



Institute of Child Protection Studies

ACT YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM Future Directions

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WHAT AT-RISK YOUNG PEOPLE REALLY NEED IS TO BE GIVEN THE SAME OPPORTUNITES AND SUPPORTS AS EVERYONE ELSE, AND THEN SOME MORE (LEMMON, 2008 p15)

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the current knowledge of ‘what works’ for vulnerable young people aged 12 to 25 years in order to inform the future direction of the ACT Youth Services Program. This report is divided into four sections. The first section describes how young people are conceptualised within a national and international context and the local and national data provides a demographic profile of young people, their aspirations and the hurdles they encounter as they transition from child to adult. The second section provides a brief overview of youth policy from a national and local perspective. It goes on to discuss the approaches, principles and characteristics that underpin promising programs for vulnerable young people as identified in the literature. Part three considers the findings of consultations held with young people and service providers regarding the future needs of young people living in the ACT. The report concludes with part four which outlines the key findings from the workshop considering the outcomes, objectives and indicators for the YSP program.

Background

The ACT Youth Services Grants Program (YSP) provides support for a substantial proportion of the services for young people in the ACT. The current program delivers services through youth centres and a range of youth development and youth support activities. The program also funds the youth peak body, the Youth Coalition of the ACT. It provides funding for a range of universal services and early intervention programs to support young ‘at risk’ people aged 12 to 25 years, with a primary focus on the 12 to 21 years age range. The stated aim of the YSP is to support at risk young people to:

- Enhance personal resilience
- Increase skills, personal development and leadership abilities
- Have informed decision making
- Strengthen personal support networks and key relationships, with peers, families and/or significant others, schools and the broader community and
- Increase participation in the social and economic structure of society

To ensure that the Youth Services Program remains relevant and effective the ACT government Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS) in conjunction with the Youth coalition of the ACT has requested that the Institute of Child Protection Studies conduct a review of ‘what works’ for young people. This request occurs at a time when there is increasing demand for a whole range of social policy decisions and programs run by government and the NGO sector to be based on sound evidence (2005, p. 29).

The project requires:

- An examination of local and national data focusing on population and prevalence of identified vulnerable groups of young people;
- A discussion of intervention programs or processes that have been shown to be most effective with vulnerable young people;
- A summary of the views of key stakeholders derived from focus groups; and
- The development of possible objectives, outcomes and performance measures to build into future contracts within the Youth Services Program (YSP).

Methodology

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). A steering group consisting of representatives from government and non government organisations as well as the youth peak body was established to offer guidance and feedback to the research team over the life of the project.

Literature review

Wherever possible, research from Australia has been included, however the information reviewed in this report is largely drawn from studies from outside Australia. Much of the work focused on youth development programs originates from the United States (US) however studies from Canada, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand are also included.

Literature was obtained using government websites, Google scholar, government clearing houses, e- journals and data bases including:

- Academic Research Library
- Academic Search Complete
- APAFT
- Australian Academic Press (e-journals)
- ABS – Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
- Family & Society Plus
- Gale Virtual Reference Library
- JSTOR (e-journals)
- Meditext
- NASW Clinical Register Reference
- NetLibrary (e-books)
- Oxford Reference Online
- Oxford Scholarship Online (e-books)
- ProQuest Social Science Journals
- Psychology & Behavioral Sciences Collection
- PsycINFO (database)
- PsycheVisual.com
- SAGE eReference
- SAGE Journals Online (e-journals)
- Social Work Abstracts PLUS (database)
- Youth journals

Key search words included: Young people, youth, adolescents, service, program, evaluation, review, vulnerable, at risk, interventions and evidence base.

Key researchers with youth and the Australian Youth Clearing House were also contacted and have provided significant advice regarding Australian literature on ‘what works’.

Examination of local and national data on young people

Local and national data were sourced from government websites, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and other key studies identified from the above data bases.

The data collected was shaped by notions of vulnerability identified in the literature. It aims to provide a national context of young people's lives and insight to the local experiences of young people.

Talking to stakeholders

A mixed methods approach was used to collect data regarding the views about service provision and the needs of young people. Focus groups and surveys were conducted with a range of stakeholders including organisations that work with young people and young people themselves. We supplemented the views of young people about services from previous work done by the DHCS to inform the development of the ACT Young Peoples' Plan 2009- 2014.

Approach

Much of the literature has emphasised that the needs of young people are better met when solutions are developed at a local level (Bruce et al., 2009). In the ACT there is an array of services that provide a breadth and depth of assistance to young people. Such services hold great expertise in understanding what young people need and how it should be provided. Young people also have a wealth of knowledge about the difficulties they have experienced and the resources both internal and external that assisted them through these difficulties. Therefore the views of both organisations assisting young people as well as the young people themselves are critical in planning for the future youth services.

Privileging the voices of young people reflects a recent notable shift in how childhood is conceptualised, stemming from the constructivist approach in developmental psychology and what is sometimes referred to as the 'new sociology of childhood'. This approach rejects the traditional framing of young people as 'adults in waiting' but rather views young people as a diverse and active group who are valuable contributors to society and competent in voicing their experiences (Corsaro, 2005). Our work reflects the assumption that to best understand the unique views and experiences of children, time must be spent actively engaging them about issues that affect their lives, including sensitive and difficult issues. Rather than eliciting their needs and views through adult voices we endeavour to

develop a direct relationship with young people to listen to their needs and views. Consequently for this project it was thought to be critical that both young people and the individuals that work with them have the opportunity to participate.

Design

Some of the organisations in the ACT providing services to young people are delivered as part of general service provision. Others are funded under YSP funding arrangements to specifically respond to certain needs of young people. In order to gain an understanding of what services, workers and young people think about the needs of young people in the ACT it was decided to use a multi-method approach using focus groups and surveys.

The questions developed for the focus groups were informed by the literature and reviewed by the steering group. The design of the survey whilst also informed by the literature was also developed from data collected from the young person's focus group and in consultation with the young people afterwards via email.

The survey was distributed using two methods. The first used a pathfinders approach (T Moore, Saunders, & McArthur, 2008) which involves engaging a group of young people who recruit and engage other young people to participate in the research and then working with Institute staff to analyse and test interpretations and conclusions. The second method involved researchers going out to places where young people 'hang out' such as youth centres. Researchers spent time with young people explaining the purpose of the project and talking with young people about the importance of providing their views on this matter. Young people who were interested were provided with a survey to complete. Youth workers enabled a small number of young people with low literacy skills to complete the forms.

Sample and data collection

Organisations

Forty organisations were identified by the steering group as being important sources of information about young people. These included both YSP funded programs as well as

programs generally targeting youth. Two focus groups were held reflecting this difference in order to better understand the experiences of each.

- Ten organisations providing services to young people funded under the YSP funding stream; and
- Nine organisations that provide services to young people. These were selected in consultation with the steering group.

Participants were also requested to complete a brief survey regarding what services they provided to young people and about their understanding of the groups of young people they were working with.

Young people

Five young people participated in a focus group and assisted researchers to develop a survey. They were recruited from a Canberra youth organisation and a small number had previously participated in other Institute research projects.

Thirty seven young people completed the survey regarding service use. These young people ranged from young people attending youth centres to other young people who had attended a range of services.

Questions and surveys used for data collection are detailed in Appendix A

Ethics

The Institute of Child Protection Studies is committed to ensuring that its direct research with individuals, and in particular 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. Ethics information and consent forms appear in Appendix B. In addition the following ethical issues were considered specifically concerning young people:

Choice: Young people’s participation in the study was purely voluntary. At the beginning of the focus group young people 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 focus group to be recorded and were shown how to switch the recorder off if there were things they did not wish to be recorded.

For the survey, young people were provided with a brochure explaining the purpose of the project and that they need only answer those questions that they felt comfortable with.

Consent: Verbal consent was provided to the researcher by parents for young people under the age of 18 participating in the focus group. For young people completing the survey, parents were provided with an information letter and requested to sign a consent form. However a number of ‘older’ young people were no longer living with either parents or guardians and wanted to participate in the study. Subsequently it was decided by the researchers to agree to these young people’s participation after ensuring they had received full information regarding the project.

Beneficence: Recognising the potential 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. 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 voucher in recognition of their time.

Confidentiality: Young people were informed that the information they provided to researchers would remain confidential except when we were concerned about their safety or the safety of others. However, there were no occasions when this occurred.

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 purpose of the focus group, and asking them what questions they would like to be asked about this subject and by giving them control over the recorder, 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. Furthermore the focus group was conducted in a relaxed manner ensuring that young people felt comfortable with the researchers and the other participants in the group.

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 are tightly interlinked processes; data analysis guides data collection (Fossey, Harvey, McDernott, & Davidson, 2002). Data obtained from the focus group with the young people was analysed using thematic analysis and then used to inform the development of questions for stakeholder groups and for the young person's survey.

PART ONE - Examination of local and national data on young people

At the 2006 Census there were 3 529 835 young people aged 12 to 24 living in Australia. These young people comprised 17.8% of the total population of Australia. 120 374 young people also identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This group of young people comprised 3.4% of all young people, and 26.45% of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but only 0.6% of the total Australian population. There are also 390,271 young people aged 15 to 24 years in Australia who were born overseas. This group comprise 15.2% of the total 15 to 24 year old Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007a).

Wellbeing of young Australians

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare maintains an ongoing watching brief on the wellbeing of young Australians aged 12–24 years. Their most recent report (2007) found that 'while most young people in Australia are doing well, there are areas where further gains in health and wellbeing could be achieved, particularly among young Indigenous Australians, young people in regional and remote areas, and young people suffering socioeconomic disadvantage' (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007, p. x).

Areas in which young Australians were found to be faring well included:

- Improved life expectancy
- Lower death rates
- Excellent, very good or good health enjoyed by more than 90% of young people
- Declining asthma prevalence, although still higher than the general population
- Declining melanoma incidence rate
- Low incidence of most vaccine-preventable communicable diseases
- Reduced incidence of clinical tooth decay
- Increased apparent retention rate to Year 12
- Increased proportion of those aged 15–24 years with post-school qualifications
- Full time participation in education and/or work (85% of 15–19 year olds; 76% of 20–24 year olds)
- Most young people living in families (80%) were living in couple-parent families, and those living in couple-parent families were more likely to have an ‘employed’ parent or one that had completed secondary school
- Most young people (90%) were not living in overcrowded households.
- Most year 7 students met the national benchmarks for reading, writing and numeracy (91%, 94% and 82%) in 2004.

Areas in which young Australians were found to NOT be faring well included:

- Higher unemployment rates than the national (4.4%) unemployment rate (12.5% for 15–19 year olds and 6.3% for 20–24 year olds)
- Increasing numbers and proportion of young people on care and protection orders and in out-of-home care
- Young adults (aged 18–24 years) comprising 20% of the total prison population in 2006
- Over 9,000 12–17 year olds under youth justice supervision
- Over representation in homeless services with one third of SAAP funded agency clients (34%) aged between 12–24 years in 2004–05
- Inadequate daily vegetable consumption (47% of 12–18 year olds and 8% of 19–24 year olds only met daily vegetable consumption guidelines)

- Only half of all young people had skin checks for changes in freckles and moles, while melanoma remained the highest occurring form of cancer amongst young people
- Increased diabetes incidence
- Excessive alcohol consumption that put young people at risk or high risk of alcohol-related harm in the short term(31%), and 11% at risk of long-term harm
- Smoking (17% in 2004)
- Increases in notification rates for pertussis (whooping cough), chlamydia and gonococcal infection, and hospitalisation for Crohn’s disease

In addition to these insights, it is now well established that there are specific groups of young people who particularly fail to do well in their youth. These groups are:

- Young people living in the most disadvantaged areas. These young people were less likely to rate their health as excellent or very good; were more likely to lack social support; be victims of assault; have lower year 12 completion rates; and death rates almost twice as high as the least disadvantaged areas.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. These young people had higher rates of death, injury and some chronic diseases compared with other young Australians; and were more likely to experience obesity, physical inactivity, smoking, imprisonment, and lower educational attainment.
- Young people with mental health issues. Mental health issues disorders accounted for almost 50% of the total disease burden among young people in 2003. Psychoactive substance use, schizophrenia and depression accounted for more than half of the hospital separations for mental health.
- Young people dying from external injuries. This was the leading cause of death for young people, with transport (mainly motor vehicle) accidents being the most common external cause of injury for males and intentional self-harm the most common cause for females.

The values, views, engagement and networks of young people in Australia

Most young people develop a strong sense of values, community responsibility and their own support networks as they mature. Mission Australia conducts an annual survey of young people, seeking their views and perceptions on what is important and of concern to them. The most recent survey (2008) shows that nationally, young people highly valued their family relationships (75%) and friendships (62%) (n=45 558). One third also valued their physical and mental health well being and independence. However, the value of

obtaining a job was split along gender lines with 22.8% of males reporting that obtaining a job was important but only 11.9% females recognised this as important (Mission Australia, 2008).

Nationally, the top three issues of concern for young person respondents were body image, drugs and family conflict. Drugs was the top issue of concern for 11 to 14 year olds, but concern about body image increased with age and was the top issue for young adults. The second and third top issues for the young adult group were depression and coping with stress. Physical or sexual abuse were important concerns for just over a quarter (26.7%) of the female respondents while family conflict, suicide, personal safety and bullying or emotional abuse were all identified as important concerns by around a fifth or more of survey respondents across all age and gender groups.

Young people of both genders and all age groups indicated that they sought the advice and support of friends (85%), parents (75%) and a relative or family friend (60%) when they had a personal problem. The internet was also identified as an important information and support source for 20% of respondents nationally. Almost 84% of respondents indicated that they had access to enough information on issues that concerned them.

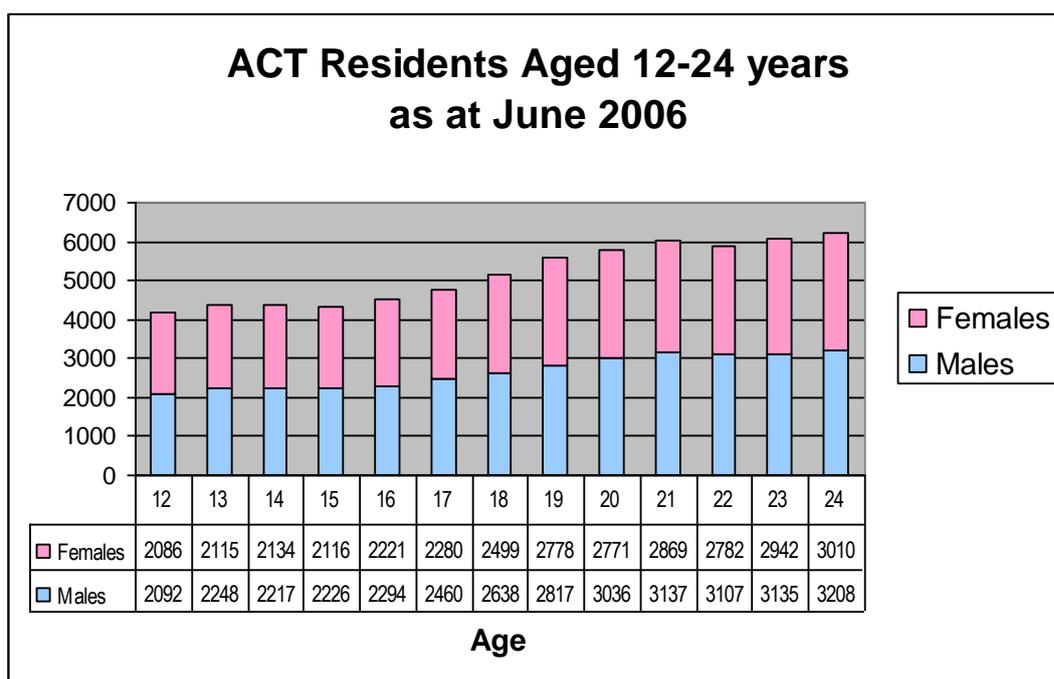
Many young Australians participate in a variety of activities outside of the home and education. Approximately 66% of respondents participated in sports, 44% in arts or cultural activities and 25% in youth groups and clubs or religious activities. Participation in sports and arts or cultural activities declined with age but young adult engagement in volunteer activities increased with age. In 2008, males were more likely to be involved in sports activities than females and females were more likely to be involved in arts or cultural activities than males.

Young people in the ACT

At the 2006 Census 67,218 young people aged 12 to 24 were living in the ACT (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007a). The breakdown of this group by age and sex appears in Figure 1 below. This Figure also reflects past fluctuations in the fertility rate.

These young people comprised 20.7% of the total population of the ACT. This percentage, which is higher than the national average of 17.8%, is a reflection of the younger age profile of the ACT. The gap between the ACT and the national average however is closing as a consequence of a decreasing fertility rate and as the population matures and more people chose to live in the ACT in the old age.

Figure 1 ACT Residents aged 12-24 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007b)



1,060 young people living in the ACT also identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This group of young people comprised 1.57% of all young people in the ACT, less than half the national level of 3.4%, and is a reflection of the lower numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait people living in the ACT. The number of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young people as a percentage of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT (27.35%) is slightly greater than the national percentage (26.45%) but generally consistent with the population profile of many Aboriginal communities.

There are also 8,939 young people aged 15 to 24 years in the ACT who were born overseas. This group comprise 13.2% of the total 15 to 24 year old ACT population, and whilst greater than the national level of 11%, can still be explained by the unique nature of the ACT with its

higher levels of diplomatic corps members, international students and academics (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007b).

The values, views, engagement and networks of young people in the ACT

The values, views and concerns of young people living in the ACT are reflected in the Mission Australia annual survey of young people. The responses of young people living in the ACT ($n= 2\ 558$) were generally similar to the national findings with the same top items being identified as highly valued: family relationships (74.1%) and friendships (64.0%); physical and mental health (32.1%); feeling needed and valued (29.3%) and being independent (29.1%) (Mission Australia, 2008).

The top three items of concern to ACT young people responding to the 2008 survey were drugs (27.9%), family conflict (25.9%) and suicide (25.2%). Whilst two of these items, drugs and family conflict, were the same as in the national response, suicide was ranked much lower on the national list. The top ranking of drugs as a major concern with an increase from 18.8% in 2007 to 27.9% in 2008 is particularly notable, due to its increased ranking by 11 to 14 years olds and males. This concern runs counter to data cited by the ACT Chief Medical Officer in his 2008 report (p48.) showing that levels of illicit substance use amongst young people has declined over time, but may highlight the difference between concern and use by young people. Overall, male respondents were more likely to identify drugs (31.8%), depression (25.3%) and alcohol (23.5%) as issues of major concern, while female respondents were more likely to indicate that body image (25.1%), physical or sexual abuse (24.1%) and bullying or emotional abuse (24.5%) were of significant concern to them. Personal safety was also identified as a major concern by 23.1% of the respondents – a level slightly higher than the national figure of 22.9% (Mission Australia, 2008).

Young people of both genders and all age groups indicated that they sought the advice and support of friends (85.8%), parents (76.2%) and a relative or family friend (62.6%) when they had a personal problem. All of these figures are slightly higher than the national figures and may reflect a stronger sense of family and general connectedness, and greater resilience. The internet was also identified as important information and support source for both male

(23.0%) and female (14.7%) respondents. 82% of respondents indicated that they had access to enough information on issues that concerned them.

Many young people participate in a variety of activities outside of the home and education. 68.6% of respondents participated in sports, 47.6% in arts or cultural activities, 22.8% in religious activities and 21.3% in youth groups and clubs. Engagement with the first two categories was higher than the national figure, and engagement in the last two categories was lower. Participation in sports and arts or cultural activities declined with age but young adult engagement in volunteer activities increased with age. In 2008, males were more likely to be involved in sports activities than females and females more likely to be involved in arts or cultural activities than males.

Differences between Australian trends and living in the ACT

Living in the ACT presents some unique challenges and opportunities for young people as the national socio-demographic trends do not naturally follow the average Australian profile. This is mainly due to the unique nature of the ACT population and includes the following traits:

- Lowest rate of children under 15 years living with one parent
- Lowest rate of families where either parent is unemployed
- Lowest number of people aged 16 and above who feel unsafe after dark
- Highest percentage of people who feel able to ask for help from others outside the household
- Highest year 12 retention rates
- Lowest number of students in government schools
- Highest literacy rates amongst year 5 students
- Highest percentage of women in the work force
- Lowest unemployment rate
- Second lowest number of people receiving government benefits and allowances
- Significantly lower numbers of teenage mothers giving birth

- Higher numbers of women aged 35 years and over giving birth for the first time
- Highest average weekly earnings of all employees
- Highest weekly rents in the country (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007-9)
- Second highest population turnover (behind the Northern territory) with a turnover rate of 11% of the Territory's total population in one year (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008)

Further contrasts and differences are illustrated in Appendix C.

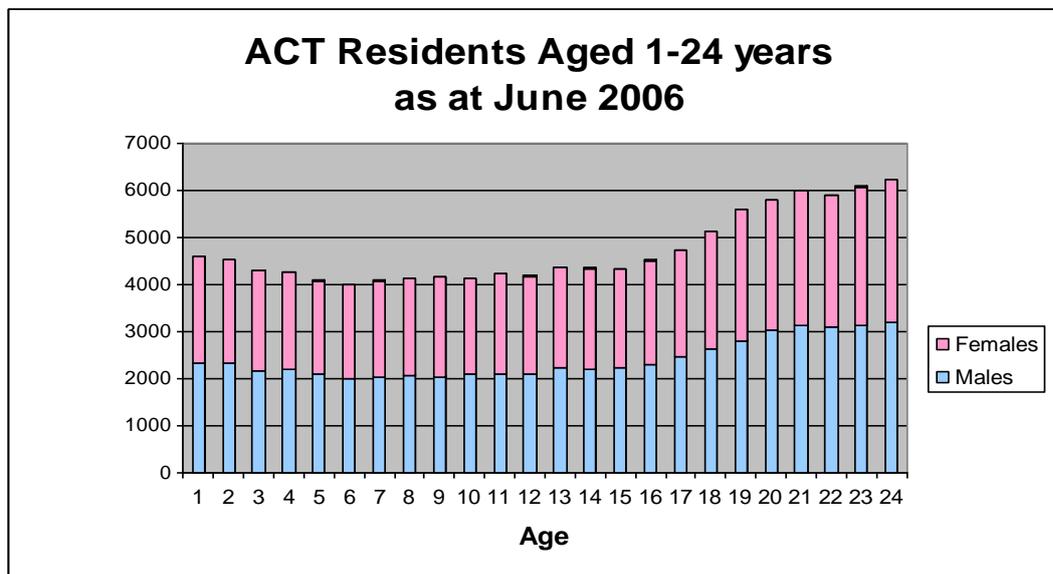
Significant trends and messages for future planning

Some of the figures above highlight important differences in outcomes for young people in the ACT. It follows then that the need for appropriate services may also be different. Some of the differences in need centre around the ACT's higher levels of education engagement, even when a young person is homeless, mental health needs, employment, internet access personal safety and population mobility.

The items of concern to ACT young people as identified in the Mission Australia survey: drugs, family conflict, suicide and personal safety; and the gender biases of male respondents towards drugs, depression and alcohol and of females to body image, physical or sexual abuse and bullying or emotional abuse also indicate there may be a need for some services to focus on gender based services.

In planning for the future it is also important to look at the fertility rate of the last ten to fifteen years. As noted above the ACT fertility rate has fluctuated in past years. Over the ten year period from 1996 to 2006 the population size of children in the ACT declined by more than 7% (see CHO 2008 Figure 14.3). This decline is a consequence of the decreasing fertility rate which has been seen both in the ACT and nationally, particularly between 1996 and 2001. Since 2001 there has been a reverse in this decline and the population has levelled out. These fluctuations will have an impact on the demand levels for services for young people in the next ten years as the current larger and older aged young people 'age' into adulthood.

Figure 2 ACT Residents aged 1 to 24 years (ACT Chief Health Officer, 2008)



These fluctuations will however also need to be balanced against the impacts of the ACT’s consistently higher than national average population turnover. Population turnover measures gross flows in relation to the size of the population and reveals the real level of turnover experienced by a population. Gross flows can also be used to analyse the population. Young adults aged 20 to 24 years are the most mobile of all population groups in Australia, and with the ACT experiencing a net gain in young adults moving to the ACT (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007-9) changing fertility rates alone can not inform future service decision making for young people.

The number of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young people as a percentage of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT (27.35%) is slightly greater than the national percentage (26.45%). This could mean that the need for services directed to these young people may be slightly greater than those offered in some other states.

SUMMARY

- Whilst it appears that young people in the ACT are managing better than young people generally in Australia in many aspects of their lives, there are still some areas that need specific attention.

- Of particular note are the needs of young people to access both mental health services and mental health residential facilities at levels well above the national average.
- Other areas needing specific attention relate to substance abuse and homelessness. Domestic violence, all forms of personal abuse, and personal safety are also issues of concern to young people.
- In planning for the future it is also important to look at the changing ACT fertility rate over the last ten to fifteen years, the consistently high ACT population turnover, the gross flows of young people moving in and out of the Territory, and to consider the needs of specific groups of young people from Indigenous and non-English speaking backgrounds.

PART TWO - Literature Review

The nature of evidence

Whilst a large number of articles, reports and papers are considered for this review robust evidence to suggest ‘what works’ in youth work with vulnerable young people is limited.

Evidence can be understood as information presented as systematic reviews, single studies or evaluations, case studies or expert’s evidence and within the literature there is great debate regarding the superiority of this evidence. Priority is often given to research with high levels of rigour for example the program has undergone a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) or has produced statistically significant results demonstrating its effectiveness. Much of the ‘evidence’ regarding youth work interventions reviewed for this report however is based upon practice assumptions and expert opinion rather than on robust empirical evidence.

The lack of rigorous evaluation within Australia however needs to be put in some context. Youth work has generally not been funded or encouraged, until relatively recently to

evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of interventions with young people. Furthermore many programs conducted with young people are funded as pilots and offer no certainty of renewal (National Crime Prevention, 1999) thus further impeding the likelihood of rigorous evaluations being conducted.

Conversely the literature does reveal a range of promising models of intervention for young people documented in the areas of education, health and criminology. Such models range from universal to targeted responses and are delivered in a variety of settings and by a variety of professionals. Given the range of programs and disciplines involved it was decided by the project steering group that this review would report on the key characteristics and principles of programs that underpin promising programs.

Responding to young people

Adolescence is a time of great change for young people. Adolescence brings with it not only physical and emotional changes but also a period of transition to ‘adult’ independence. Most young people successfully transition through this period of development with the help of friends, family and community supports. However, for some young people, this period of their life can be problematic. In particular young people without support, who exhibit ‘risky behaviours’ and who make poor decisions are often seen to be more vulnerable to experiencing ‘negative’ life consequences . Compounded with circumstances of poverty, social exclusion or homelessness, such vulnerable young people are less likely to realise positive healthy futures (Department of Human Services, Department of Planning and Community Development, & Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2008).

Addressing broad social gaps for young people has become a key priority of government both at a federal and state and territory level. Within Australia the responsibility for interventions to support and assist young people is held at all levels of government and in differing portfolios such as education, welfare and youth justice (de Roeper & Savelsberg, 2009). The Australian Government acknowledges

that young people are valuable participants in Australian society and are crucial to our nation's economic and social prosperity(Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009) .

As such the Australian government has made the commitment to *working for and with young people* (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009) in order to ensure that those who face particular disadvantages such as homelessness, mental health issues and a lack education and employment are better supported to make successful transitions to adulthood.

The federal government is currently developing a plan for young Australians to ensure that all young people are safe, healthy, confident and resilient with the skills and support they need to build their own futures. This first step in the creation of a National Youth Strategy follows the establishment in 2008 of a youth portfolio at ministerial level within the federal government and the establishment of both the Office for Youth and the Australia Youth Forum.

More recently On 22 October 2009, the Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP and the Hon Kate Ellis MP, launched the National Conversation to consult with young people and the broader community on the development of the Australian Government's National Strategy for Young Australians. This strategy is designed to support the government's vision for all young people to grow up safe, healthy, happy and resilient. Within this strategy seven core priorities are identified:

- Empowering young Australians in their schools, institutes of technology, and universities to shape their own futures
- Supporting young Australians within their families
- Mobilising young Australians within their communities
- Enabling young Australians to participate safely and confidently online
- Equipping young Australians with the skills and personal networks they need for employment

- Strengthening early intervention with young Australians to help prevent any problems getting worse and to help young people get their lives back on track
- Establishing clear cut legal consequences for behaviours that
- Endanger the safety of others.

At a state and territory level governments are being asked to incorporate new youth policy priorities as well as the broader federal youth affairs agenda that is currently emerging. Youth participation, acknowledgment of diversity as well the strengths and challenges that are unique to young people are highlighted as key priorities in supporting young people.

ACT Context

Over the last decade or so the ACT government has provided funding specifically targeted towards young people in order to respond to their needs and to services delivery ideas. The ACT Youth Services Grants Program (YSP) makes up a substantial proportion of the services for young people in the ACT. The program delivers services through youth centres and a range of youth development and youth support activities. The program also funds the peak youth body. The current YSP has been framed by the ACT Young People's Plan 2004-2008 (ACT Government Office for Children Youth and Family Services, 2004) and the Blueprint for Young People at Risk (Office for Children Youth and Family Services, 2004). These policies define the ACT Government's vision for young people and outline strategies that respond to young people's needs, particularly those who may require additional support.

In August 2009 the ACT government released a draft Young People's Plan 2009-2014 (Office for Children Youth and Family Support, 2009). The aim of the Young People's plan 2009-2014 is to build on the previous plans commitment to strengthen opportunities for all young people living in the ACT and identifies five priority areas:

- Health wellbeing and support;
- Families and communities;
- Participation and Access;
- Transitions and Pathways;

- Environment and sustainability

These five key priorities have been developed from current evidence regarding young people's issues and consultations with young people, community and government.

Young people

Youth or adolescence is a journey of transition from childhood and family dependency to adulthood and independent living. A young person's experiences through this journey set the scene for their short and long term future as an adult. It is a critical time for gaining an education; developing appropriate social, health, living and employment skills; and in learning to live life as a responsible citizen in the community. Failure to gain the necessary skills and support required at this time usually results in the creation of barriers and lost opportunities in adult life.

The development of young people from childhood through to adulthood has been explored by researchers who have over the years claimed 'knowledge' about who young people 'are' and the 'potential' they possess. Through work of renowned scientists such as Piaget, Erikson and Kohlberg, young people's development has, until relatively recently, been conceptualised as age specific, universal and uniform (J. Bessant, 2008). Such thinking however has subsequently been challenged and there is now a greater awareness of the influence that culture and different social groups have on young people's development. Furthermore recent international research on teenage brain development has also contributed to contemporary knowledge about adolescent development. This research highlights that during adolescence some of the greatest development occurs in the parts of the brain that are responsible for impulse control, judgement and decision making (Giedd, 2006).

Whilst Bessant (2008) highlights the danger of such research as potentially stereotyping young people as irresponsible and troublesome, other commentators acknowledge that this greater understanding of how young people develop enables us to recognise and respond more effectively to the needs of young people. The capacity to meet the individual needs of

Australian youth varies according to location, family support, community engagement, opportunity, personal capacity and resilience but despite this, there is a distinct consistency in the stated needs, wishes and aspirations of Australia's youth today.

Vulnerability

Individual, social and environmental factors all influence the development of young people as they transition from childhood to adulthood. Rickwood, White, & Eckersley, (2007) suggest that this transition is becoming increasingly more *'protracted and complicated by a range of social and systematic factors'* (p. 77). Social transitions expected of all young people such as finishing education, finding employment, becoming financially independent, leaving home and creating significant relationships are important milestones that if interrupted or compromised, result in a more challenging adulthood. As such it could be argued that all young people are vulnerable by simply being in this stage of development.

The transition for some young people is made more difficult because of exposure to particular life circumstances or individual risk taking behaviours. Young people sometimes lack the necessary skills, knowledge and support with which to make appropriate decisions and sometimes as a consequence may be exposed to negative events. Such exposure is seen to increase a young person's vulnerability and place them 'at risk' of harm. Harm can be defined as harm to themselves i.e. participating in high risk activities such as excessive use of drug and alcohol; harm to others such as engaging in criminal activity or harm by some else i.e. experiencing physical or sexual abuse or neglect (Sharland, 2006).

The definition of 'vulnerable' young people within Australian policy is relatively consistent however, for the purposes of this paper the Victorian definition proposed in the *Vulnerable Youth Framework* will be used. This definition recognises both the impact of circumstances on increasing a young person's vulnerability and the influence of their risk taking behaviour. Vulnerable young people are described as:

Young people who, through a combination of their circumstances and adolescent risk taking behaviour, are at risk of not realising their potential to achieve positive life outcomes (Department of Human Services et al., 2008, p. 14)

Framework of Vulnerability

Clearly the majority of young people negotiate their way through adolescence often with the help and support of friends and family and generally without too much difficulty. However as identified earlier there are a number of young people that experience particular issues or risks that, without additional support, will significantly impact their development through adolescence. This increase in vulnerability may occur at particular transition points that include moving from primary to secondary school; onset of puberty; transitioning from education to employment and transitioning from the family home to independent living (Furlong, Cartmel, Biggart, Sweeting, & West, 2003; Morris, Duncan, & Clark-Kauffman, 2005).

Additionally some risks are likely to be more associated with particular age groups. As identified in the earlier section on data about young people, certain age groups identify with some risk factors more than others. Early adolescence is associated with physical and social changes that include the onset of puberty; changes within social groups due to moving schools and changes within peer groups. The Mission Australia national survey of Young Australians 2008 reports that 11 to 14 year olds have a greater concern with issues such as family conflict, suicide, bullying/emotional abuse, drugs and self harm than middle or later adolescents (Mission Australia, 2008).

Middle adolescences is associated with young people's increasing independence however this time also presents young people with increased opportunities to experiment with alcohol and drugs (AIHW, 2008; Mallett, Rosenthal, & Keys, 2005). Whilst for some researchers such experimentation is seen to be 'part of' growing up, it is also associated with unprotected and coercive sexual activity (Ostaszewski & Zimmerman, 2006). This age group is also more likely than members of any other population group to be dealt with by police for committing a crime. In 2006–07, the offending rate for persons aged 15 to 19 years was four times the rate for offenders aged more than 19 years (5,735 and 1,305 respectively per 100,000)(Bricknell. & Dearden, 2009) . This age group is most likely to report school and study problems as well as alcohol use as significant issues of importance to them (Mission Australia, 2007).

Young people over eighteen year olds whilst also experiencing many of the issues early and middle adolescents experience also have other challenges to face. Young people at this age may be moving away from home, either trying to find employment or beginning tertiary education. Such transitions increase a young person's vulnerability to a number of issues and this age grouping particular identifies stress, depression, physical and sexual abuse and discrimination as key issues of concern (Mission Australia, 2008).

In order to map the complexity of vulnerable young people's lives the Victorian *Vulnerable Youth Framework* (Department of Human Services et al., 2008, p. 12) provides a conceptual model that depicts four 'layers' of vulnerability. Each layer of vulnerability identifies particular risk factors and the level of intervention required to respond effectively to those issues.

- The first layer of vulnerability includes all young people – by simply being 'teenagers' young people are vulnerable to difficult social interactions and traumatic life events such as death of a family member. Such risk factors however are usually managed through family, recreation and social supports.
- The second layer depicts young people as experiencing additional problems that require early interventions. Such risk factors include emerging mental health issues, truancy experimental drug and alcohol use etc.
- The third layer represents young people as highly vulnerable that require comprehensive and coordinated interventions for issues such as homelessness, significant drug and alcohol use, disengagement from education and employment.
- The fourth and final layer of vulnerability is described as 'High Risk' that requires intensive interventions for chronic or co-occurring problems such as mental health or drug and alcohol issues, criminal court orders or multiple high risk behaviours

Vulnerability depicted in the ACT

Using this framework and the data from the previous section a picture of the level of vulnerability experienced by young people in the ACT can be established. The following

table (adapted from the Victorian Vulnerable Youth Framework Discussion Paper p. 15) presents data particular to young people living in the ACT and representing the differing levels of vulnerability. This data was sourced from a range of studies detailed in Appendix D.

TABLE 1 ACT level of vulnerability adapted (Department of Human Services et al., 2008)

<p>The majority of young people in the ACT cope well with the vulnerabilities that arise through adolescence</p>	<p>Some young people in the ACT experience additional problems that require an early service intervention. Community-based interventions at this level reduce the escalation of problems</p>	<p>Young people in the ACT experiencing this level of vulnerability require comprehensive and coordinated interventions from a range of support services</p>	<p>Although relatively small in number, young people in the ACT experiencing this level of vulnerability require intensive support.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 78.6% of 11–14 year olds and 70.3% of 15–19 year olds identified parents as an important source of advice and support in 2008. • 74 % of 11–19 year olds highly valued family relationships • 90 % of young people aged 20–24 years had completed Year 12 or equivalent in 2007. • 93 % of all secondary students who graduated in 2006 were employed or studying in 2007. • 72.4% of survey respondents aged 11–14 years age and 56.6% of 15–19 were involved in <i>sports as a participant</i>. • 49.2% of 11–14 year olds and 42.7% of 15–19 year olds were involved in <i>arts/cultural</i> activities. • 22.4% of 15–19 year olds and 17.2% of 11–14 year olds were involved in <i>volunteer</i> activities. • 41.7% of secondary students (12-17 years) surveyed in the 2005 ASSAD reported consuming three or more serves of fruit each day, in-line with national dietary guidelines for adolescents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.3 % of 12–15 year olds and 11.5 per cent of 16–17 year olds drink at levels that risk short-term harm in 2005. • 2.9% per cent of ACT secondary students between 12 to 17 years reported smoking cigarettes daily in 2005. • (4.8%) of ACT secondary students between 12 to 17 years reported in 2005 they had used an illicit substance at least once in the last seven days. • 45% of 18-24 years olds in 2005 indicated medium to very high levels of psychological distress. • 115 young people under 18 years were referred to diversionary programs • There were 123 births to women under 20 years in 2007. • 257 young offenders aged between 10 and 18 years who had committed 453 offences against 350 victims were referred for restorative justice in preference to detention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.4 % of 15–19 year olds were not in education, training or employment in May 2008t • 2.3% of surveyed ACT secondary students between 12 and 17 years reported in 2005 using tobacco, alcohol and at least one illicit substance, on at least one occasion, in the seven days prior to survey. • 850 young people aged 12–24 were homeless in 2007-08 and represented 45.2% of the total number of clients of ACT homelessness services. • Young people accessed community mental health services 70,827 times in 2006-2007. • 500 young people aged 15–19 years and 300 young people aged 20–24 accessed SAAP services in 2006-07 • 20% of young people under 18 years were re-apprehended, within 12 months of undertaking a diversionary program. • 90 male and 27 female Indigenous young people (19%) and 495 non-Indigenous young people (81%) were held in police custody in 2006-07. • 62 male and 14 female young people were held in custody for intoxication in 2006-07 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential mental health care was required on 9 occasions in 2006-07 for young people under 25 years • 425 children and young people were under care and protection orders at 30 June 2008. • 60 % of male young people and more than two thirds of young women in detention meet the criteria for a psychiatric diagnosis • 10 young people aged 15–24 years suicided in the ACT in 2007. • 143 young people were placed in a youth detention centre in 2006-07 • 237 young people aged 10–17 years were on youth justice community-based orders in 2006–07. • 51 young people aged 18-24 were serving jail terms in the ACT and 12 in NSW as at 30 June 2008. • 180 young people aged 18-24 were serving periodic detention terms in NSW and 20 in the ACT as at 30 June 2008.

Working with vulnerability

The literature overwhelmingly identifies that the most prevalent issues that impact on young people's development are substance abuse, juvenile offending, mental health problems, poverty, social exclusion and family difficulties (A Lemmon, 2008; Shek, 2006). Such issues significantly impact upon the health and well being of young people and can have considerable implications for their wellbeing as adults (Hayes & Grey, 2008). A broad range of responses and ways to work with young people have been developed over the years in an attempt to prevent, or at least reduce, the impact of these issues for young people.

The development of Youth Work has been one response to meeting the needs of young people. Historically, it is understood that the concept of youth work developed in order to address the perceived needs of young people: to provide moral leadership and guidance regarding middle class values and social expectations (Furlong, Cartmel, Powney, & Hall, 1997). Youth work has been understood to provide social education, cultural experiences, recreational activities and leadership to all young people. *It introduces young people into social norms, expectations, roles and institutions as preparation for the adult world (B. Merton, 2004, p. 29).*

The term 'youth work' has been used to describe a range of services and supports that focus on and primarily benefit young people (Barwick, 2006; Furlong et al., 1997; B. Merton, 2004). 'Generalist' youth work can be described as providing services such as advocacy, social and health education, skills development, referrals and community development (Rose & Atkins, 2006). Furlong et al (1997) argue that there are four different categories of youth work that include leisure based work, personal and social development, preventative work and youth 'social work'. However he suggests that often these categories overlap.

Indeed the 2002 NSW youth work census (YAPA, 2003) illustrates that Youth Work provides a range of services. The most frequently identified include: information and referrals, informal counseling and support, living skills (for example health promotion, safe driving, budgeting, legal rights), structured recreational activities, individual case work and

advocacy. The census highlights the diversity of services provided for young people and also the partnerships that youth workers have with other organisations such as schools and health.

The literature suggests however that the characteristics of youth work are much clearer than either its definition or its outcomes (Flowers, 1998). Harland, Morgan, & Muldoon (2005) assert that there is a certain reluctance within the literature to define ‘youth work’, its purpose, goals and outcomes. Consequently definitions of youth work vary. In 2004 an evaluation of the impact of youth work was conducted in the UK that found a widespread consensus that youth work’s core purpose is ‘the personal and social development of young people, provided through informal education’ (B. Merton, 2004, p. 5). On the other hand Bessant, Sercombe, & Watts (1998) describe youth work in Australia as ‘engaging with young people in a professional relationship in which the young person(s) are the primary constituency and the mandate given by them has priority.

Flowers (1998) highlights the fact that youth workers often over simplify what they do and are often vague about how they do it. Moreover, Flowers (1998) asserts that youth workers are often more concerned about ‘how’ young people participate than about the outcomes achieved by young people.

This thought is shared by other commentators who acknowledge that youth work is not defined by its outcomes, but rather by the way youth workers support their clients. Writers argue, however, that what distinguishes youth work from other disciplines is that it:

- Works with and responds to clients of a particular developmental age;
- Emphasises voluntary participation;
- Works within young people’s context – both physical and in relation to their social ecology (including family, peers, communities);
- Based in positive relationships;
- Has a commitment to association (i.e. connecting groups of young people together);

- Is informal, both in its approach and in the character of the worker;
- Builds capacity of young people to resolve their own needs and to attain their own goals;
- values rather than problematises the ‘youth’ experience
- Attempts to identify, challenge and subvert social control and power imbalance (particularly as it relates to young people) so that young people are empowered, valued and re-connected to the community (Davies, 2005; Harland et al., 2005; Sercombe, 2000; Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, 2004)

The challenges that youth work faces and the lack of clarity regarding what value youth work provides is overwhelmingly apparent within the literature (J. Bessant, 2004; Bowie, 2004; Bruce et al., 2009; Flowers, 1998; YACVIC, 2004). There has however been an attempt to better understand and document the significance that youth work has for young people, in two UK evaluations. These evaluations used a mixed method approach, including the use of surveys, focus groups, individual interviews and case studies. Both evaluations aimed to consider the effectiveness and the impact of youth work for young people (Furlong et al., 1997; B Merton, 2004).

Whilst these studies were unable to provide statistical measures of the overall impact of youth work due to methodological issues, both studies provided qualitative evidence that youth work has an important positive impact on and for many young people.

Furthermore whilst young people described that youth work had contributed to improved learning, support and personal confidence they had also experienced tangible outcomes such as reengaging with school and reduced drug and alcohol use (B. Merton, 2004). In no priority the factors that contributed a positive impact include:

- Youth workers are closely connected to local communities and services
- Young people are facilitated to find solutions to problems rather than acting on ready made solutions

- Youth workers work from an ecological perspective and look to work with young people to develop a range of skills and knowledge - not just those required for the presenting issue
- Youth work advocates and mediates in the interest of young people strengthening relationships between young people and their communities
- Sustained contact provides a stabilising element

Factors that limited the impact include:

- Limited control over negative influences such as peers and family
- The management, support and development of youth workers
- The way mainstream services can limit the impact of youth work. An example given in this study was about the relationship between youth services and schools
- The short term nature of funding

More recently the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic), in their report *Who's carrying the can?* (Rose & Atkins, 2006) argues strongly that the holistic wellbeing of all young people is supported by generalist youth work. Through consultations with key stakeholders and survey responses, generalist youth work was found to be more flexible and universally available whilst providing support at both an early intervention level as well as at a secondary more targeted level (NLT Consulting Pty Ltd, 2007). However over the past few years it has been increasingly recognised that young people when they experience difficulties in one area of their life will very often also have difficulties in other areas. Many of the problems young people experience are interrelated and multi layered providing a complexity that requires concurrent responses (Beadle, 2009; Guilamo-Ramos, Litardo, & Jaccard, 2005).

Along with the rising complexity of young people's lives there is also a call from funding bodies for a greater focus on delivering evidence based practice to ensure better outcomes for young people. For a professional area that is fragmented and lacking in cohesion in

terms of its strategies of intervention (Bruce et al., 2009, p. 24) this has proven to be problematic. More recently Martin (2006) in a New Zealand study of youth work challenged youth workers to clarify what they were aiming to achieve in their work with young people.

Principles of practice

In considering what constitutes ‘best practice’ in youth work, the literature concludes that there is no one way of working to effectively meet the needs of young people (Beadle, 2009). Instead the literature highlights particular principles that underpin ‘best-practice’. Bruce and colleagues (2009) identified in their study the following essential components to effective youth work practice: connectivity, strengths based approaches and capacity building. Other studies focus on concepts such as collaboration, inclusivity, participation and providing an evidence base (Department of Human Services et al., 2008; Kang et al., 2006; McLaren, 2002). The following section will outline the key principles highlighted in the literature that are seen to underpin ‘effective’ work with young people.

Collaboration

The term collaboration is commonly used to mean ‘working together’. The idea of working together or collaborating for a more effective response for young people is not new and for a while now it has been recognised that collaborative practice between young people, schools, youth work services, and families provides better more sustainable outcomes for young people (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004). Furthermore Kang et al (2005) report that collaboration provides mutually supportive relationships, better responses to complex situations, improved impact and is more cost effective due to a better use of resources.

An example of a model of practice that maximises collaboration is that of Wraparound. Wyles (2007) highlights that for particularly vulnerable young people such a model encourages collaboration between a young person, their immediate support network and the services involved with them. This model developed in the US predominantly to respond to young people with mental health issues, has been adapted to work effectively with young people with complex issues that involve multiple services in their lives (Morgan Disney & Associates, 2006).

Sustainability

Long term sustainable programs and services tend to be community-based, birthed and sourced from within that community... (Bruce et al., 2009, p. 26). The concept of place based services allows responses for vulnerable young people to be developed locally, and be tailored to meet the needs of young people and their families living within particular contexts. NLT Consulting Pty Ltd (2007) in their Victorian based study concerning solutions for addressing the service gaps for young people highlight the need for local services that are well planned and strategically driven to meet local needs and conditions.

Mechanisms that allow long term sustainable services identified within the literature include:

- Systematic coordination of services
- Involvement of services, including education, who work with vulnerable young people
- Collaboration and cooperation between government and community organisations
- Voluntary partnerships across services
- Comprehensive protocols for data collection and sharing to inform comprehensive service delivery
- Identification of preferred outcomes for young people
- Inclusion and participation of young people in planning and decision making
- Investment in workforce development

Applying the principle of sustainability to any program means that they must be evaluated not only in terms of the effectiveness and function but also in their long term viability (Ife, 2002). Long term support has been highlighted in both national and international literature as a key element in supporting particularly vulnerable young people (Alistair Lemmon, 2008). Lemmon (2008) reports that many of the young people participating in his study only ‘achieved adulthood’ because of the multi layered long term support provided until their early to mid twenties. An Australian example of this is the Whitelion program developed to work with young people at risk of offending behaviour. This program has been evaluated and whilst the young people involved report that they have had considerable benefits from the program however the evaluation itself was inconclusive regarding its positive effects.

In context

Understanding the life worlds of young people is fundamental if we are to respond effectively to their needs. In order for services to work effectively with young people the literature highlights the use of an ecological systems perspective. Bronfenbrenner’s ‘ecological systems perspective’ describes how development occurs through a complex process of interaction within and between young people and the environmental contexts in which they are involved over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Figure 4 illustrates the connected nature of the approach and how a number of systems are important for a young person’s development.

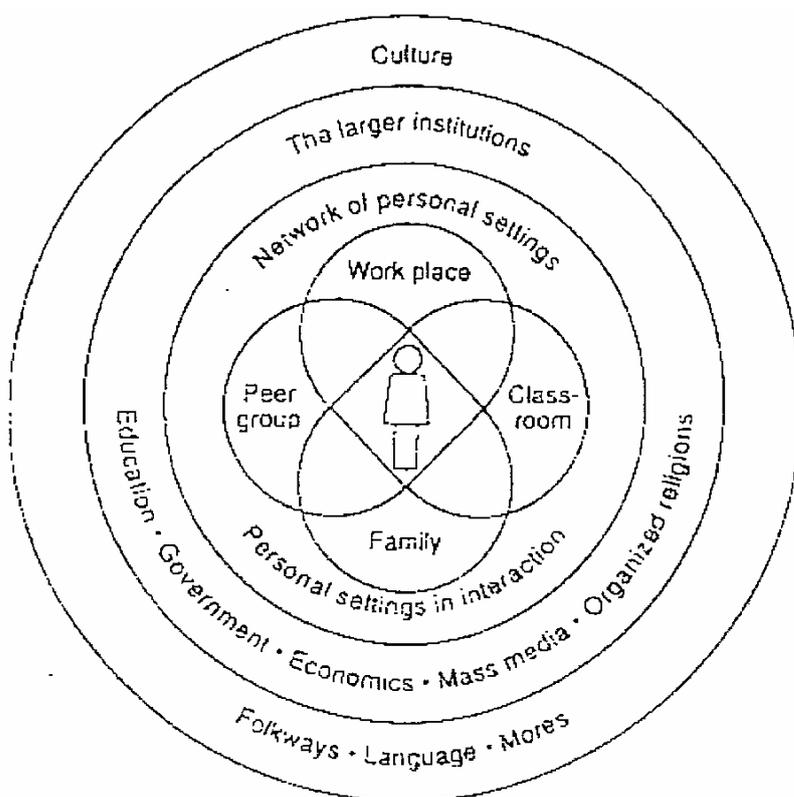


Figure 3 Bronfenbrenner’s socio-ecological model

The ‘microsystems’, closely shape a young person’s development and such systems may include the family, peer group, school and local community neighborhood. The ‘mesosystems’ are a set of microsystems and are the points of interaction between settings.

Surrounding the microsystems is the exosystem, which includes external networks, such as community structures, employment, and communications systems. Affecting all other systems is the macrosystem, which includes cultural values, political persuasions, economic conditions, and the social environment.

Bronfenbrenner's work is particularly relevant to working with young people because it acknowledges the importance of the different worlds or 'life domains'. This way of thinking about the complex impacts on the lives of young people provides a clear reason for improving the positive connections between families, schools and other important people or organisations in their lives.

Strengths based approach

Within the literature there has been a notable shift towards working with young people using a strengths based approach (Kurtz & Linnemann, 2006; McLaren, 2002). Proponents of strengths based work suggest that this approach builds on young people's capacity to address risk factors whilst enhancing resilience. Best practice evidence articulates that this approach enhances the effectiveness of interventions at any level of intervention (Kurtz & Linnemann, 2006; Maton., Schellenbach., Leadbeater., & Solarz., 2004; Tebes et al., 2007).

Bruce and colleagues (2009) suggests that adopting a strengths based approach also means promoting the concept of independence and autonomy. Such concepts can be found as integral to the next principle that of youth participation.

Participation and inclusion

The literature identifies that positive youth development is only fully realised when young people are given opportunities to genuinely participate in ways that are meaningful for them (Bell, Vromen, & Collin, 2008; Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin, & Sinclair, 2003; Mason & Urquhart, 2001(McLaren, 2002). A good deal of guidance is now available about how to promote the involvement of children and young people (Cavet & Sloper, 2004) in both public policy decision making as well as decisions regarding their own lives and there is growing evidence about the benefits of such inclusion and participation. Sinclair (2004)

highlights that young people’s participation leads to more accurate, relevant and improved decision-making.

Young people’s participation can be for a number of reasons such as to learn new skills, create positive change to the structures surrounding them or simply to develop relationships (Borden & Serido, 2009). Bell, Vromen, & Collin (2008) suggest that there are four main approaches to young people’s participation:

- Formal participation – through the use of structured long term approaches. Examples would include youth advisory groups, youth members on boards and in consultation groups
- Informal participation – this type of participation is usually short term where young people provide feedback or one off consultation
- Targeted participation –where young people from particular backgrounds or who have particular experience are encouraged to participate
- Universal participation – an approach that involves all young people

Shen, Campbell, Reed & Sheridan (2006), report that there are particular benefits for young people when they participate and that true participation and empowerment of young people begins with providing young people with the opportunity to gain tangible skills, make real decisions and contribute to their community. Participation provides a greater sense of control over what happens to young people and for young people.

To effectively engage young people at any level there needs to be meaningful opportunities, sufficient resources, well informed staff, friendly spaces, and flexibility for young people to participate for varying lengths of time. Participation needs to be relevant and that means workers need to think about the ways young people would like to participate such as face to face, online or in groups (Bell et al., 2008).

Capacity Building

Capacity building applies not only to building resilience in young people but also to strengthening the workforce established to support young people.

Building resilience is an important goal if we are to strengthen capacity and promote skills that help to reduce young people's vulnerability; developing young people's skill and knowledge to negotiate life transitions and facilitate young people to successfully adapt to change and stressful events. However to do this effectively we need a competent skilled workforce.

Bruce and colleagues (2009) highlights the need to build capacity in terms of the recruitment, training and professional development of youth workers as this is an essential component of ensuring better outcomes for vulnerable young people. The training of professionals is important for a number of reasons. Firstly workers need a positive attitude to the programs they are delivering. They need to believe that what they are doing will contribute to beneficial outcomes for young people. Secondly workers need to be able to evaluate what they are doing and the impact that this has on young people (Shek & wai, 2008).

Camino & Zeldin (2003) acknowledge that *'we as a society hold extraordinary expectations of youth workers. We expect them to carry out an astonishingly diverse range of functions and to be equipped with an array of skill sets'* (p77). However many organisations have not sufficiently equipped workers with the necessary skill or knowledge to deliver programs as devised or to work with young people who have complex issues. This is partly because there is no one agreement about what knowledge and skills are needed to effectively work with young people (Huebner, Walker, & McFarland, 2003) but also because there is a lack of investment in the training and support of youth workers.

A lack of investment in training and staff development is not the only characteristic of capacity building that needs to be addressed. Short term funding cycles, one off funding and on-going 'pilot' programs create a lack of uncertainty for both workers and young people

(Bruce et al., 2009). Cahill et al (2005) further acknowledges that this issue is not exclusive to youth work. Programs designed to target alcohol and drugs also face such challenges.

In addition to these principles Bruce and colleagues (2009) suggest that contextual and systematic considerations such as economic, political, social and cultural factors be taken into account. Bruce and colleagues (2009) suggest the following areas be considered:

- **Portrayal of young people** – as noted earlier young people are often constructed in ways that exclude some groups and commend others. Sharland (2006) suggests that young people are increasingly identified by government and policy makers as troubled, in trouble or as our future leaders. For those young people who may be understood as troubled or in trouble, such construction can be problematic as often the ‘troubled’ label individualizes the risks young people experience rather than recognizing that such issues are often a product of the structures that surround them (te Riele, 2006)
- **Service provision** – a range of interventions across the continuum should be available to young people in order to strengthen and enhance protective factors. However these interventions need to be well coordinated and managed to ensure an efficient and integrated service delivery and that services are available when young people need them.
- **Access to opportunities** – it is overwhelming recognised within the literature that education provides an essential component to a young person’s positive pathway through life. Attending school reduces the likelihood of engaging in high risk behaviour (National Crime Prevention, 1999). However it is also understood that vulnerable young people are at a much higher risk of leaving school early and becoming disengaged from any type of education. Bruce and colleagues (2009) call for a wider range of educational opportunities for young people and more intensive support to maintain a young person’s engagement.

The Dusseldorf Skills Forum (Australian Industry Group Dusseldorf Skills Forum, 2007) also acknowledge this and further add that the transition between school and employment also needs to be better supported.

Approaches underpinning working with young people

In addition to the above principles, the literature reflects two different approaches that underpin programs designed to work with vulnerable young people. The first is that of youth development which is best characterised as an approach that views young people as ‘resources’ rather than as problems (Damon, 2004). Whilst research on resiliency has greatly influenced youth development programs Damon (2004) highlights that this research was limited *by the defensive connotations of the concepts that it employed... Preventing the actualisation of youth risk behaviours is not the same as taking actions to promote positive youth development* (p. 16).

A youth development approach therefore seeks to improve a young persons life chances through engagement with external assets such as those developed by the Search Institute (Figure 3) rather than focusing on specific problem behaviours (Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Foster, 1998).

The second approach is based upon a risk and protective factor perspective. This conceptual framework provides an understanding for why some young people exposed to particular risk factors do or do not develop negative behaviours (Rutter, 1987). Such programs developed from this perspective aim to address specific behaviours such as drug and alcohol use or criminogenic behaviour.

The following sections explore these approaches and highlight the particular characteristics of what has been found to ‘work’ as well as the characteristics that underpin ‘effective’ programs.

Figure 4 40 Development Assets for Adolescents Search Institute (2006)



40 Developmental Assets® for Adolescents (ages 12-18)

Search Institute® has identified the following building blocks of healthy development—known as **Developmental Assets®**—that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.



External Assets	<p>Support</p> <p>Empowerment</p> <p>Boundaries & Expectations</p> <p>Constructive Use of Time</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family support—Family life provides high levels of love and support. 2. Positive family communication—Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents. 3. Other adult relationships—Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults. 4. Caring neighborhood—Young person experiences caring neighbors. 5. Caring school climate—School provides a caring, encouraging environment. 6. Parent involvement in schooling—Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school. 7. Community values youth—Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth. 8. Youth as resources—Young people are given useful roles in the community. 9. Service to others—Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week. 10. Safety—Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood. 11. Family boundaries—Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person’s whereabouts. 12. School Boundaries—School provides clear rules and consequences. 13. Neighborhood boundaries—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people’s behavior. 14. Adult role models—Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior. 15. Positive peer influence—Young person’s best friends model responsible behavior. 16. High expectations—Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well. 17. Creative activities—Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts. 18. Youth programs—Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community. 19. Religious community—Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution. 20. Time at home—Young person is out with friends “with nothing special to do” two or fewer nights per week.
Internal Assets	<p>Commitment to Learning</p> <p>Positive Values</p> <p>Social Competencies</p> <p>Positive Identity</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. Achievement Motivation—Young person is motivated to do well in school. 22. School Engagement—Young person is actively engaged in learning. 23. Homework—Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day. 24. Bonding to school—Young person cares about her or his school. 25. Reading for Pleasure—Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week. 26. Caring—Young person places high value on helping other people. 27. Equality and social justice—Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty. 28. Integrity—Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs. 29. Honesty—Young person “tells the truth even when it is not easy.” 30. Responsibility—Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility. 31. Restraint—Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs. 32. Planning and decision making—Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices. 33. Interpersonal Competence—Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills. 34. Cultural Competence—Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds. 35. Resistance skills—Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations. 36. Peaceful conflict resolution—Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently. 37. Personal power—Young person feels he or she has control over “things that happen to me.” 38. Self-esteem—Young person reports having a high self-esteem. 39. Sense of purpose—Young person reports that “my life has a purpose.” 40. Positive view of personal future—Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

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Youth Development Approach

Youth development programs have gained prominence particularly in the United States over the past few decades as a way to help young people become capable, socially engaged adults. However, the definition of youth development programs is elusive. Most simply, youth development programs are described as a *holistic, system and strengths based approach to working with young people* (Lane, 1996).

Youth development programs are delivered in a range of settings including schools, families and communities and utilise a variety methods such as mentoring, peer tutoring and curriculum based training. Youth development approaches generally provide opportunities for skill development and capacity building; opportunities for leadership; a reflection on identity and increased social awareness (Shen, 2006). Successful interventions identify and build on individual and group strengths and skills, rather than emphasizing limitations. Interventions aim for wider community change through positive social relationships and broad mobilisation efforts.

In addition to this, youth participation is emphasized as a key strategy in enabling the development of such skills and knowledge (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004). The level of youth participation varies between programs however youth participation is seen as a successful strategy that enhances the development *of key skills such as initiative, self determination as well as emotional, social, cognitive and behavioural competency* (Bell et al., 2008).

Australian and US definitions of youth development programs allude to similar understanding in that programs are designed to go *beyond traditional prevention and intervention models by stressing skill and competency development rather than focusing on specific problem behaviours* (Roth et al., 1998, p. 425). However the Australian youth development programs appear to be mainly conceptualized as uniformed groups such as Scouts, Girl Guides, and the Red Cross. Hence within Australian literature such an approach has been traditionally understood as being exclusive to all but a small minority of young people. These young people are usually well resourced and identified as being amongst the

highest of achievers (Bell et al, 2008). Conversely in the US, youth development programs are seen to target young people who are more socially disadvantaged, as well as older and visible minority youth who are at risk of being failed by traditional approaches (Roth et al, 1998).

Evidence

The majority of evaluations conducted on youth development programs are from the US (Catalano et al, 2004; Roth et al, 1998) and there are a number of issues with the available evaluations that prevent the conduct any formal meta analysis (Catalano et al; Roth et al). Many evaluations vary in the quality of design. There is also a lack of clarity about the conclusions reached. This has resulted in a lack of consensus as to what outcomes can be expected from these types of programs and a dearth of evidence about their effectiveness.

With that said, Catalano and colleagues (2004) report on 25 youth development programs that they have analysed and considered to be effective. To be effective, these programs had to demonstrate a contribution to better school attendance, higher academic performance, healthier peer and adult interactions, improved decision-making abilities, and less substance use and risky sexual behavior for young people. These programs occurred in a range of settings including schools, communities and families and most often used a combination of these settings to achieve successful outcomes.

Although a broad range of strategies used together produced these results, including mentoring; peer tutors; after school groups; classroom based activities; parent training; case management services and crisis intervention, the themes common to success involved methods to:

strengthen social, emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and moral competencies; build self-efficacy; shape messages from family and community about standards for positive youth behavior; increase healthy bonding with adults, peers and younger children; expand opportunities and recognition for youth who engage in positive behavior and activities; provide structure and consistency in program delivery; and intervene with youth for at least nine months or more (Catalano et al 1998).

Roth et al (1998) further conclude that successful programs are underpinned by the philosophy that young people are resources to be developed; encourage genuine participation of young people; are flexible and able to adapt to the needs of local adolescents and are long term in nature.

Eccles and Gootman (2003) further highlight eight characteristics that maximise positive youth development. These include: physical and emotional safety; appropriate structure; supportive relationships; opportunities to belong; positive social norms; empowerment practices that support autonomy; opportunities for skill building; and integration of family, school and community efforts. Eccles and Gootman (2003) also emphasise that programs with more features are likely to provide better support for positive youth development and that successful programs need to be based on the developmental needs of young people.

The UK has recently released an evaluation study on the Young People’s Development Program (Wiggins et al., 2009). This was a three year pilot initiative to reduce young people’s involvement in substance misuse, preventing teenage pregnancy and school exclusion. The Young People’s Development Program was influenced by several youth development programs evaluated in the US, most notably the Carrera Program, however the UK model did not deliver the program in the way that it was intended.

Using comparison groups to evaluate outcomes and costs of the program, the findings of this evaluation demonstrated that there were no added benefits for the Young People’s Development Program participants. Unfortunately this evaluation also showed significant negative effects for young women in that they were more likely to report truanting, school exclusion and teenage pregnancy after involvement in the program. Despite this, the program did demonstrate that it is possible to engage ‘at risk’ young people in an intensive program over a long period of time and that young people could perceive changes in their own behaviour. The evaluation recommended that particular attention be paid in future to the feasibility of working with separate gendered groups and ensuring that young people are not inadvertently brought into contact with ‘more riskier’ groups of young people.

Within Australia the Australian Youth Research Centre (Holdsworth, Lake, Stacey, & Stafford, 2005) conducted a three year longitudinal study of a number of youth development programs that include Scouts, Girl Guides, Red Cross Cadets, the Country Fire Authority and Surf Life Saving Society. Whilst these programs did not identify working with any particular groups of young people they did identify as working with *all* young people. This evaluation reported that young people attending such programs reported a strong improvement in knowledge, skills, confidence and teamwork. However there was less improvement in the areas of leadership and individual responsibility. For some young people the program had a positive impact on deciding to stay on at school, and for others attending the program had assisted them in gaining employment.

SUMMARY

- Youth development programs conceptualise young people as resources rather than problems to be managed. Such programs aim to build on young people's potential through a range of methods.
- There are significant methodological issues associated with the evaluation of positive youth development interventions. Such issues include the quality of the evaluation design, and how well the evaluation report accurately represents the important aspects of the study.
- However there are a small number of youth development programs in the US that have been assessed as working effectively to prevent particular problematic behaviors such as school exclusion, teenage pregnancy and drug and alcohol misuse. There are a larger number of programs that have been identified as 'promising'.
- Successful programs are underpinned by the philosophy that: young people are resources to be developed; encourage genuine participation of young people; are flexible and able to adapt to the needs of local adolescents and are long term in nature.

- Successful youth development programs are based on a developmental framework that supports young people building on both external and internal assets.
- Caution must be exercised in adapting program design and delivery as young people have experienced unintentional negative effects from this.

Risk Prevention and Resiliency Approach.

The risk and protective framework has been extremely influential in how the development of children and young people is understood and has been supported by research from across a range of disciplines and methodologies (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2009; National Crime Prevention, 1999). More recently there has been debate within the literature regarding the risk discourse with some commentators (J. Bessant, 2000; Crane & Brannock, 1996; Wyn & White, 1998) arguing that that the term ‘at risk’ is being used too simplistically, focusing on just the personal attributes of a young person (te Riele, 2006). They argue that this focus leads to young people becoming labeled and experiencing further discrimination and stigmatization. Chamberlain & MacKenzie (2004) acknowledge the dilemma this creates for practitioners as whilst such critiques hold some authority, critics of the ‘risk’ discourse fail to offer any alternative.

Despite this the literature overwhelmingly highlights the need to identify and respond to the risk factors that increase a young person’s vulnerability if we are to improve the lives of young people. Risk factors can be defined as *those events, characteristics or conditions that make a negative outcome more likely* (Carbonell et al., 2002b). Risk factors can be experienced across the spectrum from micro to macro levels (Cahill et al, 2005) that include individual, family and community levels. There is also evidence that the number of risk factors that a person has been exposed to is a predictor of behaviour whether that be drug use or criminal behaviour, regardless of what the particular risk factors are. The more risk factors there are, the greater the likelihood of a young person experiencing negative outcomes (Chang, Dixon, & Hancock, 2001; Dillon et al., 2007).

Resilience theorists 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.

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).

Research around risk and protective factors has generally focused on specific issues such as youth offending, mental health, violent behaviours and drug and alcohol use. Whilst there is no conclusive evidence about how these factors interact with one another, studies have identified common risk factors that exist for young people. The following table (Table 2) is taken from the National Crime Prevention study, *Pathways to Prevention*, conducted in 1999. Whilst these risk factors focus on criminal activity, many of these risk (and protective factors) are identified in studies concerning drug and alcohol addiction, problem behaviour and mental health (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2009; Frisher, Crome, Macleod, R., & Hickman, 2007).

Building individuals resilience to specific risks can assist them in managing or coping with significant adversity (E. Anthony, C. Alter, & J. Jenson, M., 2009) and the literature asserts that effective programs recognise these risks and protective factors and how they influence the young person’s life (Green, Mason, & Ollerenshaw, 2004). Furthermore the literature highlights that the system can respond to those risks most amenable to change through intervention.

The literature regarding young people offending identifies two types of risk factors (Andrews and Bonita (1988): 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 cultural background, gender and low socioeconomic status.

Table 2 Risk Factors (National Crime Prevention, 1999 p136)				
Risk Factors				
child factors	Family factors	School context	Life events	community and cultural factors
prematurity low birth weight disability prenatal brain damage birth injury low intelligence difficult temperament chronic illness insecure attachment poor problem solving beliefs about aggression attributions poor social skills low self esteem lack of empathy alienation hyperactivity/disruptive behaviour impulsivity	<i>Parental characteristics:</i> teenage mothers single parents psychiatric disorder, especially depression substance abuse / criminality antisocial models <i>Family environment:</i> family violence and disharmony marital discord disorganized negative interaction/social isolation large family size father absence long term parental unemployment <i>Parenting style:</i> poor supervision and monitoring of child discipline style (harsh or inconsistent) rejection of child abuse / neglect lack of warmth and affection low involvement in child's activities	school failure normative beliefs about aggression deviant peer group bullying peer rejection poor attachment to school inadequate behaviour management	divorce and family break up war or natural disasters death of a family member	socioeconomic disadvantage population density and housing conditions urban area neighbourhood violence and crime cultural norms concerning violence as acceptable response to frustration media portrayal of violence lack of support services social or cultural discrimination

Table 3 Protective Factors (National Crime Prevention, 1999 p136) Protective Factors				
child factors	Family factors	School context	Life events	community and cultural factors
social competence	supportive caring parents	positive school climate	meeting significant person	access to support services
social skills	family harmony	prosocial peer group	moving to new area	community networking
above average intelligence	more than two years	responsibility and required	opportunities at critical	attachment to the
attachment to family	between siblings	helpfulness	turning points or major life	community
empathy	responsibility for chores or	sense of belonging/	transitions	participation in church or
problem solving	required helpfulness	bonding		other community group
optimism	secure and stable family	opportunities for some		community/cultural norms
school achievement	supportive relationship	success at school and		against violence
easy temperament	with other adult	recognition of achievement		a strong cultural identity
internal locus of control	small family size	school norms re violence		and ethnic pride
moral beliefs	strong family norms and			
values	morality			
self related cognitions				
good coping style				

Dynamic risk factors, 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 influence a young person's vulnerability.

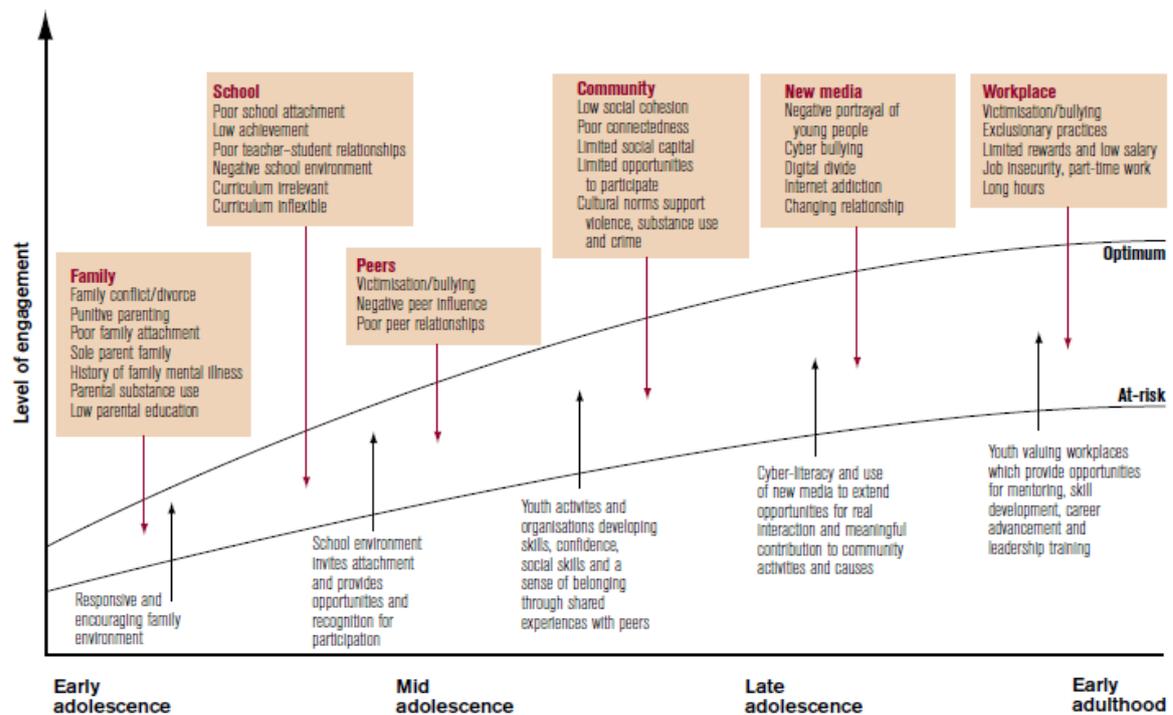
Although much is known about what factors are significant in increasing a young person's vulnerability, the causal nature between these risk factors and how they relate to particular behaviours remains, in most cases, relatively unclear. The interplay of these risk factors has also been left under explored. For example literature regarding young people's offending behaviour argues that there is strong evidence to suggest that poor education and limited social networks are significant risk factors leading young people to engage in criminal behaviour (Day, Howells, & Rickwood, 2004). However, such factors are also identified as risk factors for young people's drug use (Cahill, Murphy, & Hughes, 2005) but clearly not all young people who use drugs commit criminal offences and vice versa.

Much of the research has focused on single risk factors and how these increase a young person's vulnerability. However vulnerability can also be seen to increase if risks occur concurrently and over a period of time. Research regarding the cumulative effects of such risk factors is an emerging field in that the complexity of how risk factors and protective factors work together is not clearly understood. There is evidence particularly from early childhood research (Miller, 2007), that suggests that repeated exposure to multiple 'low level' risks can be as detrimental as exposure to one significant risk factor because a young person's vulnerability increases as the cumulative effect becomes more intense.

Silburn, (2008) in the ARACY (2009) analysis of the risk and protective factors concerning violent and antisocial behaviours among young adolescents in Australian communities provides a diagrammatic view below of the different domains of a young person's lifespan as they transition from early adolescence through to early adulthood. *The upper line represents steady, positive development through childhood and adolescence. Exposure to risk factors arising from the four domains of family, school, peers and community can reduce*

the slope of the trajectory, while protective factors in the same domains work to support healthy development (ARACY, 2009 p 10).

Figure 5 Across the life span (Silburn, 2008).



The literature also describes that young people may experience risk factors in two ways. Toumbourou and Catalano (2005) cited in ARACY (2009) refer to ‘snow ball’ pathways of risk where pre-birth risk factors such as maternal mental illness or drug and alcohol use increase the chances of early childhood difficulties. These difficulties then increase the likelihood of other risk factors accumulating throughout childhood, for example, the child is likely to experience difficulty in settling at school or may find friendships a challenge.

The second way young people may experience risk factors is through a ‘snowstorm’ effect (Toumbourou and Catalano, 2005 as cited by ARACY, 2009). This effect is described as where young people are exposed to high risk environments that have a negative effect on their behaviour. For example there is an increase in risk taking behaviours later in adolescence due to reduced parental monitoring and exposure to negative peer groups.

The evidence from the risk and protective framework literature acknowledges the strong influence that such factors have on a young person's behaviour. However in order to respond effectively, the literature relating to youth offending (Day, Howells, & Rickwood, 2003) and mental health (Fuller, 1998) highlights the importance of ensuring that risk factors are responded to in the most effective way. The literature suggests that addressing dynamic factors such as a young person's attitude, ineffective use of leisure time or educational attainment, is the most effective way meeting the needs of a young person to increase personal resilience and reduce such risk factors increases so that life chances are increased.

Factors such as age, ethnicity, gender, disability, and socio-economic status that are considered 'static' risk factors need to be addressed in other ways. The literature highlights across a range of disciplines that the age *and* developmental stage must be acknowledged and operationalised when working with young people (Steinberg, Chung, & Little, 2004).

Chronological age does not necessarily indicate the developmental capacity of a young person. In developmental psychology, the three age categories of early adolescence (11-14 years), middle adolescence (15-17 years) and late adolescence (18 – early 20s) are used to understand the young person's physical, cognitive, emotional and social development (Slee, 2002). Whilst many programs have been designed to address risks at particular chronological ages the literature is now suggesting that young people are experiencing risks such as drug and alcohol use and mental illness at earlier ages (Rickwood et al., 2007). Subsequently services are being asked to respond to the differing natures and levels of vulnerability as well as the critical developmental needs and challenges of young people.

It is also evident within the literature that in order to respond adequately to these factors early identification and intervention is required to ensure that risks do not escalate or become embedded in the young person's life world. Early intervention is seen to reduce the long-term negative and costly impacts of risks for the young person, their families and the system (Day et al., 2003).

The notion of prevention and early intervention is underpinned by a public health approach which emphasises the importance of identification and early treatment so that inequalities

can be prevented or minimised through social supports that target the wellbeing of an entire population (Cahill et al., 2005).

Such an approach employs primary, secondary and tertiary levels of intervention. Primary intervention aims at preventing risk to the health and well being of a person. Secondary intervention identifies those most at risk and uses strategies to address risk factors whilst tertiary interventions refer to interventions that are used after an event has occurred (Butler, 2009).

Up until recently there has been a significant emphasis on funding interventions at the tertiary end for children and young people. However practitioners and policy makers alike are recognising that there needs to be more of a balance of services across the continuum. As such both nationally and internationally more emphasis is being placed on the development of early intervention strategies. Watson and colleagues (2005) suggests that prevention and early intervention strategies are important because they:

aim to influence children's, parent's or families behaviours in order to reduce risk or ameliorate the effect of less than optimal social and physical environments. An important goal of prevention and early intervention is to change the balance between risk and protective factors so that the effect of protective factors outweighs the effect of risk factors thus building resilience.

Tully (2007) describes the three broad approaches to intervention:

Universal interventions that are offered to the whole population with the aim of promoting positive development

Selected interventions that target 'high risk' individuals who are known to be at greater risk of experiencing negative outcomes

Indicated interventions where a young person or their family are identified as already experiencing difficulties.

However a common theme identified in the literature is the tension that exists between whether there should be the provision of more universal preventative services over targeted interventions for young people (Fonagy, 2001; Winkworth, 2003). Whilst there are clearly some obvious benefits for each type of intervention (for example, universal programs have a broader application and often have less stigma attached to them thereby appearing to be more accessible whilst targeted services on the other hand provide a more specialised response with a greater effect (Tully, 2007) it is argued by some that responses for vulnerable young people are not effective. Moore (2008) argues that this has been due to the intense focus on the provision of targeted and treatment services rather than offering services that are universal and preventative in nature.

In order to work more effectively with young people and their families Moore (2008) argues for a need to develop an integrated tiered system of universal, targeted and specialist services. Such a system would provide a seamless continuum of services for vulnerable young people. Moore (2008) states that universal services need to provide a broader range of services and that specialized services need to be supported to deploy the expertise of specialists more broadly.

Evidence

Many of the programs developed to work with vulnerable young people are built upon reducing risk factors and building protective factors that have been demonstrated to predict particular adolescent behaviours (Bond., Toumbourou., Thomas., Catalano., & Patton., 2005; Carbonell et al., 2002a; Dickson, Derevensky, & Gupta, 2002). Much work has been done concerning which risks are associated with particular outcomes however as Giesen, Searle and Sawyer (2007) point out

prevention programs are only effective if they are able to influence key risk and protective factors that have a causal relationship with the problems being addressed, that is, that they have a strong conceptual framework built on a solid empirical base which describes the relationship between risk and protective factors, and relevant problems (p. 786)

As with the youth development approach the evidence underpinning the effectiveness of programs based on risk prevention and resilience theories is problematic and all articles reviewed for this section highlight methodological issues when assessing program effectiveness.

Within the literature, research regarding the effectiveness of prevention and early intervention programs addressing particular risk factors have predominantly focused on early childhood. Research for adolescents has generally targeted tertiary interventions in particular contexts such as drug and alcohol or criminal behaviours. Given the increasingly high rates of substance abuse, juvenile offending, mental illness, and child protection notifications there is a critical need to identify effective early intervention strategies for young people.

A recent review of early intervention strategies for children and young people aged 8-14 years (Tully, 2007) advises that effective strategies for this age group fall into three categories: child focussed, parent focussed and multi component programs. Tully (2007) identifies factors (in no priority) that influence program effectiveness:

Parenting programs

Tully (2007) reviewed twenty two programs were for this section including programs such as Positive Parenting Programs, Teen Triple P and Strengthening Families Program.

- Generally parenting programs for this age group have found to strengthen protective factors such as parent/child communication and reduce risk factors such as poor monitoring and supervision
- Universal parenting programs delivered at transition between primary and secondary school have been effective in preventing alcohol and substance abuse
- Programs that enhance parent/child communication show long term benefits in preventing alcohol misuse

- There is mixed evidence as to whether the inclusion of children and young people in programs leads to better outcomes
- Interventions that aggregate families of young people with complex issues have found to increase substance use and behavioural problems
- Behaviourally based parenting programs are likely to be effective for families with parental depression, multiple risk factors, marital separation and children with externalising behaviour problems
- Positive changes in parenting behaviour have been shown to improve a young persons externalising behaviour
- Involving parents in school based interventions may enhance the effectiveness

Child focussed programs

Seven programs were reviewed for this section and include the programs Life Skills Training and Problem Solving for Life (Tully, 2007):

- These programs are typically delivered in the school setting
- Risk and protective factors are targeted using class room based interventions that focus on problem solving and emotional regulation
- Programs to prevent violence, depression, anxiety and abuse are more effective when a cognitive –behavioural or skills based approach is used.
- Programs that aggregate ‘high risk’ children and young people in groups should be avoided
- There is mixed evidence regarding the effectiveness of extracurricular activities and after school programs and maybe more beneficial for less vulnerable young people

Multi- component programs

Fourteen programs were reviewed for this section that includes programs such as the Gatehouse project, FRIENDS program and Raising Healthy Children project.

- Multi-component programs often address a number of risk and protective factors across a range of locations, including school, family and community
- There is evidence to suggest that multi component programs that target school connectedness improve behavioural and psychological outcomes
- Community programs are more effective when delivered as part of multi component program

Tully (2007) further emphasizes that whilst there is evidence to suggest that a number of programs that focus on single risks are effective, there is also growing evidence to suggest that multi component programs are more effective.

Bailey (2009), acknowledges that a number of researchers have called for a broad approach to be taken to target the multiple issues young people face. This is because risk factors linked with young people often co-occur. For example risk taking behaviours such as substance misuse may be causally related to offending behaviour and unsafe sex. Further such behaviours are identified as sharing a number of common risk and protective factors. Consequently Bailey (2009) suggests it should be possible to design programs that address multiple high -risk behaviours simultaneously.

A recent review of Australian programs that tackle the issues of drug and alcohol misuse by young people (Cahill et al., 2005) highlight the lack of empirical evidence regarding program effectiveness in Australia. Subsequently Cahill and colleagues (2005) developed their own set of evidence based criteria to assess the likely effectiveness of programs. Using risk and protective descriptors identified in the drug and alcohol literature Cahill and colleagues (2005) reviewed 27 programs that provided both universal and more targeted interventions across the domains of the individual, family, school and community.

The programs reviewed whilst clearly incorporating components that address drug and alcohol misuse also highlighted that the ‘most’ promising programs target a range of risk and protective factors through a variety of approaches and therefore addressed a number of issues. As a consequence of this young people experienced a range of positive outcomes including building skills and knowledge to deal with other issues. This finding is consistent with a recent study regarding a US program delivered in schools to address substance use. Project ALERT is a prevention program targeting adolescent drug use. The program seeks to motivate young people against using drugs and help them build skills to actively resist drug use. In a study regarding the effectiveness of this program, researchers found that targeting risk and protective factors associated with drug and alcohol use had cross over effects for a number of other adolescent behaviours that share these risk and protective factors (Ellickson, McCaffrey, & Klein, 2009). The results of this study demonstrated that young people were much less likely to engage in sex with multiple partners or have unprotected sex because of using alcohol or other drugs. Furthermore this drug prevention program had long-term effects on young people’s ‘risky’ sexual behaviour, reducing its prevalence among young people five to seven years after young people’s participation.

In the US the *Child Trends Research Centre* has produced a number of syntheses on the characteristics of what works for young people. These syntheses focus on reducing or preventing risk factors to do with drug and alcohol (Bandy & Moore, 2008) and sexual health (Ball & Moore, 2008) as well as promoting engagement in education. The following table details the characteristics of what they identify as the types of programs that work for these areas.

Table 4 Characteristics of Successful Programs

Characteristics of preventing and stopping adolescent substance use	Characteristics of adolescent sexual health programs	Characteristics of programs that enhance educational outcomes
Multi-component programs	Target a range of locations, ages and parents as well as young people	After school time programs have positive effects
Programs that address all forms of drug use in combination	Target a range of risk factors	Programs that include teachers influence educational adjustment and achievement
Increasing knowledge of health consequences	Support to young mums reduces subsequent pregnancies	Programs that provide academic support or homework
Programs tailored to risks specific to particular populations	Programs with some community participation	Programs that have frequent and intense involvement 1-8 hrs a day 5-6 days a week
Peer-teaching when combined with adult facilitation	Programs running less than 15 hrs can work too	Programs that are ongoing
Programs that emphasise drug resistance and reinforcement of anti-drug attitudes	Programs can be gender specific	
	Curriculum and programming are not sole elements of success	
For details on specific programs See Bandy & Moore, 2008 for more detail	For details on specific programs see Ball & Moore, 2008	For details on specific programs see (Ling & Moore, 2008)

Summary

- The risk and protective framework has been extremely influential in how we understand the development of children and young people and has been supported by research from across a range of disciplines and methodologies
- Resilience theorists 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.
- Many of the programs developed to work with vulnerable young people are built upon reducing risk factors and building protective factors that have been demonstrated to predict particular adolescent behaviours.
- The literature highlights that the system can respond to particular risks most amenable to change through intervention.
- It is also evident within the literature that in order to respond adequately to these factors early identification and intervention is required so as to ensure that risks do not escalate or become embedded in the young person's life world. Early intervention is seen to reduce the long-term negative and costly impacts of risks for the young person, their families and the system (Day et al., 2003)
- A range of Individual and parenting programs are identified as showing promising results in reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors. Multi-component type programs are increasingly being highlighted as most effective as risk factors linked with young people often co-occur.

How are services best delivered to young people?

Valuable effective work is conducted with young people in a range of settings. Young people who are generally healthy and well supported in the most part have limited need to access services however for those who are requiring additional support research has shown that the following forms of service provision are effective ways of reaching youth (McIntyre, 2002; National Youth Agency, 2006).

Youth friendly services

The term ‘youth friendly’ service generally applies to services aiming to improve the accessibility and quality of existing services for youth (Finger, Lapetina, & Pribila, 2002). McIntyre (2002) suggests that services for young people need to be accessible, equitable, acceptable, appropriate, comprehensive, effective and efficient (p27). Furthermore youth friendly services require:

- Youth friendly policies that fulfill the rights of adolescents as outlined in the UN Convention of the rights of the Child
- Respect and inclusion of all young people regardless of race, gender, disability and religion
- Holistic and timely responses
- Promotion of autonomy and participation of young people
- A safe environment that offers privacy and confidentiality and avoids stigma
- Encouragement of family and community participation
- Competent, motivated and considerate staff
- Evidence based programs and
- A range of services to increase coverage such as community based, outreach or peer-to-peer (McIntyre, 2002).

Youth centres

Canadian research has identified that successful youth centres focus on five key ingredients: youth ownership, mentorship, community connectedness, effective coordination and

sustainability (Luken & Warner, 2005). Such ‘ingredients’ can be connected to the key principles highlighted earlier on in this report however the researchers emphasise that the success does not depend on one element alone , but that it comes from the interconnections between them.

UK research identifies that youth centres *provide a safe environment to enjoy structured leisure activities and participants are provided with the opportunity to develop personal and social skills through informal education* (Furlong et al., 1997). Young people who use youth centres tend to spend less time ‘hanging around’ and subsequently are less likely to be involved in high risk behaviours. This research also suggests that more vulnerable young people, such as those who used drugs or have had involvement in criminal activities do not use youth centres as much as perhaps other young people.

However it would appear from the consultations held as part of this project, vulnerable young people in Canberra do use youth centres to some degree although the opening hours are problematic for nearly all the young people who participated. Both young people and organisations working with young people advised that young people not engaged in employment or education often ‘wandered the streets’ during the day as there was no where else to go. Young people highlighted the need for youth centres to be open earlier. Opening hours were also identified as something that needed addressing in Furlong’s (1997), study as the reality was that youth centres were only open for a limited number of hours and days a week, which for young people experiencing significant issues was not enough. Collins Management Consulting & Research Ltd (2003) evaluation of youth health centres further illustrates that operational hours are an important factor to accessibility and effectiveness and that limited hours means limited opportunities for young people to access support.

It is argued by some that the provision of youth centres is an essential foundation for effective youth work because they can provide a range of opportunities to young people within certain age ranges in a particular locality (Merton, 2004). However it would appear from the literature that there is a general lack of research regarding what effective youth centres ‘look like’. The small amount reviewed highlight the need for youth centres to

provide structured, regular and constructive activities within secure environments (Margo, Dixon, Pearce, & Reed, 2006). Furthermore it is recommended that such activities have clearly defined goals and outcomes. This research study also highlighted that activity programs needed to be long running for any successful outcome to be achieved.

This is particularly important as Swedish research has identified that non structured participation in ‘youth recreation centres’ was linked to high rates of juvenile offending and persistent offending for adolescent males even after controlling for individual, family, and economic factors prior to involvement in the youth centre (Mahoney, Stattin, & Magnusson, 2001).

A UK review (HM Treasury & Department for Education and Skills, 2007) however reports that ‘*like any type of leisure setting, it is dependent on the level of engagement, quality of staff and the degree of structure*’ (p 41). The review reports that not every activity or setting is necessarily positive but that *including involving young people in the design of activities that are relevant to their lives, basing provision directly in their communities and deploying outreach youth workers*’ (p41) increases the possibility of successful outcomes.

More generally, structured activity for young people is increasingly common for young people such as sport, arts, music etc and often through issues of poverty there are a number of young people who become excluded from ‘regular’ adolescent community participation. *More often than not, excluded youth turn to each other for support and friendship. Shared experiences of rejection, change, lowered socio-economic status, difficulty in school, the justice system, and more forge a connection amongst these youth* (Sharkey & Shields, 2008, p. 254)

However Speizer, Kouwonou, Mullen, & Vignikin (2004) suggest that youth centres provide an effective strategy to engage young people because of their non-exclusive and supportive environment. Furthermore they are able to respond to the most vulnerable young people who often do not use services by providing outreach services and then linking them back into services. Speizer and colleagues research focused on young peoples ‘risky’ sexual

behaviour and found that youth centres were an effective venue in meeting the health needs of young people.

School based programs

It is overwhelmingly recognised within the literature that education provides an essential component to a young person's positive pathway through life. Attending school reduces the likelihood of engaging in high risk behaviour (National Crime Prevention, 1999). However it is also understood that vulnerable young people are at a much higher risk of leaving school early and becoming disengaged from any type of education. Bruce and colleagues (2009) call for a wider range of educational opportunities for young people and more intensive support to maintain a young person's engagement. The Dusseldorf Skills Forum (Australian Industry Group Dusseldorf Skills Forum, 2007) also acknowledge this and further add that the transition between school and employment also needs to be better supported.

Schools are often one of the first to know if young people are experiencing difficulties (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 2004) and youth and education literature also acknowledge the responsibility and necessity of schools to meet the broader needs of young people. In doing so, schools have engaged with a range of stakeholders including youth services and youth workers in an attempt to increase their capacity to meet increasing need. Across Australia, a range of school-linked (where community services provide services on the school campus) and school-based (where schools provide youth services themselves) have emerged at the initiation of individual schools, state and territory education departments or, in the case of Full Service Schools, at the national level (Moore, 2006).

Many of the programs referred to in the literature are either developed as part of the school curriculum or run in partnership with schools. Cahill et al (2005) in their review of programs that 'work' also identified that school based programs held great promise for a range of issues not just drug and alcohol. Reviews have suggested that the delivery mechanism and methods, duration and timing are all important elements in the effectiveness of a program (Gottfredson & Wilson, 2003). However whole school approaches have been found to be

particularly promising in supporting vulnerable young people. An example Cahill and colleagues (2005) provide is that of the Gatehouse project.

The Gatehouse project is an Australian developed program that is based on promoting adolescent emotional well-being and preventing adverse health outcomes such as drug and alcohol use, depression and youth suicide (Butler et al., 2008.). An initial evaluation of the project has indicated that the program has success in a range of areas including reducing drug and alcohol and increasing school connectedness. A similar project ‘doing it differently’ has now been developed for younger students transitioning from primary to secondary school (Butler, Bond, Drew, Krelle, & Seal, 2005)

After school programs have also received some attention. Anthony, Alter, & Jenson (2009) remark that such programs based on the principles of risk and resiliency are needed to build and maintain academic skills of vulnerable young people. Furthermore they found that programs that target a single domain are missing many opportunities to assist young people

Mentoring

Mentoring programs provide important relationship building and role modeling between young people and adults. Most large quantitative studies about the impact of mentoring come from the US. These studies indicate that mentoring can have a significant impact on problem or high-risk behaviours, academic/educational outcomes, and career/ employment outcomes (Hall, 2003).

The US literature has identified a number of characteristics which help to make mentoring programs effective. These include screening of mentors prior to matching; matching of mentors and youth on relevant criteria; supervision and support of mentors; structured activities for mentors and youth; parental support and involvement; frequency of contact and length of relationship. An example of a well evaluated mentoring program is the US Big Brother / Big Sisters of America program. This program has positive results for both the reduction of drug and alcohol use and increased engagement in school (Sallybanks & Taylor, 2003).

Outreach

Targeted outreach has been shown to be effective in health prevention for a number of years now. 'Street-based' or outreach work is particularly effective in finding the hard-to-reach and most vulnerable young people, who are unlikely to respond to school or centre-based work (Crimmens et al., 2004). Such work generally takes place in spaces where young people 'hang out' at times when young people most need them (Schley et al., 2008).

Ferguson (2007) reports that effective outreach is based upon relationships of trust, as is most effective youth work. Through open relationships workers are able to engage young people and facilitate their participation back into services. This is consistent with Cahill et al (2005) and Dickens & Woodfield (2004) who advise that outreach can be used to effectively build participation from young people.

Case management

Case management emerged in the 1970's in response to the policy shift from institutional care to community care in order to achieve specific outcomes such as community tenure, independent living and employment (Arnold, Walsh, Oldham, & Rapp, 2007). Whilst there is debate in contemporary literature concerning the definition of case management, Gursansky, Harvey and Kennedy (2003) describe case management as a process that is commonly undertaken by human service organisations to coordinate the often diverse and complex roles and responsibilities organisations have with a client.

According to Moore (2004) case management is: *A set of logical steps and a process of interaction within a service network which assure that a client receives needed services in a supportive, effective and cost efficient manner.....that it is viewed, not simply as a set of practices, but a system of intervention within its specific context, with objectives, ideology, functions and structures. (Moore, 2004, p.3).*

Borum (2003) states that, for any management plan to be successful in achieving positive outcomes for young people, a thorough developmentally appropriate, assessment of the

young person must be completed. He further states that the assessment should be systematic and comprise of the examination of both risk and protective factors.

The effectiveness of case management with young people is highlighted in a study by Grace & Gill (2008) that looked at outcomes for ‘homeless jobseekers’. This study identified that effective case management services were most apparent in the area of employment and that participants with more than 20 contacts were most likely to be employed and financially self reliant (p.28). This length of contact with the case manager was seen to not only improve key outcome areas but also enable the development of the client/case manager relationship.

Recreation programs

de Roeper and Savelsberg (2009), suggests that policy approaches for vulnerable young people tend to focus on meeting basic needs and that arts and recreation programs are delivered more to young people who are seen as a resource. Cahill and colleagues (2005) recognise *that recreational programs may be the only point of active community engagement for young people who are neither in education nor in work* (p. 39). The current literature concerning recreation and arts based programs for young people however remains inconclusive about their effectiveness for vulnerable young people. Some researchers identify positive effects for vulnerable youth in the areas of juvenile justice, mental health and drug and alcohol addiction (Cheong-Clinch, 2009; Ersing, 2009; Gardner, Komesaroff, & Fensham, 2008; Holyoake Institute for Drug and Alcohol addiction Resolutions, 2005). Whilst other evaluations suggest that such programs can contribute only a small effect for the most vulnerable of young people (Sallybanks & Taylor, 2003). Those programs that have been found to be most effective for young people, target protective factors in a range of levels including individual, family and community (Cahill et al, 2005).

What do young people want from services?

Three studies conducted with children and young people in the ACT over the past few years around young carers of parents with drug and alcohol problems, young people’s experience of homelessness and youth justice have highlighted what young people want from services

in order to best support them (T. Moore, Noble-Carr, & McArthur, 2007; T Moore et al., 2008).

Young people feel that they are more likely to seek support from particular workers and services and to continue their involvement when supports were provided in a particular way. The following list outlines what young people say they would like when using services:

- Flexible and responsive – Young people valued the fact that organisations provided outreach and were able to come to them when they needed. Young people also valued workers who were regularly available when they felt they most needed help.
- Strengths based – young people highlighted that they valued services that believed they could succeed. Young people believed it was important that workers not only addressed the problems they were experiencing but also saw the positives and opportunities in their lives.
- Professional and caring – Young people valued being able to talk to a significant adult whom they could trust and who were skilled and knowledgeable about not just the singular issues but of the complexity of their lives. Practical assistance is valued as much as support and understanding.
- Individualized and family centred – Young people report that there is a need to see them in their own right and for their perspectives to be acknowledged and valued. However they also highlight the significance of their family and the need for support around their family's issues.

Young people also highlight the barriers that prevent them from effectively using services:

- Disrespect – Young people did not like engaging with services where workers treated them disrespectfully or did not encourage participation or involve them in the decision making process.
- Previous poor experiences - Young people had experienced being 'let down' by workers in that support had been promised but never realised.

- Lack of identification of needs – when young people report that services do not always adequately identify and respond to the needs of young people.
- Practical issues – young people identified a lack of transport, lack of finances, and difficulty in some of the locations of services as barriers to access.
- Personal issues – Young people highlight that sometimes not knowing what help is available, being unable or too frightened to ask for help as well as just not wanting to ask for help stops them getting the support they need.

These findings are supported by Speizer and colleagues (2004) who also highlight other difficulties such as concerns about privacy and confidentiality, worker attitudes and legislation and policy that make ‘serving’ young people difficult.

Young people living in the ACT have also more recently been able to participate in two consultations, (2008 and 2009) regarding the development of the new Young People’s plan 2009-2014 (see Appendix E for more detail). As part of these consultations young people were asked about their service use. Similar to other research, the results from these surveys indicate that young people would like services to be more inclusive and participatory and for services to be easily accessible, professional and ‘youth friendly’.

Summary

- The literature highlights a range of promising ways to work with vulnerable young people
- Services need to be ‘youth friendly’ and be accessible, developmentally appropriate, comprehensive and evidence based
- It is argued that youth centres are an essential foundation for effective youth work because they can provide range of opportunities to young people within certain age ranges in a particular locality, however youth centres do not always reach the most vulnerable of young people
- Structured activities are an important component of buildings –based youth work

- School based programs have been found to be particularly promising in supporting vulnerable young people as has outreach work
- Case-management is more effective when young people and workers meet more frequently
- Young people prefer to use services that are flexible and responsive, strengths based, professional and caring and individualized and family centered

PART THREE - Stakeholder Views

To inform the future direction of the YSP, views from key stakeholders were collected using focus groups and surveys. The data collected from these were analysed using thematic analysis and SPSS respectively Data provided by DHCS from consultations with young people to inform the development of the Young people’s Plan are also included. . The following section presents the findings from both the young people and the organisations who participated in this review.

Survey data – Organisations

Service delivery

Not surprisingly youth centres or ‘drop in’ centres provide a range of services such as counselling, recreational activities, case management and family support. Centres also made the highest number of referrals for young people. These data suggests that organisations which provide outreach services provide more health promotion, advocacy and life skills training than other service types. There were only a small number of services that work with schools, in community development or who are co-located.

Organisations were provided with a range of issues relating to service provision and asked to identify which ones they felt were important. Staffing capacity was most significant with over half the number of organisations participating indicating that the recruitment and retention of appropriately skilled staff was an issue. The second most frequently reported

issue was about ensuring that services remained relevant. From focus group discussions that further explored this statement, services highlighted that it was important for them to be able to provide services that met young people’s emerging needs. That service’s were ‘relevant’ to what young people wanted. The following table details the issues.

Table 5 Major issues confronting services

Major issues confronting services	Frequency
Directing Resources	4
Identifying need	4
Appropriate funding	8
Reach of Service	4
Relevance of Service to young people	8
Location of Service	5
Staffing Capacity	10
Support and training of staff	5
Measuring benefits and outcomes of services	7
The balance between universal and targeted work	7
The relationships between organisations	5

Services and levels of vulnerability

Using the Victorian framework of vulnerability that identifies young people as experiencing vulnerability at four different levels (refer to p.29) organisations were asked to identify what level of vulnerability young people using their service usually identified with. It is evident from the table below that organisations most frequently work with young people who experience a range of problems and who may be considered highly vulnerable. ‘All young

people’ and those at highest risk are less likely to receive services from the organisations attending the focus group.

Table 6 Which level of vulnerability do you most work with?

	All young people (12-25)	Experiencing Additional Problems	Highly Vulnerable	High Risk
Least frequently	5	1	1	4
Less frequently	3	3	3	5
Frequently	3	4	3	3
Most frequently	2	5	6	1

Survey data – young people

Thirty seven surveys were completed by young people from Canberra who to a lesser or greater degree used a range of services in the ACT. A higher number of males completed the survey (63%) with the mean age being 16 years. The youngest age was 14 and the oldest 20+. Over half the young people (52%) participating indicated that they identified with another culture, with only 22% identifying as ‘Australian’ and 7% Aboriginal. 41% of young people had already left school and over a quarter didn’t know when they would be leaving school. Only 7% of young people identified as wanting to go on to tertiary education with 15% reporting that they would finish education after year 12 and 11% finishing at year 10.

Concerns

Young people were asked to indicate if the following issues detailed in the table below were of concern to them. The top three most frequently identified issues of concern for young people completing this survey were ranked in the following order:

- Financial worries (42%)
- Family relationships (33%)
- Their future (32%)

Mental health and difficulties in school closely followed.

Table 7 issues experienced by young people

CONCERN	Not concerned	Slightly concerned	Very concerned
Difficulties school	52%	20%	28%
Finding a job	50%	29%	21%
Family relationships	50%	17%	33%
Forced into sex	84%	8%	8%
Getting pregnant/ or someone pregnant	64%	16%	20%
STI	52%	36%	12%
Your sexuality	92%	4%	4%
Trouble with the police	54%	29%	17%
Being bullied	60%	20%	20%
Feeling unsafe at night	64%	16%	20%
Worries about using drugs	71%	17%	13%
Dealing with money problems	29%	29%	42%
Making / keeping friendships	56%	28%	16%
Worries about health	46%	29%	25%
Worries about drinking alcohol	56%	32%	12%
Finding accommodation	63%	13%	25%
Mental health	58%	13%	29%
Physical health	60%	28%	12%
Body image	56%	28%	16%
Your future	40%	28%	32%
Self harming	68%	28%	4%

Other ‘lesser’ issues of concern identified by young people were ranked as:

- Sexually transmitted Infections (36%)
- Worries about drinking alcohol (32%)

Finding a job, and worries about health and money and trouble with the police followed in frequency of concern (29%).

Opening hours

41% of young people completing the survey indicated that opening hours of youth services, particularly youth centres, needed to be open earlier in the day. A smaller number indicated that youth centres needed to be open later.

Places and Spaces

Young people were asked about where they would prefer to access support. Young people identified that ‘drop in’ was the most frequently preferred place. However it needs to be acknowledged that the majority of young people completing the survey were predominantly ‘drop in’ service users.

Table 8 Places to access support

Place to access support	
Drop in	85%
Street parks etc	19%
Community centre	19%
Help from schools	11%
Street vans	4%
By phone	4%
On line	4%

What young people want from a service

Young people were asked to rank in order from 1-5 what they valued as an important part of service provision. Young people reported that a service that assists them to learn new skills and that will support them to tackle issues as well as having workers that they can trust and have a good relationship with were equally *most* important for them when using a service. Two other attributes ranked highly were the importance of workers who respected and understood young people’s values and needs and who enabled them to participate.

Big issues

Young people were asked if there were particular issues that youth services needed to respond to. Twelve young people did not complete this section and four young people described that they did not need the help of youth services as they could ‘help themselves’. However the remainder identified the following categories:

- Better relationships – Young people reported that they wanted more assistance with improving family relationships and dealing with conflict between them and their friendship groups
- Connections – Young people described wanting to use services as a way of reducing social isolation. They wanted to be able to ‘make friends’ and meet other young people in similar situations as themselves.
- Education and assistance with drug and alcohol and mental health issues

Whilst clearly not a typical response, two young people did highlight the need for more assistance from youth services to help them to ‘stay out of trouble’, and to ‘obtain appropriate accommodation’.

Focus group data – YSP and Non - YSP organisations and young people

The three focus groups carried out with both young people and service providers reflect similar concerns regarding the issues that young people are currently experiencing. The following section discusses the key themes that emerged generally across focus groups for both young people and organisations. Differences of opinion amongst the groups have been noted where appropriate.

Emerging issues for young people in the ACT

Whilst all groups talked about common issues such as those reflected in the literature including access to mental health services, mental health issues, drug and alcohol, difficulties at school or in finding employment, being in trouble with police, and the lack of

appropriate and available accommodation, participants also provided information regarding what they felt were ‘emergent issues’.

Ages of young people

To some degree the emergent issues identified by adult participants were a reflection of the diversity of service provision within the group. However there was consensus between the two adult groups that young people were presenting to services at a younger age with more complex problems. Young people aged between nine and twelve were of particular concern. This age group presented certain dilemmas for services in that officially they are not funded to work with this age group and secondly when they try and engage care and protection services to assist the young person, the young person will often disengage from the youth service. This is because adult participants say the young people do not wish to work with care and protection services, often because of negative past experiences. This was particularly important because services felt that they were working with young people who were ‘unknown’ to them. Adult participants described how young people, who were often disconnected from family, would present to services with no next of kin or identification which made it extremely difficult for services to respond effectively.

Two further age groups were identified as experiencing particular vulnerabilities. Young people aged 17 to 21 were seen as often having complex issues such as mental health and drug and alcohol issues. However a key issue for them was to maintain stable accommodation. Young people aged between 21 and 25 also experienced complex and complicated lives but this was often compounded by the fact that they sometimes had young children themselves. Young people also highlighted the need for age appropriate services because it was difficult to use services where there was such an age range.

Increased vulnerability

Adult participants said that young people of all age groups who used their services are increasingly identifying family backgrounds of abuse or neglect or relationships where domestic violence occurs. One participant stated that young women in particular *do not*

always understand what a safe relationship is. Furthermore because of the housing shortage they may often end up in abusive relationships just to prevent becoming homeless.

It was stated that some young people were engaging in risky sexual practices, sometimes leading to unwanted pregnancies. However whilst some young women were using abortion as a ‘contraceptive’, others continued with their pregnancies but then experienced significant post natal depression. Health workers in particular felt that this issue was of particular concern because these young mums became quite isolated from their peers, disconnected from education and had only the most basic of life skills themselves.

Financial difficulties

Adult participants felt that young people were also experiencing more debt than ever before. Furthermore this debt was often created by and owed to government departments such as Centrelink and Housing. Workers described how the complexity of the system and the bureaucracy between departments allowed young people to go into debt sometimes without knowing and this then made them more vulnerable to further debt. It was also reported that young people from refugee backgrounds were of particular risk of getting into debt. One participant felt that young people from refugee backgrounds were particularly susceptible to debt with loan companies as they did not always have a clear understanding of the consequences of such loans.

Young people also identified that debt and low income were major issues, and provided significant barriers to accessing support. One young person described that having no money meant that he could not catch a bus from one service to the next. Consequently he felt that often it was ‘just too hard’ and would end up not attending appointments. This is experience is reflected in the survey responses.

The most vulnerable young people

When asked if there were particular groups of young people that were more vulnerable than others, workers highlighted the following groups as experiencing significantly more challenges than other young people:

- young refugee's;
- culturally and linguistically diverse young people;
- young people with a disability;
- young people between eight and eleven disengaging from education;
- young people between twenty one to twenty five years of age without accommodation and with young families; and
- Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander young people all.

Young people acknowledged that one of the key issues for them is that the majority of youth services that they had attended were not culturally appropriate. This was particularly so for the two Aboriginal young people that attended the focus group.

Service use

Young people's perception of what a youth service was shaped by the places they went to, the activities they participated in and the assistance they required. Youth centres were high on the list of places they went to and this was often the first port of call for a range of reasons. Youth centres provided:

- friendly chats
- referrals
- a meeting place
- fun activities
- places to meet new people
- A place to be helped with '*lots of stuff*'

Young people identified that the services they accessed was mostly through the help of their youth worker at a youth centre. Young people advised that youth centres provided them with a 'friendly normal way' of getting help. These young people did not want help in formal ways. One example was given where the young person felt that the psychological and

emotional assistance he required was better received through being at the youth centre than the face-to-face counselling he was referred to with a psychologist.

Conversely whilst young people enjoyed the relationship they had with their youth worker and found them easy to connect to, young people also felt that these workers did not always have either the skill or knowledge to help them with some of the more complex issues they experienced. In addition to this young people stated that attending such services often *made you look like 'a loser'* as youth centres often had a certain stigma attached to them.

To try and change this reputation young people felt that workers should be actively engaged with the young people and providing opportunities such as sports, arts and regular activities that all young people could be involved in. Further young people felt that the 'status' of youth centres could be improved by attracting sport stars or well known role models that could positively connect with the young people using the centre.

Youth centre workers also acknowledged that the 'cohorts' of young people using their services changed fairly frequently. Such '*crew changes*' however brought 'territory' battles. Young people were seen to 'adopt' organisations which could be problematic for other users. One worker reported that student's from one Canberra College had refused to use the local youth centre because they were frightened and intimidated by the other young people going there.

Young people also spoke about not using services and the informal support that they received from peers. This is seen to be particularly important for young people who are disconnected from family. One young person spoke about the notion of gangs and how he felt that a group of young people meeting on the streets was often seen to be problematic by adults and particularly the police. Young people reported that often there was nowhere else to go, particularly if you are homeless, and that meeting your friends in the city provided important support and education. There was acknowledgement that a number of young people had particular issues such as drug and alcohol that could influence other young people's behaviour however this was not seen as problematic but just a 'shared'

experience. Young people asserted that it was adults perceptions that needed to change. Young people also stated that workers needed to be more available in the spaces they ‘hung out’ in.

Adult participants also recognised the dilemmas that exist between outreach and buildings based work. One participant felt that more outreach or street based work needed to occur as often the most vulnerable young people were not accessing services through youth centres or other organisations.

Service provision

In both focus groups with organisations there was a shared concern about young people and the care and protection system. Both groups reported that they felt that they could work with young people up to a point but where there were significant issues of risk, they needed the support of care and protection services. This support however was not always forthcoming predominantly because workers reported that care and protection services saw the YSP as having the major responsibility of supporting the young person. Workers advised that the YSP did not have the capacity to do this and that it *could not be the safety net for the system*.

Conversely some workers felt that whilst care and protection services relied enormously on the support of the YSP, collaboration between YSP providers and care and protection was limited. Youth centre workers highlighted that their work was not *valued or understood* by other organisations, care and protection in particular.

The provision of targeted and universal work was also problematic for YSP providers. Service providers acknowledged that there was a clear need for both types of intervention however they felt that most of their work was about crisis management. Further some organisations felt that they had approached the funding body for guidance as to who their target should be but have never received any guidance. The lack of objective and shared understanding about the YSP has made it difficult for providers to know exactly what level of service they should be providing.

Outcomes

The notion of identifying outcomes for young people in service provision is a relatively recent shift however participants on the whole believed this to be a good move.

The idea of measuring outcomes is a great aspiration that is to be welcomed

On further discussion regarding what outcomes we should be looking to achieve with young people, YSP focus group participants advised that such a question was difficult to answer as much of what they do is only really realised in the longer term. However on further exploration both focus groups identified the following short term outcomes in no particular priority:

- Reconnection to
 - Family
 - Sustainable housing
 - Education or employment
- Participation in
 - Activities that build skill and knowledge around help seeking, health and problem solving
 - Community that provide a sense of purpose and belonging
- Engagement with
 - Services more than once to help break cycles of chronic disadvantage

How we measure such outcomes collectively is more problematic. Organisations acknowledged that limited data is collected around outcomes and because there are no shared outcomes amongst services there is an inconsistency of data collection across organisations. Much of the current data collected is about organisational process rather than about young people. A number of workers identified that they collected 'basic' information about young people although this often is not meaningful for the worker. Participants described *just ticking boxes*. Others felt that their organisation had been

proactive in collecting information about young people particularly in regard to the effectiveness of the service they had received.

To date organisations advised that they collect data in the following ways:

- Participation rates and hours
- Assessment tools
- Feedback from young people either informally or through surveys
- Client satisfaction surveys

Data from Consultations with young people to inform the Young People's Plan 2009-2014.

As noted earlier, data was collected from young people in 2008 and 2009 in order to inform the development of the Young people's Plan 2009-2014. The survey questions encompassed young people's service use and the following data regarding young people and service use has been provided by DHCS for this report. Further information regarding these consultations can be found in Appendix E.

The 2009 Young Peoples Plan survey results indicate that:

- There is a need to increase the number of better resourced youth centres
- Health services need to be co -located throughout the ACT
- 'Younger' young people want to access services such as youth refuges, Centrelink payments and CIT.
- Government need to advertise their services more effectively
- Youth spaces designed by young people are needed in new urban developments

The 2008 survey findings can be categorized into the following themes:

Access to support

- Young people are not always aware of the services available to them
- Services are not always open or available when young people need them
- Particular groups of young people such as those from a culturally and linguistically diverse background and Indigenous young people are not always able to access support they require

- Fear of discrimination and personal safety negatively impacts service use by some groups of young people
- There is a need for more accessible mental health services for young people
- Services need to be more inclusive of and accessible to young people with disabilities

Young people's participation

- Young people would like greater involvement in decision making about themselves
- Young people would like to actively participate in service planning and design

Service provision

- The quality of service provision for young people is often unsatisfactory
- Services need to be able to provide skilled workers to better respond to needs of all vulnerable young people but also to specific groups such as Indigenous and migrant and refugee young people
- Services need to provide a continuum of support
- Better collaboration between services and service sectors is needed

Summary

- Organisations highlight a number of emergent issues as well as more common ones that young people are experiencing. Emergent issues include increased complexity of issues for young people, younger age groups requesting support, young parents accessing services, and the need to support older young people for more chronic issues
- Young people report financial worries, family relationships and their future as key issues for them
- Organisation report that a range of service responses are required to address the needs of vulnerable young people
- Young people and organisations alike highlight that workforce capacity in youth services is of concern
- Young people have a range of views about what issues are of concern to them and how they would like to access support

- Organisations highlighted the following outcomes they wished to achieve with young people: reconnection to family, sustainable housing and education or employment; participation in activities that build skill and knowledge around help seeking, health and problem solving and engagement with services more than once to help break cycles of chronic disadvantage

PART FOUR – Workshop to identify objectives and outcomes for a future Youth Services Program

The final section of this report details the findings of the workshop held to discuss the possible vision, outcomes and objectives of a future youth services program.

The workshop was conducted with members of the steering group and representatives from the ACT government Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services as the first stage of developing potential objectives and outcomes of a future youth services program. In preparation for this workshop participants were provided with the draft literature review and data about young people. Participants were asked to reflect on the following questions prior to the workshop:

- Two theoretical approaches are identified in the report – resilience theory and youth development theory – does one fit better in terms of framing the new directions for YSP?
- What has changed recently for vulnerable young people – what are the implications for YSP?
- What can we learn about the key features and principles of promising programs that could inform the future directions of the YSP?
- How can youth services funded by YSP better respond to those issues facing vulnerable young people?
- How can YSP funded services be better supported to increase their capability?
- What is on the horizon in terms of opportunities for the YSP?
- What do we hope the YSP will achieve with which groups?

The workshop began with participants considering:

- Which groups of young people would be accessing and participating in funded services and
- Whether YSP should be a universal service or one that provides more targeted responses

Young people

Participants concurred with the suggestion that a future YSP should aim to provide support to vulnerable young people who are experiencing:

- Additional problems as they transition through adolescence and
- Who require a more coordinated and comprehensive response because of increased vulnerability through homelessness or disengagement from education or employment.

At present the YSP supports young people aged 12-25 years, with a focus on those aged 12-21 years. Current research and the results of the focus group with organisations highlight that younger age groups are currently seeking support. Some services reported children as young as nine coming to youth centres for help.

Whilst the restructured YSP and family support funding aims to address the needs of young people along a developmental continuum, it was suggested in the workshop that the YSP component focus on young people aged 10-25 to better respond to the emergent needs of ‘younger’ young people.

Circumstances increasing vulnerability

In considering which groups of young people the future YSP should target, workshop participants identified young people who through their personal or social circumstances experience or have the potential to experience increased vulnerability. This would include the following groups of young people that:

- are not engaged in either education or employment
- are experiencing or are at risk of being homeless
- have with a mental illness,

- have with a disability
- are young carers
- may experience negative discrimination because of their sexuality

Workshop participants also suggested that young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds such as migrant and refugee young people or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were also in need of opportunities for extra support.

Responding to young people

For the needs of young people to be responded to effectively, workshop participants argued that a range of service responses would need to be provided. Participants stated that young people with specific issues require comprehensive and targeted responses. However in order to engage young people successfully and to reach them as early 'in the life of the problem' as possible, some participants recommended that a range of strategies that are developmentally appropriate be provided. Such services would offer not only a preventative component but also attract young people who may not necessarily access more formal services.

Vision, objectives and outcomes

Using an ecological framework, the ACT Draft Young people's plan 2009-2014 and a resilience approach, workshop participants developed a preliminary vision and objectives and possible outcomes for a future Youth Services Program.

The following diagram details the outcomes and then the objectives at an individual, family, education, community and service system level. However it is of note that these objectives and outcomes are congruent with the priority areas of health well being and support, families and communities, participation and access and transitions and pathways highlighted in the draft Young People's Plan 2009-2014.

The role of the YSP is to support young people aged 10 – 25 years who are experiencing additional challenges that require timely, comprehensive and coordinated interventions in order for them to reach their full potential, make valuable contributions and share the benefits of our community.

INDIVIDUAL

- Young people are safe
- Young people are resilient
- Young people have purpose in their lives
- Young people achieve personal and social development and do fun stuff
- Young people's health and well-being is improved

- Support young people to participate in decisions about themselves
- Reduce barriers to young people's participation
- Support young people through transition periods in their lives
- Encourage young people's participation in developmentally appropriate activities
- Assist young people in accessing support and resources to:
 - enhance their health and well-being and
 - build resilience

FAMILY

- Young people have secure and supportive families
- Young people have positive connections to family

- Assist young people and their family together to resolve family issues
- Assess young people's needs in the context of their family and community
- Provide families with increased resources to support the young person

EDUCATION

- Young people participate in education, training and employment
- Young people's attendance at school is increased
- Young people achieve national educational standards

- Assist young people to access meaningful education, training or employment
- Develop young people's strengths and talents
- Develop educational and support strategies to reengage young people in learning
- Expand diversity of workforce providing education for young people
- Develop enterprising methods (alternative education)

COMMUNITY

- Young people are connected to community
- Young people are able to meaningfully participate in the community
- Young people are valued acknowledged and supported by their community

- Encourage young people to participate in and contribute to their communities
- Recognise young people's capacity for volunteering
- Encourage young people's participation in sports, arts and cultural activities and peer based projects
- Provide 'youth friendly' spaces
- Challenge negative community perceptions of young people

SERVICE SYSTEM

- Improved integration across systems
- Increased amount of evaluative knowledge on what works for whom and in what circumstances
- Appropriately skilled and resourced workforce
- Continued development of skill and knowledge acquisition

- Create and implement a work force strategy
- Ensure ongoing professional development of workers
- Provide adequate remuneration for skilled workers
- Build evidence- base of 'what works' with young people
- Develop evaluation capabilities for services
- Improve data collection systems
- Develop and evaluate collaborative practice between service sectors

Suggestions for a Future Youth Services Program

The need to address broad social gaps for young people has become a key priority of government both at a federal and state and territory level. Over the last decade the ACT government has provided funding specifically targeted towards young people in order to respond to their needs. However there is increasing demand from both government and NGO's that such responses should be based on sound evidence.

This report highlights that the nature of such evidence is problematic. Until recently youth work interventions were unlikely to have been researched or evaluated. Much of the research about 'what works' for young people has been developed from other disciplines including education and health. However even within this body of research there are methodological issues that prevents clear evidence about 'what works'. Consequently this means conclusions about the effectiveness of programs with vulnerable young people were limited. Instead this section of the report offers some ideas developed from both the literature and the responses of stakeholders to inform the future direction of the YSP.

Responding early to young people's needs

Some young people may only need a small amount of support to assist them whilst others may need a more comprehensive and coordinated approach. The literature highlights that programs need to identify and use interventions with young people that address the differing levels of vulnerability identified at individual, family and community levels. The literature also suggests that in order to adequately respond to a young person's vulnerability early identification and intervention is required so as to ensure that risks do not escalate or become embedded in the young person's life world. Early intervention is seen to reduce the long-term negative and costly impacts of risks for the young person, their families and the system (Day et al., 2003). Programs also need to acknowledge the key transition points for young people and recognise that they may need extra support at various times of their life. Subsequently services should provide developmentally responsive strategies across a continuum so as to increase a young person's resilience across their life span.

Possible theoretical approach to the future YSP

It is evident from the literature that current work with vulnerable young people is based upon two main approaches: youth development programs and the risk and protective framework. These approaches have been influential in how the development of children and young people is understood and are supported by research from across a range of disciplines. However the evidence remains inconclusive, as to which approach is more effective.

Principles to underpin practice

The literature does acknowledge that successful programs share particular characteristics and are underpinned by a number of principles. It is suggested therefore that the following principles be considered for any future program:

Collaboration – that services and service sectors work together to ensure continuity of support for young people and reduce.

Sustainability- that services are developed in consultation with local organisations and in response to local the needs of young people and their families.

In context – that young people’s needs are responded to in the context of the individuals and institutions in their life-worlds.

Strengths based – that workers address young people’s issues, but also build upon strengths and opportunities.

Participatory and inclusive practice- for young people to have opportunities to formally and informally participate in matters that affect them.

Capacity building – for young people to be supported by a well resourced, skilled and knowledgeable workforce.

Characteristics of promising interventions

Characteristics of successful programs suggest that programs should not actively aggregate groups of young people with complex issues. However it is recognised that this is not always possible and that young people with complex issues often find informal support from one another. Places such as Youth centres can mitigate some of the effects by providing programs with well structured activities, goals and outcomes.

Furthermore programs are often more successful when they target multiple risk factors. Evidence suggests that using multi-component type programs that target a range of factors across a range of systems simultaneously are increasingly achieving good outcomes for young people.

Workforce capacity

The availability of youth workers with a strong skill and knowledge base is a critical issue in providing effective programs for young people. Evidence suggests that investing in workforce capacity is essential in build program capacity for the future youth sector. The evidence from our consultations indicates that there is concern about the level of skill presently in the youth sector and more importantly the level of resources that are available to develop and sustain the required capacity. Currently there is little substantive information on the actual skills base, and without such information capacity building, workforce planning as well as projections of the skill levels and skill sets that may be required to respond to young people in the future, are difficult to ascertain. With the proposed change in directions for the YSP, investment will be needed in defining the skills that youth workers will need, and establishing workforce development initiatives.

Adding to the evidence base

Finally, in any new program attention to developing an appropriate evaluation framework and the requisite data will be required. The framework should be underpinned by a shared understanding and definition of the YSP vision by all youth service providers. Once a set of well defined and measurable objectives, indicators and targets are developed work will be required to ensure useful data are collected for both accountability and for agencies to use

in responding young people. A framework like this would make it possible for judgments about how young people who use YSP are progressing.

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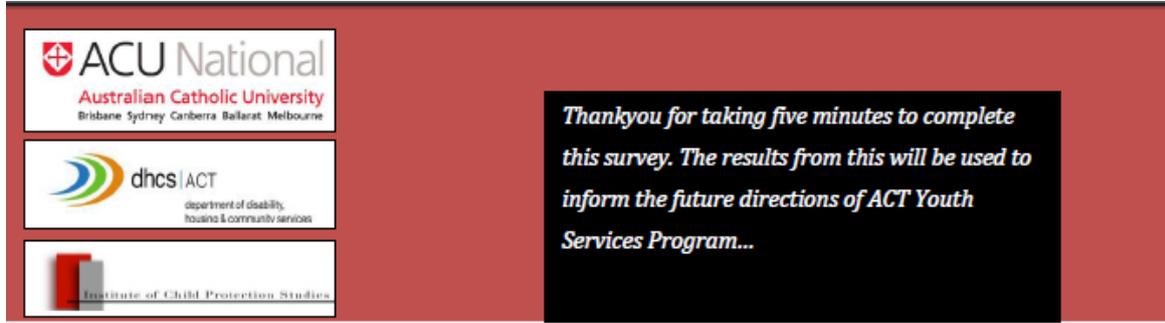
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Appendices

DRAFT

Appendix A Focus group questions and surveys

Survey for Organisations



1. Please indicate the type of work/interventions your organisation provides at present to young people aged 12- 25 and how these interventions are provided

	Youth Centre/drop in	Outreach/ detached work	Schools/CIT	Co- location	Community development	Other
Case management	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Health promotion	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Recreational activities	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Counselling	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Family support	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Referral	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Assistance with education	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Assistance with employment	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Life skills	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Practical assistance such as brokerage, accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>					

2. What does 'Evidence based practice' mean to you and what evidence based programs or processes does your organisation use with young people?

3. What are the major issues confronting services for young people today?

- Identifying need
- Directing resources
- Appropriate funding
- Reach of service
- Relevance of service to young people
- Location of service
- Staffing capacity
- Support and training of staff
- Measuring benefits and outcomes of services
- The balance between universal and targeted work
- The relationships between organisations
- Other

4. The diagram below illustrates different levels of vulnerability – please rank in order from 1-4 (in the boxes beside the diagram) what levels of vulnerable young people you feel your organisation assists most frequently. (1 being the most frequent to 4 being rarely)



Dept. Human Services 2008

5. Could you give us a specific example of how a young person has benefited from your service?

Questions for focus groups with organisations

Focus group schedule for YSP stakeholders

Young people in the area

1. What are the main difficulties faced by young people in Canberra? How are you able to identify these difficulties?
2. Are there particular groups of young people that face more challenges than others? Why?

Youth Work provision

3. Are their particular issues or groups of young people that are priorities for you? How do these relate to ACT policy?
4. Are there issues or particular young people in Canberra that you feel are missed? What can be done to change this? (Funding/better collaboration/focus of service etc).
5. Is there anything you feel is lacking in present youth service provision? What is needed to change this?

Outcomes

6. What are the kinds of outcomes you are looking to achieve for more vulnerable young people? How do these relate to ACT policy/research?
7. What do young people want to achieve in your service? How do you know that?

Effectiveness

8. How do you think youth services help reduce vulnerability among young people?
9. What do you think are the key variables on which success should be measured?
10. How do you measure and evaluate the success of work with young people?

ANY OTHER COMMENTS

Young people survey

'Space to hang out with your friends' *'Doing fun stuff'*
'Getting some help when you need it' *'Learning new things'*

We think that these might be some of the reasons why young people use youth centres or other services especially designed for young people. However we also know that for many different reasons not all young people want to use youth services. The Australian Catholic University and the ACT government want to find out more about what young people think about using Youth services and if they have used them, what worked well for them. By answering the questions below you can help us help young people in Canberra to get the support that they need in the ways that they want.

About yourself

1 Are you? (Please circle one)
Male
Female
Other

2 How old are you? (Please circle one)
12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 20+

3 How would you describe your cultural background?
Aboriginal
Torres Strait Islander
Other _____

4 When do you think you'll stop going to school? (please tick one box)
 I've already stopped
 After finishing year 10
 After finishing year 12
 After finishing university
 Don't Know

5

Over the past year, have you been worried about any of the following?
(Please tick one *box* for each line)

	Worried	Very Slightly worried	Not at all worried
Difficulties in school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finding or keeping a job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relationships with your family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being forced into having sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting pregnant/getting someone pregnant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting a sexually transmitted infection like Chlamydia or HIV/AIDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your sexuality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting into trouble with the police	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being bullied/harassed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feeling unsafe out at night or when alone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worries about using drugs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dealing with money problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making/keeping relationships with friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worries about health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worries about drinking alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finding somewhere to live	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your mental health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your physical health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your body image	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self harming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other concerns please write in below

6

In the ACT there are a number of services specifically for young people. These include youth drop in centres, youth health programs, counselling, activity / skills groups, etc. What are some of the big issues in your friendship group that you think a youth service could help you with?

7

About how often would you use a youth service for.....

	I haven't	Only once	Once a week	Once a fortnight	Once a month	A few times a year
Advice and information	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Talking about problems (face-to-face or telephone)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Group work	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Sports	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Social activities	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Personal support	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Life skills	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Health care	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Practical help ie help with money, accommodation etc	<input type="checkbox"/>					

8

Some young people have told us that they don't use youth services – are any or these reasons why YOU wouldn't go?

- They are not open at the right time (what time should they be open?)
- I have supports like friends, family etc
- I don't know about them
- I'd feel ashamed to get help
- They are not culturally sensitive
- Youth workers don't have the skills needed to deal with some issues
- It's not cool
- Other

9

Is there a problem you or a friend have encountered that you think a youth service wouldn't be able to help with?

10 Where would you most likely access youth services if you needed and they were available?

- School /colleges
- Community centres
- Drop in - Youth centres
- Street vans
- Streets, parks , and other places young people hang out
- On line (email / chat rooms)
- By phone

11

I would most likely use a youth service that:

Please rank in order from 1-5 (with 1 being the most important and 5 the least)

- Assists me to learn new skills and that will support me to tackle my issues
- Respects and understands my values and needs
- Encourages me to participate fully as valued member of my community
- Ensures that I can access information to enable me to make informed choices and fully participate in available opportunities.
- Encourages me to understand my legal and social rights, and to exercise them with support
- Recognises my cultural background
- Promotes the enthusiasm and passion of young people through projects and activities
- Has workers I can trust and have a good relationship with

12 Is there anything else that you think could improve youth services or make young people more likely to get help from them?

YP - Focus group Questions

1. What is a youth service?
2. What does a youth service do and what don't they do? I.e. what outside of their scope?
3. What questions need to be asked about young people using youth services?
4. Why might young people use youth services?
5. What kind of people wouldn't use services?
6. What are some of things young people want to get from using youth services?
7. What are youth services not good at doing?
8. What would a good Youth service look like?
 - About the way they engage young people
 - About the types of relationships workers have with young people
 - About the types of support they provide
 - About where they are located
 - About the way they provide supports
 - About the way they work with others (incl formal and informal support networks)
 - What would you hope to achieve

Any other comments

Appendix B – Ethics Information and consent

Information letter and consent for parents and guardians and young people assent (survey)

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



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30/11/2009

INFORMATION LETTER TO PARENTS/ GUARDIANS

TITLE OF PROJECT: THE FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF THE YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: DR. MORAG McARTHUR

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: MR TIM MOORE and MS VICKY SAUNDERS

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are writing to request your permission for your child to participate in a research project about their experiences of using youth services in the ACT. This letter is designed to provide you with some information to help you decide whether you want to contribute to this research. The Youth Coalition of the ACT (YCACT) and the Department of Disability, Housing, and Community Services (DHCS) have asked the Institute of Child Protection Studies to conduct a review of the Youth Services Program. Through the project, we hope to find out more about their ability to access and use appropriate services, their needs and preferences in regards to the way that services are provided, and ways in which programs might be improved.

We would like your child to complete a survey. It is anticipated that this will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Some of the questions will provide answers for your child to choose from. Others will require your child to write an answer about their experience. Your child need only answer the questions they feel comfortable to answer.

Through consenting to your child's participation, you will be allowing for the development of valuable information about the experiences your child has had with youth services. The report to the ACT Government and the Youth Coalition of the ACT is aimed at helping to make youth services better for young people. We may also develop some articles which we will publish for others to read. However, we will ensure that nothing in the report will identify particular young people or families.

Young people and their families have the choice about whether or not to participate- it is completely voluntary. You or your young person can withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason.

Information provided by young people and families will remain confidential unless researchers are concerned about the health or wellbeing of children. If a young person discloses that they are being harmed, researchers are obliged to report their concerns to Care and Protection services.

If you have any questions about the project, please contact the principal researcher:

Dr. Morag McArthur
Australian Catholic University
Institute of Child Protection Studies
223 Antill Street
Watson ACT 2602
Phone: 02 6209 1225

Or

Vicky Saunders
Australian Catholic University
Institute of Child Protection Studies
223 Antill Street
Watson ACT 2602
Phone (02) 6209 1227
Email: vicky.saunders@signadou.acu.edu.au

The report about this research will be provided to ACT Government and the Youth Coalition of the ACT. If you would like a summary of this report, please tell us by ticking the box on the consent form which is with this letter.

This project is conducted with the approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University. If, during the course of the research, you have any complaint about the way that you have been treated or if you have a query that you think has not been dealt with by the project researchers, you may contact:

Human Research Ethics Committee Chair
Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Strathfield Campus
Locked Bag 2002
STRATHFIELD NSW 2135
Ph: 02 9701 4159
Fax: 02 9701 4350

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the result of your complaint.

If you are willing to consent to your young persons' involvement in this research, please complete and sign both copies of the attached Consent Form, post one in the attached addressed envelope (no postage stamp is required), and keep one for your records. Alternatively you may give it to your child to hand back to the researcher.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Morag McArthur
Principal Investigator



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30/11/2009

CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Copy for researcher

TITLE OF PROJECT: THE FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF THE YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: DR. MORAG MCARTHUR

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: MR TIM MOORE AND MS VICKY SAUNDERS

I, (parent / guardian) have read and understood the information provided in the *Letter to Parents/Guardians*. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree that my child/ren, who are nominated below, may, if they agree:

complete a survey

Realising that I can withdraw my consent at any time, I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify my child in any way.

I would like a summary of the report to be sent to me at the end of the project.

NAME OF PARENT / GUARDIAN:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:/...../.....

NAME OF CHILD (1).....

NAME OF CHILD (2)

SIGNATURE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR.....

CRICOS registered provider:
00004G, 00112C, 00873F, 00885B



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30/11/2009

ASSENT FORM FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Copy for researcher

TITLE OF PROJECT: THE FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF THE YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: DR. MORAG MCARTHUR

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: MR TIM MOORE and MS VICKY SAUNDERS

I.....have read (or had read to me) and understood the information provided in the Information Letter to. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this:

complete a survey

I understand that I do not have to answer questions I do not want to, and that I can leave at any time that I like without having to give an explanation

I agree that any information that is collected for this study may be published in a report or shared with other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

I would like a summary of the report to be sent to me at the end of the project.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT.....

SIGNATURE..... DATE.....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR.....

DATE.....

CRICOS registered provider:
00004G, 00112C, 00873F, 00885B

Information and consent for young people (survey)

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



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30/11/2009

INFORMATION LETTER TO YOUNG PEOPLE

TITLE OF PROJECT: THE FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF THE YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (RESEARCHER): DR. MORAG McARTHUR

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR (RESEARCHER): MR TIM MOORE AND MS VICKY SAUNDERS

Dear participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project. This letter is designed to provide you with some information to help you decide whether you want to contribute to this research. The purpose of this research is to provide a report to the ACT Government and the Youth Coalition of the ACT on how well the youth services are working and how they could be improved. We would very much appreciate hearing your views.

We would like you to complete a survey. It is anticipated that this will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Some of the questions will provide answers for you to choose from. Others will require you to write your own answer. There is no right or wrong answer for these questions. We would like to hear what you have to say. You need only answer the questions that you feel comfortable to answer.

Through your participation, you will be providing valuable information about your experiences of the assistance you have received from youth services such as a youth centre. The report is aimed at helping to make youth services better for young people.

It is totally up to you whether you agree to participate and you can pull out of the research at any time without giving a reason, including after the interview has begun.

Who you are will be known to the researchers only. Who you are will not be disclosed to anyone else, unless you told the researchers something which indicated a severe danger to yourself or anyone else and the researchers would discuss this with you before they told anyone about it. When the report is written it will not involve your name or any details of your life which would allow other people to recognize you. We may also write up what we find out in a magazine for other researchers, but this would not involve naming or identifying you in any way

Any questions regarding this research can be directed to the main researcher

Dr. Morag McArthur
Director
Institute of Child Protection Studies
Australian Catholic University
223 Antill Street
Watson ACT 2602
Phone: 02 6209 1225

Or to Vicky Saunders
Researcher
Institute of Child Protection Studies
Australian Catholic University
223 Antill St
Watson 2602

The report about this research will be provided to ACT Government and the Youth Coalition of the ACT. If you would like a summary of this report, please tell us by ticking the box on the consent form which is with this letter.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University.

If you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during this study, or if you have any question that the Investigators have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee, care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Unit:

Chair, HREC c/o Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Strathfield Campus
Locked Bay 2002
STRATHFIELD NSW 2135
Tel: 029701 4093
Fax: 02 9701 4350

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the result of your complaint.

If you would like to be involved in this research, please sign both copies of the consent form and give one to the researcher who speaks with you.

Yours sincerely

Morag McArthur
Principal Investigator

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



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30/11/2009

CONSENT FORM FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Copy for researcher

TITLE OF PROJECT: THE FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF THE YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: DR. MORAG McARTHUR

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: MR TIM MOORE AND MS VICKY SAUNDERS

I.....have read (or had read to me) and understood the information provided in the Information Letter to Young People. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to

Complete a survey

I understand that I do not have to answer questions I do not want to, and that I can finish at any point that I like without having to give an explanation

I agree that any information that is collected for this study may be published in a report or shared with other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

I would like a summary of the report to be sent to me at the end of the project.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT.....

SIGNATURE..... DATE.....

SIGNATURE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR.....DATE.....

Information and consent for parents of young people (focus groups)

Australian Catholic University
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30/11/2009

INFORMATION LETTER TO PARENTS/ GUARDIANS

TITLE OF PROJECT: THE FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF THE YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: DR. MORAG McARTHUR

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: MR TIM MOORE and MS VICKY SAUNDERS

Dear Parents and Guardians.

We are writing to request your permission for your child to participate in a research project about their experiences of using youth services in the ACT. This letter is designed to provide you with some information to help you decide whether you want to contribute to this research. The Youth Coalition of the ACT (YCACT) and the Department of Disability, Housing, and Community Services (DHCS) have asked the Institute of Child Protection Studies to conduct a review of the Youth Services Program. Through the project, we hope to find out more about young people's ability to access and use appropriate services, their needs and preferences in regards to the way that services are provided, and ways in which programs might be improved.

We would like your child to participate in a discussion group. The identity of your child will be known to the researchers and to other young people attending the group.

The discussion group will be conducted at the Australian Catholic University Canberra campus and will take approximately two hours of their time. If you agree, we will audiotape the group to ensure that the researchers have an accurate record. However, the tape can be stopped at any time and the interviewer will take notes. The tapes will be used by researchers when writing the research report and will not be accessible to anyone outside the research team.

Through consenting to your child's participation, you will be allowing for the development of valuable information about the experiences your child has had with youth services. The report to the ACT Government and the Youth Coalition of the

ACT is aimed at helping to make youth services better for young people. We may also develop some articles which we will publish for others to read. However, we will ensure that nothing in the report will identify particular young people or families.

Young people and their families have the choice about whether or not to participate- it is completely voluntary. You or your young person can withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason.

Information provided by young people and families will remain confidential unless researchers are concerned about the health or wellbeing of children. If a young person discloses that they are being harmed, researchers are obliged to report their concerns to Care and Protection services.

If you have any questions about the project, please contact the principal researcher:

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Australian Catholic University
Institute of Child Protection Studies
223, Antill Street
Watson ACT 2602
Phone (02) 6209 1227
Email: vicky.saunders@signadou.acu.edu.au

At the end of the project, we will send interested families a summary of our findings. If you would like a copy of this summary, please check the box on the attached consent form.

This project is conducted with the approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University. If, during the course of the research, you have any complaint about the way that you have been treated or if you have a query that you think has not been dealt with by the project researchers, you may contact:

Human Research Ethics Committee Chair
Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Strathfield Campus
Locked Bag 2002
STRATHFIELD NSW 2135
Ph: 02 9701 4159
Fax: 02 9701 4350

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the result of your complaint.

If you are willing to consent to your young persons' involvement in this research, please complete and sign both copies of the attached Consent Form, post one in the attached addressed envelope (no postage stamp is required), and keep one for your records. Alternatively you may give it to your child to hand back to the researcher.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Morag McArthur
Principal Investigator

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



Australian Catholic University Limited
ABN 15 050 192 660
Canberra Campus (Signadou)
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PO Box 256 Dickson
Australian Capital Territory 2602 Australia
Telephone 62091225
Facsimile 62091216
www.acu.edu.au

30/11/2009

CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Copy for researcher

TITLE OF PROJECT: THE FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF THE YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: DR. MORAG MCARTHUR

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: MR TIM MOORE AND MS VICKY SAUNDERS

I, (parent / guardian) have read and understood the information provided in the *Letter to Parents/Guardians*. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree that my child/ren, who are nominated below, may, if they agree:

participate in a discussion group

Realising that I can withdraw my consent at any time, I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify my child in any way.

I would like a summary of the report to be sent to me at the end of the project.

NAME OF PARENT / GUARDIAN:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:/...../.....

NAME OF CHILD (1).....

NAME OF CHILD (2).....

SIGNATURE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR.....

CRICOS registered provider:
00004G, 00112C, 00873F, 00885B

Information letter and consent young person (focus group)

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne

30/11/2009



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INFORMATION LETTER TO YOUNG PEOPLE

TITLE OF PROJECT: THE FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF THE YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: DR MORAG MCARTHUR

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATORS: MR TIM MOORE AND MS VICKY SAUNDERS

Dear participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project. This letter is designed to provide you with some information to help you decide whether you want to contribute to this research. The purpose of this research is to provide a report to the ACT Government and the Youth Coalition of the ACT on how well the youth services are working and how they could be improved. We would very much appreciate hearing your views.

We would like to invite you to participate in a discussion group. Should you decide to participate in the group, your identity will be known to others also coming to the group. However, we will change or delete any information that might identify you in our notes.

The discussion group will be held at the Australian Catholic University Canberra campus. If you agree, we will audiotape the group to ensure that the researchers have an accurate record. However, the tape can be stopped at any time and the researcher will take notes. The tapes will be used by researchers when writing the research report and will not be accessible to anyone outside the research team.

Your involvement in this research will take about two hours of your time. Through your participation, you will be giving us valuable information about ACT youth services that will be fed back to the government to help improve how youth services

In our research, what is said will remain confidential. This means that we will only use information for the purposes of our research project, and only with permission. When the report is written it will not involve your name or any details of your life which would allow other people to recognize you. We may also write up what we find out in a magazine for other researchers, but this would not involve naming or identifying you in any way

Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason, including after the discussion group has begun.

The report about this research will be provided to ACT Government and the Youth Coalition of the ACT. If you would like a summary of this report, please tell us by ticking the box on the consent form which is with this letter.

Any questions regarding this research can be directed to the principal investigator

Dr. Morag McArthur
Director
Institute of Child Protection Studies
Australian Catholic University
Watson ACT 2602
(Ph) 02 6209 1225

Or

Ms Vicky Saunders
Research Officer
Australian Catholic University
223 Antill Street
Watson ACT 2602
(Ph) 02 6209 1227

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University.

In the event you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during this study, or if you have any question that the Investigators have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee, care of the nearest branch of the Researcher Services Unit:

Chair, HREC
c/o Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Strathfield Campus
Locked Bay 2002
STRATHFIELD NSW 2135
Tel: 029701 4093
Fax: 02 9701 4350

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the consent form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Principal Investigator or researcher.

.....
Morag McArthur
Principal Investigator

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



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30/11/2009

CONSENT FORM FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
Copy for researcher

TITLE OF PROJECT: THE FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF THE YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: DR. MORAG MCARTHUR
NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: MR TIM MOORE and MS VICKY SAUNDERS

I.....have read (or had read to me) and understood the information provided in the Information Letter to young people. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this:

- Discussion group, which is audiotaped
- Discussion group which is not audiotaped (please tick relevant activity)

I understand that I do not have to answer questions I do not want to, and that I can leave at any time that I like without having to give an explanation

I agree that any information that is collected for this study may be published in a report or shared with other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

- I would like a summary of the report to be sent to me at the end of the project.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT.....

SIGNATURE..... DATE.....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR.....

DATE.....

Information letter and consent form organisations (focus group)

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne

30/11/2009

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INFORMATION LETTER TO STAFF

TITLE OF PROJECT: THE FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF THE YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: DR MORAG MCARTHUR

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATORS: MR TIM MOORE AND MS VICKY SAUNDERS

Dear participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project. This letter is designed to provide you with some information to help you decide whether you want to contribute to this research. The Youth Coalition of the ACT (YCACT) and the Department of Disability, Housing, and Community Services (DHCS) have asked the Institute of Child Protection Studies to conduct a review of the Youth Services Program. Through the project, we hope to find out more about the use of youth services by young people in the ACT, what is working well and what some of the barriers are that prevent young people using services.

Should you decide to participate in the focus group, your identity will be known to others in that group. However, we will change or delete any information that might identify you in our notes.

The focus group will be conducted at the Australian Catholic University Canberra campus. If you agree, we will audiotape these interviews to ensure that the researchers have an accurate record. However, the tape can be stopped at any time and the interviewer will take notes. The tapes will be used by researchers when writing the research report and will not be accessible to anyone outside the research team.

Your involvement in this research will take about an hour to an hour and a half of your time. Through your participation, you will be giving us valuable information about ACT youth services that will be fed back to inform funding and policy decision making.

We may also write up the findings in an academic journal.

Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason, including after the focus group has begun.

In our research, what is said will remain confidential. This means that we will only use information for the purposes of our research project, and only with permission. For the purposes of writing this report for YCACT and DHCS, we need to provide views of stakeholders about how the service system is working with young people however we will not use your name. Our aim is to identify common themes. This means that your organization may be identified in the report, which may also mean that your role in the organization will be able to be identified.

Any questions regarding this research can be directed to the principal investigator

Dr. Morag McArthur
Director
Institute of Child Protection Studies
Australian Catholic University
223 Antill Street
Watson ACT 2602
(Ph) 02 6209 1225

Or

Ms Vicky Saunders
Research Officer
Australian Catholic University
223 Antill Street
Watson ACT 2602
(Ph) 02 6209 1227

The report about this research will be provided to ACT Government and the Youth Coalition of the ACT. If you would like a summary of this report, please tell us by ticking the box on the consent form which is with this letter.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University.

In the event you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during this study, or if you have any question that the Investigators have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee, care of the nearest branch of the Researcher Services Unit:

Chair, HREC
C/o Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Strathfield Campus
Locked Bay 2002
STRATHFIELD NSW 2135
Tel: 029701 4093
Fax: 02 9701 4350

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the consent form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Principal Investigator or researcher.

.....
Morag McArthur
Principal Investigator

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



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CONSENT FORM FOR STAFF
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TITLE OF PROJECT: THE FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF THE YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: DR. MORAG MCARTHUR
NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: MR TIM MOORE and MS VICKY SAUNDERS

I.....have read (or had read to me) and understood the information provided in the Information Letter to Staff. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this:

- focus group, which is audiotaped
- focus group which is not audiotaped (please tick relevant activity)

I realize that I can withdraw my consent at any time. I realize that my organization may be identified in the report, which may also mean that my role in the organization may be identified.

- I would like a summary of the report to be sent to me at the end of the project.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT.....

SIGNATURE..... DATE.....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR.....

DATE.....

Appendix C – ACT and Australia data compared

	ACT	Australia
<i>Young people population (2006 census)</i>		
Young people aged 12-24	67 218	3 529 835
Young people aged 15-24 born overseas	8 939	390 271
Total population all ages	324 034	19 855 287
Young people aged 12-24 years as a % of total population	20.7%	17.8%
<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (2006 census)</i>		
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 12-24 years	1 060	120 374
Total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population all ages	3 875	455 016
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 12-24 years as a % of total young people aged 12-24	1.57%	3.4%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 12-24 years as a % of total population	0.33%	0.6%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 12-24 years as %of total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population	27.35%	26.45%
<i>Education (2005)</i>		
Secondary students as a proportion of the population (2007)	8.4%	6.9%
Apparent retention rate for fulltime students in Year 7 – Year 12	88.7%	74.7%
Did not complete year 12 (15-64yrs)	19.0%	31.2%
<i>Homeless young people (2006)</i>		
In education	52%	42%
Unemployed	45%	56%
In full-time work	3%	1.8%
<i>Mental Health (2006-07)</i>		
Community mental health service contacts, rate per 1,000		

Aged less than 15 years ¹	256.4	106.4
Aged 15-24 years ²	1 018.9	337.0
Residential mental health care service episodes required for young people under age 25, rate per 10,000 ³	0.8	0.4
<i>Income support (Centrelink clients in December 2005)</i>		
Youth allowance recipients	1.5%	1.6%
Newstart Allowance recipients	1.3%	2.1%
<i>Labour force (June 2006)</i>		
Proportion of population aged 15 years or more employed in full-time work	75.2%	70.8%
<i>Income (2006)</i>		
Mean equivalised gross household income per week (2006)	\$1,042	\$807
Average weekly ordinary time earnings for adults(a) in full-time employment (May 2006)	\$1,202	\$1,042
<i>Social capital (2006)</i>		
Contact with family/friends living outside the household in last week	81.6%	96.3%
Could ask for small favours from persons living outside the household	95.8%	92.1%
Persons able to ask for support in time of crisis from persons living outside the household	95.4%	93.3%
<i>Crime and safety (2006)</i>		
Persons who feel unsafe or very unsafe at home alone after dark	5.1%	6.7%
Victim of physical or threatened violence in last 12 months	9.9%	10.8%
Victim of actual or attempted break-in in last 12 months	12.8%	9.4%
<i>Communications (2006)</i>		
Use internet at any site, including home, work, internet cafe etc (2005-06)	81.0%	66.0%
Household access to the internet at home (2005-06)	68.0%	57.0%

¹ AIHW mental health tables 2006-07 hse-74-10686.xls Table 5.1 (Available from <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10686>)

² AIHW mental health tables 2006-07 hse-74-10686.xls Table 5.1

³ AIHW mental health tables 2006-07 hse-74-10686.xls Table 5.24

Had contact with family or friends outside household in last 3 months via internet (email/chat rooms) (2006)	64.5%	47.1%
Had contact with family/friends outside household in last 3 months by mobile phone/SMS (2006)	81.2%	77.4%

Appendix D Sources for data detailed in Table 1

2005 ACT secondary student drug and health risk survey (2007) p. 10.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2007). Births, Australia. Publication No. 3301.0. p. 17.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2008). Prisoners in Australia. Publication No. 4517.0. Data cube: Prisoners, age.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2009a). Australian Social Trends. Publication No. 4102.0. Data cube: Education and Training.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2009b). Causes of Death, Australia, 2007. Publication No. 3303.0. Data cube table 9.3: Underlying cause of death, Selected causes by age at death, numbers and rates, Australian Capital Territory.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2009c). Recorded Crime - Offenders, Selected States and Territories 2007-08. Publication No. 4519.0. Data cube: Offenders by age, sex and state.

ACT. Chief Health Officer. (2008). Annual Report 2008. p. 13

ACT. Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services. Office for Children, Youth and Family Support. (2009). Pathways to the future: A consultation paper on increasing young people's engagement in education, training and work, 2008 *in* ACT Draft Young People's Plan 2009-2014 p. 20.

ACT. Department of Justice and Community Safety. (2009). Annual Report 2008-09. p. 10.

ACT Health. (2008). *Children's and Young People's Justice Health Services Plan 2008-2012*.

ACT Policing. (2008). Annual Report 2007–2008. p. 42.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2008a). Homeless people in SAAP. SAAP National Data Collection Annual Report 2006–07. Australian Capital Territory supplementary tables: Table 4.9.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2008b). Mental health tables 2006-07 hse-74-10686.xls Tables 5.1 and 5.24.

(Retrieved from <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10686>)

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2009a). Mental health services in Australia 2006-07. Mental health tables: Table A5.1: Community mental health service contacts, by sex and age group, states and territories, 2006–07.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2009b). Mental health services in Australia 2006-07. Mental health tables: Table A5.24: Episodes of residential mental health care, by sex and age group, states and territories.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2009c). Child Protection Australia 2007-08. Appendix A.

Australia. Productivity Commission. (2009) Report on Government Services p. 4.78.

Homeless People in SAAP. (2009) SAAP National Data Collection annual report 2007-08 in ACT Draft Young People's Plan 2009-2014 p. 17, 44.

Juvenile justice in Australia 2007-08 (November 2009) Table 5.3.

Mission Australia (2008) National Survey of Young Australians 2008.

Appendix E ACT Youth Consultations

Information provided by Denise Bridges ACT Youth Policy & Program Officer, The Office of Children Youth and Family Support

From June 2009 to July 2009 youth consultations were conducted by the Department of Disability Housing and Community Services, Youth Directorate in the ACT engaging 140 young people in face to face consultations and a further 432 young people in two youth surveys, the first conducted by the Youth Advisory Council and the second conducted by the Minister for Children and Young People regarding the development of the New Young Peoples Plan 2009-2014 and its key priorities. The young people consulted were from ACT Youth Services and the broader community.

The purpose of this consultation process was to gain useful information on what young people felt were important issues to be addressed in the development of the new Young Peoples Plan, to highlight any gaps in services delivery and to ensure that young people have had an active role in development of the new ACT Young Peoples Plan 2009-2014.

Information was gained on:

- *Young peoples thoughts of the four key priorities from the old plan and whether they remain relevant to young people*
- *Young peoples priorities*
- *Key themes of importance to young people*
- *Service Delivery*
- *A Youth Friendly City and Youth Participation*
- *Accountability of the new Plan to Young People*

This was achieved through a series of questions outlined in the Young Peoples Plan Discussion Paper along with additional question to evoke further thought and input from young people in the development of the new 'Plan'. The responses from each question were then collated and grouped into themes.

The Consultation

The Department approached a total of nine youth services and organisations that worked directly with young people aged 12-25 across the ACT. Consultations were conducted by DHCS staff and Members of the Youth Advisory Council. Consultations involved a diverse group of young people from a range of backgrounds, life experiences, culture and abilities such as young people at risk; with disabilities; from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people; young carers; young people who have been in the care and protection system and GLBTI young people.

Consultation involved group discussion, with the smallest group being 5 young people and the largest group of young people was 25. This was an opportunity for young people to comment on the Discussion Paper and to provide feedback to the ACT Government on the development of the new ACT Young People's Plan 2009-2014 and for young people to raise key issues of importance to them.