2001a). Peer bonding meets a range of powerful social needs and can connect young people to a wealth of community resources and opportunities and is particularly valuable when families and communities are unable to provide young people with these basic needs (L. K. Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990).

In their early lives, young people reported that they only had limited positive connections with peers, social groups and networks. In fact only five of the young people could identify peers who had a positive influence on them prior to their first incarceration. Those that did valued these friends, particularly those who were supportive of them over time:

I had this real mate. She stuck by me no matter how sick I am [i.e. how much I was using drugs] ...

However, young people generally talked about being 'loners' and about feeling excluded from school due to bullying and harassment or how, after moving schools they lost contact with 'good mates'.

As will be discussed in subsequent sections, young people did note that they developed positive peer relationships and networks after being released from Quamby (after previous sentences) and felt that these peers had a positive influence on them. Parents and support workers concurred, with each being able to identify a positive peer influence that was available to the young person outside the centre.

5.1 Peers and their negative affect prior to incarceration

Although there are some references to the positive influence that peers can play, the bulk of literature on recidivism recognises that young people's peer groups are 'a considerable potent force' in their lives and can have a significantly negative impact on their criminal behaviour (Cottle, Leil, & Heilbrun, 2001). Recent studies have

suggested, however, that the link between negative peers and criminality is often overstated and that, in fact, the influence of positive peer association can powerfully mitigate against a number of risk factors (Caffray & Schneider, 2000; Quigley, 2004).

Most of the young people told how they got caught up with 'the wrong group' early in their lives (often in late primary school and early high school). They thought that their participation in this friendship group had led to them take part in a range of risk taking behaviours. They shared how this risky behaviour progressed to criminal activity after meeting peers who were part of the 'scene'. They talked about how, at the beginning of these relationships, they were 'good kids' who had not been in trouble with the police, how they began taking other risks (such as drinking alcohol and not attending school) before being exposed to criminal behaviour, encouraged to participate and then escalate their offending with peers.

Young people reported that they often engaged in these activities when other more productive daytime activities were not available. They talked about 'hanging out' at skate parks, in shopping malls and at friend's houses during the day and that when these activities became boring participated in criminal behaviour.

As with other areas, it appeared that the more young people participated in negative behaviours the less likely they were to participate in more pro-social activities. As one young person reflects:

*If I kept skating I would've been good; I was pretty good back then. At thirteen I could do 180 degree 10 stairs, kick flips 6, hill flip 7, all that. I was hard as, man. I was part of the scene, dressed the part as well. Had the jeans: the tight jeans and the tight top cracking, the hat. I was on my way... But then I got caught up with the others and that's basically what happened. I kinda started wishing that I f**kin never went there you know. I kinda wonder what I'd be if I hadn't gone there that day. What I wouldn't've missed out on, you know*

This young person's involvement with crime began after he moved from one side of Canberra and he lost contact with his friends, had to settle into another school and re-establish himself. He reports that this was OK in the short-term but that he started getting in trouble when he started socialising with his cousin and his friends on the other side of town:

I went to a primary school out there then high school. And I was all good, I wasn't doing anything bad. And then one day, I used to be a skater, skate with all my mates. And I went for a skate out there in Belconnen. And that's when I saw my cousin, I hadn't seen him in ages. I'd see him and I go 'wassup' and he goes 'come out with us, come chill with us this Friday at the mall.' 'Why, what's goin on there?'. He goes 'everyone hangs out there, on Friday nights'. So I went out there and I never came back to hang out southside the same...

I just got caught up. Made mates with these people... I got caught up with them mates. From there I started wagging school. Catching the bus all the way out to Northside. The bus interchange at Belconnen was all packed up with kids, you know, when I was younger. We used to chill at the interchange, the mall and shit. Smoke some weed, do all that kinda shit. Then after that the mall started dying down. So we didn't like going to the mall, we realised that we were just [Mall] rats. So I just called my mates and told them to go to their house. Started wagging school and going to their house and we'd all meet up and one of the guys who'd drive, he'd drive us around and all that.

Interviewer [What did your parents think?]

Well they didn't know that I was wagging. And then I started to act different, I stopped skating. They realised that I'd fully stopped. I started hiding from them, coming home late. Getting home at like 11 and my parents would go off at me in the morning. They'd wake me up, tell me to go to school. And I'd be late for school, maybe do half a day... I was 13 then.

Although young people could identify occasions when their peers sometimes tried to dissuade them from participating in risky behaviours it was more common for their peers to put pressure on them to offend. They talked about how criminal behaviour became a part of the way their group interacted and they felt they needed to participate to stay part of the group, to win the respect of their peers and to 'have fun' with their friends. Young people felt that their peers also negatively affected their behaviour by encouraging them (directly or indirectly) to participate in crime and, often, to accelerate their criminal behaviour:

I just caught up with mates and that too. Just friends and like, we were all from Queanbeyan and we were living up there and all our friends were getting into the shit and we just tag along wiv em and get caught up in it too

All my cousin's mates are all older than me. They all get caught up in stuff. I'm the youngest in the group. We all used to go into Civic, get in trouble. It was just something we did as a group, hey. You just went along with it.

Young people talked about how criminal behaviour was only part (though an increasingly dominant part) of their group's lifestyle and how group dynamics led them down the criminal path. Young people also reported that their involvement in these groups often lead them to breaking friendships with others and that when they realised that these 'old friends' were the ones they really wanted to spend time with that things were too late:

*One mate just left me when he found I was dealing drugs. He had a freak out about it and wouldn't talk to me again. I was gonna give it all up so he'd hang with me again but he never answered my calls and I went f**k it what's the point. If he's not gonna talk to me anyway I might as well just keep doing this. I miss him, hey. But I never knew how to fix it.*

Parents considered peer influence as having an enormous impact on the likelihood of the young person offending. This was because parents and support workers believed that many of the young people wanted to be 'accepted' by their peers and would go to any length for this to happen.

He was a boy that wanted to be noticed and fit in and unfortunately would do anything – he had a bad selection of friends asking him to do illegal things...as long as his friends thought he was ok – he would do anything to gain their respect, he wanted to be noticed.(Support person)

Interestingly, research suggests that peers do not directly affect young people's risk taking behaviour as much as the perception of their peers' risk taking behaviour (Caffray & Schneider, 2000). For example, a young person may use drugs heavily because they believe their peers are using heavily. Similarly they may participate in criminal behaviour because they believe that others are keen to participate or because they are fearful that they will be excluded from the group if they choose not to engage. However, when the actual amount of alcohol consumed by a peer is measured, or their keenness to participate in crime ascertained it is most often less than what the young person perceives. One young person may commit a robbery because they believe that others in the group have committed a robbery and then escalate this behaviour because they believe that others have done so also (Caffray & Schneider, 2000; Kandel & Andrews, 1987).

Young people in this study reported a similar experience, reflecting that they often 'talked up' their behaviours but how they also had 'fallen for it', particularly when younger, committing crimes because they believed that everyone else was:

Yeah you thought everyone was doing it and you didn't wanna be the one not doing it, or only doing pussy shit. Half of em probably weren't doing half the shit they said they were doing, I know I wasn't, but sometimes you just go with

it and get involved in stuff you would never've if you didn't think other people were.

Parents also described the need that young people had for being accepted by their peers and the difficulties experienced by those who weren't. The young people who were not accepted were often forced to develop connections with other groups in order to form meaningful identities and this led to sometimes inappropriate and destructive friendships. Racial bullying is also identified as an issue that families and young people experienced. One family reported that they believed that racial bullying had contributed to their child's negative peer associations and criminal behaviour. Parents considered

*The ACT is multicultural but I think it is very racist here...he would get called 'you black c***t' and that made him get into this gang thing...and this gives them their identity... but there is a dark side to this. (Support person)*

As well as discussing racial discrimination towards young people in the community, families also described a lack of cultural understanding amongst workers. Culture and cultural dissidence was considered by one parent as something that workers could easily identify and subsequently used to explain their sons criminal behaviour.

KEY FINDINGS: Interactions with peers prior to incarceration

- Young people had limited positive connections with peers and often lost these after being engaged in criminal and other risky behaviours
- Some young people had negative experiences in schools and with other peers (including bullying and racial discrimination) which led them to leave school and associate with negative peers
- Young people's risk taking (including their criminal behaviour) progressed and their involvement in positive activities reduced as they became more involved with negative peer groups
- Young people often committed crime and escalated their criminal behaviour to 'fit in' to groups

5.2 The nature of relationships with peers inside Quamby

Maintaining relationships

One of the problems highlighted in this study is that young people often do not have positive relationships with peers, and that even when they do they face significant challenges in maintaining them whilst incarcerated. Firstly, this occurs when a young person's friends have been involved in the juvenile justice system. In such cases, there is sometimes a reluctance to allow them to have contact with the young person while they are incarcerated.

All the other guys they get phone calls to their boyfriends and girlfriends. I don't get any calls from my girlfriend they won't put em through. It's cos she's

been here and they reckon she's a bad influence – even though she's the one who's been keeping me out of trouble

Secondly, young people were sometimes reluctant to have their friends visit them because they feel ashamed of their situation, because they don't want to have their friends see them not 'doing well' and because they do not want to hear about how 'good things are on the outside' as this makes being incarcerated even more difficult.

Nah, I don't like em visiting – them seeing me bad. It's hard enough.

I didn't wanna see people, my mates and stuff. It was frustrating when my mate came in. It was good catching up with them, finding out what was going on and that. But then he left it was pretty shit. He was going out to do stuff and I was just going back to my cell, hey.

Thirdly, many of the young people's positive friendship groups may relate to a particular activity such as sport or employment which the young person cannot currently participate in. As a result, some young people felt that they had lost most of their positive peers as they cycled in and out of the system. Young people talked about this loss with some concern and frustration, particularly as they realised how important peers were to them and their need to replace old friends post-release:

When you go in and out, you lose touch with the guys who aren't caught up in it, you know. So you just keep doing stuff, that's what you did. That's all the guys knew so you just stayed in it [the scene]. All the people you knew before, you didn't know em anymore and so you hang with 'em, the guys from in here.

The role of peers inside Quamby

Young people reported that they forged some important and long-lasting relationships with peers inside the Centre. Most of the young people talked about how they greatly valued these relationships, often suggesting that without them they might not have 'survived' their time inside Quamby. They talked with some fondness

about how their friends helped them deal not only with their loneliness and boredom, but also with the sadness they felt in being isolated from their external friends and family, the shame associated with their incarceration and the sense of hopelessness they seemed to accumulate during their stay. Young people also shared that their peers helped them manage their behaviours, calming them down after negative interactions with other young people or centre staff and helping them find solutions when facing challenges.

There's a couple of boys, mainly one boy we're really close. And this young girl, I adopted her, she's my daughter now. I'll look out for her.

In a way, if these guys don't support each other it's not bad. But it's real good when you do, you know. Watch out for each other and that... Having mates you can hang with, rely on – that's important.

For some, these relationships were enduring and had lasted for some time, while for others the friendships were restricted to the time that they were incarcerated:

You got to stick to yourself, but talk to people, like have mates, but mates in here. You have mates – but they're just mates in here.

Young people in the study often talked about the challenges that they faced at Quamby and reported that their peers helped them cope with their sadness, frustration and disappointment:

*Some workers and like other people reckon that we cruise through. But when we're in the rooms – f**k it – it's a whole different story. Me and [my mate], we had an airvent and shit. And he told me a whole lot of shit that was weird and stuff. And I thought he was all hectic and that, all gangster [confident] and shit. But he was like upset and I was like, 'what?'. And I was listening to him and he goes like "I miss my Mum". Cos like me and him got locked up and it was his sister's birthday like the next day... And he was all like upset and shit.*

But they [the staff] wouldn't know, hey. You don't want em to see that shit. You don't want anyone to see any of it.

Not all the relationships between residents were positive. In fact, many talked about ongoing hostility between individuals and groups of young people although they felt that there weren't as many altercations between groups as may occur on the outside world. Some shared experiences of being bullied by others and of being 'wound up', of fighting and the consequences for this:

There's heaps of fights in here. Lots of lads punch on when no one's around. Like fighting, swearing at each other... You get sent straight to the cage [the secure unit]. There's no TV, no knives or forks or nothing...

There's some good things and some bad, you come across some dickheads in here and then there are people who are OK but you don't really want to make friends with everyone.

Some of the kids in here I don't get on with them... Sometimes you get treated unfair. The other guys were pissing me off, being dickheads. Trying to make me stay in longer. You can't do much about it. I just tried to get away from them. Do my time and get out. And when I get out and they're up there in the unit. I'll be up there drinking the coke and having a smoke and getting my way back. See how they feel.

They reported that these tensions were often left unresolved because the Centre's strict discipline code often prevented young people from fighting, which they saw as a way of resolving issues. Instead, young people talked about how issues went 'underground' and called for better strategies for dealing with issues as they arose.

KEY FINDINGS: The role of peers in Quamby

- **Young people often lost contact with positive peers during extended periods of incarceration**
- **Young people valued the relationships that they had with their peers inside the Centre, often turning to them for support and assistance**
- **Interpersonal conflict amongst young people at Quamby was often pushed 'underground' and left unresolved**

5.3 The role of peers post release

Peer issues were identified as being both of concern but also being important for young people post-release. Young people often talked about how their peer groups were full of risks, but that these same groups often kept them from participating in risky behaviours, from committing further crime or for breaking their orders.

I've got mates that don't get caught up in stuff, man. Especially the guys who are over 18. They keep out of trouble cos they don't want to end up in Goulburn [jail]. They know that we're doing stuff and they tell us not to but they're not like enforcing it or nothing.

They'd say to me, even when I was smoking cones, don't be a dickhead!

Quamby friends were also considered by parents to be full of 'risks'. However one parent identified how peers from Quamby rather than being a negative influence as they had feared, had actually supported the young person after their release:

His friends are the same friends. At the start I was really worried about him hanging around with the same people but a couple of the friends he was locked up with have all got jobs now and in fact it was one of his friends from Quamby that got him this job. I think they help each other.

Young people believed that having positive peers around who could dissuade them from getting involved in crime countered those who actively encouraged them to do so. Having a 'legitimate' excuse to not participate in crime (because they wanted to 'hang out' with these older mentors who had 'street cred' because of their past experience in the system) was valued by many of the young people:

It's OK hanging with them cos they don't get into the shit and it's OK for you to not do stuff if you're with them. The others don't keep nagging at you to do it. So that helps, hey.

Some of the young people also talked about how their girlfriends also took on this role and were seen as a legitimate 'distraction'

I'd go to em 'I'm not doing it' and I'd go home to my girlfriend. I'd choose her over crime any day... I choose my girlfriend before drugs and she'll choose me before drugs. I gave up pot, I gave up ice, and I done it myself. She won't even smoke a cigarette or let me do it. She's real strict.. She keeps me on the right track. I definitely don't wanna lose her because she's a real good chick. She's good for me. She helps me.

When asked how his friends responded to the influence that his girlfriend had on his life, he replied

They go, 'you're a bitch!' but I got back to 'em, "what would you do? Would you stay with someone for ages or would you go and do crime?". I say to 'em, "I love her and I'm not gonna get involved"... I've lost lots of friends cos of that – but who cares? I got a girl and that and I'm happy. That's my main concern...

Developing new friendships

Young people realised that they needed friends and that although some of their friends got them into trouble; they also provided friendship, a sense of belonging and a sense of identity. They valued these things and felt that unless they could find other peers who could provide them with these things they would go back to being with their friends, regardless of their conditions or the likelihood that they would be tempted to participate in crime again:

It's not realistic at all. I go out and went straight to them [my friends]. They've been friends for quite a while, they're the ones you know, who you hang with, who stick with you, who help you out.

Young people valued having friends who they could 'hang out with', be supported by and who would dissuade them from participating in further crime. The more 'normal' these young people were and the more 'normal' their shared attitudes, activities and networks were the better.

I mainly hung with mates in football teams... I reckon that's better – just hanging with those kind of blokes. Dudes you don't do stuff with.

I reckon you need to have friends that are supportive but friends that you can have fun with too. Friends that actually go out and do stuff, fun stuff. I wasn't 18 when I got out but it was good to have friends that were older that could come over to my house and hang out, have a few beers, but keep you out of trouble, you know what I mean? You gotta have friends like that... let you do stuff that your parents won't let you do – but stuff that's OK – not crime or bad stuff, but good stuff.

As we will see in the section on meaningful activities, young people greatly valued being part of positive groups at school, at work, through sports and in the broader community:

Being in a team, with team members... They help you out, support you... It's the best thing to be in a team... and you bond with the others and sometimes go out and stuff. You're in a good environment instead of being in a bad one like in Quamby and stuff.

The best thing is my basketball. We haven't done that well but I'm proud of it – about being in a team and having fun with the team mates.

I was playing indoor cricket every week, touch footy on Mondays. I'd play and then I'd referee the games. The bloke that I played with, he used to play with my brother and that and he hooked me up... I met him because when I got out of here I was playing tackle with him... I got his number and was hanging out with him some more and he said, 'you wanna come play indoor cricket?'. Then one day after I was playing touch he said 'you wanna come referee a game?' and I went 'yep' and then he offered for me to go to Yass to do a refereeing course that that I could get paid to ref... He was great, the kind of guy I needed. Helped keep me busy and linked up with stuff...

So, you meet people, good blokes, blokes you can have good talks with. They can help you get other jobs. Like one bloke is a screw at one of the jails. Another dude is a finance officer. So you meet other people and they might hook you up with a job, more opportunities you know... It's good too cos there's a real mix of people: people you're age, people younger, people who are different and stuff. Opens up a whole new world, you know. And that's what we need, you know. To see the world different, to get out of the hole.

Support workers also agreed that young people enjoyed making positive connections with peers through activities such as sport. However they also pointed out the difficulties that young people had sometimes in joining their old world and new world together.

He was invited to a birthday party and he had never been to one before. He's now coming into a world where those things are important. He didn't fit into his old world anymore but he didn't quite fit into his new one. He started critically looking at his family – he went to visit his mum and came back saying he thought he was going to die because of the germs.

Currently, one of the key ways that young people are linked up with new positive peer groups is through the youth workers who provide direct care at Quamby. Young people often noted that these staff maintained an ongoing relationship with them post-release and invited them to join their sporting teams, to go to the gym together and to share in community (and religious) activities together.

Young people valued these relationships and the connections that these friendships allowed with the broader social scene. They were aware, however, of some of the inherent challenges that arose as the personal-professional nature of the relationship became ill-defined:

I still have contact with my Quamby worker... I don't think you're supposed to do that but I think it's a good thing. Someone to talk to. Someone on your level [i.e. someone who doesn't talk down to you]. That's why it's made my time easier. Other workers are just power trippers. Yeah, it's good to have em with you.... There's a conflict of interest, maybe, between their job and their personal life, you know. So maybe that's a problem... I think having em support you is good. But there has to be a boundary, you know. They shouldn't be socialising with you and that. Cos then you expect stuff of them or put them in situations where things aren't good for em... So they cant get too close to you.

As part of this study we did not interview direct care workers so can not make any observations about their perceptions of the nature of the relationship with the young people, the safeguards that they put in place for themselves and the young people nor the challenges that they face in providing ongoing support to them post-release.

However, young people saw this ongoing relationship as being incredibly positive and would argue, then, that if these relationships are to continue that guidelines, training and supervision might be helpful to ensure that appropriate boundaries can be developed and maintained, particularly if young people return to the Centre.

Negative peers post release

Young people who had not developed such positive peers reported that they often went back to their old friends and re-engaged with unproductive behaviours. In fact, many reported that within hours of their release they had had some contact with these peers who often came around to their houses to 'celebrate' the young person's release. Others were able to last for longer periods of time and reflected that even though they had been determined not to get into trouble with these peers, this ultimately happened within weeks:

*I kept away from the boys until New Years and that's when it started. I didn't even call them, I just ran into them and they said 'you know you wanna come over here for a drink or something', "yeah, "yeah".. Then later you meet up with another group and then you do something stupid. And then its past twelve o'clock before you realise it and there's no buses and so you just stay out and things get worse and you just go 'f**k it' cos you're drunk and tired and don't have any other choice.*

Returning to old peer associations was also highlighted by parents, NGO's, statutory workers and support workers. Parents and workers agreed that these peers were a significant factor that affected the young person's risk taking behaviour. Peers were identified as influencing the young person's alcohol and drug taking, criminal activity, loss of employment from the day they left Quamby. As one support worker noted:

A lot of the kids are waiting for them on the outside. The kids in here are partying in their head before they have even gone. In the back of their mind they're thinking they'll catch up with mates, have a few bongs, a few drinks.

KEY FINDINGS: The role of peers post-release

- The same peer group can both positively and negatively influence young people
- Positive peers (even in negative peer groups) often dissuaded young people from committing crimes post-release and gave young people legitimate excuses for resisting criminal behaviour Young people valued new friendships with positive peers but often felt that they did not have the skills or confidence to make or maintain these relationships
- Because they had a need for friendships and relationships, young people often returned to negative peer groups if these needs were left unmet. As a result, many reengaged in criminal behaviour.

5.4 What young people want

A number of participants called for peer based support to become entrenched in the programs at Quamby, believing that it would be helpful for both those receiving advice but also for those giving it. Young people often spoke with some pride about how they had assisted their peers and remarked that 'helping each other out' was one of the more important parts of their Quamby experience.

I say they need a program, hey. Where they have to go, even if they don't want to. They need that man. Just to get told to go to school by someone in here. One of the boys. Someone to tell em what could happen if they didn't go. Like there's one guy in here who everyone looks up to – he hasn't been in for ages but all the young ones listen to him and do what he says. They respect him.

He's the best fighter, the fastest runner, the best guy – not even the workers can catch him. He's a bit of a handful but he's cool. Like he said to me "go and ask for a committal" and I did and that was the best thing for me.

Some of us could go and talk to 'em out there and they'd listen. Like you don't go to 'em and say "do that, do that". You say "we'll help you if you do this and do that and that. We tell em to go to school. Go to footy and do stuff right.

Young people also felt that it would be helpful to invite some of these mentors back into the Centre, to share their successes, the challenges that they had overcome and the ways that they had changed their lives and the benefits of doing so. They believed that this was important because most young people were sceptical about whether they could make change and whether good things could come from doing so. Conversely, they thought it was important for young people to see how others had failed and what the repercussions were for doing so:

*Not name anyone, but show like how other people have done, stuffed up. Like in here they know that 60% of people are going to [adult] jail, so they need to show how people have stuffed up. Like they're on drugs, or they've been a dickhead and wanted to go out and done crime. Or different things. Give 'em something to look at, to think about, to see it ain't great to do that shit that it f**ks your life.*

Although young people could see the benefit of running peer-based programs in Quamby, they were a little sceptical about how some of the younger residents would participate.

I don't know. All the big guys in here and stuff, the older lads and shit, they're all quiet. All the little ones that come in and shit are all loud and that. They think they're all hard and shit. It's like they think they're our mentors and shit. We don't wanna say nothing to 'em.

There's one guy in at the moment who's real young and I keep saying to him, 'what are you doing back here? You've been in like 2 or 3 times while I've been in here'. And he goes, "Cos in here you get food and shit, you know, go to the gym and stuff. You can't do that out there". And I go, "Yeah, but how about school and shit?" and he goes, "I don't care about school and me Mum doesn't care if I go to school or nothing so who cares? I don't get no shit for not going from my Mum, don't get no shit for not going. I don't care if I don't have an education".

I talked to 'em about what they wanted to do when they got out and they go 'They wanna get into boxing". And I say, "But how about school and stuff?" and they go "nah. I can't just wait til I get older and you know do boxing. I don't need no school for that". I go "suit yourself".

This was particularly the case if mentors were not committed to making changes in their lives. Participants felt that young people would easily 'see through' mentors who had not taken on their own advice:

*I don't tell 'em nothing. If they wanna f**k up it's up to them. You try to tell them to keep out of trouble so they don't come back in here. But you can't really tell someone to do something that you're not going to do yourself.*

However, most felt that these challenges could be overcome if young people, staff and the broader system demonstrated that they valued such an approach and that it became part of the way the Centre operated. However, young people also commented that the current climate within Quamby kept them from actively mentoring younger boys. They felt that staff were not supportive of what they were attempting to do or misunderstood their intentions:

We try to be role models but as soon as we say anything we get in the shit because if they're fighting then we step in and tell em to stop mucking around.

They'll listen but if anyone touches them then we lose our privileges... They'll listen to us sometimes, but they [the staff] make it hard for us to help.

Again they believed that without much change, a program that provided them legitimate and supported opportunities to engage with their peers could easily be implemented.

5.5 What could be done?

- ***Helping young people stay in contact with established positive peer groups***

It would appear that the current system does not always explore with young people the types of positive peer networks that they have established prior to incarceration or develop strategies for maintaining these links during incarceration. Community organisations may play a more active role in helping positive peers maintain contact by bringing them into the Centre and helping sustain those relationships.

One community worker, for example, identified the value of the positive nature of the peer relationship, and helped these peers support the young person in meaningful ways. This included the young person and their friend catching up post-release and talking through any challenges that had arisen together. It was recognised that the friend was a constant support to the young person, whom they were most likely to turn when facing challenges and who was in a good position to frankly raise any issues as they arose.

Opportunities for such working relationships to be fostered and developed across the young person's engagement in the system might be helpful in not only supporting the ongoing relationship but also in achieving positive outcomes post-release.

- *Helping young people develop new peer groups*

As we have seen, the system currently does not have the capacity to support young people to develop positive peer networks during their periods of incarceration. Although young people were well aware that being 'locked up' meant that they could not be linked with positive peers (they talked mainly about sports groups etc), they felt that better outcomes might be achieved such as new friends if they were connected to activities pre-release .

But I really don't have any friends any more. Because I now realise that the people I used to call friends aren't really my friends... Hopefully by going to CIT I'll make some new friends. Most people who go to CIT actually don't do crime cos they're too busy doing school work. So hopefully I'll make some new friends there.

Young people also highlighted the fact that because of their incarceration they were often unsure about how to make new friends and lacked the confidence and self worth to do so. Providing young people with opportunities to develop and practice these skills prior to and after their release might be helpful in helping them overcome these difficulties and that ongoing social support post-release might also be of benefit.

Community organisations who currently visit the Centre could play a more active role in connecting young people to the social and recreational programs that they run in their mainstream programs outside the Centre. Young people valued the PCYC ReLink memberships that were made available post-release, although they reported difficulties getting to program and sometimes felt hesitant to go when they didn't know anyone. For these connections to be effective workers from these community organisations may need to work actively with the young people (picking them up, taking them to their services, introducing them to other staff and young people) so that these positive relationships can be forged.

I got hooked up with a worker who comes in here. You know with all the sports and that and he said come see me when you're out...

- ***Helping young people manage negative peer groups***

Young people reported finding it difficult to stay away from negative peers, particularly when they had not developed other friends or positive groups of friends. For most of the young people the only strategy that they had identified (which was reinforced in their case plans and reasonable directions) was to sever all ties:

It's because I had my mobile phone. If I didn't have that, if I couldn't have been in contact I wouldn't've got caught up again and again and that.

I've got to keep away from the old group I used to hang around with. I got seeing these two guys I seen, was hanging round with them a bit, it just happened. We didn't do any crime or anything but I still hung around with them, drank with them. So I've gotta keep away from them. I'd like to spend more time with my family, I'd like to build a shed out the back with my Dad, do the things I always wanted to do with my family but didn't cos I was spending too much time with my friends....

I'm not going to tell anyone where I live, besides workers and that, so they can't find me and get me into stuff. They won't call.

I think it all got to do with the friends I was hanging around.. I know it was my choice but the peer pressure is on you from your mates.. from drinking, smoking pot, stealing cars. I've got to change my friends and change my free time - spend time more with my family and just have fun.

However, in a city as small as Canberra, many talked about running into old acquaintances on a daily basis and reported great difficulty in not engaging with them.

Young people felt that they needed some help to develop strategies for saying 'no' to their peers or in coming up with good excuses for not participating in crime. They also need to develop assertiveness and negotiation skills so that they can better manage these complex relationships while still 'saving face'. Providing them with opportunities to have positive peers around them and attaching them to workers who can help mentor them through these processes were also seen as being of benefit in managing these challenges.

- *Peer based support*

There is growing evidence to support the provision of group-based programs for young people, particularly those in juvenile justice settings. These programs are valued for their ability to prevent negative subcultures from developing amongst groups of clients while providing young people with an environment within which they can constructively participate in their treatment (Kapp, 2000). One of the most popular forms of group therapy for children and young people is Positive Peer Culture which attempts to counter the powerful influence of negative peers by providing young people with the opportunities to develop effective social skills through the resolution of social problems. Young people who are engaged in these processes are supported by staff who hold them responsible for caring for themselves and their peers and who reinforce effective habits, model caring behaviours and provide them with experiences where they can have their skills affirmed within a safe environment (L. Brendtro & Ness, 1982). These positive outcomes are transferred to the community through volunteer experiences conducted with young people whilst incarcerated and then again post-release to ensure that lessons are reinforced and any early challenges overcome.

The Positive Peer Culture program complements the Response Ability Pathway training which most youth justice staff have completed as part of their induction process. It builds upon a philosophy that asserts young people's needs for a sense of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. It actively encourages young

people to take responsibility for their actions and, as a team, to develop strategies for resolving the challenges that they encounter more productively and as a group. When things go well, the group is acknowledged and rewarded as a team and are challenged and confronted when things fail.

Although these programs are often viewed positively, recent evaluations suggest that the effectiveness of outcomes may be compromised when groups are run by untrained and unskilled staff and when the integrity of programs are not maintained. Adequate resources need to be invested and ongoing supervision and support provided to staff to ensure that the positive outcomes can be achieved (Kapp, 2000). This is not to suggest that programs such as PPC should not be promoted (as there have been positive outcomes for young people and centres that engage in the process) but that adequate planning and appropriate delivery of the program is required to achieve intended impacts.

Although not speaking about this particular program, a number of the young people called for a similar process to be available to them during their incarcerations. They felt that this would help them manage any conflict, to give them opportunities to build their social and negotiation skills and to help prepare them for the challenges that they were to face in the outside world:

Get us all in a big group and talk to us about stuff. Help us go through right and wrong. Get people to sit down with you and talk about everything. Get you ready. Talk through stuff that could happen, talk about ideas people who've done it and that. What they did. What helped.

What could be done:

- **Helping young people stay in contact with established positive peer groups**
- **Helping young people develop new peer groups**
- **Helping young people manage negative peer groups**
- **Peer based support**

6. School

Engagement with school has been shown to protect young people from a range of negative influences. In particular, education achievement, commitment to school and participation in school-based activities (including those that are extracurricular) have shown to reduce the levels of engagement in antisocial behaviours and buffer against the effects of risk factors prevalent in other aspects of a young person's life (DeMatteo & Marczyk, 2005; Hoge et al., 1996). This is because as well as keeping young people occupied and limiting their opportunities to commit crime, schools can provide them with social inclusion, a positive sense of self, a sense of belonging and achievement (Heckenlaible-Gotto, 2006) – each of which are protective factors against criminal behaviour (Harper & Chitty, 2005). Engagement with school also appears to discourage young people's participation in antisocial behaviour as their participation may jeopardise their educational potential (Jessor et al in DeMatteo & Marczyk, 2005)

However, there are also clear links between low school achievement, poor academic performance, low commitment to school and early school leaving and criminal behaviour (Keys Young Pty Ltd, 1997; Sullivan, 2004). This may be because their disengagement with schools allows time and opportunities to participate in criminal

behaviours, exposes them to negative peers and other negative influences and allows them to normalise their criminal behaviour (DeMatteo & Marczyk, 2005)

6.1 Engagement with school prior to incarceration

Only one young person in this study felt that they had a good connection with their school prior to their incarceration, and that this engagement alleviated some of the risks that existed in his life. However, he subsequently dropped out of school after spending more time with negative peers and getting involved in problem behaviour:

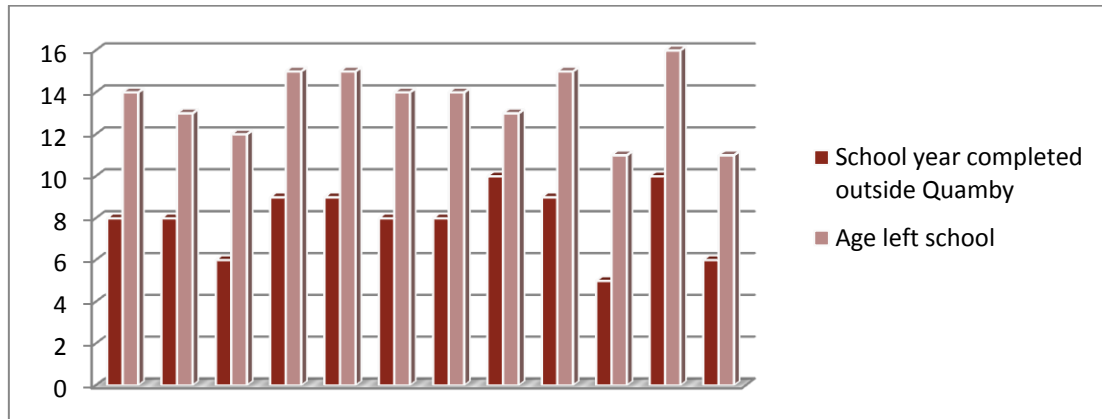
I was good at school 'til I hit year 6 and met up with some people at that school and then I started wagging school and then started running away from home and staying out. That's when I started stealing cars, and that's when I started going my own way.

All young people reported having poor experiences at school prior to incarceration at Quamby and all but one stopped going to school at a young age. As can be seen from figure 1 below (where the x axis marks the year and the y-axis relates to each participant) most young people had left school before they turned 14, with three having disengaged during their primary school years.

When I was growing up and shit, I wasn't going to school very much. I was just hanging out with bad kids, just hanging out and that. And I was getting into trouble and that. Like most kids who hang out with bad kids do.

I don't go to school. The last time I went to school was in year 6.

Figure 3: Early school leaving



For most of the young people, poor attendance at school was indicative of their lives at the time. For those young people who did not have stable family lives, their poor attendance seemed to reflect their parents' lack of commitment to their child's education or the nature of their chaotic lives (or both):

Mum never gave a shit about my education. She didn't see the point. So when I stopped going she never got me back into it.

The parents interviewed acknowledged their child had left school early and there was a complicit acceptance of this. For most families who participated in this study, education was not valued for the young person however getting paid employment was.

Even when parents were successful in getting their children to attend school, some young people still stopped going, often without the knowledge of their parents. With little to do during the day or in feeling pressured to commit crime with friends, many young people started committing crimes early and escalated their behaviours.

For the others, disengagement with school most often occurred at the same time during which they formed relationships with peers who were also skipping school and getting caught up with crime. Four young people, however, reported that it was because they had dropped out of school that they got caught up in criminal

behaviour – they reported having limited if any involvement in risk taking behaviours prior to their disengagement.

Regardless of the interplay of school and criminal issues, most young people reflected that their education suffered significantly.

Minimal response from school

Young people in this study generally began absconding from school and dropping out from an early age. Families that were concerned about their children's education reported frustration that their child's school did not recognise the signs of early school leaving or work with them to come up with solutions. Although individuals in particular schools attempted to re-engage them in their education, parents and workers felt that strategies did not work and that attempts to reconnect their children were fairly fruitless.

Although much time has passed between when these young people first starting missing school and now, stakeholders identified the ongoing challenges of responding to the needs of these children within the education department. Although there are programs that specifically target children at risk of early school leaving exist, they require schools to identify and refer children to these programs or for external agencies to raise issues of concern with the education department directly. Children with problem behaviours who have parents unable or unwilling to engage with the process and where schools have limited resources and connections with Student Support Services seem less likely to refer to programs early in the life of the problem. Examples were given of children who were excluded from school because of behavioural problems and then participated for as little as six hours a week in education without alternate programs in place to replace the unfilled hours. Participants reported concern that this often led to children filling their days with unproductive activities and that reintegration was often difficult.

KEY FINDINGS: Educational experience prior to incarceration

- **Most young people reported having negative experiences in school and left school before completing compulsory education**
- **These difficulties were sometimes caused by or further compounded by young people's risk taking and criminal behaviour which made their return to school less likely**
- **The early identification of early school leaving and strategies where the system and parents could work together to help reconnect young people with education were minimal and generally ineffective**

6.2 Engagement with education whilst incarcerated

Because of negative school experiences prior to their time at Quamby young people reported often feeling afraid of being involved in the Quamby education program. Some talked about not wanting to 'feel dumb' particularly in front of other class mates; others believed that even attempting education was useful, some thought that they had no aptitude for school work or study; while others reported that education was boring and not something they particularly wanted to do. It was only because their participation was relatively compulsory that they ventured back into the classroom at all:

You're forced to go to school; you've got no other option. You either go or you've got to stay in your room. You're not forced to go but then you rather just go.

However, this apprehension was usually short lived, as young people encountered supportive teachers, small class sizes and a curriculum that was flexible and responsive to their individual needs and capabilities. As the same young man noted:

The schooling is good... You get used to it and, you know, it's really good. Not what you're expecting at all.

Young people valued the way in which the program was provided particularly because they had poor self esteem and low confidence and thus appreciated working with peers in a non-judgmental and safe environment:

In here it's good. I've almost finished my year 10. Most people are here are like me. They don't know much either. It's not that they don't know much, it's like educationally they don't. They're on the same education level as me. It's just a lot easier to put my hand up and go 'I don't know this' or just yell out 'can you help me'.

They also appreciated the range of programs that were available and that they could often do things in the school that they enjoyed. Having their skills and these new experiences accredited was also considered helpful, with many of the young people reporting that having a variety of vocational certificates helped them access employment or further education and training after leaving detention.

You get some good support in here from... education staff... All the people down there, the variety of things down there. They help you with your schoolwork.... You learn all different strategies... like doing metal work, woodwork, art, horticulture and stuff... When I first came in I had a thing for wood... And twelve months in this time my woodwork teacher said I should like follow things through with my woodwork cos I was good at it... I wanted to become a cabinet maker... So he helped me find an apprenticeship and got me work experience [while in]... My woodworker got someone to come in and do an interview and then I was on work experience for three months... and then he offered me an apprenticeship... My boss is a good bloke... They've taken the time from my work experience and put it on my apprenticeship...

While I'm in here I wanna keep going with school. I was out there for a few months and was going and that so I wanna keep going, not stop... It's pretty good in here. They help you with your maths and stuff. You get to do different stuff like art and woodwork and stuff and music. That's pretty good and stuff... It's like proper, you know, and that's good but they're with you helping you to do it, you know. .. I've only got a few modules left, so I'm hoping I'll finish before I get out...

I like music because I'm in a band... Music is one of my favourite things and it keeps me going. But I don't get to do it often. I get it every three days but I'd like to get it more often, start practicing the bass. The teachers help you and stuff but that's one thing I'd like to develop.

The engagement with education whilst in Quamby was also valued by parents, even those that had not placed any value on it before. One parent acknowledged that without Quamby the young person would not have achieved their year 10 certificate and that without this they would not be able to obtain employment.

However, staff at Quamby cautioned that the educational success that the young people achieved in Quamby was sometimes misleading and provided them with a false sense of ability that potentially stopped them achieving out in the community.

They do so well in this environment. We tried to arrange maths tutoring for one kid so that he could do this CIT course that he wanted. But he said 'no', he wasn't going to do it because he was told he was the best at maths here. They are not comparing them to mainstream and they have this false sense...

However, young people spoke with some pride about their successes at the HEC and recognised that these successes were sometimes their first within education. They valued highly the efforts made by education staff to recognise and affirm them for their achievements (by having small ceremonies, giving them awards and certificates, receiving reports and inviting parents to come in for interviews).

I've almost finished it, hey. I'm just finishing some things up in computing. Just about finished English and I've just got to finish up writing some reports and essays. It's taken me 7 years to finish high school – but I've almost done it... It's pretty huge.

This need for constant recognition and affirmation has been recognised in the literature as has the actual environment in which education is provided. As Mazzotti and Higgins note,

The manner in which school staff and educators structure the learning and social atmosphere can facilitate the rehabilitation of the student. Through the provision of a stable, secure, and welcoming support system, school personnel and educators provide important elements for the life successes of students (2006, p299)

These factors: environment and affirmation are most important to young people, and need to be in available when they return to the community if positive outcomes are to be maintained. Unfortunately, young people often reflected that the schools and alternate education programs they returned to often did not provide them with the same level of support or encouragement as they received at HEC, limiting their willingness to remain engaged.

KEY FINDINGS: Educational experience whilst at Quamby

- **Young people valued their engagement in Quamby and felt that, for the first time, they had an opportunity to succeed**
- **Young people enjoyed the range of subjects available and the way that education was provided in a safe, flexible and individualised way**

6.3 Providing support through the transition

Young people were often provided with assistance to help them manage their transition back into the community. This was sometimes provided in a planned and organised way with staff from the HEC and Department of Education securing places for young people in mainstream schools or in alternate education environments. However, young people noted that some teachers, youth workers and their case workers had also established links for them with vocational training, with specialised programs (such as the YARDS program and the Yurauna Centre at CIT) and with ongoing learning opportunities.

The art teach got me enrolled in school. I wanted to do it, it was my own choice.

They've organised school. They're going to take me to school on Monday to check it out.

Having a link between the program provided at Quamby and those provided in the community was also valued by young people who were pleased that the progress that they had made could continue into the community. They particularly appreciated having access to the same staff who they had met and built relationships with during their periods of incarceration. As with other aspects of their lives, having someone to support them to access programs post-release, in providing ongoing encouragement and support and in resolving any teething issues that may arise (i.e. not having money for text books, not knowing what courses were available or helping young people to manage administrative tasks such as lodging academic transcripts etc) was highly valued.

I'm doing like a Certificate II in business. I don't know if I'll ever use that. You know [my worker I saw in Quamby]... She just come in and helped out with that [in organising the transition]. You know, started in there when we had

*programs and stuff. They go from 9 to 3, just before lock down. They came in and said do you want to do it? I did one module in there and have two or three left to do out here. Yeah, that made all the difference. Having someone to check in on me, to get me ready, to organise stuff I didn't know how to do, to talk me through it. Yeah, that was important, hey. Otherwise I would've just gone 'f**k it, it's all too hard' and just not done it. But having someone helping you with that stuff, yeah it should be done for everyone.*

6.4 Participation in education post-release

Although such planning occurred, none of the young people who were interviewed in this study had a significant interaction with an education program post-release. This was either because they were too old to participate in mainstream school, because they chose instead to get a job, because they were 'on the run' and did not want to get caught at school, because they didn't see the value in participating or because they were not outside of Quamby long enough to re-engage successfully. However, young people did speak, at length, about prior experiences of returning to school and / or the barriers that kept them from positively re-engaging after previous releases. These included:

- ***The affect of incarceration***

Some of the young people reflected that, in the past, even when they had some poor links with schools prior to their incarceration, that these had been severed as a result of their committals. In these circumstances, young people felt that it was because there wasn't good planning between Quamby and the school and because the school was not committed to having this 'problem kid' return to their school. Young people felt that, as a result, they did not actively encourage the young person's return:

I dropped out [when I was 13]. That's cos that was the first time I went in [to Quamby]. I never went back really.

I went back to school but then I went in here for 2 weeks and I went back out and they told me they didn't want me anymore. That's why I never went back.

They also commented that it was difficult to re-engage with school when constantly cycling through the system, returning to Quamby for further committals and then returning to their school and having to catch up on work or begin again with a group of students that they did not know.

I started wagging in year 6 and then in year 7 I had a court order that I had to go to school, that's after I did three months... When I was about 13. And then, I got out and went back to school for a year and a half. That was hard, beginning again, catching up... I wasn't hanging around any of my mates but then I started hanging around them again [and I got in trouble] and I came back in here for 4 months and I was out for a month and started hanging round with them again and stopped going to school. It was hectic, hey. I was never at school long enough and when I was I was all over the place. Doing stuff I'd already done or stuff I couldn't do cos I wasn't ready. That's half the reason I didn't go.

- **Planning issues**

It would appear that although some discussions had occurred about how young people might re-engage with schools or other educational programs, young people sometimes felt that they did not have concrete arrangements put in place that would facilitate this happening effectively. As such, they reported not participating:

I was going to go to [an alternate program] but no one hooked up with me and I didn't know what to do... so I didn't do nothing.

When arrangements were in place, young people identified that it was more difficult to re-engage with schools and to keep motivated to do so when they exited the program during school holiday periods.

School wasn't hooked up for me until February . That's like months after 4 months after I got out so it was pretty useless. I needed something to do straight away. I couldn't wait til February.

*I think that I stuffed up because of my schooling and because I didn't really like my school. The real reason I stuffed up was because there were two weeks holiday when I got out and there was nothing for me to do. So I just got straight out and was bumming around at home and [after the holidays] I went, "f**k school, I don't want to do that"... I really shoulda stuck in but, you know, you kinda lose interest. And you kinda start like getting nervous and stuff cos there's such a long time in between. So yeah, that's why I went 'f**k it'.*

One of these young men suggested that even when they were to be linked up with mainstream schools that placing them in alternative education settings or having other activities available to them until school was organised would be helpful:

Maybe running programs for people who school's not ready for or people who don't wanna go to school. If they can't go to school, have a program from em: things you can do. To keep em occupied until they're ready. Hooked up with stuff to do. Cos you go crazy with nothing else to do.

- ***Mainstream schools discouraging young people's participation***

The young people who returned to their old schools reported feeling judged by their teachers and peers about their pasts and felt they were not willing to believe that the young person could 'make good' this time around. As we will see in further sections, this lack of faith had a profound influence on the young people, and in the case of education, often discouraged them from re-engaging with the education system.

When I got out I went back to school and when I walked past these teachers looked at me funny and they're like, "Oh, I heard you've just got out of

*Quamby”.... And I’m like, “what you mean? I ain’t been in there” and shit. And they’re like “we’ve known you since you were in year 7, we know you’ve been in”. And that’s f**ked. It’s f**ked up. And they look at you weird and that and they’re telling everyone.... And that’s personal information and that.*

Young people who were enrolled with new schools also reported finding it difficult to ‘start afresh’. This was particularly difficult when either their youth justice worker or, in one case, the police enter the school and, by their presence, indicated to the school community the young person’s past:

*The f**kers kicked me out because I was in here [Quamby]. And then I went back there and they went “we don’t want you here”. Because youth justice kept coming in to check up on me.*

One young person graphically described the situation from his point of view:

*Because I was done at the school for a breach and the police came and locked me up. So then the school like put [me] on a suspension for nothing. You come in here, but that shouldn’t mean anything. You’ve come out from here and you need stuff to do and they suspend you and you’ve got nothing to do. And all they suspended you for was for getting done by the cops. Not for stuff that had anything to do with them. They just didn’t want me there and so the school goes we haven’t had any trouble here, we haven’t had police come here before. These people calling after me. They basically kicked me out because of my bad background. They kicked me out because there were people ringing up to check up on me. I went ‘well f**k you then’... It’s f**ked, the system hey... I told my old teacher and he said ‘they can’t do this’ – I was 14 ‘you’re under the age before they can kick you out’... Even putting me on suspension they shouldn’t be able to do because I did nothing wrong.*

Parents also described the difficulties that they had experienced when reintegrating the young person back to mainstream education. One parent described how they had arranged for the young person to go back to school after leaving Quamby but that due to an administrative issue the young person had been prevented in taking the place. The parent reported that the way in which this was managed by the Department of Education had completely destroyed any motivation and hope that the young person had developed about returning to education. As a consequence of how this was managed he did not return to school.

His support worker and I fought to get him into school – I introduced him to the principal and we went and had an interview and he was due to start at the beginning of the year. He knew some people and he said that he wanted to continue with his education unfortunately two weeks before he was due to start we got a letter to say his entrance to the school had been refused and that they couldn't accept his enrolment...that set him back a lot to the extent he said 'stuff it, I won't go to school.

Another family described how the young person had received a lack of support from the school. The parents reported that they would organise for the young person to start back at school but within a few weeks he would have started truanting again and committing crime. The school did not communicate this absence to the parents and they often had no knowledge that the young person was truanting until he had been rearrested.

KEY FINDINGS: Experiences with education post-release

- **Considerable planning had occurred to facilitate young people's engagement with education or vocational training. This was conducted primarily by HEC staff and community training providers**
- **Although they valued education, young people did not re-engage with schooling post-release because:**
 - **Any links that they had with schools were weakened or severed as a result of extended periods of incarceration**
 - **Schools appeared to be reluctant to take on 'difficult students'**
 - **Planning issues (such as when young people were released and how links to schools and training organisations were made) disrupted the transition process.**

6.5 What could be done

Recognising risk prior to incarceration

Although this group of young people had come to the attention of their teachers, schools and the education department due to poor attendance, poor achievement and disruptive behaviour in the classroom no effective early intervention occurred. Young people's disengagement continued for significant periods of time without

response. Although a number of programs have been developed to better identify and respond to young people having educational difficulties (such as Schools as Communities, Youth Support Workers in Schools, Youth Education Support and Youth Connections) stakeholders maintain that groups of young people, particularly those with problematic behaviours were still falling through the gaps from a young age. Schools' responses often seem to be determined by whether a particular staff member shows some interest and commitment to referring young people to services early and their views about particular young people and families. Developing a series of guidelines that clearly state when referrals to programs are required and who is responsible may help address the ad hoc nature of these processes.

Ongoing provision at the Hindmarsh Education Centre

Young people and parents highly valued the educational experiences provided at HEC. Young people reported that for the first time in their lives they felt confident to attempt and achieve in their education. They appreciated the opportunities to engage in a broad curriculum but felt that they would like more opportunities to for vocational education and subjects that reflected their talents and interests (i.e. more music, mechanics, hospitality etc).

Minimising barriers to school re-entry

During this project, the ACT Department of Education implemented a program to assist young people leaving detention. We understand that this program aims to assist with organisational matters (such as ensuring that transcripts from HEC are sent to schools, that paperwork is completed and that the young person is able to get to school). However, considerable support is required to ensure that schools are ready for the young person's entry and willing to support their transition back into the education system. Promoting positive staff attitudes, enabling flexibility and individualised support and positively engaging with parents are all essential in facilitating a young person's return (Mazzotti and Higgins, 2006).

Intensive assistance is also required for the first few months during which time young people's confidence and commitment to education may wane. Support in getting to and from school, in completing assessment and in negotiating new relationships with teachers and peers would be of assistance in ensuring that young people's involvement with the school is positive so that their ongoing engagement might be sustained.

Pathways back into mainstream education are timely

Young people often failed to reengage with education because pathways were not seamless. Education options were either not well organised, required the young person to establish the link with a school themselves or were not available for some time post release. Better coordination would facilitate earlier school return. When immediate return to school is not possible (i.e. when a young person is released during or late in the school term), meaningful alternate activities (preferably educational ones) need to be provided to ensure that the young person remains busy and motivated to continue their studies. Young people felt that short courses might best fill the gap during these periods.

7. Young people's alcohol and other drug use

The nature of the link between alcohol or other drug use and young people's criminal behaviour has been highly contested within the literature. One camp suggests that early alcohol and other drug use leads to early criminal behaviour while another argues that the opposite is true. In the most recent Australian study, the Australia Institute of Criminology found that criminal behaviour often precedes drug use (by about 6 months) but that drug use exacerbates criminal behaviour, particularly in regards to property offences (Prichard & Payne, 2005).

Certainly workers and practitioners from statutory and non-government organisations that participated in this study report that their experience of young people and drug and alcohol use both leads to and is the cause of criminal behaviour.

Regardless of which comes first, the link between the two issues has been established and has shown to be significant for many young people.

It is not surprising, then, that most of the young people in this study reported that alcohol and other drug use was a significant issue for them and that their use played a part in their early criminal behaviour.

7.1 Drug use prior to incarceration

Eight young people reported that they began using drugs and alcohol at an early age. In fact, young people's accounts and court records showed that most had developed significant drug and alcohol habits before they began high school:

I've smoked marijuana since I was 9. It's just something that I do... I did have an ice problem before I came in[to Quamby]. Which was pretty bad... It made me wanna do things. I was so energetic. I didn't want to sit in one spot. And then when I come down off it I'd get angry and want more. That's why I went and the burglary that I did and why I'm back in here.

When I first got on the shit, on ice, I was 13.

I started with my Mum. That's just how it was in my family. We all did it.

I drank cans of bourbon and coke from when I was like 10. I used to get smashed on it. Then I started drugs and it went from there.

Parents also identified the use of drugs early in their child's life.

At 13 that's when the drugs came in. He claimed he had Ice when he was 13 and he did become extremely difficult to manage then. He was certainly smoking marijuana.

The rest of the young people in the sample talked about how they began using alcohol or other drugs later in life and how they felt their use was heavier and more frequent than other young people their age.

Regardless of when they began using, young people talked about how their drug and alcohol use became a central part of a lifestyle which was not conducive to engagement with school, with positive peers or positive daytime activities but, instead, led to their participation in crime. Some felt that their involvement in peer groups led to their drug use while others felt that it was just a part of 'the scene' but all recognised that it played a part in their disconnection from the broader community and then their criminal behaviour:

Before I was using ice and shit I was just using pot and never used to be doing nothing. I was the goodest kid, all goodness and light, but when I started getting into the ice, it just fell over... It started off me just wanting to have a bit of fun... and things happened that made me wanna use more. I started off just smoking it, after a while I was having it every day and I couldn't get off it. I needed it. If I didn't have it I'd be whacking out... I have to have some kind of drugs if it was pills to get me to sleep or waking up. I couldn't just be straight. Every day was full on.

One young person spoke about how their using impacted on relationships

*I had mates I was hanging around. One mate just left me when he found out I was dealing drugs. He had a freak out about it and wouldn't talk to me again. I was gonna give it all up so he'd hang around with me again but he never answered my calls and I went 'f*** it, what's the point? If he's not going to talk to me anyway, I might as well just keep doing this'. I miss him, hey. But I never knew how to fix it.*

A number of the young people talked about how their alcohol or other drug use influenced their criminality. Firstly, a few talked about how, when using drugs, they were more likely to engage in crime to pay for their habits. With the daily cost of their drug use being high it is maybe not surprising that young people committed crimes (such as break and enters, theft and aggravated theft) to pay for their use. In

some cases this was to pay for more drugs while in others it was to pay off their debts to dealers to avoid physical consequences.

I got on it [Ice] and shit. I've been going hard out on it. Had to do crimes to pay for stuff and that.

People would still commit crime if they're addicted to it. They like need money for their drugs or something. They wouldn't care. They wouldn't think twice about it, coming back in here.

Support people also acknowledged the influence that alcohol or other drug use had on a young person's criminal behaviour.

Income has been a challenge because of his drug use. This [drug use] seriously impacted upon his ability to get his Centrelink forms in – then your income gets cut off if you don't get your forms in. If his Centrelink got cut off then that would always lead to further reoffending because he would sell, why would you jump through the hoops with Centrelink when you would make more by selling?

Other young people talked about how they were more likely to commit crime while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. Young people who were using Ice were particularly aware that while under the influence their behaviours changed and felt that they were more likely to participate in violent crimes.

I was doing drugs heaps. Heroin and ice. Ice was the worst. I used to stay out two months straight. Be fully whacked out. I tried to stab me uncle and everything. I was a full whacko.

Parents who identified that their child used drugs also reported that it had been the drugs that had 'come first' in the young person's life and that their criminal activity had come later. Parents were unsure as to whether this criminal activity was a direct

consequence of drug use but certainly acknowledged drug use had aggravated their risk taking and criminal behaviour.

7.2 Young people's AOD issues during Quamby

Clearly incarceration prohibited any alcohol and drug use for young people and parents acknowledged that this 'time out' provided an opportunity for young people to 'detox' and 'sort themselves out'. File reviews and interviews however identified that detoxing was a significant and often distressing experience for young people. Whilst there are some medical provisions for young people at Quamby there is no specialist alcohol or drug detox unit and young people are held in specific cells whilst they withdraw from drug and alcohol. This project did not have access to the young person's medical files but there was little evidence in the case management files to suggest that case workers or other staff had had contact with the medical team for either an assessment of or intervention for alcohol or drug withdrawal. Files did however acknowledge that young people who were withdrawing from drug and alcohol are regularly observed by staff and their behaviour monitored.

Alcohol and drug counselling is provided to young people during their incarceration however parents and young people identify that this is often not effective due to a number of reasons.

They come in and talk about drugs and all that stuff. Talk about what you're gonna do when you come out and stuff. What drugs do to you and how to keep off em. [Do you find it helpful] Nah the stuff they do in here's useless when you get out.

[What do you want?] Lots more drug and alcohol counselling. That sort of shit...They do like programs and all that but not really do useful stuff,

rehabilitation... They make you watch videos and stuff... I need more. Ways to keep off it...

Some young people identified that they would prefer to access support from other organisations that they felt maybe more helpful and others expressed that they are simply not ready to attend such a service. Parents and support people also concurred with this, with one parent describing that their child had only attended AOD counselling because it had been court ordered. This parent expressed that counselling would only work if the young person wanted to be there because, from the parent's prior experience, even court ordered interventions were not enough to ensure the young person's participation as they had always absconded from this service.

Key Findings: Issues related to young people's drug use prior to and during incarceration

- All young people had begun using alcohol or other drugs by their early adolescence
- Some young people's AOD use began before their criminal behaviour but increased and became more problematic as they got involved with negative peers, and risky and criminal behaviours. Others began committing crime and then through their negative peer groups developed AOD issues
- Young people find detoxification difficult because current interventions are limited and sometimes inaccessible
- Some young people saw incarceration as enforced detoxification and reported being most willing to deal with their AOD use whilst inside
- Young people generally did not view the AOD support that they received in Quamby as being helpful

7.3 Young people's AOD issues after release

Most of the young people were acutely aware that their drug use affected their transitions back into the community. In fact, the majority felt that what most threatened the success of their transition was whether or not they could keep their drug use at a manageable level. They believed that drug use not only led them to commit further crime but also kept them from engaging in meaningful activities, many of which were required as part of their reasonable directions:

*I reckon the first couple of months will be alright. I don't know if I will get too f**ked on pot. That's the thing that's holding me back in life... I'm too lazy on it. I totally, "I'm going to stop smoking". I've got a plan for myself – if I'm smoking too much I gotta pull myself around... I don't want to be back in here – there's too much shit.*

This time I don't wanna get breached. Every other time I just go out and straight away go and get drugs. This time I'm not going to do it. This time I can't get breached again. I don't wanna go to adult prison but more like I want to get my life straight out now. I've used all me juvenile years as a drug used, wasted em. I've got a pretty bad name out there as a drug addict. I really wanna change that.

Some felt that this would only be possible if they completely abstain while others felt that they would continue using but hoped that their use wouldn't escalate. In the case of the latter group, it appeared that they believed that it was alright for them to have a few drinks or to use drugs recreationally and that managing their use was about keeping it 'under control' rather than to abstain generally:

Just like watch out for my drug & alcohol, watch out for my peers, try to focus on all the triggers that got me into there... drugs, straight up..

The first thing to do is to try to keep off the alcohol that led to all this stuff. I don't want to get fully off alcohol, I want to still be able to have fun, to go to work during the week, and go out have a beer... I wanna be able to have one beer, to be able to control it.

I'm going to try not to drink when I get out... just the first night... because I know it gets me in trouble. I'm going to get help from my brother because he doesn't want me to drink ever. He knows what it does to me.

7.4 Challenges experienced post release

Family and friends

Even when young people were committed to abstaining from drug use, many acknowledged that they found this difficult because drug use was such a central part of their social lives, with families, peers and communities often using together at gatherings and also in their day-to-day activities. Some felt that they would have to avoid these situations and people or to work hard to make sure that they weren't tempted to use with them:

I'm just gonna not use drugs... I'm not going to hang out with [Mum] all the time... Just go and see her and say 'hello', maybe spend an hour with her. But that's it.

I'm going to try to stay away from everyone who uses. Ice especially. Which is going to be hard because a few members of my family are on it at the moment. And yeah, I'm pretty determined not to use.

When one young person was asked whether he thought other family members might seek support to deal with their own alcohol or other drug issues, particularly knowing he was trying to give up and that it would be difficult being with them when they were under the influence of drugs, he replied that he didn't think it would have an affect at all. "Why would they?" he asked, "They wouldn't choose me over the drugs."

So I've got to make the decision – which is more important to me. Being off the drugs or spending time with them? It's hard cos they're family and they're all you've got".

'Doing it by myself'

The expectations held by a number of young people that they can stay off drugs 'all by themselves' is highlighted in both the support and young person interviews. Young people said that did not want support or counselling from drug and alcohol organisations as they were capable of doing it on their own

It's going to be hard. I've got heaps of mates who get on the drugs. I dunno how I'll deal with that. I'm not going to go to rehab or anything because I'll do it myself.

Workers also acknowledged this finding but were of the opinion that young people needed significant support to remain drug free.

He visualises long term how he would like to be but I have to keep pulling him back... He doesn't want to be on the methadone program...the methadone knocks him around - he wants to be clean but has to participate in this because of his order. He wants to get off it...he thinks he can do it all by himself but he can't.

Feeling ill-prepared to cope with AOD issues

Young people generally reported feeling unprepared for release and could not identify concrete and useful strategies for dealing with their drug or alcohol issue. When they had identified strategies they felt as though they were unrealistic or vague: (i.e. "Danny will keep away from people who use drugs" or "Jess will think about how drugs have negatively affected her life and make the choice not to participate again"). They also believed that these strategies did not take into consideration the reality of their situation: the very real family and peer pressures

that confronted them, the reasons why they used drugs and alcohol in certain situations or the fact that drug use had become a 'normal' part of their lives.

Not recognising underlying issues

Young people talked about how using alcohol and other drugs helped them cope with a number of underlying issues and feelings. They believed that the system currently focused too much on their using and failed to recognise these underlying challenges, reflecting that when these difficulties weren't resolved that they could not successfully reduce or stop their habit. Young people identified the following reasons why they used alcohol or other drugs:

- **Boredom:** Young people reported that they often had little to do and that their drug use helped fill their days by making them feel as though time was going faster and that periods of being alone and unoccupied were shorter.
 - *It passed the time mainly*
 - *Weed makes the day go so much quicker*
- **Lack of confidence:** Some young people talked about 'needing' alcohol or other drugs to cope with situations where they felt unsafe or uncomfortable. One young man, for example, talked about needing drugs to help him sleep the night before a job interview and then feeling as if he needed 'a billy' to be able to even leave the house to go to what he believed would be:
 - *a really scary situation that I didn't think I could do... No one told me how to do it or what I should say so I freaked out and I needed it [the drugs] to be able to face it*
- **Dealing with social situations:** Some young people talked about a perception that they needed to use to socialise with peers – both because it was what

others were doing but also to be able to feel as though they could interact comfortably (“it helps me to be able to talk and that”)

- **Underlying pain, depression and anxiety:** Young people talked about how their drug use was a technique they used to cope with some of the feelings and emotions that they encountered. In other stages of the interviews, young people talked about trauma, grief, loss and feelings of hopelessness. It would appear that their drug use was often used as a way of dealing with these issues.
 - *It gets too hard so I started using em. It was only like 2 weeks ago that I started [after being out for 9 months]... It was everything, all too much. My Mum was here and she said she didn't want to have anything to do with me anymore... I just couldn't cope and I just had to [use]*
 - *It helps me to stop thinking, to get outside of myself*
- **Moderating anger and aggression:** Young people sometimes talked about how they used to moderate their behaviour. One young person said that he used because he thought he had ADHD and because it settled his nerves while others said they used because if they didn't they might go out and cause damage or assault someone (after an altercation or stressful event).
- **Being addicted:** Some young people felt that they were addicted to alcohol and other drugs and that they used because they couldn't resist the urge:
 - *When I get out I still crave for it and that. I hope I don't have to want it for too much longer*
- **Dealing with the side effects of other drugs:** Some of the young people were polydrug users – particularly when using drugs such as ICE and methamphetamines which they complemented with other ‘downers’

- **Enjoying the feeling of being intoxicated:** Some young people reported that they purely enjoyed the experience of being intoxicated. These young people used for the sake of using. For many (though not all), taking drugs or drinking alcohol was something that all their friends did and it was something they felt they needed to do to be a part of the group.

Parents also identified some of the underlying reasons that they believed young people used drugs:

- **Peer / sibling influence** – parents identified the influence of peers and less frequently siblings as a major contributing factor to the young person’s alcohol and drug use
- **Mental health**- two parents identified that they believed the young person used drugs and alcohol for both diagnosed and undiagnosed mental health issues
- **Enjoyment** – two parents identified that their child continued with their use of drugs because they simply enjoyed it and could see no reason to stop.

Recent literature on adolescent risk-taking behaviours stresses the importance of recognising these factors and the inter-relationship of a young person’s using, the context within which they are using and the outcomes envisaged and sought by young people. Caffray and Schneider found, for example that

Studies of adolescents’ perceived reasons for engaging in risky behaviours, specifically regarding alcohol and drug use, have demonstrated that the primary reasons that were most predictive of their alcohol or drug use focused on the affective states and consequences of their alcohol or drug use (Caffray & Schneider, 2000, p546)

Ineffective Strategies

Young people appeared to be quite aware of the reasons for their use of drugs but were often unable to identify better strategies for coping with the underlying issues.

Amongst the group, some young people reported that were generally willing and in fact were often 'desperate' to engage in effective drug and alcohol programs but felt that they had little confidence in the services provided and therefore they were not likely to have ongoing involvement. They reflected that most of the AOD support that they received focused primarily on their drug use and the impacts that it had on them physically rather than recognising why they were using or the challenges they faced in managing their use. Furthermore many programs are based upon a harm minimisation approach as opposed to abstinence which is what is required in most reasonable directions ordered by the court.

I think when it comes to drug and alcohol. You know how you do drug and alcohol counselling. Instead of talking to people about marijuana and alcohol all that, well people know that realistically marijuana has never killed anyone and that it only leads to mental illness and people go 'I'm not gonna get that anyway'. But with ice. If you get videos and make people watch them. Maybe then that will make them realise that there's a difference between alcohol and marijuana and ice which will actually kill you and marijuana which has never had a recorded death.

They felt, however, that until they could find alternatives for their drug use they would continue to use or be constantly tempted. They also argued that while services did not match their needs they felt disengaged and 'unheard':

I don't like going to them because they make me feel stupid. Because I'm like young and stuff and because I'm on ice they talk to you like you know nothing. Like you're stupid that you don't know what its doing to you...

Drug and alcohol services not matching the young person's needs with support was also identified by YJ workers who also reported that young people disliked attending these programs due to the age range of people attending them. Having younger people in the group made older adolescents uncomfortable and stopped any candid

discussion about their drug and alcohol issues. Consequently young people felt it was a waste of time going as they received no benefit from attending the program.

Young people and parents identified the possibility of young people attending drug and alcohol counselling outside of the ACT. Workers expressed a need for more residential care programs for young people.

We need more residential care programs but somewhere that they couldn't just walk out of and catch the bus to be back with their mates

We thought for a long time he needed to get away from Canberra. As soon as they get out their mates are right there and off it goes. If he had gone out west for a year he would have had a chance.

Finding stuff here in Canberra is really hard – going outside of the ACT has helped him – that's what did it.

However other workers challenged the effectiveness of removing young people from their friends and community

I also think you can take them away but they are always going to come back to where their family is. If you take them away you need to make sure they develop skills for when they come back home.

Young people also acknowledged the need to be able to learn new skills but more importantly be able to transfer them to different settings. They reported finding it difficult to remember or use skills in their post release lives that they had learnt during the alcohol and drug counselling received during their periods of detention. They shared, that because the 'outside world' was so different to Quamby that even the skills that they had developed inside seemed unworkable or, in most cases, not practiced in this new context. As such, ongoing mentoring and support seems necessary.

7.5 Using post-release

Most of the young people and a number of workers talked about the frequent use of drugs and alcohol shortly after release from Quamby. For a few young people, they started using within a few hours of exiting – either as a celebration of their release, because they missed using, or because old friends and acquaintances came around and encouraged them to drink or use as part of the scene.

Workers also identified that peers and family presented difficulties for young people particularly on release.

When they get out all they want to do is drink, take drugs, catch up with their friends and all that stuff that they haven't been doing whilst they are in Quamby

Others abstained from drug or alcohol use for some time but began again after a critical incident occurred, after they experienced a major setback or when their alcohol use escalated in more problematic drug use.

I didn't smoke much when I got out, I waited. I didn't do much til New Years. I drank a little bit with Dad at home. And then they went away and that's when I went a little bit crazy cos I was home [alone]... I started off just drinking with mates and then I used a little bit and then it went crazy and I was using drugs and shit... and then I got caught up in stuff, especially when I was coming down.

I let alcohol take over me. I'm not in for fresh charges. I just got breached... Like there was this one night when I had a cone and I just passed out. I didn't really have any more but then I was slowly using some more and then I just was slowly doing it more. I got breached, not going to work, not going home and they did a urine test and I got done and came back in here.

A number of young people identified strategies that they and their families had put into place that were effective for them but, as noted above, most young people felt that strategies were often ineffective.

When I get paid, I get so much... I spend it all on weed and stuff. So my Dad takes it now and gives it to me bit by bit so I don't, so I can't buy a big amount. My Mum reckons I'm stupid on this shit... I have gone a bit far...

Key Findings: Issues related to young people's drug use prior to and during incarceration

- All young people had begun using alcohol or other drugs by their early adolescence
- Some young people's AOD use began before their criminal behaviour but increased and became more problematic as they got involved with negative peers, and risky and criminal behaviours. Others began committing crime and then through their negative peer groups developed AOD issues
- Young people find detoxification difficult because current interventions are limited and sometimes inaccessible
- Some young people saw incarceration as enforced detoxification and reported being most willing to deal with their AOD use whilst inside
- Young people generally did not view the AOD support that they received in Quamby as being helpful
- Young people believed that strategies that had been provided were ineffective because they minimised the effects of these factors and were unrealistic in nature

7.6 What could be done?

Programs provided to children

A large number of the young people reported using significant amounts of alcohol and other drugs in their late childhoods. This is obviously unacceptable, particularly recognising the influence that early drug use has not only on a young person's criminality but of equal importance, their physical and mental health. Significant, appropriate and targeted drug and alcohol counselling and support is required to seek out children who are using drugs and to provide them assistance in dealing with these issues. As highlighted in this and other studies, children who live in families where parents and other family members are using appear to be at greater risk and may need specific targeting to minimise their drug use.

Better identification and resolution of underlying issues

As we have seen, young people believed that their drug and alcohol use was often spurred on by critical incidents or reflected their difficulties in resolving underlying challenges and pain. As such, the system needs to be better equipped to identify and work with young people to more constructively resolve these issues. This needs to begin during periods of incarceration when young people tell us they are most amenable to discuss their issues and seek resolution.

Any progress made with young people during periods of incarceration needs to be mirrored in the community if positive outcomes are to be sustained. The challenges of sustaining young people's engagement with counselling and psychological support are discussed elsewhere in this report, but it would appear that more assertive service provision is required.

More opportunities for young people to participate in alcohol and other drug programs out of the ACT

Young people often talked about how they appreciated participating in residential drug treatment programs, particularly those provided outside of the ACT. It would

appear that this would reflect their preference for intensive models that respond to their broad needs but also their belief that if they leave Canberra they would achieve better outcomes. It would appear, however, that young people also need to be provided assistance after completing these programs so that they can continue to abstain on their return to the ACT.

Family focussed support

AOD interventions need to recognise the challenges young people in families where other relatives are using face when attempting to minimise their AOD use. Family-focussed supports such as family group conferencing may assist young people to raise their concerns and needs and to develop more effective strategies for dealing with their AOD issues within challenging environments.

Part Two: Responding to differing needs

8. Responsivity

The third of the principles in the 'what works' literature is the 'Responsivity Principle' which relates to identifying and responding to identifying factors which may not be directly related to a young person's criminality but are relevant in assessing what types of supports might be helpful and how they might be best provided to maximise positive outcomes. Cognitive style is one such 'responsivity factor', a factor which does not influence a young person's criminal behaviour directly, but more their amenability to a particular treatment program (Hoge, 2002).

Amongst these responsivity factors there are those that are common in the general population (eg gender or cultural background) while others are more common in offender populations (ie concrete thinking styles, poor verbal skills) (Day et al., 2003). These factors need to be considered when designing responses for different groups with the more influential responsivity factors (such as the influence of drugs, willingness and ability to make change, and cultural background) having prime importance.

Some of the key responsivity factors that were identified in this project included the young people's age and developmental stage; and:

- Their readiness and willingness to make change
- The community's willingness and preparedness to accept the young person
- The system fosters interdependence

In this part we will discuss these factors and make some observations about how the system might best respond to the challenges that they provide.

9. Responding to responsivity factors

9.1 Age and development

A young person's age and developmental stage has shown to be a risk factor in that the age and developmental stage at which a young person first committed crime; entered the juvenile justice system and was released can all affect the likelihood that a young person may participate in crime post release.

Age and developmental stage are also key responsivity factors that must be acknowledged and operationalised when working with young people throughout their engagement in the justice system if effective outcomes are to be achieved (Steinberg, Chung, & Little, 2004). The differing natures and levels of vulnerability, the key developmental needs and challenges and the social and legal realities (such as voluntary education for under 15s and the relative independence allowed of those turning 18) can influence how services are provided and how effective they are to be.

In developmental psychology, the three age groupings of early adolescence (11-14years), middle adolescence (15-17years) and late adolescence (18 – early 20s) are used to understand the young person's physical, cognitive, emotional and social development and may provide the system with some clues about the differing experiences amongst groups of young people and how to best support different young people during their engagement in the system.

Altschuler and Brash (2004) highlight, for example, the importance of family for early adolescents and argue that the level of stability and support provided by their families may mitigate a young person's re-entry. They claim (as we have in part one) that the system must therefore allocate sufficient resources for family-centred supports such as mediation for transitions to be successful.

They observe that mid adolescents, in contrast, become more reliant on peers (which, as we have seen, can be problematic in that most incarcerated young people become disconnected from prosocial peers during their detention) and that successful reintegration requires the development of alternate positive connections with peers. (through peer mentoring, sports teams and education).

Finally, they suggest that late adolescents seek independence and that successful case planning requires young people's active participation in decision-making and planning and that individual support (through mentoring etc) are more beneficial than constant supervision and direction.

In this way, the needs of young people of differing ages have shown to be different as have the ways that we need to support them so that positive outcomes can be achieved.

Increased attention to younger offenders

Participants in the stakeholder workshops recognised that young people of different ages had different needs and that a range of approaches and service responses was required to cater for the diversity found amongst the population exiting detention. In particular, there was a strong view that the system needed to better respond to the needs of younger offenders both in recognition of their increased vulnerability but also because they were more likely to have sustained involvement in the justice system if they were not successfully reintegrated into their communities and desist from crime.

Each of the young people we interviewed had appeared before the courts before they turned 15 years of age, with some appearing as young as 10. Young people usually reappeared a short time after their first appearance, were given community based orders and then were subsequently incarcerated for both periods of remand and committal.

Now aged 16 and over, young people reflected on their experiences and argued that more intense and different responses were required to work with younger remandees. A number felt, for example, that age was a determining factor in whether a young person was ready to change their attitudes and 'make good'. They talked about how they had changed their attitudes to crime and that this was because they had become more mature over time. For some, this was a natural thing while others felt that their looming eighteenth birthdays and the knowledge that they would be transitioned into the adult facilities if they committed further crime was the major incentive:

The way I see it for other people, how they're thinking is like, "I'm 14 so there's four years to go before I really get in trouble so I'll just do this"... and they come in here and it's nothing.

Recognising transitions from childhood to adulthood

Developmental psychologists have argued that as well as understanding young people's transition from one developmental stage to another, the system must recognise that many remandees are also transitioning from childhood to adulthood and that this development can also affect what types of support young people might need and how they might best be provided (Greve, 2001a).

Steinberg et al (2004, p24) suggest that young people transitioning into adulthood require a level of psychosocial maturing which requires development along three domains including (1) mastery and competence; (2) interpersonal relationships and social functioning and (3) self-definition and self-governance. These domains appear to resemble the spirits of 'belonging', 'mastery', 'independence' and 'generosity' developed by Brendtro et al (1990) in their 'Circle of Courage'. They argue that for these domains to be successfully developed, young people require the involvement

of supportive adults and opportunities to develop autonomy and specific competencies (Steinberg et al., 2004, p7)

Young people reflected on the changes that had occurred in them during their time in the juvenile justice system and talked about 'lost' childhoods – lost opportunities to spend time with other children and young people doing 'normal' things; in learning how to live in 'normal' society and to do 'normal' things like going to school and being part of school teams etc. They also reflected that they believed that the world outside had also changed while they were inside and that they no longer 'fitted in':

You know you miss out in here. I didn't get those years like them [other YP in the neighbourhood], my life was different now. I was more like an adult after being in there. You know, you change. You're not a kid anymore and you don't really fit in. I wanted to be one of those dudes, I wanted to be there, be a part of it. But you're not. So you come out from being in here and you can't go back. You feel different, you are different to em you know...

Young people also talked about how they needed to now take on additional 'adult' responsibilities: as parents of their own children, as partners to adult girlfriends/boyfriends, as semi-independent adults managing adult roles such as employee, peer and friend. The young people and their workers reported that currently, the system does not formally identify the needs of young people transitioning from youthhood to adulthood or respond to them in a systematic way. There was a call, therefore, for supports (such as mentoring) to be developed to help young people acknowledge and manage their new 'adult' roles, particularly in regards to the parenting of children, of managing different relationships with their own parents and peers and the new responsibilities of work and training.

KEY FINDINGS: Age and development

- The needs of young people engaged in the justice system change depending on their age and development.
- To be most effective, the system must recognise and respond to the differing needs of young people of different ages, particularly:
 - The increased vulnerability and level of risk for young people who enter the system at an early age
 - The new roles and challenges facing those transitioning from childhood to adulthood

9.2 Young people's readiness and willingness to change

A young person's attitudes towards offending, to rehabilitation and towards help-seeking have each been identified as influencing the nature of a young person's rehabilitation (Day et al., 2003) and are considered both risk and responsivity factors that need to be recognised when planning transitions back into the community. This section explores how young people understood the importance of having a positive attitude and of being willing and ready to change.

A number of studies have pointed to the fact that young people need to feel prepared to change, have a positive attitude towards change and have developed strategies in place for this to occur (Abrams, 2006; Abrams & Auilar, 2005; Greve, 2001a),

Abrams and Aguilar argue that to positively change patterns of behaviour young people must move through three stages. Firstly they must recognise their 'negative trends' rather than employ schemas that edit out self-defeating criticism that helps them cope with and justify these behaviours and to "defend against threats to self-concept and to sustain their self-esteem at the cost of re-examining their behaviour and self concept" (2005, p177; AIHW, 2008) In other words, young people must recognise that their behaviours are problematic and not attempt to excuse or justify them, regardless of how this might effect the way they see and feel about themselves.

Secondly, they must recognise a need to change their behaviour and can envision new ways of acting in the future. Young people need to construct 'possible selves' that contain realistic approximations of who they will become in the future and some of the dreams and fears associated with becoming this new person. In effect, young people must identify both the type of person they want to become ('hoped for selves') and the type of person they do not wish to become ('feared selves') and to use these to sway their decision-making. It has been shown that without these concepts of self young people find it difficult to succeed in behaviour change because they have limited interior motivation for doing so.

The third stage requires young people to develop concrete strategies for achieving their visions of a hoped-for self and for avoiding their feared selves. The development of these realistic and attainable strategies and goals are integral if successful and sustained behaviour change is to be achieved.

Young people in this study seemed to have completed stage one and were in stage two of the suggested process. Whether this was because young people had developed scripts to use with the multitude of professionals who were engage in their lives (ie by presenting as being aware of their behaviours and by displaying remorse young people may get lesser sentences and be treated more positively) or

not cannot be a determined. . However, most of them recognised the negative affect that their criminality had had on their lives and the lives of their families and communities and appeared determined to make a change:

All of the young people believed that ultimately those transitioning from detention needed to be committed to making changes to their lives. They felt strongly that it was only when young people took responsibility for recreating their lives that they could change and that to offer support to those who were not interested was futile:

It's in the person, what they wanna do. If they don't wanna be in trouble they've gotta work at it.. There's nothing you can do, you can't make em, you cant make em 100% alright. There's gonna be people who'll help em but they've gotta wanna change, hey.

For some, this was mainly about a change in focus or a recognition of the futility of crime and the negative consequences that incarceration had had on their lives. This young man talked about how he had changed his thinking (at two different interviews):

I'm in a different spot to [other young offenders] now, I see crime in a different way now... Things that have happened to me... Like some people think "I'm just going to steal a car", but I think different – "I stole a car, and look what happened!" But they don't see that... I could see how it's affected me, if you know what I mean. But they don't get that because they haven't been through that.

[Us older remandees are] different. They're [the younger ones are] looking at things like, "Can I get away with it?... If I can, I'll do it". But I'm thinking "I don't want to do it". I see it as "I might get away with it if I do it, but I don't want to do it".

Those in the group interviewed who were not at this stage appeared to either minimise the effects of their crime-taking or felt that other factors outside of their control (ie being intoxicated) had led to their negative behaviours. In the case of the former, one young person felt that his crimes were victimless and that he should participate in as much risky behaviour during his adolescence 'because you only get one chance at being young, you might as well enjoy it':

I'm going to do as much stuff as I can before I turn eighteen. That's how I see it and then just stop. You're only young once so you gotta try it: crimes... drugs... I've still got a while before I'm 18 so if I do anything before then it will be OK. But then when I turn 18 I'm not gonna do anything. It'll be over... When I'm 18 I don't wanna go to adult prison, just thinking before you got into it, 'where am I gonna end up if I do this shit'... I'll stop when I'm 18. That's all I've been saying to myself since I was 13. As soon as I turn 18 I'll stop, no more... That's it. My brother did it, so I can do it... He's mucked up a little bit and been to jail and that but he's been down a hard road. He's settled down now with a kid.

He talked about how he was going to 'settle down' after he turned 18 but did not appear to have any immediate intention of changing his behaviour. He hoped, instead, that he would not be caught when he committed future crime because he did feel as though he was wasting his time in the detention centre.

Another young man believed that it was his drinking that led to his criminal activities, reporting that *'I wasn't myself, everyone said that, I was someone else. I couldn't help it. I'd done so well but the alcohol took over.'* He felt that his intoxication was responsible for his assault: *"it took over, I had no control"*.

Other than these young people, most of the others could see how their past behaviour had affected them, their families and victims and appeared to be determined to change their lives for the better. What seemed to differ amongst the group was the level of confidence they had in being able to become the people they

wanted to become. Most believed that this time things would be different, that they had enough determination to keep away from the temptations, to make good on their commitments and to move on from their criminal pasts. In fact, many of the young people seemed to have created an almost idyllic view of how things were to be and how they were going to live their lives:

Life will be different for me. I'll be working, keeping out of crime, being there with my son.

When I got out last time I said to myself "I'm never gonna come back here" but there's just heaps of little things you've got to look at. I reckon, just you've got to get it all 100 percent. You've got to have your work in place, stuff you're going to do when you get out. You've got to have that in place. You've got to have your family in place. Supports. You've got to have everything perfect for when you get out.

Others were more cautious and some were quite pessimistic about their futures. Although they too could identify these 'hoped for selves' (though these were not talked about in this way) they were also quite aware of the challenges that they would face and felt quite unprepared for what they saw as a difficult road ahead.

This time I don't know. I wanna say I'll do good, but I know I can't do good in Canberra. [What are the odds of doing well if you stay?] Shit odds... Doesn't matter where I go, I'll have a fight with my girlfriend or something won't go right and I'll take off. I'll go rob someone, go take some drugs and when I hit the drugs I won't stop. It will have to take something pretty special to stop me. Don't get me wrong, I really wanna do good. I just know it doesn't work all the time. It's hard to say... I'm gonna have to leave town, start again. Recreate myself.

I don't wanna get out of here.. I'm starting to get panicky... because of just everything, I don't wanna get back on drugs. So right now I'm just changing all my mates... It's gonna be hard, but it's alright.. When they talk to me, I've just gotta you know [walk away]. Me Dad will have to help me keep busy cos when I'm not doing anything, when I'm bored that's when stuff happens.

Others were aware of the pressure that they had put on themselves and reported that they were trying to be realistic about what they could achieve:

I'm feeling good. Trying to stay out of trouble and stuff. That's going OK. I can't say I've been perfect but I've been OK.

This fear for the future has been shown to be common amongst groups of young people exiting detention, with commentators reflecting that 'delinquents' are more likely to be more fearful and less optimistic than their non-offending peers:

Although there were similarities between the hoped-for selves of delinquents and non-delinquents, there were major differences in their expected or feared selves. Although the non-delinquent youths' expectations and fears were relatively "balanced," the balance was lacking for most of the delinquents; their fears exceeded their expectations and their hopes. (Greve, 2001b)

Some of the young people felt that desisting from crime was more difficult than they had imagined and that even though they were hoping to not re-engage with the system it was sometimes inevitable:

That's what most of the boys say – that they 're going to get out when they're 18. They're not going to do crime hardly ever. But then they turn 18 and they're still doing crime. And they get locked up and come back. So it's shit.

Young people's responses to challenge

There seemed to be two types of responses to the realisation that things were not going to be easy. The first group spent much time worrying about their future and centring their self talk around "I'm going to achieve, things are going to get better" while the second group tried to identify strategies to prevent these challenges from emerging. Some, for example, said that they had had conversations with their families and workers and asked them to support them, but with little pressure:

*It's taken time to get good, you know. Cos this time I really wanna change, for myself... I just told all the organisations that were working with me last time to lay off, cos the pressure was too much and it made me stuff up. Cos if I've got too much pressure on me I can't take it and I go and tell everyone to get f**ked cos I can't do it no more. This time, I said to 'em, 'don't pressure me, let me make my own decisions and that' and they've been good with that... They asked me if I'm doing good and that's it, and that works.*

For some, they were not only not editing out 'self critical data' (as required by stage one in Abram's model) but appeared to focus intensely upon it. These young people felt that they were solely responsible for their behaviours and that their offending was reflective of their inherent weakness and failures. Even when it was obvious that there were negative influences surrounding the young person at the time of their offending (such as family conflict, financial instability or negative peer influence) young people did not use them to excuse their behaviour:

Nah, I can't blame it on that stuff in my family. People were fighting and all stress out and everything was going bad but it's no excuse. I did it because I

couldn't cope but I have to take responsibility for it, you know. I can't blame it on that stuff.

Comments like this appear to fly in the face of the commonly voiced opinion that young offenders generally do not take responsibility for their actions. The opposite seemed to be the case for many in this group of young people.

This situation seems to be congruent with Abrams & Aguilar's study which showed that young people had competing schemas: that they tend to overstate their own limitations and failings and understate or other factors that might also influence their behaviour (Abrams & Auilar, 2005, p 186). As such they were successful in recognising some negative trends but filtering out others.

It's all on your head. If you wanna do it or if you wanna go on another path. It's up to you. No one can stop you from doing what you wanna do.

However they generally did not appear to have developed strategies for attaining their hoped for selves or deflecting the risks that may lead to them become their feared selves. These young people and those in the first group could only identify a very limited range of strategies that would enable them to achieve their goals. Almost all of the young people were unable to identify anyone who would or could help them realise their plans.

Instead, this group of young people generally saw that to change their future was their sole responsibility and only they could ultimately influence whether they would be successful or not. This view of responsibility appeared to affect their help-seeking behaviours, with many unable to identify 'champions' and mentors who could help them achieve their goals or, just as importantly, support them. Instead, many young people felt that there were not many people around them who believed in them or felt that their goals were achievable. These ideas have been evident in previous

research which indicates that many young people exiting detention have limited support networks and are not adept at seeking assistance.

They talked, then, about how devastating it was when things didn't work out in the way that they had hoped:

I just don't know anymore. I was all excited, thinking that things would be different this time that things would be all good, that things were planned. Maybe it was too much, that I got too worked up. But, you know, everything looked good.

In a few cases, young people felt as though their whole worlds were crashing down and had little hope for the future. This young person continues:

To be honest I just want to get locked up now. I was going to do a break in and get locked up this morning because I just can't, it's all too much for me... like I've never felt like this before, never. And I've gone through a lot of shit before and I've never felt like this. I just feel so alone and so empty and lost and confused. Everything. I don't even know how to feel. I just can't even explain it really...

She talked about how she had gone from feeling as though everything was working well for her to feeling as though she had no control.

I know how serious it is now, like if I stuff up I'll end up in adult's [prison] that's why I'm trying my hardest. But I know if I don't, if things don't go right now, I know something's going to get real bad. I know it is... I just have no hope, it's not going to get better.

Some of the young people reported that because they had such high expectations of themselves when they did falter or stumble they gave up hope completely, often reengaging in the behaviours that they were trying to avoid:

*Every time I've come in here I've said "this is it, I'm not coming back. I'm not coming back". I'll do good for ages and then, I dunno, I just go "f**k it!" and start stuffing up. Just because I don't think I can do it or because I make a small stuff up. And I go I can't do it so who gives a f**k?*

They reported that after small indiscretions they would often escalate their behaviours knowing that they had failed and believing that they would probably be re-incarcerated for their breaches or crimes:

For me, when I was on the run for a break it was like "I've got nothing to lose, who cares?" because I was gonna get done anyway. But if I was thinking like if I get done for it "yeah, it's only a breach so it wont be that much time' things would be better.

KEY FINDINGS: readiness and willingness to change

- To have positive and sustainable outcomes, young people must:
 - See that their behaviours have been problematic
 - Identify who they want to be and who they don't want to be in the future
 - Develop strategies to achieve their 'preferred' selves and not become their 'feared' selves
- Young people generally felt fully responsible for their actions and underplayed the role that risks in their families and broader environments had on their lives
- Young people often created an idyllic view of the world and felt overwhelmed when their expectations of themselves, the support that they envisaged or their general successes were not achieved.
- Young people either became motivated to succeed or became overwhelmed by their failures and reverted back to old behaviours
- Young people have not been supported to develop good quality strategies to make change and often failed as a result

9.3 The community's willingness & preparedness to accept the young person

As we have heard, young people believed that to successfully reintegrate back into their communities, they needed to believe that success was possible, that they have the skills and resources to achieve their goals and that they have others who have confidence in them and are available to support them to steer clear of the risks that present themselves. For young people who are not engaged in the juvenile justice system this optimism and these supports can be found and nurtured by their extensive natural support systems (such as family, friends, communities etc) but young people in this study often found it difficult to identify their strengths and the resources available to them. Instead, many young people expressed a lack of confidence in themselves, their communities and their futures and more often reported a perception that the adults in their lives saw them as failures and incapable of change. For example, one participant shared that workers had told him not to pack his bag 'because he'd be back pretty quick' and that they were betting on how long he would last outside. He felt that even though he knew that the workers were probably joking that such conversations destroyed his confidence and compounded his own insecurities.

On the outside, young people also encountered situations which they perceived as being pessimistic. When attempting to return to schools and youth services, some young people felt that adults were often not willing to recognise that they had changed through their incarceration and were different people to those they had encountered in the past. One young man, for example, said that teachers at his school automatically labelled him as a trouble maker because of his past and that although he tried to 'slip back in' to the life of the school he was treated differently to peers. "I had to constantly prove myself" he noted "they wouldn't let all that old shit go". Similarly, another young person felt that services were not willing to work

with him because he had 'burnt [his] bridges' in the past and that workers weren't willing to begin again. "I was banned so that was it".

There's lots of places that won't take you. They want you in here[Quamby] cos they don't want to work with you, and it's easier when you're in here cos they can justify not working with you. When you're out they want to see you fail. That's what I've worked out in here.

Young people reported that although they understood why community members were wary of them, being constantly viewed as dangerous or as inherently bad affected the way they and others saw them. For example, one young man talked about how upsetting it was to have police stop him at a public event when he was with new friends and ask him to empty his pockets to prove that he didn't have any contraband on his person. He reported that he felt incredibly ashamed and that he felt that his new friends became more distant from him as a result of this interaction.

They put us on show, a lot of us young ones... it's not just me. You're walking down the street. And they'll come up and bag search us, pat us down, for no reason... We'd just be walking you know... That's why I either run if I see the coppers or fire up

Another young man talked about being followed by police while he was walking down the street. He felt that everyone was looking at him and that the police said to him that they would soon catch him doing something wrong "because they reckoned I couldn't've changed":

They're on an authority trip, they'll never see you as different. As soon as I get out, if I'm walking down the street, they'll go "hey, there's [that young person]." Because everywhere I used to go they used to follow me – thinking I was going to rob people or stuff... Never giving me a chance, never thinking I've changed.

It is important to note that these are young people's perceptions of other's thoughts and views and that this pessimism may not be as pervasive as it appears to them. However, their perceptions clearly affected the way they constructed themselves and viewed the world around them. A number suggested that because they felt that the world was against them they gave up and fell back into old patterns of behaviour which included drug taking and criminality. Conversely, some young people reported that this pessimism motivated them to "prove them wrong" by succeeding although they also reported finding it difficult to do so without support and encouragement.

It would appear that young people's perceptions are, to an extent, justified. A number of parents in this study, for example, reported that they did not have much faith in their children's potential to break out of their criminal lifestyles and were resigned to the fact that their children may eventually graduate to the adult system. The system also, in its documentation at least, appears to focus , on how young people have stumbled and failed to meet requirements. In analysing the operational and case management files at Quamby and in Community Youth Justice, for example, it was often difficult to identify young people's strengths and resources as much of the documentation focused on their criminality, their problems and their negative behaviours. In an extreme example, a non-government organisation stated in a report to Community Youth Justice that the young person "is a lost cause. [He] is going to go straight to the adult prison, just like his family. Any support that we put in now will probably be wasted".

Case conferences across the system (regardless of whether co-ordinated by statutory, voluntary or community based programs) also appeared to focus on solving young people's problems rather than identifying and building on young people's strengths and resources. However in contrast an example given by one government worker talked about a client's participation in a case conference where organisations were told that the agenda was only to focus on positive events, on celebrating the young person's achievements and their hopes for the future. The

worker reported that the young person was overwhelmed, commenting that “I’ve never had a case conference before” and “I wish all of them were like this” and that she felt that their engagement in the services significantly increased as a result.

Young people also talked about the incredible affect that adult’s optimism had on their lives. Contrasting the aforementioned examples of young people’s negative interaction with police one young man talked about how empowering it was to have a police officer tell him how proud he was that the young man had not reoffended, particularly as many of his peers had.

The police actually are starting to lay off, more than I expected. The police officers... they said the only reason they’re letting me go is because all of “your old co-offenders names are coming up, you’re the only person that’s not”. That means you’re either really good [at not getting caught] or you’re being good and aint doin nothing. I said ‘I aint doing nothing’. It was kinda good, I was kinda proud. He said ‘yeah, well I’m proud of you then’.

Another young person talked about how

*having someone believe in you makes a huge difference. It’s like you’ve gotta live up to their expectation cos you don’t wanna let them down. But it’s the opposite too, hey, like if they don’t believe in you you’re gonna f**k up to prove em right too.*

These findings are not incongruent with previous studies that have stressed the value that young people place on having adults believe in them (whether they have an informal relationship or a formal one) and how having someone expect the best in them empowered young people to live up to these expectations and succeed (Lemmon, 2008).

It is important to note that this requires balance. For example young people sometimes felt that there was a difference between workers being hopeful about

them and being unrealistic about their strengths and abilities. One young person talked about ringing a worker during a difficult period believing that he was going to have to commit an offence because he did not believe that he could cope on his own. He reported that worker, who he phoned up for help tried to be reassuring by telling him that he could cope with the challenge and that he had the strength to do so:

Like my worker, she's always been good with me. Always telling me I've got potential and that... But then when I told her about all this, what I was doing. She said "Why are you doing this? You're more mature than this, more courageous". It's got nothing to do with being mature or courageous. I am mature and that but I do have feelings as well. And I couldn't cope. So her telling me I could didn't help. It just made it worse. It felt now I was letting her down too. Made me feel worse. Like a complete failure.

The young person argued that he needed the worker to acknowledge his difficulties and give him some ideas to resolve the challenges:

That's what I really needed. Someone to say, "yeah that's bloody hard" and to tell me that they could help me. It takes a lot to say you're not coping so you need em to recognise that. Because if they don't you go 'I'm not telling them nothing anymore'. And that's worse.

Acknowledging small steps

In addition to being hopeful, young people believed that the system needed to acknowledge the small steps that they had made and the considerable effort that they have invested to both do the "right thing and not do the wrong thing."

In his work on juvenile offenders, Mark Halsey describes a 'desistance model of offending' which "builds in 'failure' as an inevitable (and therefore expected) part of being released from custody (conditionally or otherwise). Under such a model, the person released is conceived in something other than hydraulic (all or nothing) terms

– as beyond those discourses which would invoke the label recidivist (due to breaching) or rehabilitated (due to no breach being detected for a prolonged period). (2007, p167).

Although describing it in a less academic way, young people and a number of workers often recognised that young people were going to make mistakes and that they believed, on reflection, that young people and the system often becomes caught when they believed that young people can be ‘all or nothing’ (as described in the section focusing on future selves). As such, these participants believed that the system could be significantly improved if it focused on how young people desisted in their criminality rather than how they participated in it.

One youth justice worker gave an example of the value of focusing on young people’s progress rather than just their failings. She talked about a young man who was constantly 10 minutes late to school and how it had been suggested that he be breached because of his tardiness. Rather than doing so, the worker talked to the young person and found that he was catching a number of buses from one side of the city to the other to get to school. Instead of punishing him, the worker praised the young man for his commitment to education and his efforts in getting to school. The worker went to the young person’s school and informed them of the situation and ensured that the rest of the CYJ team knew not to breach him in the future. This was a positive interaction that both built the young person up and helped them navigate the system rather than a negative interaction that would have led to a breach and, potentially, another period of incarceration.

Adopting such a view, although potentially problematic administratively, may also be helpful in responding to the challenge related to young people about not wanting to talk to parents or workers about their failures for fear of ‘letting them down’ or of potentially being breached. One young person spoke about this at length, reporting that he believed that he could not talk to anyone about his marijuana use which he

said that he used because he had cravings for heavier drugs and because he felt overwhelmed by the pressures of living outside of Quamby. He needed for someone to acknowledge that his minimal use of marijuana was, for him, a positive step – because it meant that he did not use another harder illicit drug or commit crime to pay for them. But he also recognised that he needed some support to find better strategies for dealing with his challenges. He was fearful that he would be breached when he failed his urinalysis but did not feel comfortable talking to his CYJ worker about this relatively small indiscretion.

Communities 'moving on'

Although it is of prime importance that young people change their behaviours and develop strategies to achieve their preferred selves, recent studies have asserted the need for families and communities to also be prepared and, where necessary, change to ensure that the young person's reintegration can be a positive one.

Writing in the adult arena, Burnett and Maruna (2006) argue that to ensure that a detainee's transition is positive, communities must be willing to accept that the individual has made appropriate amends and be willing to forgive these past wrong doings. They argue that the best way to support this is to engage the individual in activities that promote their value and potential through positive community contribution because:

...only by taking responsibility for making things right with victims and victimised communities can offenders change either the community's image of them or their perceptions of themselves (citing Bazemore and Stinchcomb 2006, p86)

Otherwise they argue that ex-prisoners are “in” but not “of” the larger society and can be excluded from its resources and the opportunity to draw on its capacity. They

argue that while communities maintain a negative view of prisoners they tend to further isolate them post-release. Activities that they encourage are those that visibly meet community needs, build community capacity, provide ex-prisoners with opportunities to participate in community-oriented helping or leadership. As distinct from traditional, involuntary labour or community service work, these strengths-based programs allow offenders to 'give something back' while developing strengths and opportunities which they can use in seeking further employment or careers. Rather than being judicially ordered as punishment, these activities are voluntarily agreed upon and are intended to be both enjoyable and rewarding.

Evaluations of such strengths-based programs suggest that those individuals who felt that their community activity was 'rewarding' had lower rates of recidivism than those whose was viewed as a punishment. They found that "In many instances, it seems, contact with the beneficiaries gave offenders an insight into other people, and an increased insight into themselves;... greater confidence and self-esteem; ... and the confidence and appreciation of other people". (McIvor in Burnett & Maruna, 2006, p88)

The community's positive response to these offenders (although not yet empirically evaluated) also appears to be important:

"... the helper principle suggests that by treating prisoners as positive resources and providing opportunities for them to develop pro-social self-concepts, communities will be more willing to do their share in the process of reintegration, hence reducing recidivism" (Burnett & Maruna, 2006, p89)

The young people in our study seem to agree with such observations. As we have already heard, many talked about how difficult it was returning to a community that they felt was hostile towards them and how difficult it was for them to change when others did not believe them.

Although young people in this study were not formally linked into volunteer activities, two who had engaged in volunteering programs reported high levels of satisfaction. They appreciated having activities to do (both were refereeing sporting games) and also seemed to value having their contributions recognised by others (both in financial payments but, as importantly, in the positive feedback they received). Feeling part of an organisation and being depended upon were also seen as being important.

The importance of engaging young people in such activities can not only help restore their community's regard but also what Brendtro (1990) describes as the spirit of generosity which he argues is necessary for growth and development. So, it would seem, does it enhance some of Brendtro's other identified needs: their needs for belonging (through their engagement with their communities), their sense of mastery (when their contributions are acknowledged and recognised) and independence (when they choose to participate in activities for the good of their communities).

KEY FINDINGS: Community preparedness.

- Young people often felt as though the community (including their parents, teachers, the police and others) did not believe that they had made changes in their lives and were not willing to let them 'move on'
- They reported that this was discouraging and influenced their ability to achieve
- Young people greatly valued optimistic adults who believed in them and felt that such relationships were empowering
- There is a need to recognise young people's successes (no matter how small) and to understand the complexity of challenges that they face in making changes in their lives

9.4 The system fosters interdependence

The move from detention to the community was a difficult one for many of the young people who experienced significant culture shock when leaving an environment that was characterised by structure and within which decision-making was limited. Inside, young people were generally not responsible for organising their activities or managing relationships. Young people reported that this was often refreshing, that they appreciated not having to juggle the multiple complexities of life on the outside and that in this controlled environment that they could refocus and begin again.

However when returning to the community, workers and young people often felt that they needed to once again take responsibility for managing their lives and for the consequences for decisions that they made. This view (which has been explored in the literature) is underpinned by a belief that self-sufficiency and autonomy are the ultimate goals for young people and that workers must encourage this by minimising their levels of assistance (Propp, Ortega, & NewHeart, 2004).

Some workers were of the view that if the system was to organise everything for the young person then the young person would become dependent on the system and would not develop important skills. This view, which is pervasive across 'helping systems' (Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2006; Propp et al., 2004), and seems to be entrenched in some youth work practice in the ACT (Barker, 2008), is problematic as it assumes that young people have the skills and opportunities to seek support and that the best way to encourage young people to develop is to force them into acting alone. Requests for assistance are therefore seen as weaknesses and a sign that the young person is not taking responsibility for their lives (Iglehart, 1994).

Young people, however, generally reported that they felt unprepared and unable to manage without assistance. Although they wanted to take responsibility for their situations, they needed workers to give them advice on what options they had, on

what resources were available and how to overcome presenting challenges. However, most reporting feeling as though workers distanced themselves in ways that were unhelpful.

Recognising the challenges facing young people exiting state care, writers such as Stiver (1991) and others, argue that the system needs to move away from polarising 'dependence' and 'independence' and to focus more on interdependence, a blending of self-sufficiency and dependency, a "process of counting on other people to provide help in coping physically and emotionally with the experiences and tasks encountered in the world when one has not sufficient skill, confidence, energy and / or time" (1991, p160). This view asserts that relying on others is not only natural and developmentally appropriate but also provides young people an environment in which they may grow and develop. Stiver continues, "This notion would allow for experiencing one's self as being enhanced and empowered through the very process of counting on others for help" (1991, p160). As such, young people need to be encouraged to attempt new tasks in uncharted territory but to do so knowing that they have supportive adults who are there to encourage and support them through these often scary and unknown places.

Propp et al, (2004) argue that the system must adopt such an approach if it is to be effective in supporting young people's transitions. Firstly, young people who have been institutionalised for some time often develop a sense of learned hopelessness that is fostered by practices that diminish or restrict their decision-making skills and opportunities and through them their sense of power. For young people who are incarcerated, a loss of liberty often equates to a loss of choices about what they do, who they associate with, how they are supported and even the daily tasks that they participate within.

One young people in this study made this observation:

You lose everything inside. You get out and you don't know how to do shit anymore. And everyone expects you to do stuff for yourself and you're like really wanting to do it but sometimes you just don't know how. And it freaks you out and you start stressing and then you get all angry at yourself and then you cant do stuff even if you wanna. You kinda need someone just saying, 'yeah that's it', not doing it for you but like letting you know you're doing the right thing or going 'how about you try this' and helping you cos its completely different out, hey. Nothing like inside. And the longer you're in the harder it is.

Others talked about how they had become institutionalised, sometimes returning to Quamby because it was somewhere they felt safe:

I like it in here. It's like a second home. I can say that, that I've been institutionalised... When I'm on the outside I'd prefer to be back in here. It's not as stressful, it's more relaxed... Makes me feel bad, cos I know I shouldn't be this way, I shouldn't feel like this, that I'm more comfortable in here. I shouldn't be institutionalised, I shouldn't want to go back to lock up. I should be out on the outside living a good life. That's why I wanna leave town this time to see if that'll help, get me out of it. Change my thinking.

I don't think I was ready to come out. I wanted to get out bad but then sometimes I just didn't. And when I got out sometimes I just wanted to be back in there again, you know. Just when things were out of control. It was like a reality check. It was good in a way.

Propp et al (2004) argue, then, that the system must recognise the ways that it has disempowered youth in the past, develop cooperative relationships between workers and young people where power imbalances are addressed and where this relationship is used as a foundation on which young people can learn new skills to advocate for themselves, participate in decision making and in seeking other supports. As such young people are encouraged to take responsibility and control

over their lives but with the support and guidance of a trusted adult who walks with them. They argue that by doing so young people not only benefit from positive change within the social system but also the positive effects associated with taking control and in regaining control of their current situation. The benefits also flow to the workers and the broader system as young people are more likely to engage and invest in solutions, limiting staff frustration and a sense of failure (which in turn can lead to negative views of the young person and of themselves).

In this study there were a number of cases where workers attempted to develop this interdependent relationship with young people. A Community Youth Justice Worker talked about how she picked a young person up from Quamby on the day of his release, took him to his house, helped him unpack and then took him to the shops to buy cleaning products and some cooking supplies. She then took him home, helped him cook a meal, ate it with him and then helped him clean up afterwards – all the while teaching him basic skills but also being present with him during an anxiety-filled time.

The young person reported highly appreciating this opportunity:

In my eyes, I saw her as a good worker. [She] was the best one... She helped me out and stuff. When I was getting in trouble, when I was good she helped me out. She took me home to my place on the first night. I was real scared and I didn't have no one to help me get there. And she helped me get stuff, for my house. Groceries and stuff. And she stayed around and helped cos she knew I didn't have that much confidence and stuff. No one had done that kinda thing for me before.

Other young people talked about how they valued having a worker available to them to talk them through difficult situations and help them make helpful decisions. They most valued workers who were available on the other end of the phone, particularly when they felt that they were going to do something 'bad' such as taking drugs,

committing crimes or breaking directions. Being able to 'talk themselves down' was imperative for many who needed someone to help ground them and remind them of their goals.

She was really good. You tell me everything. Sometimes I'd be needing someone to talk to and she'd come over. She'd help me out. She just comforts me and talks to me and stuff.

Yeah, I wouldn't've survived without her. I needed her, you know. Not to tell me what to do, well not really. More to help me talk things through. Get my head straight. Cos sometimes it's full on and you can't like you just can't think it through. And you need someone to say 'you don't want that, you've done so good' and you to remember that, 'you're right'.

Propp et al (2004) also stress the importance of workers spending time with young people, mentoring them through decision-making processes. In discussing a recent consultation with homeless young people, staff from the Youth Coalition shared that young people valued workers who went with them to Centrelink appointments, who helped them self-soothe when frustrated in the long lines, when negotiating payments and when resolving conflicts.

Neither young people nor workers in this study expected that workers would be present at every appointment but that, instead, through the experience of solving problems together young people would build their skills, their confidence in using these skills and in drawing upon previous experiences to have successful outcomes. Because young people's engagement with services post-release was so poor, it would appear that they did not have such relationships although many spoke about valuing informal relationships that they thought could be replicated:

Yeah my Mum helps me with stuff like that. She's real good, helps me work through the decisions. But she can't always be round and I can't talk about lots of stuff with her so it would be good if there was like a worker or someone who could do that stuff, hey. Be like there for you.

It would appear that significant resources would be required to provide such a support to young people and that currently only a few support services have the flexibility and capacity to assist young people in this way. It may be helpful to investigate how the programs provided by Barnardos, Open Family and the Canberra Men's Centre might be replicated or broadened to allow greater access to young people during the first crucial months post-release.

KEY FINDINGS: Interdependence

- Young people experience significant challenges returning to the community and need ongoing support.
- This is particularly the case for young people who have been institutionalised and who develop a sense of learned hopelessness
- Ongoing support and mentoring is required to help young people develop new skills and to navigate the 'outside world'

9.5 What could be done

Program delivery needs to take into account young people's developmental needs

At present there seems to be limited understanding of adolescent development and the differing developmental needs of young people of different ages and backgrounds have. As a result, supports and services are provided in ways that appear to be inappropriate and unresponsive to young people's real needs. This is the case for both government and non government services who generally provide supports in a generic and non-individualised way. As such training and development of workers is required so that more responsive and effective assistance can be provided.

In addition, consideration of developmental needs is also required when planning supports at the service-level. There has been some helpful work in the United States and elsewhere that identifies a range of responses that target young people of varying ages and developmental stages (see: Mears & Travis, 2004a). This work recognises that incarceration, and a range of preceding factors related to a young person's living environments (ie their exposure to trauma) can impact upon a young person's development and that, as a result, young people of the same age may be at different stages of development. Such programs should be investigated and, where appropriate, implemented in the ACT context.

Recent work on development audits which gauge young people's capacities in a series of domains has shown to help practitioners understand and respond to a young person's developmental needs. Such an assessment might be used alongside the new tools being introduced in Youth Justice which we understand do not ascertain young people's developmental needs.

Young people transitioning into adulthood

Young people transitioning from childhood to adulthood may also require assistance in managing the new relationships and expectations that they encounter upon release and some of the physical and emotional changes that have occurred during periods of incarceration. Linking these young people with mentors that are available to help them understand these changes and to work alongside them to resolve challenges may be of benefit as would arranging them to engage in existing services (such as programs for new fathers) where they can meet others in a similar situation to themselves to develop new skills and strategies.

Assisting young people to achieve their 'hoped for selves' and not become their 'feared selves'

It would appear that many young people are unable to make sustainable changes because they do not have clear, concrete or achievable strategies to enable them to reach their goals and to overcome the considerable challenges that they face when trying to abstain from negative behaviours. Further work with young people on problem-solving, help-seeking, on managing risks and on assertive behaviour would each assist young people to better deal with the challenges that they face.

For this to be effective, better identification of the key challenges that young people face is required. As noted in the section on alcohol and other drugs, strategies that focus solely on drug use rather than the reasons why people use drugs are ineffective. So too are strategies that do not recognise the environments within which young people live: telling young people to stay away from risky environments is not helpful when young people are living in families where other family members commit crimes, use drugs or condone antisocial behaviours. Such strategies appear to not only be ineffective but may actually further exacerbate young people's feelings of hopelessness and failure.

One suggestion that may have merit is the development of a peer support program not dissimilar to that adopted by Alcoholics Anonymous and other self-help models where young people are paired with a 'sponsor' who checks in on the young person, is available when they feel like they are not coping or when tempted to reengage in antisocial behaviour.

Encouraging community preparedness

It would appear that there is little community understanding of the lives of young people or what happens with them at Quamby, what it aims to achieve or what progress they make during periods of incarceration. As a result, young people may experience significant challenges when attempting to reintegrate into the community. Promoting positive stories about their successes and those of the program may go some way to challenging the popular view that young people exiting the Centre continue to be dangerous and that they have not changed during their incarceration.

It would also appear that such pessimistic views are held by people within the system: police, teachers and workers. This is understandable recognising the apparent failure of young people to achieve sustainable positive outcomes. However, as noted in the section on optimism, there may be some benefit in supporting these workers to recognise the small but measurable successes that young people achieve and the significant challenges that they have overcome. Adopting a desistance model of justice (as outlined in Mark Halsey's work) may be of benefit in helping workers to reframe their observations enabling them to respond more optimistically.

Young people also need to be better equipped through training and mentoring to cope with the inevitable knock backs that they will encounter. Young people should not be discouraged from hoping for the best but instead be given the skills and confidence to develop a level of resilience that enables them to sustain a degree of self esteem and optimism so that they can become their hoped-for selves.

Responding to young people at key points in transitions

As we have seen, young people often need significant support at a number of key points. Firstly, the few days after their release seem to be critical. It would appear that each young person needs to have someone available to support their transition: to make sure that they have somewhere safe to live, that they have food and clothing, and that they can enact some of their strategies related to abstaining from drug and alcohol use (many reported that this was the major temptation post release). At this point, a key worker is also required to ensure that each part of the young person's case plan has been initiated.

Ideally this would involve a worker from Quamby, the young person's 'key support person' and the young person's family doing positive and 'normal' activities with the young person that could help re-establish and affirm new bonds and allow the Quamby worker to hand over responsibility and to disengage in a positive way. Such activities might include shopping for new clothes, buying food and cooking a meal, going to Centrelink to make sure that arrangements are in place.

Fostering interdependence

Drawing together all of the themes identified in this part, there seems to be a major call for providing young people with opportunities to connect with strong, positive and encouraging adults with whom they can develop a relationship of openness and trust and with whom they can resolve challenges that they encounter. Where possible, families should be supported (through family conferencing and ongoing family support) to assume this role. When this is not possible, other appropriate adults from within the young person's ecology might be identified and supported to assume this important role.

These relationships need to be fostered as early as possible so that strong bonds might be formed before periods of crisis and be supported through the transition from incarceration into the community as the nature of the relationship may change

significantly at this time (for example, parents reported that their role sometimes changed from a supporter to a monitor post release). Ongoing support (ie supervision) might be required to assist mentors throughout their involvement.

Part 4: Towards reintegration

10. Successful transition and reintegration

In this part of the report we will explore what makes a successful transition and reintegration, how young people currently experience these processes and what measures might be put in place to resolve the challenges that they and those working with them encounter post-release. We draw heavily on young people's experiences and the observations of those who have worked with them (or attempted to work with them) in the community.

10.1 What we want to achieve

All participants were asked to identify what it was that they felt the system should aim to achieve for and with young people engaged in the juvenile justice system within the ACT.

Generally, their responses fell into one of two categories:

- A decrease in criminal behaviour
- A general improvement in the lives and future life opportunities of young people

They believed that the young person's transition back into the community would be successful if they:

- Had overcome or felt prepared to face the various risks and challenges that had led them to engage in crime in the past including those in their families, their peer networks, and their communities
- Had developed a range of protective factors that could shield them from these risks and challenges including having positive peer groups, mentors and a positive sense of self
- Had changed their attitudes towards offending and believed that change was possible

- Were engaged in meaningful, affirming and 'normal' activities such as education, employment, involvement in sporting teams and programs
- Were well integrated into their communities and were able to access its supports and resources
- Were able to access ongoing assistance from the service system that helped them sustain positive outcomes and overcome challenges that they may encounter

For this to occur, young people, workers, families and other stakeholders believed that the system had to operate a particular way. There was significant agreement between different stakeholder groups, including the young people about what the system might look like. There were also differences in views which have been captured in the analysis and discussed.

Firstly, participants believed that the system had to have a **holistic and broad view of rehabilitation**: recognising that for outcomes to be achieved sustained support must be available to address the many risks inherent in the young people's lives. It should not focus narrowly on the time young people spent incarcerated or for short periods after their release. Some noted that the young people at Quamby had developed their behaviours and problems over many years and that it was naïve to believe that significant change could occur during short periods of incarceration. As such, it was argued that all players needed to engage in the rehabilitation process.

As part of the rehabilitation process, participants believed that young people needed to be **reintegrated back into their communities** or, for those who never had experienced good engagement with their communities, integration. This required young people to connect with their communities and be given opportunities to be engaged within it. The concept of 'embeddedness' emerged: the idea that young people needed to be surrounded by their communities (by strong, positive adults,

supportive peers, ongoing assistance and normalised interactions) rather than to have weak linkages with it.

To allow such a broad approach, participants felt that rehabilitation and reintegration needed to be given priority status with planning for a young person's **transition beginning on day one of their incarceration**. This allowed services who had past involvement with the young person to remain actively engaged and new services to come on board with key and clear objectives identified (such as preparing the young person for independent living).

As such, participants believed that the system had to work in a **well-managed and coordinated way**. The rehabilitation of young people needed to become the responsibility of all parts of the system rather than that of the Detention Centre itself and the key players in a young person's life (including the young person themselves, their families, informal supporters, government and non-government workers) needed to be both involved and take responsibility for supporting young people in well defined ways. This requires better communication, more opportunities to develop shared goals and understanding, and better handover to assist seamless service delivery. Although the juvenile justice system has primary responsibility for enacting court orders, other players need to be supported to take carriage for parts of the young person's rehabilitation and be supported to allow this to happen. Participants (including young people) stressed the importance of having some consistency in approach across services and supports reflecting that when people's goals and expectations were inconsistent (and sometimes contradictory) positive outcomes were threatened.

Participants also called for increased **accountability and monitoring**: observing that providers from across the system often did not deliver on their commitments, sometimes because young people did not take up offers, because they had forgotten or misunderstood their undertakings and because more coordination was required

to enable the young person's access. As such, participants felt that mechanisms for monitoring the provision of services needed to be developed that had a broader focus than monitoring young people's compliance of orders or reasonable directions (which is currently Community Youth Justice's primary mandate).

Young people and families felt that positive outcomes were best achieved when processes were **inclusive and responsive** to their needs, wishes and circumstances. As such, they called for more **individualised support** which appropriately assessed their situation and gave them an opportunity to feed into the process themselves. When their participation was minimal so, it seemed, was their ownership of commitments and their likelihood of actively meeting objectives. This also included the system understanding the particular challenges and threats that they encountered when trying to fulfil expectations (such as having to deal with drug use in the family while trying to abstain; in holding down a job when they felt unskilled; in family members feeling uncomfortable 'policing' their children around certain issues).

Recognising that young people often were reluctant to seek support from workers and other adults who they did not know or trust, participants stressed the importance of identifying **key workers**, who the young person might chose themselves, and who were available to young people and could work with young them on resolving the issues that they encountered. This worker would not necessarily sit within or be responsible to Youth Justice but could work closely with them to ensure that their broad needs are being met. This worker could enable **continuity of care** for the young person. This worker would be responsible for (and be resourced to) actively help a young person seek out and connect to another key worker if they were no longer able to assume this vital role. As such, the frustration and difficulty that young people experienced when constantly losing their workers (due to high staff turnover and movement within the Department) might be reduced.

The following section explores the young people, workers and parents perspectives of what *should* happen during reintegration as well as describing some the most useful things that *did* happen.

10.2 Young people's experience of 'rehabilitation'

Young people saw rehabilitation as being about learning new ways to respond to some of the temptations inherent in their 'outside' lives. This process identified some of the faults in their characters, their thinking and their commitment to living crime-free lives. Generally, they believed that it was something that they had to do themselves. Some believed that during their time in Quamby they were able to reflect on their lives and on the gravity of the charges.

It's [rehabilitation] not very successful. Basically it's on you if you wanna change. Quamby doesn't help you... Quamby just a place to be put away. It's then on you to think about what you wanna do. Some people don't even think about it like that. They go in there and go 'rah rah rah' and then they go out and do the same thing and come back in. Always the same thing.

[Rehabilitation is] Making you make better choices than what you do. Basically, trying to find yourself more. Your better side so you don't have to come back. Like who you are, who you really are. Trying to be better than what you were before.

They also realised the importance of their outside relationships and their appreciation of participating in the broader community which was not possible due to being incarcerated.

They argued that while in Quamby it was the boredom that often motivated them to make changes and that it was during the times by themselves rather than time in programs where they decided to make amends.

*For me it helped heaps. I was thinking a lot in there. Whether I wanted to come back, f**k, who I wanted to be.*

Most young people did not believe that the programs at Quamby aimed to rehabilitate them directly but instead provided them with the environment within which to make changes. In fact, when young people were told that one of the stated aims of the project was to rehabilitate young people, they were sceptical at best:

*It's a joke. There's f**k all here that stops you.*

It's [too easy] in here. They don't make you do anything, they don't offer you much, really. It's just doing your time. Making things good for the community, whoever that is.

It don't do nothing for you. You're just like in here and the only thing you get pissed off about is that you can't see your family or can't drink or smoke or stuff. It doesn't change anything, you're the same when you get out.

One of the reasons why young people were sceptical about the effectiveness of Quamby in rehabilitating young offenders was because they had seen so many of their peers continue to perpetrate crime and continued to be engaged in the criminal justice system.

Young people also believed that one key demotivator for participation in crime was the fear of being incarcerated. However, most noted that after their first stint in the centre this fear dissipated. One young woman remarked, for example, that she had not been involved in serious crime when she was younger because she had heard that girls were raped at Quamby and that they had to shower on the ovals. When, on an overnight stay, she discovered that this was not the case she said "f**k it, this place is alright – I might as well do whatever cos it's really not that bad".

Secondly, participants felt that younger inmates, in particular, were actually more likely to reoffend after learning new skills from their peers and after hearing about

new 'exciting' experiences that they could enjoy. One young man talked about the older boys who 'thought it was cool' to tell the younger boys how to break into particular cars and where to punch and kick victims if they were caught. The younger boys would often listen to the older boys talk about their criminal histories (much of which the participants believed were embellished) and would go out and commit further and more serious crime in an attempt to get the older boys respect.

Thirdly, young people believed that these unhelpful relationships were exacerbated during periods of incarceration when they became completely disconnected from any positive peer groups that they may have had prior to custody. They said they were more likely to hang out with these new peers because their old peer groups had 'moved on'.

Lastly, young people talked about the fact that they sometimes committed crimes just so that they could return to Quamby to get the supports and services that they needed. Although they recognised the futility of such a strategy and the fact that they would lose all the benefits of their progress and be disconnected from their families and communities again, they sometimes felt that this was the only way to get the assistance they needed:

Here's the thing, right. I reckon that if I didn't go through this stuff I wouldn't have the support that I'm getting now. I've thought about it lots. If I could go back to 16 and do things different, I wouldn't do anything different. I wouldn't hurt the people I did but other than that I wouldn't do nothing different. You know if I was a good kid and went to school and all that, went to college and then to... university I might have done OK but then when I needed some help, someone to support me, they wouldn't be there to help. I'd have no one... So with me, you go to school, you stop going, you get in trouble, you go to a refuge, you go to court, you go to court again for doing other stuff, then they put you on an order, then they put you in Quamby for a couple of months, then

you get out on bail and there's no help, then you get in trouble again and they put you back in for longer and then you ask em for help, and then you ask em again and again and then they hook you up with support and then more support and when you get out you've got that support. So that's been good – I wouldn't change nothing because if I didn't go through that stuff I'd have nothing. And life would be really bad, you know? So it's been a bad life but it's worth it because I'm getting help now. I reckon if you talk to anyone, any of the other clients, right, they'll say the same as me. You should ask 'em because it'll be the same. They might say it different but it's the only way to get hope.

The irony of the situation was not lost on many of the young people who felt that the system made it more difficult rather than easier to desist from crime. They argued, then, that greater effort was necessary to limit some of these negative impacts and

If you make it harsher people won't want to come back. If you make it easier then people out there will be thinking 'screw it, I can do crime. Who cares?'. It's different to different people. Some toughen up in here. Learn new ways to do crime. Some will come back. Some will be more eager to do crime when they get out.

10.3 Resolving negative affects of incarceration

Young people also felt that rehabilitation was about helping them deal with some of the challenges and difficulties they experienced because of their detention. They felt that they needed support to manage the culture shock that they experienced when transitioning back to the community. Many noted that their lives in Quamby were quite different to those outside its walls, sometimes describing it as “the real world outside”. One commented, for example, that he had had more Christmas’ at Quamby than he had had with his family and that it was going to be strange for him to spend one on the outside. They talked about how difficult it was to readjust.

This is not surprising for young people who's 'outside' life appeared to be no better than their 'inside' life. As one young man noted, in Quamby *"you get fed, you get a bed to sleep in, you get to go to school each day. You do work, art, woodwork... go to the gym do stuff you can never do on the outside. Life's shit out here, worse than in there"*.

Limited responsibility. Although young people were accountable for their behaviours and for their progress in education and, to a limited degree, in their relationships with peers and workers the level of responsibility they assumed for making decisions whilst inside was both limited in scope and nature. Young people often reported that this was a positive thing: that Quamby gave them some respite from the challenges and problems that they faced outside and sometimes gave them excuses to leave their issues unresolved (relationships with parents and peers; the challenges of getting a job or staying in school; debts etc). Inside Quamby they did not have to pay bills, make choices about what things they would do during the day or even what they would eat, drink or when they would sleep.

In fact, young people reported that they sometimes forgot how to do some of these things and felt 'set up' when they returned to the community. They often reported having little confidence in themselves and their abilities and felt that the system was pressuring them to take on responsibility for things that they didn't think that they could fully handle.

Young people also reported that the thrill of having less restrictions and more control over their lives was also problematic, particularly in the initial weeks after they left detention. Most talked about getting out and doing things that they weren't allowed to do in Quamby: just because they now they could. This included drinking, staying out until the early hours, and "mucking up" with peers. Some reported that this thrillseeking took them down a path that they had no wish or plan to follow: getting once again caught up in risk taking, drug use and criminal behaviour.

Their conflicting needs and wishes were not lost on young people. On one hand they wanted to enjoy their new 'freedom' but on the other reported feeling uncomfortable by the endless choices and consequences that presented themselves before them.

Access to support: Young people also found that they were not given the same level of support in the community as they had received inside Quamby. There was often no one to make decisions for them, to hold them accountable for bad choices or to follow up with others who failed to meet their commitments. When parents and family members attempted to take on this role, young people often reported feeling torn: they knew that they needed help but did not want to feel as though their parents had taken over the role of a Quamby worker, scrutinising their actions and activities. In a number of cases, young people reported conflict with their parents, which in two cases led to them becoming homeless.

Young people also reported that they no longer had the same access to education, to health care treatment, to counselling or support – or at least not to the same extent or not in a way that was as easily accessed outside than inside.

Managing relationships. Some of the young people stressed the fact that during periods of incarceration they had built strong and meaningful relationships with other residents and staff and that they felt that they would lose these when leaving the Centre. For those who had poor social networks in the world outside Quamby, the prospect of leaving these people, and a lifestyle within which they could form positive relationships was overwhelming

For me, someone who's been in for so long, the workers they're all like family. So I'm really going to miss them when I get out.

Others reported that whilst inside their interactions with peers and staff were primarily institutional ones. Young people generally felt that most people would keep

to themselves and their groups of friends and “not start anything”. Although relationship difficulties were often left unaddressed, young people reported that they were more predictable inside: there was a code of behaviour that shaped the way they interacted with others. If there was an outburst, young people were excluded from each other and they reported having “to just get over it”.

On the outside, however, young people felt that this predictability dissipated. A few of the young men, for example, reported that they couldn’t read other young people in the “real world” with one young man reporting “I was always looking at people sideways going “what are you looking at, you wanna fight?”. Some said that on the outside they got into more fights, often over “little things” that escalated because they didn’t know how else to resolve them. Although not usually physical, young people shared that this was also apparent in their family relationships: “I got fired up with Dad and went off just cos I didn’t know what to do”.

It’s weird when you get out... it feels like everyone’s looking at you. You get all paranoid. All that kinda stuff. It’s all weird, you feel strange. You kinda think ‘maybe I cant cope out here, I have to go back in’.

Always with someone to often alone. Young people reported that one of the big differences was that in Quamby there was always someone with them or at least watching them whilst on the outside they often felt quite alone. Young people had workers around them who could help them talk about problems they were facing and had friends with whom they could get support when facing difficulties. They also had people around them when they felt like they needed space and when they didn’t want to be with others. Many saw this newfound aloneness outside Quamby as a positive but also felt that it was often quite daunting. Often they reported that they would reconnect with old peers, particularly those that had also served time at Quamby because this was more comfortable than spending time alone.

Images of self. Young people reported that although they sometimes had to “talk themselves up” inside Quamby, that inside they generally did not have to prove themselves to others: in the HEC they were just another student who needed help catching up rather than the “stupid kid” up the back who was causing problems; because they had no access to drugs, weren’t involved in crime or other risk taking behaviours they never had to escalate their behaviours to fit in (although they said that they sometimes they overstated the reasons they were in); and they had limited interactions with members of the opposite sex that were like those outside requiring particular behaviours or commitments.

When they returned to the community they sometimes struggled because they had to reconstruct their identities – and were again torn about how they should proceed. On one hand many tried to assert their new selves (the ones that had made changed and who had moved forward) but often found that others weren’t willing to accept these changes as quickly as they had anticipated. When this failed, young people sometimes engaged in old behaviours so that they could resume their old, comfortable selves and all the positive gains that went with them.

11. Experiences of support

11.1 The nature of support provided to young people prior to, during and after their incarceration

As part of the study, we attempted to develop a better understanding of young people's service usage before, during and after their incarceration. It was anticipated that young people would have poor engagement prior to entering the Youth Detention Centre but that their involvement with outside services would increase during and after these periods as a result of case management and transition planning. Although there was some evidence that these processes were put in place, we found that their engagement with services did not increase substantially during their incarceration and, in most cases, dropped both during and after these periods. These findings are summarised in Figure 1 below. In the 'during' and 'post' columns, we have indicated whether there has been an increase in the number of young people getting support from the service (↑) or whether it has dropped (↓) or stayed the same (→) compared with the level of support provided prior to incarceration. As can be seen, although there has been an increase in the level of support provided to young people during their incarceration, most young people disconnect or continue to be unengaged post-release.

Table 2: Engagement with formal supports

	Service Type	Number of young people accessing support		
		Prior	During	Post
Government	Care & Protection services	7	2↓	0↓
	Community Youth Justice	11	2↓	6↓
	CAMHS	1	6↑	1→
	Turnaround	0	4↑	0→
Non-Government Services	Generalist youth services	9	0↓	0↓
	YSAAP	3	3→	4↑
	Mentoring	2	0↓	2→
	Sports / Recreational	2	11↑	2→
	Non-statutory case management	2	3↑	5↑
	Health service	4	1↓	5↑
	Indigenous programs	1	2↑	2↑
	AOD program	6	7↑	4↓
TOTALS	48	41↑	31↓	

Please note that services such as PCYC (listed in 'Sports / Recreational') and Ted Noffs (listed in 'AOD programs') are included in this table.

This section explores young people's interactions with the service system, it identifies some of the barriers and challenges that they encountered when seeking and accessing support and reports on some of the reasons why they believed their connection to services was not successful.

11.2 Engagement with services prior to incarceration

Many of the young people in this group were well known to the system due to family problems, past experience with juvenile justice or because of their poor engagement with education. However, they reported getting little assistance in the time leading up to their incarceration. The young people who accessed community-based services identified the following types of programs:

- **Youth centres** – most of the young people had been to a youth centre at some time before becoming incarcerated. Most talked about youth centres as being a place to ‘hang out’, to play pool or computer games or to spend time with friends and were generally unaware of the personal support or case management services that were available or the centre’s capacity to help them find and access a broader range of supports. Two young people said that they thought that youth centres could help them with emergency relief, with food and bus tickets.
- **Youth refuges** – five of the young people had stayed at a youth refuge in the past. They reported varying degrees of engagement with the services; two who had used them for extended periods, one who had stayed for only a couple of nights. They said they had not enjoyed their time at the refuges because the rules were too rigid and that at the time of their stay their lives were too chaotic. Three of the young people said that they would not be able to access refuges again because they had broken services’ rules and believed that they had been banned from future support.
- **Non-statutory case management / personal support** –these types of supports had been offered to many of the young people although only two of them had taken it up prior to incarceration (for reasons identified below). These two talked about how their workers had helped them find services, get to appointments and to help pay for some of their expenses.
- **Health services** – four of the young people had used a community health service where they had seen a doctor or had other support. They only seemed to seek support when they were particularly sick or when they wanted to access alcohol or other drug programs.

- **Indigenous programs** – of the four young people who identified as being Aboriginal, only one said that he had accessed formal supports from an Indigenous service prior to incarceration. However, the other young people did talk about going to the services with their family members and felt that they could get help there if they wanted to.
- **Alcohol or Other Drug Programs** – six young people said they had participated in some form of AOD program before incarceration. Four had been directed by the courts to do so. Most felt that they had not been ready to commit to treatment and did not believe that the programs had led to any long term positive outcomes for them. Two noted that being in a program meant that they cut down on their use for a period of time which they believed was helpful.

Young people also had varying involvement with a number of voluntary and involuntary government services. These included:

- **Care and Protection** – was identified by seven of the young people as having had some past involvement. Five of these seven believed that they were still clients of this service when they entered Quamby. They generally believed that Care and Protection monitored their families, co-ordinated their placements in foster care or in youth refuges or provided emergency relief (such as food and clothing) when requested.
- **Turnaround** – none of the young people believed that they had been engaged with Turnaround before they had become incarcerated although two thought that there may have been a referral during this period.
- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service** – only one of the young people thought they had been supported by CAMHS prior to their incarceration. This is despite a number that believed that they had been diagnosed with a mental health condition, including depression, anxiety and ADHD.

Young people's engagement with services was generally limited and most often episodic. Prior to their incarceration, young people were not usually engaged in programs where they had ongoing contact with or support from particular workers or services.

Some of the reasons young people identified for *not* seeking or accessing support included:

- **Lack of relevance** – young people shared that in their early years in particular they did not believe that their behaviours were problematic or of a significance that warranted attention. As such they did not accept assistance even though it had sometimes been offered:
 - *They've offered help but I've knocked it back, I've burnt them, burned a lot of bridges. I just went 'I don't need it'.*
 - *They kept trying to help me but I was off doing my own thing... They tried their hardest, I was off with the fairies...*
- **Lack of relationship** – young people shared that if they did not know workers or were not linked with services that they would not seek assistance even when they believed that this was required.
 - *I never knew em so I was never gonna talk to 'em hey. People like me can't just talk about stuff, ask for stuff. If you don't know em, don't trust em. Nah, it's not gonna happen*
- **Poor experience with services** – young people shared that they were apprehensive to seek support because their engagement with services in the past had been negative. They talked about being frustrated by workers and services that treated them badly or failed to meet their expectations. As such they reported some reluctance in seeking support.
 - *If you've been f**d around, you're not gonna ask for help – from anyone. You give up. Think it's gonna happen again. "I'm gonna get let down". It's easier just not asking*
- **Lack of knowledge** – young people often shared that they did not know who could help them at different times or how to access assistance from programs. Even those young people who were engaged in the service system (i.e. through care and protection, or through mainstream youth services) reported that they did not know how to ask their workers for referrals to other supports and felt that these workers had not offered suggestions about where to go.

- *Nah, I never knew about all that stuff ... what they could do. I went there for years and no one ever told me. If you hadn't told me, I still wouldn't know now*

KEY FINDINGS: Engagement with services prior to incarceration

- **Young people had some involvement with a range of government and non-government services prior to entering the juvenile justice system**
- **This involvement was generally limited in nature and most often episodic.**
- **Young people were often unaware of what types of supports programs with which they were engaged could offer nor their capacity to refer**
- **Young people often did not seek out supports because:**
 - **They did not believe that they had problems or issues**
 - **They did not have relationships with workers**
 - **They had poor experiences with services in the past**
 - **They did not know what services were available or how to access them**

11.3 Engagement with services while incarcerated

Services external to Quamby

Most of the limited connections young people had prior to incarceration seemed to either weaken or drop off completely while young people were detained. In fact only three young people who were visited by an outreach worker could identify a community-based worker with whom they had a relationship prior to their incarceration that had maintained that relationship while in Quamby.

Similarly, there was limited engagement between young people and workers from government organisations. Seven of the young people, for example, had some relationship with Care and Protection before being detained but only two said that their worker visited them inside and that this visit was at a case conference. Eleven young people said that they had a Community Youth Justice worker but only two said that their worker visited them while inside (although some did talk about their worker also being present at their transition planning meeting).

Young people often expressed their dissatisfaction with their lack of engagement with programs. Although they thought that workers may not feel as though they have much of a role to play with young people during their incarceration, they wished that workers had kept in contact with them, providing ongoing support:

I only got two visits a week so if no one comes in it sux. No one came in this week and no one came in last week.

They didn't really do much since I got in here, when I was 16. They don't really give a crap about people in here or people who are over 16.

They've pretty much finished. I'm still on their books but they don't do anything any more. Since I got in, they go 'who cares?'. Be nice for them to visit, but. Show they really cared.

It is probably important to note that young people associated more with workers than particular services or programs. For example, young people felt that they had been 'dropped' by services because the workers with whom they were connected in the community were not the same as those who visited them while inside. As such, they did not consider that there was any continuity of care provided because those who provided the service and the type of assistance provided changed over time.

A few of the young people reflected on the reasons they believed workers did not maintain contact with them. Firstly, a number believed that both community and government services 'dumped' their cases when they entered Quamby because the young person was difficult to work with and because they believed that workers could justify closing their cases at this point:

Others thought that workers may not know they were in Quamby due to a lack of process that identified who they'd like to have ongoing contact with or who might be available to help. Some were not aware that they could ask Centre staff to contact community workers to ask them to come and visit them. While others said that they weren't sure whether or not workers, particularly those at youth centres or refuges were able to do outreach or whether Quamby would allow them to enter the centre.

In a following section workers discuss some of the challenges that they have encountered in maintaining links with young people during their detention. Although some of these may explain the reasons why they were unable to visit, it is important to note that young people were generally not aware of these challenges and took the disconnection personally.

New relationships

Whilst incarcerated, young people identified a number of services that were provided to most, if not all, young people during their time in Quamby. PCYC, for example, ran weekly recreational activities for the young people and Ted Noffs provided drug and alcohol counselling.

In addition, Quamby linked individual young people with a number of case management services, particularly Homelinx and JPET (Centacare), Open Family, Lowanna, Barnardos and Turnaround. These services were involved with young people, particularly in the weeks prior to their release and focused on securing accommodation and identifying supports that were available to the young person after leaving Quamby.

Staff from Caloola (Job Network provider) also regularly ran sessions with individual young people which were then offered to them in the community. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people participated in weekly art sessions with a youth worker from Gugan Gulwan. Young people who were involved in these services were pleased with their participation, and as we will see in the next section, happy about the ongoing relationship they had with these workers.

Young people appreciated how workers helped them through the transition but more importantly they valued the visits made during their incarceration. One young man said that he took up every opportunity he could to talk with people outside:

Cos Quamby gives them opportunities to speak to counsellors and whoever and the kids there just don't wanna... But me, I spoke to a priest and the counsellors all the time...whoever I could... It wasn't that I needed help it's just that I wanted to talk to someone. To try and make me feel better. .. So I'm not as lonely in there. Trying to see society more, not just the workers. Not just the kids.

*There's some workers who sit down with you and shit, talk about what you want to do with your life and shit. I've got this other worker who came in the other day. He's Aboriginal worker for Aboriginals. And he's f**kin awesome! Talking about my life and stuff and how I'm letting crime f**k it up and stuff.*

Challenges identified in working with young people while in Quamby

At a series of interviews and workshops, a range of government and non government services identified some challenges that they had in maintaining links with young people after they entered into the Centre. These included:

- **Programs being unaware that the client had been incarcerated**
- **Quamby relying on the young person to seek assistance** before existing support people are identified and contacted
- **Quamby case managers are overworked** and may not have the time or capacity to forge ongoing links with the community
- **Services not being funded to do outreach** - an issue for some centre-based workers and programs
- **Ongoing support for young people who are incarcerated is not in program briefs:** which means that workers cannot justify ongoing relationships
- **Quamby's discouragement of group-based activities:** was an issue for some services who could only offer support to groups of young people rather than individuals.

KEY FINDINGS: Engagement with services whilst in Quamby

- **Most connections young people had with services prior to incarceration were weakened or severed on entry**
- **Young people felt that this was because:**
 - **Services saw them as being too difficult to work with**
 - **Workers were unaware that they had been incarcerated**
 - **The system did not identify their support networks**
- **Services reported it difficult to engage or maintain relationships with young people because: they did not know that young people were incarcerated; they relied on young people identifying and seeking support; because they do not have enough resources or scope to maintain relationships.**
- **Young people forged new relationships with services that offered case management and co-ordination, alcohol and other drug counselling, social and recreational activities and vocational education and training.**

11.4 Statutory Services at Quamby

Case management is the key service that attempts to facilitate positive outcomes for young people both during and post their incarceration at Quamby. At the second interview, young people were asked about their experiences of this service, particularly what types of support were being provided, how case plans were being developed and the nature of the relationship that they had with their case manager.

Amongst the group there was some confusion about what case management was and what it aimed to do. Some young people felt that the role was primarily organisational and focused solely on their time at Quamby (that case managers did assessments, organised visits and phone calls from people outside, wrote reports for the courts and were involved in making decisions about any consequences were applied for rule breaking), while others felt that workers were there as a support (as someone to listen, to talk issues through with and to advocate on the young person's behalf to other staff members in the Centre). Generally, young people felt that case management focused on time at Quamby and were often unaware that they were involved in planning for their release:

Just work out what you're gonna do when you're in here and what you need to do, like school and stuff. [Is it also about getting you ready for when you leave?] No, it's just about what happens in here.

Young people also were unsure as to whether case management support was available for them post-release.

The parents interviewed were also confused about what case management was and what it aimed to do. Parents identified case managers in Quamby and Community Youth Justice as a resource for providing information to them about their child and someone who monitored the young person's behaviour.

Case management at Quamby

According to operational guidelines, all young people who spend time at Quamby are provided with case management support. However, due to organisational pressures, it would appear that at the time of this study only young people on committal and some on prolonged remand were provided this support. Workers reported that their ability to spend time with young people and provide case management support had been limited by a number of unfilled case work positions because they had to prioritise a number of other more pressing tasks (such as court and pre sentence reports) and their participation in internal organisational processes. Young people shared their case workers' frustrations, particularly when anxious about something that they felt they needed straight away or as their release became imminent:

I think I know who she [my Quamby case manager] is but I don't know her name or nothing. I've only seen her, talked to her a couple of times in here. I'm out in a couple of days so I'll hopefully see her before I go.

I tried to talk to [my case manager] about [what I had to do before I get out on tomorrow] but they said that he was too busy. So that's that. If I miss out, I miss out.

Young people were also aware of the worker's competing priorities and although they appreciated these constraints, a number talked about how better outcomes were required. They observed that sometimes young people left the Centre without good plans in place and that more resources were therefore needed to redress the situation:

If they're on a three month committal they've [the case managers] just got to get things going. Case management have to do stuff with them all the time, getting them ready. They can't be stuffing around... They need to spend more time with them, but they've got too much else on their plate and some people there's nothing organised because they've got no time.

They're flat strapped man. It'd be great if they could come down and spend more time with us, talk about stuff. But, you know, they're down on staff and they can't even get out of the office half the time. I don't blame it on em but you can't get to talk to em enough, and so there's stuff you need to get done or to talk to em about but you can't see em or when you see em you know they're too busy so you don't even bother asking, hey. So yeah it sux. They need more staff in there cos people are missing out. Mainly the shy ones or the ones that don't kick up a stink or the ones who dunno how to ask for help. They're the ones that miss out and they probably need it most, hey.

The nature of the relationship between the worker and the young person and the types of things that they did together also ranged significantly. Some young people spent considerable time with workers talking through issues and developing strategies for issues that were arising at the Centre and in developing some goals and strategies for when they returned to the community. These young people talked about having strong and intimate relationship with their worker (once likened to 'a second Mum') and felt that they could rely on them for support when they needed it most.

Oh yeah, I wouldn't be able to do all that stuff. I don't know what's around or how to get into it. It's been good having someone to help me, tell me what I need to get done and how to do it. Like a support to remind you. Yeah, that's been good.

Others felt that their relationships with the workers were not as close and reported that they usually only spoke to the worker when they needed something or when a case conference was looming. They didn't believe that there was much that their case worker could do with them, except when they wanted to communicate with people outside or to negotiate conditions related to their incarceration. As such,

these young people often did not identify the workers as providing them with mentoring or support.

Either way, young people did generally believe that it was good to have case workers based at the Centre because they could better appreciate the challenges that young people were facing and stuck with them during the more difficult times. Young people also valued having someone who could help organise things for them: appointments with doctors, visits from relatives and the occasional link up with external people who did things that they enjoyed (music workshops, sports activities and mentoring).

Engagement with Community Youth Justice post-release

Seven of the eleven young people who exited Quamby were placed on community orders which required them to engage with a Community Youth Justice worker. These young people were often confused about the role their case worker in Quamby assumed, and even more so about the role of the Community Youth Justice worker. Some saw that the CYJ worker's role as monitoring their compliance with orders, while others saw it more as a support role. Either way, most saw the role not as having a coordinating function but being limited to the confines of their immediate weekly interactions. One young person described his interactions thus:

CYJ is a place to go, basically... If I go there once a week, go there and get it over and done with. If they help me along the way, all well and good but it's just something you have to do... You just go in to the front desk and then sign your name and the person you wanna see and go sit down and wait for them to call the YJ worker who comes out and takes you in there, into the office. And then they sit you down and ask you what you've been doing and then who you've been hanging around with and that. Then they write another date on a calendar and they give it to you. And that's about it... It's helpful, it gives you

someone to talk to, if you've really got no one to hook up with. And like it's good because like the responsibility, like you know that you have to go there. And you know that if you don't go there what the consequences are. It's good for that. For making you responsible.

Most of the young people felt that this post-release case management primarily focused on monitoring compliance and recognised the issues related to this:

We just talk about things at home, about my family and shit. And if I've taken drugs and what's going on. That sort of shit. They don't really do much; it's just them checking up on you for the courts. That's what I think, anyhow.

Nah, you can't talk to them about the real stuff that's going on half the time cos you don't know what they're going to do with it [the information]. You know, you feel like you wanna tell them that you're using some drugs but wanna get off em and you need some help but you're kinda worried that if you do they'll breach you. So the one person who is there to support you, you can't tell em what's really going on. So that sux hey. And people think that cos you've got a YJ worker they're doing everything for you but half the time they don't really know whets going on. So you sort of can't win.

Young people saw the role of the CYJ as being significantly different to that of their case manager in Quamby. The Quamby case manager provided a support role, often advocating on the young person's behalf for better conditions, for more contact with relatives and for recognition of their progress in education and in the Centre more generally. Young people generally saw their case managers primarily as 'fix it' people who were also available to talk through issues. Because of this and because the case managers spent so much time with them at Quamby, they felt that their relationships were stronger and more positive:

They're different jobs. The CYJ workers aren't there with the kids. They're not there every day. Not there when they're pissed off, when they're not pissed off, you know. When they're angry or sad. They see you go through everything. They see you go to the toilet and EVERYTHING! You get to know em real good and they know about you.

That is not to say that young people did not have strong or meaningful relationships with their CYJ worker because when asked to identify a key support person in their lives, young people often identified the CYJ worker as someone who understood their situation and who they relied on for assistance. What seems to be different, however, was that young people felt that the Quamby case manager was solely responsible for helping them whilst their CYJ worker had a more complex role to play.

Me best worker ever was [my CYJ worker]. She was the maddest worker. If I needed to speak to someone she'd always be there for me. If I thought I was going to do something wrong, I could ring her up and she's there straight away. And I'd say "... I need some help – I need help, I'm gonna do it'. And she'd come around straight away and help out.

[My CYJ worker] used to ring up and check on me. And write the report. We'd sit down and chat. She'd give me bus tickets to help me get around and stuff. When I wasn't talking to my Mum and that she was helping me out with that kinda stuff.

In fact, young people often identified their Community Youth Justice worker as being either the only or one of a few people that were available for them post release. In such occasions, they appreciated having someone that could assist them:

I reckon it' good [to be hooked up with a worker]... You're not just coming out into the world with like nothing. Doing what you wanna do, what you need to

do on your own. You've got someone there for you and like, who can tell you what you're doing is good or tell you what you're doing is bad.

However, young people often commented that their CYJ worker was not always able to provide them with this kind of support and that additional assistance was needed:

Someone you can sit down and talk to. To help you stop doing crime. Someone you can see like once a day if you need it... I think its something you need to do; you need someone you can talk to. About how you're feeling and that, what you're doing, how you're getting on.

Difficulties young people experienced when working with CYJ

Although young people reported that support from CYJ could be valuable, they believed that for a number of reasons they did not always positively engage or get the assistance that they believed they required. Some of the challenges they identified included:

Workers who young people don't like or trust

Young people could generally identify CYJ workers who they trusted and who they believed they could talk to about their issues. However, most reported that developing such a bond required time and energy and that it was only in their later years that such relationships had been developed with their workers.

The main thing is working with someone that you like. I know that if I go to youth justice and I'm put with someone I don't like, I don't wanna go see them, and I go 'they're too hard on me.' And maybe people who actually understand where you're coming from and rather than going 'yeah, I understand' but realistically they've never been through what we've been through and like they're going 'I know what you mean, I know what you mean' and you're just going 'no you don't, no you don't.'

Young people valued youth justice workers who actively supported them and responded to their broad needs rather than focusing narrowly on their compliance with orders.

Like if they're good YJ workers they'll ring you up not just to tell you to come in today, but they you ring you up ... to see how you are and stuff. A good YJ worker does that, makes sure you're OK.

Difficulties related to the dual role of workers: support vs supervision

Young people often talked about the dual role that workers from Community Youth Justice assumed and the confusion and frustration that they felt as a result of the sometimes contradictory and conflicting part they played in their lives. On one hand youth justice workers offered support to young people, listened to them, and provided advice on how to manage the challenges that they experienced. On the other, however, workers were also compelled to report any non-compliance with their orders and reasonable directions, breaching them and returning them to Quamby.

*It's a c**t of a thing, you just don't know what they're doing... It's their job so you don't hold it against them.*

Young people reported that what made this situation more difficult was that there was often a lack of consistency in workers' approaches to issues which meant that they often second guessed their worker's response and whether or not they might act on information or not. This lack of predictability was often stressful for young people, who sometimes took their worker's decision to report their breach personally because they thought that the worker had some discretion about what and how much was reported. Some felt that workers lulled them into a false sense of security, encouraging them to open up about their compliance but then using the information gathered through a positive interaction against them.

*It's weird but you kinda know already. Like if you f**k up they'll f**k you over. If you have a good relationship with them, they'll do the same... You can go in there and be friends with them and sometimes they're two faced they can tell you that things are all OK but then f**k you over. You know, breach you and shit. Even for things they said last time were OK, you know... That's just what I think. Sometimes you don't understand it and they'll just breach you – even if you don't know [that you've done the wrong thing]. They'll go, 'do you understand this?' and you go 'not really' but they don't explain it. And then when you f**k up they go 'I don't care, you f**ked up and you've gotta wear it. You should know...' Even though they never explained it properly.*

As such, young people valued workers who were clear and transparent about their responsibilities and were often forgiving when they were required to breach them or make other hard decisions:

*[they're] straight up, on the ball. They don't f**k you up. They'll tell you how things are and make sure you get it. Bad workers don't give you that. It's just, 'it's not my job'.*

Workers not having the time or capacity to talk about real issues

Young people recognised that workers often had significant caseloads so it was often difficult to secure enough time to talk about the issues that were important to them. When feeling stressed about having to get to the appointment and then sitting in the reception area at the Office (very public space) young people said that they often did not feel confident raising their concerns. Some reflected that workers often did not engage them about issues that were important to them.

I really don't like working with them. I've had a lot of trouble with them in the past and I'm just really happy that I'm not working with them, even for support because like they never gave me support, like honestly. I mean they only have got me help going to a refuge and that's it. Like and then they leave

me and say 'come back in next week and we can talk about your drug and alcohol' and that's it, you know. Ask you how you're going and then go straight away "well that's good, come back next week". It could be that back then I wasn't really into it, didn't pay attention but... I don't know what's the point.

Location of CYJ

For a number of reasons, young people called for some flexibility in relation to where they met with their community justice worker. Firstly, a number felt that it was difficult to get to Civic without being tempted to catch up with friends, to 'score' drugs or not be otherwise distracted. One young person, for example, said that to get to their youth justice appointment they had to catch three buses, go through both Woden and Civic bus interchanges where they had both friends and enemies and then walk through the city where they faced similar challenges. They reported that this was particularly difficult when they were feeling vulnerable and that the return trip home was just as difficult, if not more so, if the appointment did not go as well as they had hoped.

They don't make it easy for you, you know. Like all your meetings are in Civic – and that's where all your associates are, your dealers, all the trouble. And to get there you have to catch like 3 buses and go through the interchanges. And that's where you see people again and though you try your hardest, you can only say no to em so many times. Then you start caving, you know. Cos they all go "come over here and talk to me" and you do even though you've got in your head you're not going to score or nothing, just talk cos they're your friends and that. But then sometimes you just go "OK, I'll hang out with you". You try to stay away from all the places where there's temptation, you know, but then they [CYJ etc] force you to go to those places. They should make it somewhere else or come to you. Especially at the start, but that's when they make you go there the most but that's the worst time.

Young people also felt incredibly intimidated by the building and office within which youth justice appointments occurred. Sitting in the foyer of a large public service building with a constant flow of workers and visitors, young people felt as though people were judging them and that the stress of having to do so was not conducive to a good session with their worker:

It's too stressful, people looking at you and stuff. You get all nervous and you think people are judging you and stuff and you get so worked up you can't even talk to your worker and you forget all the stuff you wanted to talk to them about and you don't wanna talk about your problems cos you've just got in your head that the whole world's judging you. No, it's horrible. I hate it. You feel humiliated and it doesn't matter how good, how nice your worker is you still are all paranoid when you get in and meet em.

Young people also felt that the time getting to and from the appointments in Civic limited their capacity to do other things, including employment and education

That's the thing I didn't like – was to have to go to school then go to youth justice and then to the drug and alcohol and from there you gotta go somewhere and then work out what you're doing the next week – it takes up all your time and its hard... I had to go to youth justice, I had to see a psychologist and then I had to go to tech every Friday... at 12 o'clock in the arvo, but sometimes I had to go to justice then and I had to work around it. It was hard trying to juggle everything. Too much pressure, too many things to do.

That's the problem, having to report ... every day. Trying to work and that.

Young people therefore asked that the location for meetings be changed and, ideally, be in their homes or other places they felt comfortable.

Instead of you going out there, maybe they could come and see you sometimes – so you don't have to go out there.

KEY FINDINGS: Young people's experiences of case management

- **Young people did not fully understand the role of case management during periods of incarceration and often felt that it was limited to operational issues**
- **Staff shortages and limited time resources restricted the amount of support that case managers could provide to young people at Quamby**
- **The function of case management provided by CYJ post-release primarily focuses on issues of compliance although a range of supports are offered. Young people appreciated this support but sometimes found the duality within the role difficult to understand and manage**
- **Some of the barriers that kept CYJ case management from achieving optimal outcomes include:**
 - **Location of appointments and a reluctance to provide outreach support**
 - **A lack of trust in workers who assume different roles and approaches**

11.5 Engagement with non-statutory services post release

When transition plans were developed for young people, the Case Managers at Quamby appeared to invest significant amounts of time in identifying supports that might be beneficial to young people after leaving detention and listing contact details for the young person on the transition plan.

Nevertheless, the take-up rate of services for young people was generally poor, particularly when their participation in the service was not compulsory and when the

young person was required to seek assistance from the service themselves. On top of the reasons identified in the section on young people's engagement with services prior to incarceration, young people identified a number of reasons why they did not access services after returning to the community. These included:

Re-incarceration or fear of re-incarceration

A number of the young people in our study had charges that they needed to answer in other jurisdictions. For a number this meant that they left Quamby and were then charged and / or incarcerated in facilities outside of Canberra. These young people reported some ambivalence about the whole case management process, arguing that the arrangements that had been put in place for them prior to release were irrelevant and that even if they were to return to Canberra after exiting NSW facilities they would need to begin the whole process again.

Nah, I appreciate what they've done but, hey it's pretty useless. Cos you're locked up and no one from here [Canberra] is gonna go up there and visit you, work stuff out. And no one up there checks to see if there's shit in place for you down here. No one talks to no one so it's pretty useless.

Regardless of whether they were incarcerated or not, case plans were not enacted upon their release and, it would seem, were not followed up after they exited detention centres in other jurisdictions. Young people found this frustrating (as did workers) who had invested considerable time and energy in developing a plan that would never be enacted. They therefore advocated for additional coordination between jurisdictions.

Other young people in the study were afraid that they had outstanding warrants for arrest or were worried that they were to face fresh charges and therefore went 'on the run'. During these periods, they couch surfed, left the ACT or stayed inside their homes fearing that they could be tracked down and incarcerated. They reported that in these times they lost connections with formal and informal, government and non

government supports because they didn't know whether different programs would inform the police, their CYJ worker or the courts if they had been in contact. This was problematic because they generally thought that support would be helpful and because some needed basics such as medication and ongoing assistance for their drug addictions:

When you're on the run you can't see anyone. You gotta lay low... you can't get help even if you wanna.

Unwillingness to have ongoing involvement with involuntarily programs

On return to the community, young people generally took up activities that they were required to participate in so as to not breach their 'reasonable directions' (a series of court ordered or community youth justice determined requirements). In particular, young people accessed drug and alcohol counselling, employment assistance and vocational education and training. They did report feeling good about their involvement with these services. Although they were reluctant for there to be too many conditions listed in their 'reasonable directions', young people did believe that having to meet with workers was sometimes useful. Two young people felt that these involuntary services could play a part in connecting young people up with other potential supports but believed that they were taken a narrow view of their responsibilities:

Nah, they're like only focused on what you're made to do with 'em. Like you see your drug and alcohol worker and they talk to you about that stuff. Maybe they know who you could get help with other stuff from but they don't ask and it doesn't really come up... It's kinda the same with your YJ worker, but you can't talk to them about some stuff cos you might get breached. But maybe if they could suggest stuff like hypothetically that could be good... Cos you just don't know who you can get help from or how to do it.

However, because young people were 'over' having workers tell them what they needed to do (as they had done at Quamby), many said that they refused to participate in services that had been compulsory after their reasonable directions lapsed. At this point, young people generally abandoned supports.

Services are identified but not organised

"S is aware that he needs to follow through, be responsible and be committed to what he chooses to do. T (his brother) explained that there weren't enough supports for S in the past and that is why S reoffended. [Quamby worker] did explain that S was old enough to make choices and that if he needed assistance he did have people he could contact for support. [She] offered T and S the opportunity to call Quamby Youth Detention Centre for assistance if S needed it."

This description of a discussion at a transition case conference highlights a key issue: that although young people and families request services prior to release linkages to services outside Quamby are limited. Although services are sometimes identified as being available to young people if needed, young people and families report that a more active linking process is necessary if they are to take up the identified service. This is often because young people and families do not know how the service might assist them or who to contact and because young people often lack the confidence and help-seeking skills to connect to and request assistance.

Because such assistance was not always provided, young people reported being confused about their case plans and did not understand what they were required to do to implement them. In many cases, young people were provided with a list of phone numbers for services that they could access if they needed but were often unsure about how these programs might help or who to speak with to get assistance.

Service providers who participated in a focus group and interviews also remarked that it was difficult to respond to need when they were unaware that their services

had been suggested to young people prior to release. They reported that if they knew that young people might be seeking their assistance they could prepare for their involvement and, where possible, actively connect with the young person to support that referral. Others said that when young people did contact them they were often unable to provide assistance immediately due to waiting lists but that if they had pre-warned they may have been able to accept the referral straight away.

Lack of confidence

Young people reported great difficulty in connecting with services, particularly when they did not know workers personally. One young person said that he sometimes called services on a list he was provided by his case manager at Quamby but hung up when a worker answered because he did not feel confident enough to ask for help. Others had similar experiences, and talked about needing to consume alcohol or marijuana before calling a service because it 'took the edge' off their anxiety.

Similar to their experiences prior to entering Quamby, young people again shared that it was difficult for them to engage with services and workers that they did not know and said that they did not feel confident in asking for help. Instead, they would try to cope by themselves, often with poor outcomes.

Research with both juvenile and adult offenders clearly shows that detainees find it difficult to seek support post-release and that they will often need assistance in identifying their needs, seeking out appropriate supports and then in accessing them. Although having high levels of needs, studies have shown that young people are often reluctant to seek support due to negative past experiences particularly with workers in the correctional system and that they are more likely to use informal networks of support (such as family) to receive assistance (Day et al., 2003). What became clear in this study, however, was that families often felt unable to provide ongoing assistance to their children and were not aware of what types of services were available and how to contact them. Often having little interaction with the

service system (including the case management team at Quamby and Youth Justice), families were often unaware of what services had been recommended to their children and how to access them.

Lack of monitoring and accountability

Although case plans were sometimes developed for young people prior to their release, their effectiveness was limited because little or no follow up with young people after they left Quamby. It would appear that no organisation including CYJ has responsibility for holistically case managing young people once they return to the community. We understand the CYJ case manages the narrow criminogenic needs (e.g. attending drug and alcohol programs, going to school) and monitoring the specific of court orders. Although some CYJ workers will respond to young people's broader needs (e.g. particularly emotional support) this is not viewed as their main role. This lack of a case manager to monitor and review the case plan is even more of a problem when there are no orders in place and therefore no one to take responsibility for implementing the case plan (if it exists).

As such, most case plans failed to achieve their anticipated goals, with young people feeling unsupported and frustrated as a result:

It's just, well I got out and everyone had stuff set up but no one's done nothing that they were supposed to. No one's helped me. It's too hard. So I've gone back on the drugs and shit. It's really hard because I really want to do well.

She should've been doing what she said to youth justice she was doing. She should've been ringing and checking. Like I didn't have power, and she didn't check, it was off for like two weeks. She was supposed to get it organised but she didn't... I was in the dark for like 10 days. I had to rig up the power myself... They reckon they fixed it up but they didn't.

*When I got out it was really up to me to like do it. They kinda hooked me up with stuff but I f**ked it all up. I don't regret it. I just f**ked it.*

There's some people who are supposed to be helping me out but they're not here at the moment. [Do you know who they are?] No, I don't. I just know that they're supposed to be helping me. [Do you know what they're going to help you out with?] No... I just know that things were organised when I was in Quamby, but they're supposed to and [my community-based worker] was going to find out why they hadn't done anything. But I'm not too sure who they were or what they were supposed to do.

Parents also criticised the planning because it was done in an artificial world and had not really helped their child. They reported that things were not always followed up. One mother, for example, understood that as part of her child's exit plan an apprenticeship would be arranged. This never happened and it was left for the parents to try and find activities for the young person.

The young people are all in good shape and good spirits, but it's not like that when they get out. It's a hard world out there especially when they are looking for work and that's when they gravitate back to their peers.

They need to make sure that they have a job to go to straight away because it's really hard to get one when all you can talk about is the last few months in Quamby.

When young people had bad experiences with a service they said they were unlikely to seek assistance from that service again. In fact, in a number of cases, young people who had had a bad experience with a particular service reported that they would not ask for help from any formal service. As one person said

I'm not even going to bother, you know. If they're going to be like this they might as well stay away because that's how they're always going to be...

Timing

The first few days after a young person's release from Quamby appear to be critical in establishing them back into their families and the community. This is a vital period for providing support that assists them to refrain from participating in old habits and behaviours.

I was kinda scared at first when I got out... for the first two weeks or so cos I had no one telling me it was gonna be ok... Then things changed and I got caught up in stuff. I was just having fun. I had all this money. I was buying alcohol, drinking every day. Then I let it take over me: I stopped going to work, hanging out and that.

During this period, a concerted effort is required to buffer their confidence levels by providing them with support. They need someone to remind them about their decision to 'make good this time' and about the strategies that they have developed to overcome the challenges that they may encounter.

In a number of cases, workers from Quamby, Community Youth Justice or a community organisation assumed this role and provided significant and incredibly valuable support during this critical period. However, this was often ad hoc and not coordinated. In fact, government staff reported that providing this kind of support to a young person was not generally supported by departmental policies and that if they were to assist young people in this way it was done unofficially - in their own time and without resourcing.

Young people also felt this period was also a critical time. This was when young people reported that the excitement of being out of the Centre, their level of motivation and their interaction with services began to wane considerably.

It was real bad after things settled down, you know. When things start getting boring or normal and when everyone starts pulling back, you know. Like you

think there's gonna be people round you helping you but people stop calling and you kinda go 'I'm OK I don't really need em' but then things get pretty bad and cos you haven't got help from em you either think 'I cant ask em for help cos I don't know em that well' or they tell ya that you missed your chance. That sux cos you're on your own. Yeah it's your own fault, but you kinda don't realise that you're gonna need em.

Young people reported that they often faced difficulty at this point, because they had not yet established a relationship with services and supports or had already severed them because they didn't believe that support was necessary during this 'honeymoon period' when things seemed manageable. They reported finding themselves in a situation where they believed that they had no assistance available to them and had no confidence in approaching workers or organisations with whom they had no prior relationship.

Challenges identified by workers and other stakeholders

In addition to the challenges highlighted by the young people, parents, workers and services identified some other factors that impinged their ability to provide support to young people post-release. These included:

- **Poor communication:** NGOs reported that they often were unaware that a young person had exited Quamby and were requiring assistance
- **A lack of notice:** was an issue for some organisations who reported that they needed three to four weeks to get things put in place while the system "tries to get everything organised in the last week".
- **Young people not wanting assistance:** a range of providers reported that young people often refused to accept support on release and that if they did return to the program for assistance it was not always available (because cases had been reassigned, beds filled etc)

- **Change of workers:** (both in Quamby, Community Youth Justice and in community organisations) sometimes meant that services were not aware of their commitments or the arrangements that had been put in place. This was also an issue when young people sought out particular workers rather than programs and chose not to participate when they had left.

KEY FINDINGS: Engagement of services post release

- Young people had poor engagement with services post-release. This was because:
 - Young people were often reincarcerated after only short periods of time
 - Young people were unwilling to be engaged in involuntary programs
 - Links between young people and services are weak and require young people to ask for assistance
 - Young people often lack confidence in asking for assistance
 - There is often poor communication, a lack of notice and shared goals amongst organisations
 - There is a lack of monitoring and accountability across the system
 - Support is not always available when young people want or need it
- There are pivotal points where support is needed (particularly in the short time after release and at around the 3 month point when things 'get back to normal') but assistance is not always available

11.6 Things young people want from case management:

Young people were asked to reflect on their experiences and to consider what types of things they believed needed to be discussed and organised with them to achieve a good transition and reintegration. They consistently identified the following as being key elements:

- **Effective Alcohol and Other Drug programs**

As noted elsewhere, young people felt that their alcohol or other drug use was their primary concern and that they needed effective programs to assist them deal with their addictions post release. Although they believed that some of the existing ACT-based services helped them in the short-term, more intense assistance was necessary to help them deal with the unresolved and underlying issues that made giving up their addiction more difficult (such as past hurtful or traumatic experiences, feelings of insecurity and hopelessness, an inability to find positive activities to fill their empty days and to minimise the overwhelming boredom they experienced). Young people who were serious about abstaining from drug use often asked to be referred to drug programs outside of the ACT and appreciated the ongoing support provided to them during their stay.

- **Education, Training and / or Employment**

Young people felt that it was important for the domains of education, training and employment to be included in their case planning. Firstly, they were often proud of their successes at the Hindmarsh Education Centre and wanted to make sure that their achievements could be recognised within the community. Having their school and vocational work accredited and the appropriate documentation ready for their departure from the centre was seen as imperative by many of the young people. For those young people who were willing to return to mainstream education, having someone to help them enrol, to attend the first few days and to help them reintegrate into the school environment was seen as valuable.

Young people were most often keen to engage in meaningful employment. Although one young person did not want for his new workplace to know about his past, most felt that they needed help preparing for a job (including putting together a resume, getting references and practicing job interview skills), in organising ways to get there and in ensuring that their other reasonable directions were not conflicting with their work life (young people sometimes talked about the fact that they couldn't hold down a job whilst attending drug education, youth justice appointments and other classes but did not feel raising these issues with their workers). Young people valued employment not only because it gave them something to do during the day but also because it connected them with positive peers, helped them build skills and self confidence.

- **Things to do during the day**

To reintegrate back into the community young people felt that, they needed assistance in making connections with positive people, activities and opportunities (e.g. sports and with hobbies such as music and dance). These were activities which they enjoyed and valued because they linked them up with other people, built their confidence and ultimately filled their days, reducing boredom and the opportunities to revert back to their risk-taking behaviours.

I just think there needs to be fun stuff to do. Not like doing boring stuff like having to go to youth services. Like doing sports, going go karting. So you can go round and hang out with other people. That's fun. Just till you get back into it, fit back in, feel ok, know you're going to be OK, you're not going to be tempted. All that stuff. You gotta be able to think 'I've got other stuff that I can do, that I'm gonna be OK'.

I'd like to get into sport – it's the one thing that I think might get me out of [using crime]: to start a sport, to commit to it. I'm still young. I'm only 15 and usually sports starts usually start early like 13 or 12 but I can still start with it...

Young people felt that it was important for the system to recognise young people's needs for these positive activities and argued that in developing case plans workers should identify young people's interests and make connections to such activities for them:

Let them choose what they want to do in life: what they like, what their hobbies are. And you help em get good at that so that they've got something to achieve at. And they'll pursue it on the outside. That's the stuff that keeps you going, you know. People have to think that they can achieve and they need help getting hooked up.

Heaps of Aussie dudes in here like stealing cars. So I reckon they like cars and that – there's a metal class an auto class to fix stuff up... It would be good if they could be told to rebuild a car, to do it up. For it to be theirs. To encourage 'em to get better at it and to get the skills so that they can do it when they get out of here... And then if they could hook em up with stuff when they get out, give em stuff to do – positive stuff. Stuff they wanna do that's cool. Cos that's the problem, no one think 'what is gonna be good for em? What's gonna make em feel good? What's gonna be something that's gonna keep them occupied?'. I don't get it really. You can put all this stuff together but if people don't feel good, don't have stuff that's good for them they're not gonna change, to leave this stuff behind. They might try but it's gonna be harder if you don't have something to live for, to be good for.

To increase access, these activities needed to be free or inexpensive and be easy to reach on public transport. the Ongoing costs of sport, gyms and other universal activities is reported by workers and support people as limiting young person's access.

Things've gotta be free and you gotta be able to get to it. There needs to be stuff to do till you get into school or get a job or whatever.

If there was stuff for me to do, and not getting pressured [things would be better]. There's stuff for other kids to do but it costs too much money. And the only way to get money is doing crime.

I love dancing. If I had someone help me pay for getting into dancing, for keeping me occupied during the day then yeah [things would be better]. Or if I had something to look forward to, doing after school, then I'd probably go to school to get that in the afternoon... Just doing activities like that. Keeping you busy.

The PCYC provide this facility for minimal cost but for many young people the cost of getting there prohibits their use. Consequently most activities attended by young people are organised by and through services. However, participation in services has its own implications. Services only provide a number of standard activities that may not always address the young person's needs, they are often stigmatising and do not always encourage other positive peer relations as many of the young people attending these services will be young people in similar situations. Data also indicates that for many young people these activities are not maintained or for some, even commenced after release.

- **Fitness & Sport**

Those young people who were engaged with sports and other recreational activities reported that their involvement was invaluable not only because it gave them things to do during the day but also because it kept them fit:

I wanna get into boxing, or at least commit to training, getting my body in shape and all that... it'll fill my day, give me something to do.

Yeah, sport has kept me focused. I play a bit of foot and stuff, heaps of touch, me and the boys, just mucking around on the oval throwing the footy around,

playing cricket. Since I've been out I've been doing heaps of rec stuff.. keeping me out of trouble, giving me stuff to do, getting me healthy.

Most importantly, however, young people valued the opportunity to spend time with 'normal' people with whom they had common interests other than crime or risk-taking behaviours. Young people greatly valued being part of a team, being relied upon and sharing a common goal.

Yeah, for me sport's important. Being in a team, with team members... They help you out, support you.. It's the best thing to be in a team... and you bond with the others and sometimes go out and stuff. You're in a good environment instead of being in a bad one like in Quamby and stuff.

The best thing is my basketball. We haven't done that well but I'm proud of it – about being in a team and having fun with the team mates.

I was playing indoor cricket every week, touch footy on Mondays. I'd play and then I'd referee the games. The bloke that I played with, he used to play with my brother and that and he hooked me up.. I met him because when I got out of here I was playing tackle with him.. I got his number and was hanging out with him some more and he said, 'you wanna come play indoor cricket?' Then one day after I was playing touch he said 'you wanna come referee a game?' and I went 'yep' and then he offered for me to go to Yass to do a refereeing course that that I could get paid to ref... He was great, the kind of guy I needed. Helped keep me busy and linked up with stuff...

As with other spheres of their lives, young people often felt as though they didn't have the know-how to connect with sports and, even when they did, to make connections with their team mates. Many said that they were too shy, didn't know how to communicate with people after extended periods of time in Quamby because they were never sure how people perceived them. As such, a number thought that as

well as lining young people up with sport, assistance in connecting with particular people would also be helpful:

I think it's good to do sport with someone you know, so that you can have fun straight away: they can help you get to know the others in the team. Like I only knew one person in the team... but you know he invited me out, down with the other boys to the pub and that. So you kinda get to know the guys on the team.

- **Health (including medication, dental)**

Whilst incarcerated, young people often had access to a range of health services that they valued and hoped would continue when they returned to the community. In particular, a number said that they thought that case managers should make sure that any treatment that they were receiving (such as dental care etc) could continue on the outside. Most, however, reported difficulties finding free or accessible service post release. At the beginning of the project nurses from Quamby provide services at the Junction Youth Health Service, an arrangement that young people found helpful. As this arrangement is no longer in place, young people called for other opportunities to have an ongoing relationship with health professionals.

- **Someone to talk to**

Young people reported that they needed someone who they could trust who would be available to them post-release. They felt that it was important that this person could listen to their concerns, help them work through any challenges and come up with better strategies for dealing with issues as they arose. They felt that this person should sit outside the justice system because they needed someone that they could talk frankly to about issues such as drug use and other aspects of their lives without fear of being breached. They needed to know this person, or at least have someone they trusted link them with this person and help them to form a trusting relationship.

- **Income support**

A number of the young people were leaving Quamby into an independent lifestyle. Having financial stability was important to these young people who were often anxious about how they could afford to live, eat and move around the city without having to commit further crime. As such, they felt that it was imperative for them to be signed up to Centrelink prior to their release.

- **Accommodation**

Having stability in accommodation was highly valued by young people. Although they recognised that sometimes refuges were their only option, young people wanted places where they felt safe, where they felt that they had some control and where they could relax.

- **Living skills**

Young people often spoke about their lack of readiness to return to the community and identified some key areas of concern. They believed that some assistance would be helpful to develop some basic living skills, particularly when they had been incarcerated for significant periods of time and had therefore not had many opportunities to develop or build upon these skills. Some of the areas included:

- Budgeting
- Coping with challenges
- Resisting AOD
- Building confidence
- Assertiveness (particularly in managing peers)
- Coping with living outside an institution
- Communicating with people outside an institution
- Negotiation
- Relationships: how to develop and maintain them (esp. with new peers & girl/boyfriends)

- Sexual health
- Parenting

It's hard, you know, on the outside. You've got your mates who want to take you out drinking each night. There's the dickhead people you used to go out and do crime with. You've got family pressures. You've got all this good stuff in front of you, stuff to tempt you. You need to be able to deal with it all, and I reckon they should be getting you ready for that stuff.

*You come out not knowing stuff no more. It'd be good to get help with that stuff, getting you ready. Helping you know things so you can make it. Cos you've missed out on so much and you know nothing. How to make friends, how to cope, how to get a job. All that stuff. Like I haven't even had a girlfriend and like I dunno know about that stuff. And I'm scared s**less about it and Quamby does jack all about that. If I was going to a normal school I'd learn about that stuff, sex, relationships but in here there's nothing. So yeah, it's big stuff but embarrassing stuff you're not gonna ask for.*

Although young people sometimes were supported to develop skills whilst in Quamby, many felt as though they could not enact them once they were both back in the community.

Firstly, young people said that they did not have the resources to continue their progress. For example, although a number enjoyed the occasional cooking class in Quamby, they reported that without basic cooking equipment (such as pots, pans or utensils) they could not cook for themselves when living independently. They said that they would appreciate being supplied these essentials when leaving the Centre and said that any earnings that they had made in Quamby could be used to purchase them. Secondly, young people reported that they often found that the strategies that they had learnt in Quamby (such as dealing with conflict or managing depression)

weren't as effective in the outside world which looked and felt quite different to that in which they had practiced the skills in. They felt unsure about how they might

That's what gets me into trouble. I can't take it. In here I can take it when people stir up shit, when they say stuff. But out there they look at me funny, like they eye you up and you lose it.. In here if you get into a fight they take your TV and all that. On the outside you're on your own, there's no one to stop you. So you get in a fight and that's it you just go for it. You win or you lose... Nah, those strategies or whatever, they don't mean shit out there. Waste of time. Even if you try, they don't work cos life's completely different out there.

These reflections are not inconsistent with those of researchers in the United Kingdom and the United States who have found that skills “learned in a correctional facility will do little unless they are highly relevant to real-life settings and situations and continue to be reinforced in the community” (Abrams 2006). These studies suggest that with appropriate mentoring and support can assist young people by providing them with adults who can model positive relationships and reinforce skills within the context of real-life situations and interactions and when programs are provided on an ongoing basis, that young people can solve problems that arose in regards to school, work or stable housing. (Abrams 2008).

Young people were not always sure as to whether it should be their case managers who helped them develop these skills or whether it might be other workers at Quamby or in the community post-release. However, a number felt that the case management process should help the young person identify and develop a plan for developing these skills through the reintegration process.

11.7 How young people want case management to be implemented

Young people felt that they and their peers were more likely to actively engage in the case management process when it was provided in a particular way. These often included a need for:

- **Strengths based: things to build on and feel proud of**

It was important for the case management process to identify and build upon their strengths. The young people reported that the process itself was often problem-focused and that it was disheartening when they believed that everyone could only see their weaknesses and failures. Young people felt that they were more likely to engage in the case management process if they felt empowered by it and were more likely to believe that things could get better this time if people believed in them and their future.

Young people also thought that it was helpful for case workers to identify opportunities for them to succeed. They felt that even having one activity (be it school, sports, hobbies or volunteer work) that they, their families and others around them could be proud of would be helpful and urged that it be an integral part of case planning.

- **Plans are realistic and responsive**

Implementing their case plans was often difficult because some young people believed that the goals did not respond to their personal circumstance or their own needs and wishes. The plans often felt overwhelming, with young people believing that they were over ambitious, and in a number of circumstances unachievable:

All you've got is people sitting down here. We have a case conference and people sit down and they go 'you should be doing this or that'... Like for mine, I had all these things thrown at me and I went 'yeah, OK' because there was a lot. I was a bit scared. It was a bit confronting that I had everything there [all those expectations] and they're like 'it's not that much, you don't have to do

that much'. And I was going 'well, yes but I have to do all of this when I get out' and I don't think I can. But they didn't change anything, they didn't really listen. So I was like freaking out, stressing to the max.

As noted in other sections of this report, young people felt that the identified strategies did not acknowledge the challenges that they encountered when trying to stay away from drugs, from risky situations or in meeting their reasonable orders. Not buying drugs, for example, requires a young person to have the negotiation skills, confidence and commitment to abstain from use when their dealer lives in the local neighbourhood let alone when the dealer is a close family member or friend. Young people thought that being moved to a new part of Canberra (or better yet outside of the ACT) would be the best strategy to overcome such a problem but also thought that some help in problem solving and negotiation would also be useful.

Nor, did they believe, that the strategies resolved some of the reasons they engaged in particular behaviours. One young person, for example, said that he stole cars when he was feeling depressed or overwhelmed. He enjoyed the adrenalin rush and the respite from his own thoughts and worries. Although he agreed with the strategy "stay away from people and places that might tempt him to engage in criminal behaviour", he felt that he needed new ways of dealing with his problems. As such, some work was necessary to help him discover new ways to ameliorate the many stressors in his life or, when impossible (which was often the case) to have more prosocial methods of dealing with them.

Young people also felt that the complex nature of their families and friendship groups were not always fully appreciated or reflected in their case plans. Many recognised, for example, that there were many risks associated with their friendship groups (i.e. they were most likely to participate in crime when others were around) but also stressed that these groups gave them a sense of belonging, met some of their personal and emotional needs, gave them something to do during the day and

often included a number of peers who discouraged them from participating in crime also. As such, they were reluctant to sever ties (as suggested in their plans), particularly when alternative sources for friendship and interaction were not going to be available or when they felt unable to access them (for shyness, lack of confidence or ambivalence).

We had a case conference. We did that shit... We just talked about the same stuff you just talked about, what I'm going to do when I get out... But they just wrote down the ideas, nothing was done to make it happen. It was all up to me and I had no idea what would work.

- Offers choice

There were mixed view about what choices they should be allowed to make in regards to their case plans and the 'reasonable directions' that were attached to their plans post-release. On one hand compulsory orders were helpful because if they had the choice to participate in a program or not or associate with particular people they said they would make the easier and less helpful choice. They also stated that having orders sometimes legitimised their decision not to participate in crime or other behaviour:

*It can be a good thing, it can be a bad thing. The good thing... if your mates wanna go out one night and they come to pick you up, and you've got bail conditions, then you gotta stay at home. And you could go 'well f**k it, I won't go cos I could get locked up' but I think sometimes it's a bad thing cos you want to go out with your mates and you go 'f**k it, I'll go out with them anyway' and there's a big chance of getting done... of getting in trouble and getting caught for it and it, making it worse.*

On the other hand, however, young people reported that they would often rebel against their orders because they felt that they had no control over their lives and, post release were 'over' being told what to do.

When you get out of here and you've got all your choices and you wanna do whatever you want. When I got out of here my Mum was telling me I had to stay at home with my family and that, not go out anywhere and like I respected that but I still wanted to go out. I just had to.

And another thing is having orders always stuffs me up. Like I can do fine if I've got no orders but yeah... orders to attend youth justice every week... like my friends are going shopping and I wanna go shopping, I'll just go with my friends and I'll go screw youth justice because I wanna go shopping.. And I get breached. Just for not doing what they told me. It's not cos I did anything new.

Some of these and other young people reported that having compulsory orders were also counter productive as they would often cease attending programs or participating in positive activities after their orders were completed. This decision was as a way of showing that they were 'free' and that their involvement with the system was at an end. They felt that although they saw the value in continuing their engagement with these programs that they associated them with their orders and began to resent them as a result. In some instances, young people sought out alternative supports but more often than not ceased their involvement entirely.

Those young people who completed their orders in Quamby reported that they felt more positive about being connected to services and programs voluntarily. They felt proud because their participation was more about their own commitment to changing their lives than an obligation to do so. They said that they were more likely to have an ongoing relationship with these organisations and to feel good about what they were providing.

When conditions were to be compulsory, young people reported that having an opportunity to be involved in deciding what the conditions looked like and how they were to be monitored was helpful.

The issue of breaching was also an issue for young people who often believed that their orders and their reasonable directions were unrealistic and felt that the pressure of having to fulfil numerous obligations was too intense. They recognised that it was important to have their days and weeks full of activities, but they did not believe that their workers realised how much time it took them to 'psych' themselves up to attend appointments or to talk to people about what was going on. Instead, they felt 'set up':

Every time I get out, every night the cops would come and knock on the door to see if I was out... I had to be at home 24-7 unless I was with my family. Wasn't allowed to drink, wasn't allowed to associate with my friends, had to go to CIT, YJ. A few more conditions... heaps of stuff. It's not realistic that any of us can do all that stuff. You're gonna stuff up. You're set up, you know... They know you're going to stuff up: YJ, the judge. That's why they put in the conditions.

Yeah, you've gotta be able to make choices. Cos you gotta feel free, be able to decide what you're gonna do and like when you're gonna do it. There shouldn't be all those restrictions. It's too hard. And that's why you stuff up. That's the reason I'm Ok this time is because there's not all those rules and I can keep my nose clean. I can do it because I'm not stressed out by all these people telling me what to do and breaching when I haven't done it. That doesn't help... I used to find that the hardest – being at home by a certain time, 6:30. That's hard and you're not doing anything wrong but you get breached because you're not at home. Not because you're stealing or stuff but because you're not home. I didn't get it. And I got done for that, for a little

thing you know. So it's good I don't have them rules because I've been getting through and have done OK.

*I don't want to get on orders, man. That's what f**ks me up. I always get breached. They make it reside as directed, man. But I can't do that. I'll always breach because I wanna go spend time with my family, to be with them.*

However, young people were also aware that sometimes these were also helpful. As such, they recognised the importance of workers determining their needs and in working with the young person to identify the best ways of responding:

*It depends on the person. If you got, I dunno... if you were to get breached and you were the kind of person who if he gave you a chance you'd just f**k it up again then it's not worth it. You might as well just go to Quamby for a little while and come out free, you know. That was like me, if I had a chance I'd just blow it, you know. It would've been better for me to have just done my time and have come out with no conditions cos then I wouldn't've f**ked it up and been in there so long. I would've learnt my lesson, you know. Some other people can be like, he'll give you a chance and give you strict as bail conditions and you won't f**k up from there cos you know it's your last chance. For me I knew it was my last chance, but I dunno, I wasn't thinking straight. I was thinking straight until the point where I didn't something wrong and I was like 'oh' after it, 'what did I do?'*

- **Continuity of care**

Young people expressed significant frustration about the number of workers who came in and out of their lives over a short period of time. They talked about how they found it distressing when they had built up positive relationships with particular workers to find that they had been assigned to different clients or had left the system after a short period. They were particularly disappointed when workers were changed without their knowledge and felt that the system should at least give young

people the opportunity to say 'goodbye' to their workers and, where possible, for the old workers to help them make connections with their new ones.

KEY FINDINGS: What young people want from case management?

- **Young people felt that a good case management process:**
 - **Linked them with effective AOD programs**
 - **Connected them with education, training and employment**
 - **Helped them find positive things to do during the day**
 - **Linked them with sporting activities**
 - **Responded to their health needs**
 - **Provided them with someone with whom they could talk**
 - **Organised Income support and accommodation when required**
 - **Helped them develop living skills**

- **Young people felt that a good case management process:**
 - **Is strengths based**
 - **Is realistic and responsive to their needs and wishes**
 - **Offers choice**
 - **Offers opportunities for participation**
 - **Promotes continuity of care**

11.8 How young people would like to be supported

Young people felt that they were more likely to seek support from particular workers and services and to continue their involvement when supports were provided in a particular way. Young people talked about a small number of organisations which they believed were optimal:

(1) Young people valued the fact that these organisations **provided outreach and were able to come to them**. This was particularly important for young people who were afraid to go to public places for fear of succumbing to the temptations they encountered (particularly in the Civic centre and at bus interchanges).

(2) young people valued that these workers were **available when they felt they most needed it**: when they felt unsafe, when they felt as though they might go out and commit a crime or take drugs, or when they felt upset.

You should be able to call em up and say 'can we catch up and have a chat?' – Especially if you're worried about stuff. I had people like that out there and that was good

(3) Young people valued the **flexibility and the individualised approach** these services adopted: being able to broker services, organise trips away, identify young people's strengths and connect them with opportunities to build on them (i.e. sports and hobbies)

(4) Young people valued services that were **regular and available**:

It think having someone there, like ongoing, it's a good thing. Someone to talk to. Someone on your level. That's why it's made my time easier

I think they're pretty important because if I didn't have them I would've, I don't reckon I'd be going as well as I am at the moment... I see them mostly once a week, twice a week. Whatever, whenever I need to talk to them. I talk to them on the phone every day. They help you. But they're there for you too. To talk to and that

- (5) Young people valued workers who **spent time identifying problems** and worked with the young people to respond to them. Young people said they valued workers who empathised with them and did not make rash judgments about their situation or what the young person was going through

You need someone who'll talk like you are now. Talking to people who know about things... Find out about it. I hate when people go 'I know what you've been through'. That's something I just can't stand. But if you go, like you, and go 'I've spoken to other young people who've gone through some stuff like you and I can see where you're coming from' instead of 'I understand' then that's OK

- (6) Young people believed that workers in these services **saw the best in them and believed that they could succeed**. This was important to young people who said that they did not want to work with services that only focused on their problems and who did not help them see the positives and possibilities in their lives.

It's been real positive support. I haven't seen him all that much, but I saw him at the camp and then again yesterday and he's already hooked all this stuff up for me... He just said 'yep, yep, yep.' He got it organised.

I had a [support] worker... She used to meet me at a coffee shop and stuff. Even if I was off my head and stuff, we'd still sit there and talk. She was really good. [She'd say,] "You tell me everything". Sometimes I'd be needing someone

to talk to and she'd come over. She'd help me out. She just comforts me and talks to me and stuff. Helps me with housing and stuff... She's like, "when you get a place...", they ended up giving me a thousand dollars and the white goods and help you set up the house and that. Help you with a whole lot of things, like counselling and things.

Conversely, young people talked about some services that they believed were unhelpful to them. They consistently highlighted issues that they believe dissuaded them from accessing:

1. Young people did not like engaging with workers who they believed **treated them disrespectfully** by speaking down to them, by not affording them the right to make decisions or by treating them badly
2. Young people were disappointed by services that **did not follow through** on what the young people believed they had promised. They believed that it was useless to seek further support if they had been let down.
3. Young people did not like services where they had **little control**. In particular, they reported rebelling against refuges with strict house rules or with conditions that they felt 'were like being in Quamby again even though you're supposed to be free'.
4. Young people reported that they sometimes lost contact with services but that this did not mean that they no longer wanted the support. Instead, their **disconnection** was often more a reflection of the chaotic nature of their lives and hoped that services would actively remain in contact with them.
5. Young people said that they found it difficult working with services that put **too much pressure** on them and those who overstated their failures. Young people reported that they needed people to get through difficult times and to make amends for their mistakes rather than 'writing them off'

She should've been doing what she said to youth justice she was doing. She should've been ringing and checking. Like I didn't have power, and she didn't check, it was off for like two weeks. She was supposed to get it organised it but she didn't... I was in the dark for like 10 days. I had to rig up the power myself... They reckon they fixed it up but they didn't.

11.9 What could be done

Increased awareness about what types of programs are available and how to access them

It would appear that although there are a significant number of guides and directories of youth services in the ACT, young people are still not aware of what support is available and from whom. This is particularly concerning in that young people in this study had visited a number of mainstream youth services but could not account for the ways that even these programs might assist them.

We would argue that there is a need for workers in these services to actively engage young people who enter their programs to welcome them and explain to them what supports they can provide (ideally young people would be given some information about the service, what they might expect and how to get help). These workers could ask them about any presenting issues and would then be in a good position to help young people make links with other programs if their services cannot meet their broad needs. Although this is basic youth work, young people reflected that this does not currently occur.

Warm referrals

One of the consistent issues highlighted in this study relates to the fact that young people generally do not access programs when they are charged with the responsibility of doing so themselves and that workers in the system must help young people make connections if they are to be sustained. We would argue that this must be more than providing young people with a list of names and phone

numbers and expecting them to call when needed. Vulnerable young people like those in our study must be supported to make these connections: workers should introduce the young person to workers from the service and, where possible, transport them to a face-to-face meeting where they can help the young person build trust and confidence in the worker and the program. The referring worker should explain to the young person the nature of the support available and talk through any misgivings the young person may have.

Individualised and group-centred service delivery

It would appear that most service delivery to young people during periods of incarceration and post release are reactive and are only provided when young people identify them as an issue and ask for help. We hope that these needs will be better identified through effective assessment but would argue, at the same time, that there are a number of needs that are common across the remanded population that should be addressed as a matter of course. Problem-solving, negotiation and help-seeking are all areas that young people might explore during their time at Quamby, as are issues of sexual health, relationship building and basic living skills.

One worker shared that at the request of a particular young woman Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT came into the centre and provided her with information about safe sex and birth control. When asked whether all the girls who were incarcerated at the time were given this service when SHFPACT visited, the response was that as they had not requested the support it was not provided. It would appear that there was a missed opportunity to provide important information to young people.

Mirroring supports

One of the key factors that determines the effectiveness of programs provided to detainees whilst incarcerated is the extent to which these supports are replicated within the communities to which they are returning. Currently most service provision

is not mirrored in the community: intimate supportive learning environments are limited; daily contact with workers who are available to talk through challenges are not resourced; sessions to explore strategies for dealing with problems are not offered. In fact, most young people reflect that although they don't like the loss of liberty, life is actually better and more support is available inside the Centre than it is outside. It is not surprising then, that most don't see incarceration as a deterrent.

There is a need to build this 'mirroring' in the design of programs that are made available to young people so that positive outcomes can be achieved post-release. We would argue that community organisations who run programs in the Centre must also offer similar opportunities within the community and for workers who have built connections with young people inside to maintain them once released. This requires programs to have a longer term focus and not be centre or time-specific.

A few felt that it would be helpful for workers at Quamby to role play help-seeking situations while others stressed the need for services to engage with them meaningfully whilst they were incarcerated. They believed that this needed to be more than an initial meeting or a casual introduction at a case planning meeting because it often took time for them to 'suss out' the worker and build a relationship that they could trust.

Lack of clear case co-ordination across the youth justice system

At present there is not a coordinated approach to case management. This is because case work is generally contained to discrete periods (ie during incarceration, for periods when there is a CYJ order, and periods after young people disengage from youth justice) with different workers responsible for developing and rolling out case plans at different times for different reasons. Case plans are time limited and generally do not build in long-term goals.

The seamlessness of service delivery also seems to be limited by the fact that Quamby and CYJ case management teams are separate and have limited

opportunities to develop shared goals and responses to the needs of shared clients. In particular, transitional planning seems disjointed: with Quamby staff developing plans which often sit out of the brief of CYJ programs and cannot therefore be fully enacted.

We would argue, therefore, that there is a need for young people to have one case plan that follows them through their engagement with the juvenile justice system and beyond their engagement. This case plan would focus not only on their time in Quamby, on their transitions, or the limited time they are under the supervision of CYJ but encapsulate each of these stages.

The key goal of this case plan needs to relate to positive reintegration and the strategies identified relate to ensuring this important outcome. The case plan must respond to the risk and protective factors that exist in the young person and their ecologies and reflect their individual responsibility needs. Obviously this plan needs to recognise court orders and young people's reasonable directions but this should not be its primary consideration.

Recognising the narrow focus of case management services provided by the statutory system, we would argue that this plan would need to be developed and implemented as a partnership between both statutory and non-statutory organisations with shared goals and outcomes. The Turnaround model or the Looking After Children process may provide a foundation on which such a case management framework might be built.

A lack of monitoring and accountability

At present the responsibility for enacting transition plans does not sit with any particular worker or organisation. As noted, CYJ has a narrow mandate and is not always able to take charge for the breadth of actions identified or for an ongoing engagement if young people are not on orders or when their orders lapse. Because of this most plans are not enacted.

As part of the transition process, a key agency needs to be identified and be responsible for co-ordinating services around the young person. This agency must monitor the plan and readjust it to meet the needs of young people in the community.

Where possible, this agency needs to have an ongoing relationship with the young person to identify any emerging issues or gaps and facilitate their re-engagement with programs if they should disengage at any time.

Currently there are a number of community based programs who are contracted to provide case management to at-risk young people. We would assume that with some assistance, these programs could be enabled to take on this responsibility and to manage the young person's case through their engagement with the system and beyond.

Siloing of programs in youth justice

Workers within youth justice and other key stakeholders identified that better outcomes might be achieved for young people if the two key players in the statutory system worked closer together. As noted in the section on case plans, current practice is sometimes disjointed and generally uncoordinated.

Interestingly, the new adult system in the ACT has chosen to adopt a model where staff are not assigned to either prison or parole but instead have a case load made up of people who are incarcerated and those on orders in the community. This enables adults to have the one key worker over a considerable period of time and for a single approach to be adopted throughout their involvement. Although they identified a number of practical and resourcing issues (ie how to spend time in and out of the youth justice setting; how to ensure equity of support to both groups; how to manage two different reporting requirements), stakeholders generally agreed that there was some merit in a model that minimised structural challenges.

Whether or not youth justice adopts such an approach or not, further thought about how the two parts of the system might be better integrated is required.

Practice issues

It is clear that the location of the CYJ office is problematic for young people. Recognising the challenges that young people face in getting to the Office and for feeling comfortable once there may justify some consideration about where the office is based. At the same time, there was a call for workers to meet young people in places where they felt safe and were most practical for young people who need to juggle their commitments to school and employment. The benefit of meeting outside the office was raised by a number of staff and young people who argued that young people were more likely to engage and workers were more likely to get a sense of how young people were really going in a less formal and relaxed environment. We would suggest that resources be allocated so that more assertive outreach is possible.

Confusion about the role of case management both in and out of Quamby

As mainstream youth services must clearly articulate their roles and nature so must statutory case management programs. Young people need to be given a clear set of goals and aims of case management and a list of things that they might expect from the service. In particular, the discrepancies between the support and monitoring functions of case managers need to be clarified so that the nature of the relationship between worker and client can be predictable, consistent and equitable.

The role of Community Youth Justice workers must be clearly stated and promoted so that external services are aware of the gaps in support that may need to be filled externally. If it is determined that the focus of CYJ work is primarily on the monitoring of orders and responding to criminogenic need then other services need to be engaged to provide emotional and personal support when required.

Continuity of care

Continuity of care is fundamental in best practice youth work. Young people are more likely to engage in programs and to sustain their engagement when they have consistent workers or a series of workers who have ensured seamless service delivery through effective handover. As such it must be built into all processes that engage young people.

Over the course of this study there were significant staffing changes at Quamby. For a large proportion of the time, there was only one case worker available to young people and even this worker had periods of time when she was not working in the case management team. This had an impact on young people's connection to the case management process and minimised corporate history. Ensuring stability within the staff team is essential to ensure that such challenges are overcome.

Workers from organisations external to Quamby often disengaged or were disconnected from young people during periods of incarceration. This also was disappointing and frustrating for young people who wanted to have an ongoing relationship with these trusted adults. Better processes for identifying the positive resources available to young people must occur so that these relationships can be maintained.

Concluding remarks

In 1963, adolescent psychiatrist Fritz Redl wrote:

It is a real art to produce a delinquent. It requires persistence and perseverance in making the same fatal mistakes all over again, in piling injury upon insult, in combining personal rejection with wrong handling or sentimental coddling with outbursts of punitive righteousness. And even then you are liable to fail unless destiny comes to your rescue and also exposes the youngster in question to wrong handling by other people, to undesirable influences through prestige-loaded age mates, criminal adults, or the boredom of insufficient and inadequate recreational facilities. And still you may be licked unless you happen to put your child into a neighborhood with a high degree of delinquency lure and unless the school complies by refusing to give your youngster personal guidance in his first great conflicts with life or bores him into truancy (Redl, 2008).

In this article, Redl attempted not to excuse young people's delinquency but instead to see past it to the vulnerable and lost child within. He argues that it is important to recognise, as his contemporaries have done, that 'hurt people hurt people' and that until we can fully understand this pain little can be done to change their circumstances or their behaviour. Redl also argued that to be effective, workers and the system must see the 'true' child, their strengths, resources and hopes. This challenge resonated for the research team many times throughout this project as young people recounted their stories with great sadness and regret but also with great optimism and hope. We were reminded of their vulnerability when sitting with a young man who had torn apart his face after a bad hit of Ice, taken because his mother told him she wished he had never been born. We were touched by their concern when we heard of two streetwise young men who comforted each other through the air vents during tough times, like when one was moved to tears after missing his little sister's birthday. We were moved by the pride of the young man when he received his first ever 'A' and the determination of the young man who

borrowed youth work textbooks so that he would be prepared to enrol in a course at the CIT. We were disappointed, then, to read online discussion boards that described these same young people as animals, as unworthy of love or forgiveness or notes in case files describing them as “lost causes” who did not warrant support.

As we have seen, many of the young people in this study had significant and ongoing involvement in the service system. Over the course of this project we read over 120 case files that dated back to some of the young people’s early childhoods. Many of the young people’s early lives were characterised by chaos and challenge. More than half lived within families where a family member had their own alcohol or other drug issue or were committing crimes; while others faced poverty, family breakdown and social exclusion. Although young people were reticent to make a causal link between these family challenges and their criminal behaviour, it became apparent that these factors heavily influenced their participation as did their early school leaving, their association with negative peers, alcohol and other drug use and their lack of involvement with meaningful activities.

Although these many risks were apparent in young people’s lives and led them to commit crime, and to continue to commit crime post-release, a lack of a clear and shared risk assessment framework has kept services from fully appreciating the young person’s needs or the factors that might restrict the effectiveness of service outcomes. Across the system different parts of their stories have been captured (in the many care and protection, health, mental health, education and youth justice files that exist) but at present no one account seems to appreciate the full breadth of experience or need.

Young people in this study had limited links to either formal or informal networks of support. They faced a number of challenges in developing meaningful connections during periods of incarceration and upon return to the community. A lack of communication, joint planning and shared goals coupled with a siloed service system

limited opportunities for integrated service delivery and effective sustainable outcomes. At a service level, programs were often seen as being irrelevant or unnecessary or relatively inaccessible to young people who lacked the confidence or know how to ask for the help that they needed. If engaged, services often found it difficult to maintain a relationship with young people who moved in and out of detention, whose involvement waned at different points but required almost instant and significant intervention at others, and who found this lack of predictability as difficult to manage as some of the behaviours with which the young people presented.

Although many of the young people identified family as their key support and as a protective influence, the families in this study often sat on the sidelines or, due to their own difficulties, remained disengaged from their children's lives completely. When parents were willing and able to play a part in their children's lives, operational guidelines, limited consideration of family needs and a pessimistic view of families often restricted their involvement. On the outside, youth work models that failed to engage families or understand how they might best be engaged to support young people also limited the amount and nature of assistance that families (both nuclear but also extended) could provide to young people.

Even though this project highlighted some significant challenges, there were many examples of promising practice that were achieving good outcomes for young people. Across the service system, passionate and committed workers were developing positive and fruitful relationships with young people that fostered interdependence and stability; programs were giving young people opportunities to succeed and skills that they could use to engage with education and employment; services were engaging positive peers and families to build natural networks of support that were sustainable after young people disengaged from the juvenile justice system. This progress is heartening and provides the foundation for future development.

In reflecting on these experiences and findings, we would make a number of observations about how the system might move forward. These observations sit within a growing body of literature on how to best assist vulnerable young people and their families.

Intervening earlier

Firstly, we would argue that most young people in this study may not have entered the system, or at least have been sustained for prolonged periods, if appropriate interventions had occurred for them earlier. We would argue that if the system had better identified the multitude of risks present in their environments and responded accordingly they too may have been diverted from the juvenile justice system and not have endured ongoing involvement unnecessarily. In particular, assertive support is required to: children who live in families affected by problematic alcohol or other drug use – particularly to intervene early so that these children do not form their own AOD issues; children who begin absconding from and leaving school at an early age; and families with children who have relatives engaged in criminal activity.

Rehabilitation and reintegration as the primary purpose of the system

For those who enter the system the primary goal should be on rehabilitation and the reintegration of young people into their communities. Punitive models of intervention have shown to be ineffective. They do not recognise or respond to the multitude of factors outside of the young person and their attitudes that also play a significant part in their behaviour. As such, all parts of the system (including, but not limited to services provided by Quamby and Community Youth Justice) must orient all assistance to meeting this goal: programs at Quamby must have a long term focus and be mirrored in the community so that effective reintegration can be achieved; the key challenges within young people's families and environments that might limit the successfulness of reintegration must be explored and, when amenable to change, be addressed (through programs such as family group conferencing, mediation and skills development); when challenges are static, concrete and realistic strategies and

supports must be put in place to help young people manage these risks so that they become their hoped for selves and resist their feared selves.

To achieve this we would argue that a common, rigorous and broad assessment is required to understand fully young people's risks and protective factors and their support and responsivity needs. This assessment would recognise young people's developmental needs and help programs to tailor and target interventions to those most 'at risk'. It would also be used to identify the young person's strengths and the nature of any existing support networks that could be engaged to enhance formal service responses.

Improved coordination

We would also argue that the suite of supports provided to young people must be well coordinated and managed. A single service must be identified and be given carriage for developing and overseeing a single case plan that follows the young person across their engagement in the justice system and beyond and across the broad array of programs that interact around them. This plan must focus on reintegration and identify a series of shared aims and goals that are achievable and measurable. All services must be held accountable for their responsibilities at regular case conferences. A key worker needs to be assigned to assist the young person directly (ideally the young person would choose this worker themselves) to talk through their concerns and ensure that the plan is meeting their needs. Families and / or other key natural and informal supporters need to be engaged in this process as equal partners in recognition of the important part that they can play in their child's life.

Responsive services

Programs working with young people must clearly articulate their goals, the nature of their roles and responsibilities, their capacity, their limitations and the ways that young people can access support. They must allow young people to build trusting

and respectful relationships with workers, parents, other supportive adults and, where possible, positive peers which foster a sense of interdependence: young people must be encouraged to grow and take risks in the knowledge that they have a network of support that can assist them if required. Programs must build in opportunities for young people to achieve and constantly recognise their successes (no matter how small) in desisting in crime and achieving their goals. Services must enable a level of continuity care and predictability by minimising the number of workers involved in a young person's life and by building in effective handover processes to ensure that young people are able to build new relationships before they are reassigned. Services provided to young people during periods of incarceration must be mirrored in the community to ensure that outcomes are sustained.

Ultimately, as a system we must be hopeful both for the young people in our care but also in our capacity to help them make changes in their lives.

This project would not have been possible without the generosity and openness of the young people who shared their stories and their views on how the system might be improved. We thank them for their willingness to lay their lives bare and hope that this report will provide policy makers, workers and the broader community with ideas on how young people might better be supported in the future.

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13. Attachment 1: Ethical considerations

The Institute of Child Protection Studies is committed to ensuring that its direct research with children and young people meets high ethical standards. As part of the research process, the Institute sought and obtained ethics approval from Australian Catholic University's Human Research Ethics Committee. In addition, the research team considered the following ethical issues:

Choice: young people's participation in the study was purely voluntary. At the beginning of each interview they were informed of their right to participate (or not) and the fact that they could decide what types of themes they were happy to talk about and how they might respond to particular questions. Young people were given the choice for the interviews to be tape recorded and were shown how to switch the recorder off so that if there were things they did not wish to have audiotaped they could do so. Three young people chose for parts of their interviews to not be recorded.

Parental consent: it was anticipated that parents of young people under the age of 18 would be approached to consent for their child's participation in the study. This would occur if the young person agreed to their parent knowing about their involvement and when this knowledge would not have any adverse impacts for the young person.

Non-maleficence: recognising the vulnerability of young people in this study, it was essential that young people did not experience negative impacts either as individuals or as a group as a result of their participation in this study. In preparing this report, the research team carefully considered how certain themes and issues might be raised sensitively so as not to lead to negative repercussions for young people as individuals or groups in the future.

Beneficence: It was hoped that young people would not only be protected from harm but also benefit from their engagement in this research project. Young people

were reimbursed with a shopping voucher in recognition of their time. In one instance a young person identified in her interview that she wanted to become a youth worker after returning to the community. After completing a series of interviews, the research team gave the young woman some youth work books and supported her to access training at the Canberra Institute of Technology.

Confidentiality: young people were referred to the project by staff at Quamby who also co-ordinated interviews with the research team. As such, staff were aware of which young people participated in the study and which did not. We informed participants that we could not fully protect their identity and that when reading this report staff may attribute particular quotes or stories to them. They were therefore encouraged to consider the implications of sharing certain information. We have deidentified young people and have, on occasion, deleted or modified certain information that does not detract from the young person's story but attempts, instead, to protect their identity.

Young people were informed that their identity would remain confidential except when we were concerned about their safety or the safety of others. Young people were also informed that we may be required to inform staff at Quamby if they became aware of any criminal behavior. However, there were no occasions when this occurred. At two points, research staff, at the request of a young person, informed Quamby staff of concerns that they had about their treatment at the Centre and asked for these issues to be rectified. The young person was also encouraged by research staff to formally raise their concerns.

Power imbalances: the researchers attempted to minimize the power imbalances that confronted young people who participated in the study. By providing young people with information about the focus of interviews, allowing them to choose what types of questions they answered and by giving them control over recording devices, researchers attempted to give young people some power and to promote

the fact that young people had some control over their participation in the process. Interviews were conducted in a relaxed manner and usually began with the researcher and the participant sharing food and drinks. Interviews conducted outside of the Centre took place in venues of the young person's choosing. These included a public library, a coffee shop and at the young person's home. Care was taken to ensure that the information young people was providing in these sometimes public venues was protected.

Integrity: this study attempts to develop a picture of the experiences of young people re-entering the community and the effectiveness of systems to meet their needs. As will be discussed throughout this report, there were some instances when young people were not being provided adequate levels of support once back in the community and when this was negatively affecting their mental health and broader wellbeing. Researchers decided to stop interviews when young people were distressed and chose to help young people access assistance because they believed that even though doing so may influence the outcomes of the study to not do so would be unethical.

15. Appendix 2: interviews

Young Person Interviews

All the young people in this study were incarcerated on a committal between July 2006 and July 2008. Young people were aged between 16 and 18 at the time of their first interview. 2 females and 9 males participated were interviewed on three occasions, with another male completing the first interview only. The data from his interview was excluded from this study. Of the sample, four young people identified as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and three from a culturally or linguistically diverse background .

Young people were recruited in the first instance by case management staff. They were then directly engaged in a series of three semi-structured interviews that focused on their lives prior to, during and after their incarceration at Quamby Each of the interviews was structured differently and built upon previous interviews. The interviews focussed on young people's views about family; school; employment; engagement with services, communities, and other formal and informal supports; risks and challenges that may exacerbate and prolong their criminal behaviours; and any strengths, opportunities and protective factors that mitigated their engagement in crime and influenced their re-entry post-release.

The first of these interviews was conducted in an interview room at Quamby. Although it was hoped that this initial interview would occur within the first few weeks of their incarceration, the length of time young people had already served prior to the interview ranged from a matter of days to a matter of months. The initial interview focussed on the young person's life prior to their incarceration and attempted to gauge their level of connectedness with family, community and the formal service sector. Young people were asked to reflect on the stressors and issues that may have led to their criminal behaviour and what kinds of things might have prevented them from committing (or continuing to commit) crime. They also

answered questions relating to their goals for their time at Quamby and what things they thought would help them when they eventually were released.

It was anticipated that the second interview would be conducted at Quamby in the fortnight leading up to the young people's release back into the community. Due to the often uncertain nature of their sentences, however, three young people had their second interview within the fortnight after their release into the community at a place convenient to them. One young person absconded and another went interstate to an alcohol rehabilitation centre and, as such, were not interviewed for some months after their release. A third young person was incarcerated in a detention centre outside of the ACT and, although numerous attempts were made to follow him up, dropped out of the study at this point.

The second interview focused on young people's experiences during incarceration and attempted to gauge how they had been supported during their time at the Centre, both by Quamby as an organisation and by external formal and informal supports. They were also asked to talk about the preparations that had been made for them in transitioning back into the community, how confident and comfortable they felt about their return to the community and some of their hopes for the future.

The third interview was generally conducted with young people within the community between 6 and 12 weeks after they were released. This final interview focused on how successful young people felt their transition from the Centre to the community had been, some of the things that had positively affected their experience and some of the challenges and risks that they had encountered. Three of the young people participated in this third interview after being detained for further crimes or for a breach of their conditions. These young people were asked about the reasons they believed their transition was not successful and what they would like to happen next time. Two of these young people participated in a fourth interview

which focused on the positive aspects of this experience when they eventually re-entered the community.

In a number of situations, the researchers would 'check out' some of their initial observations about a young person's experience that had arisen from previous interviews to ensure that they had been understood correctly and to also ensure that their views were still similar. This was important as a number of young people observed that during their incarceration they thought and talked about things quite differently to the way they did so on the 'outside'. They observed that while incarcerated they needed to promote an image of themselves that was confident and 'doing OK' both to cope with the challenges they encountered but also so that people would treat them differently to how they perceived they would if they felt they were not 'doing OK'. In analysing the audiotaped interviews, the research team easily noted a difference in language, tone and level of engagement in discussions about particular issues.

Family interviews

Parents and support workers were initially contacted by phone (phone numbers were provided by the young people) to organise a one-on-one semi structured interview. Of the ten young people that consented to have their families contacted it transpired that two parents or family members did not want to participate in the research study, four did not return calls or answer their phone and as a result the parents of only four young people agreed to be interviewed with one at their home and the remainder by telephone.

Support worker interviews were better attended with eight participants identifying as YJ or NGO workers and three family members (one young person did not supply a support person). However similar to the situation described above concerning family interviews, two family members could not be contacted and as a result the majority of support workers interviewed were NGO or YJ workers.

Focus Groups

A three hour workshop was facilitated with workers from key services detailed below who were identified by the research team and staff at Quamby Youth Detention Centre and others who responded to an invitation posted to youth focussed organisations in the ACT. Similar focus groups were also held with case management staff at Quamby and Community Youth Justice.

Focus Group Attendees - Non Government Organisations

- Barnardos
- Open family
- Caloola
- Woden Youth Centre
- Marymead
- Lowanna
- Oasis
- Youth Coalition of the ACT