



Reconnecting Disaffected Youth Through Successful Transition to Work

Research collaboration between BoysTown and Griffith University
funded by the Australian Research Council



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BoysTown



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Executive Summary

As stated by Holdsworth (2004) in relation to education, we know “through many evaluations, that ‘alternatives’ that focus on ‘fixing’ behaviour or learning problems through withdrawing students from the ‘mainstream’ and then seeking to return those students to the original situation, do not work”, apart from providing temporary relief, and may, in fact, serve “to hide severe problems from view” (p. 7). He advocated authentic, genuine contexts and processes if solutions for problem learning are to generalise into learners’ adaptive resolutions of their problems. There is a parallel with the issues typical of the young Australians whom BoysTown seeks to help reconnect in positive ways with society. Many have had problems fitting into conventional society; most have had problems of personal adjustment; and, all have had difficulty in finding sustainable employment. There is a parallel also with Holdsworth’s view that the best redress lies in using authentic contexts and processes in BoysTown’s use of transition-to-work programs, notably social enterprises where real, publicly-visible work provides contexts for youth, staff and community to make positive differences in the youths’ current and aspirational lives.

BoysTown is a not-for-profit organisation that delivers services and programs for socially-excluded young people to improve their quality of life and positive participation in society. These include social enterprise programs that provide paid employment to young people in a supported environment to prepare them for transition to the mainstream workforce. The suite of programs tailored to various clients groups and their needs include training, education and employment programs and are supported with wrap-around services. Data from our five year study provides empirical support for BoysTown’s person-centred method and social enterprises, and a database that shows youths’ interlinked development of personal and social growth across time that accompanied their new readiness with skills, attitude and talk associated with work. Youth in the social enterprise programs developed in these ways by working on local community-needed and competitively-awarded projects for which they and BoysTown were accountable. They learned about workplaces, equipment and tools and how to use them, worked cooperatively with others who shared resources and co-contributed to getting a job done. Other learnings included appraising how well a job is progressing, valuing what was done well and the professionalism and fun there is in talking about these things.

The young people learned about themselves, too – about what they had learned to do consistently and well, and about how they felt to have connected with their Youth Trainers and peers. They learned that there were rewards associated with the effort needed to be up

early for work, being punctual, seeing a job through, seeking and taking advice – and they celebrated the outcome of such effort and participation. On completion of the enterprise program most had replaced the abject hopelessness and despondency that they expressed on entry with re-established wellbeing and positive self-esteem, and new skills in planning, cooperation and communication. Many developed agency essential to being effective in their actions and talked about their work and future plans. Smyth & Hattam (2001) asserted that “We all make sense of the world with the discourse we have access to” (p. 411) and one of the strengths of BoysTown’s programs was to have immersed youth in the language of work, of working, of wanting to work and of using observation, reflection and talk to view participating in a more positive manner with society as sensible, valuable and attainable. This was the sense they were now making of their world.

Client Profile

BoysTown’s mission is “To enable young people, especially those who are marginalised and without voice, to improve their quality of life”. Major participants in this research were 542 of BoysTown’s youth who were beginning, about to begin or were currently participating in a social enterprise or related program of transition to work at BoysTown during the period 2008-2011. Participants comprised 135 females and 406 males whose average age was 18.8 years.

We report from findings of this research project that participants had diverse backgrounds that most typically clustered into a profile of historic disadvantage and marginalisation and through, which identifiable barriers to employment had developed, such as:

- Welfare or unstable financial support – 34% of participants were relying on Government payments and 24.9% indicated they had no income
- Negative modelling in family employment histories – 45% had grown up where the adults did not have regular work and were reliant on welfare payments
- No work history in full-time employment – 44.7% had no experience in the workforce while a further 38% had only held part-time or casual jobs

- Long-term unemployment – 38.7 weeks was the average amount of time spent in unemployment and 29.8% were in either long-term (more than 52 weeks) or very long-term (more than two years) periods of unemployment
- Low levels of formal education – 38.6% had dropped out of school before completing Year 10, and
- Lack of stable or secure accommodation – 11.7% were living in supported accommodation facilities, 6.3% were living in temporary or unstable accommodation and 42% were living in public housing.

Historic barriers to participants' positive social inclusion through employment also included:

- Poor language, literacy and numeracy skills
- Offending and antisocial behaviour
- Problems with substance abuse
- Lack of social support
- Low self-esteem
- Poor emotional wellbeing
- Little optimism and goal setting for the future
- Constrained aspirations, and
- Maladaptive decision-making styles.

Participants in this study have prejudicial personal and/or social histories consistent with those people depicted in BoysTown's mission statement as in need of its help.



Employment Outcomes

More than three-quarters (77.4%) of participants remained engaged with BoysTown and completed their program. In relation to success rate for transition into the workforce, 61.3% obtained full-time employment, re-engaged with education or continued on to further training. A further 11.9% of participants obtained part-time or casual employment. Of the BoysTown participants who gained full-time outcomes, 89% were still engaged in their outcomes after 13 weeks and 80.3% achieved sustainable outcomes of at least 26 weeks. The overall 73.2% positive employment and education outcome rate for participants in BoysTown's employment programs appears to be higher than the benchmarks for similar target groups in the national Job Services Australia labour market assistance programs.

These findings enumerate BoysTown's success in relation to helping unemployed youth to transition into full-time sustainable employment.

Social Outcomes and Predictive Functions

There is evidence of significantly positive and important changes experienced by youth in BoysTown's social enterprise programs across time. This change applies not only to their transition to **work**, **but also to their personal and social development**. **The former** show with numbers in work and an increased work readiness and willingness for work, and an action-oriented awareness of these things in the interests of "being in work" that occurred across time in the program. **The latter** revolve around significant shifts in wellbeing and self-esteem and substantial improvement in social interactions with characteristics of greater communicability, cooperation and planning. Upon completion of BoysTown's employment programs, there were statistically significant improvements from commencement across a range of areas, such as:

- Antisocial and offending behaviour
 - 77.9% had no trouble with the police – 21.2% improvement
 - 73.9% had anger management problems – 18.8% improvement
 - 73.9% had avoided physical altercations – 28% improvement
- Substance abuse
 - 75% had not taken illicit drugs – 22.7% improvement

- Self-esteem and emotional wellbeing
 - 84.7% of participants were able to face their problems – 19.3% increase
 - 82.2% were satisfied with themselves overall – 15.5% increase
 - 70.3% had a healthy level of self-respect – 27.7% improvement
 - 68% were no longer feeling useless – 26.1% improvement
- Language, literacy and numeracy
 - 83.5% had effective functional language and communication skills – 16.5% increase
 - 74.7% had effective functional literacy skills – 19.7% improvement
 - 51.4% had effective functional numeracy skills – 21.5% increase
- Personal agency
 - 82% were willing to learn new skills – 26.8% increase
 - 84.5% were utilising resources to reach their goals – 33.8% increase
- Interpersonal and relational agency
 - 78.3% were effective at cooperating with others to achieve goals – 28.6% increase
 - 71.1% were engaged in help-seeking behaviour to achieve goals – 22.5% increase
- Decision-making
 - 77.5% had effective data comprehension skills in decision-making – 34.1% increase
 - 88.9% felt in control of their decisions – 26.8% increase
- Future outlook
 - 85.2% were optimistic about the future – 21.8% improvement
 - 85.2% had specific goals for the future – 34.1% increase

There are across-group differences in the data. This is shown particularly in a discriminant analysis that yielded a predictive function based on the combination of the nature of a participant's referral, their standing in relation to a prior record in the juvenile justice system, whether they are Indigenous and their level of self-esteem. Those youth with negative ratings on source of referral, justice system record and self-esteem variables and who are Indigenous are overrepresented among those who fail to complete their program at BoysTown.

There are several differences for Indigenous youth in relation to the total group. Proportionally, Indigenous youth have greater representation at BoysTown than in the Australian community. There is a higher proportion of males compared with the total group. Proportionally more have detention histories on coming to BoysTown. However, proportionally fewer re-enter detention when at BoysTown and there were no new detainees while at BoysTown among Indigenous participants in our sample. Critically, no significant difference existed for Indigenous youth in sticking-with-the program through to completion. Thus, while being Indigenous is a negative part of the holistic discriminant function that predicts who will complete their social enterprise program, there is no appreciable indication of success or failure in being Indigenous where there is no direct relation between Indigeneity and other components of the profile.

There are indicators of likely future detention at least while youth are participating at BoysTown. Participants' prior record of detention, male gender and non-Indigeneity apply. Those most likely to be detained while at BoysTown are non-Indigenous males who have prior records of detention. Indigenous youth who in the population at large and in the study sample are overrepresented in detention numbers prior to arrival at BoysTown have a spectacularly good record in this regard once at BoysTown.

There are factors that allow the identification of those who complete the program compared to those who withdraw. The profile derived from this data presents most strongly as an interactive set of the four variables mentioned above as a significant across-group difference. It is not tenable to separate these components – for example, data from the study indicate that Indigeneity alone is not predictive of success or failure in completion of a program.

This data is evidence that changes for the better have occurred concerning participants' quality of life. This includes improvement in self-esteem, wellbeing and outlook, and decreases in detention. BoysTown's success with youth, and particularly with Indigenous youth, is strong.

BoysTown's endeavour through transition-to-work using social enterprises and associated programs is successful in quantifiable terms with clients and in ways that are consistent with its stated mission.

Recommendations

- 1. BoysTown review operational procedures for induction and case management to ensure staff are cognisant of strengths and limitations of the entry profile as a basis for:**
 - a. Early prediction of youth who do not fit this profile and are at particular risk of not completing a transition-to-work program; and
 - b. Staff development where staff critically consider the profile and its potential uses.
- 2. In reviewing operational procedures and staff development for induction and case management for youth who do not fit the entry profile, BoysTown:**
 - a. Commend staff for evidence in the report of their creating opportunities around youth's success for them to evaluate their contribution and reappraise their senses of competence and worth;
 - b. Highlight the significant progress youth have made where their self-esteem has been bolstered; and
 - c. Investigate alternate strategies to strengthen the engagement of youth likely to disengage from the social enterprise program.
- 3. BoysTown develop training programs that could be used across the social enterprise sector to build the knowledge and skills of practitioners about how to facilitate the key enabling factors, that drive the achievement of education and employment outcomes with young people, in their practice.**
- 4. BoysTown convene a meeting of social enterprise service providers with a view to:**
 - a. Engaging Commonwealth and State Governments to develop an industry plan to increase and sustain Social Enterprise – Intermediate Labour Market Programs in Australia, with the aim of reducing long-term unemployment; and
 - b. Connecting with Commonwealth and State Government Education Departments to develop referral pathways for young people, at risk of premature disconnection from school, into transition-to-work programs as a diversionary strategy to reduce the numbers of youth entering chronic cycles of unemployment and poverty.

Background

Describing what BoysTown is doing to assist disconnected youth “improve their quality of life” through its transition-to-work programs was at the hub of this research, and designing a model that may help BoysTown and other like agencies in this endeavour was a key objective. In the wider context, the project was instigated in an attempt to provide a researched contribution to Australia’s attempts to find a solution for the half-million of its youth (15-24 years) who are failing in transition to work (Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2005) with negative consequences for themselves and associated disadvantage to national wellbeing and economic strength (Figgis, 2004).

Gaps in the existing literature regarding how best to describe and predict successful transitions into work and its associated prosocial adjustment for youth with prejudicial social histories prompted a grant submission to the Australian Research Council (ARC) to study BoysTown’s “Work As Therapy” approach that had yielded promising outcomes against State and Commonwealth criteria. The ARC funded the application (LP 0776519) and its systematic observation began in 2008.

This project is significant in four ways. First, in focusing on Australian youth (15-24 years) it addresses a problem existing for a specific and major age group of the Nation’s population. Second, it is cognisant of the relationship through which sustained unemployment throughout this important developmental period decreases choices for individuals and is also associated in this demographic group with relatively high rates of offending, breakdowns in relationships, health and wellbeing issues and general loss of capacity. The effects of these problems reach far beyond Australia’s disengaged youth themselves. Heavy social and economic costs of supporting these young Australians add to the concern. A third significant aspect of this research is its tracking of youth participants through their involvement in training and to subsequent work placement. In doing so, the investigation extends beyond whether participants recognise, choose and develop skills associated with making them work-ready; to testing what are the enablers in the target programs that assist them to become work-capable. Fourth, the research is significant because it explores changes in participants’ wellbeing and personal development and any association these have with their preparedness to stick with training and resilience in work placements.

Introducing the Project

About BoysTown

BoysTown is a not-for-profit organisation owned by the De La Salle Institute that delivers services and programs to socially-excluded young people to improve their quality of life and to promote their positive participation in society. The De La Salle Brothers were established in 1680 by Jean Baptist de La Salle in France to provide Christian and Human education services especially for the poor (De La Salle Brothers, 2008a). De La Salle Brothers from France and Ireland arrived in Australia in 1906 opening the De La Salle College in Armidale, New South Wales and thereafter a number of schools in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia (De La Salle Brothers, 2008b). The De La Salle Brothers expanded to Papua New Guinea in 1946 and to New Zealand in 1953. In 1961, De La Salle Brothers established BoysTown, commencing with residential services in Beaudesert, Queensland for young men in conflict with the justice system (BoysTown, 2011). Currently, the De La Salle Brothers and its partners operate in 80 countries worldwide (De La Salle Brothers, 2008c).

In Australia, the De La Salle Brothers have provided sections of the community in need with a range of supportive services and programs operated by BoysTown. These include Kids Helpline - a national 24/7 telephone and online counselling service for youth, and a complementary Parentline service currently operating in Queensland and the Northern Territory that provides counselling support for parents and carers. BoysTown also supports families experiencing homelessness and women and children seeking refuge from domestic/family violence through the provision of short-term accommodation and therapeutic interventions. It also delivers parenting programs that provide case work, individual and group work support and child development programs for young parents and their children (such as the Penrose Young Parents Program at Port Pirie, South Australia; Glugor Young Parents Program at Deception Bay, Queensland; and the Mothers and Children's Centre at Balgo, Western Australia). In relation to the major focus of the ARC supported research project, BoysTown in 2000 began operating social enterprises to prepare disconnected youth for transition to the mainstream workforce. This provision involved vocational training, education and employment programs supported as needed with wrap-around care services.

In the La Sallian tradition, BoysTown's core values are:

- **Being a Brother and Sister to All:** The importance of the quality of relationships, between the organisation, the people it serves and within the community.
- **Faith and Zeal:** A strong faith dimension is critical to the quality of BoysTown services and an important motivating force.
- **Professionalism:** The maintenance of high standards of quality in everything that BoysTown does.
- **Perseverance in Service:** 'Standing by' the people served by BoysTown.
- **Innovation and Resourcefulness:** The courage to be at the forefront of finding new, creative and efficient responses to the most urgent needs of young people.

These core values shape the delivery of BoysTown services to its various clients who include all youth regardless of gender, race or religion. While there is no 'representative client' to describe who accesses BoysTown's Employment, Education and Training programs, many participants present with histories of family dysfunction, exposure to violence, abuse or neglect, low levels of literacy and numeracy, substance use, prior criminal behaviour, unstable accommodation, mental illness, long-term unemployment and generational poverty. Young people are referred to BoysTown from a range of agencies that address the aforementioned issues. These include family and children's agencies, and agencies otherwise concerned with domestic violence, child protection, education, substance rehabilitation, juvenile and correctional, accommodation, mental health and income support services. Additionally, many young people in BoysTown's social enterprise programs are referred from BoysTown's Job Services Australia programs. BoysTown notes that "while there have been changes in how we have delivered care over the years, our commitment firmly remains in providing support for the most disadvantaged young people in our society" (BoysTown, 2011). Historical milestones in the development of the BoysTown organisation are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. BoysTown Australia in historical perspective.

Year	Event
1961	Residential services for boys opened by the De La Salle Brothers in Beaudesert, Queensland
	First Art Union was conducted
1991	Kids Helpline telephone counselling began in Queensland
	Youth welfare and advocacy services were established in Logan, Queensland
1993	Kids Helpline became a national service
1995	Parentline began in Queensland
1996	Glugor House parenting program opened in Logan, Queensland
1999	Kids Helpline commenced email counselling
2000	Kids Helpline commenced the world's first real-time web counselling
	Social enterprises commenced in Logan, Queensland
2001	Residential services ceased at Beaudesert, Queensland
2002	BoysTown became an incorporated entity operating under an independent Board
	San Miguel Family Centre in Richmond, New South Wales became a BoysTown service
	BoysTown Employment Services opened in Woodridge, Queensland
	Parenting and early development services opened in Deception Bay and Capalaba, Queensland
2004	Domestic violence refuge opened
	Parentline expanded to Northern Territory
	Employment and training services commenced in Port Pirie, South Australia
	School-to-work programs began in Logan, Queensland
2005	Training services and school-to-work programs expanded to Ipswich, Redlands and Carole Park in Queensland and Port Pirie in South Australia
2006	Employment and training services commenced in Adelaide, South Australia
	BoysTown Employment Services opened in Blacktown and Campbelltown, New South Wales
	Pre-employment services expanded in south-east Queensland
2007	Beaudesert site officially closed
2008	Services commenced in the Tjurabalan region in remote Western Australia
	Graffiti-removal enterprise commenced in Blacktown, New South Wales
	Horticulture enterprises commenced in Blacktown and Campbelltown, New South Wales
	Parenting program began in Port Pirie, South Australia
2009	Job Services Australia expanded the employment services into Ipswich, Inala and the Redlands in south-east Queensland and Elizabeth and Port Pirie in South Australia
	Graffiti-removal enterprise began in Ipswich, Queensland
2010	Youth Connections commenced in south-east Queensland
	Western Sydney enterprises in New South Wales expanded to include tree-planting
	Parental and Community Engagement (PaCE) program commenced in Logan
2011	PaCE program began in Ipswich
	BoysTown's 50th Anniversary

BoysTown currently employs over 500 staff across Australia. It is comprised of three divisions: Fundraising and Corporate Services; Counselling Services; and Employment, Education and Training.

Fundraising and Corporate Services

Corporate Services is based at the Head Office in Milton, Queensland. This division includes Strategy and Research, Communications, Finance, Business Systems Administration, Information Technology, Property, Corporate Relations and Human Resources encompassing Occupational Health and Safety. Altogether, these Corporate Service units support the service delivery and Fundraising operations of BoysTown.

The Fundraising unit contains the BoysTown Art Union which contributes over two-thirds of BoysTown's operational income. It currently operates 10 luxury-house and five prestige-car Art Unions each year. Other sources of income include financial, in-kind and pro bono support from corporate partners and other donors.

Counselling Services

The Counselling Services Division delivers telephone, online and face-to-face counselling services. As noted, BoysTown operates Kids Helpline, a national telephone, web and email counselling service for young people aged between five and 25 years. The counselling centre also provides the Parentline counselling and support service for Queensland and the Northern Territory.

The residential services in BoysTown also are part of the Counselling Services division. BoysTown's refuge for women and their children who have experienced domestic violence is one example. It is different from most other refuges in that it accepts older male teenage children. The other residential service offered by BoysTown is the San Miguel Family Centre in North Richmond, New South Wales, where homeless families are provided with short-term accommodation and support.

Early parenting and development programs are offered by BoysTown for young parents in Deception Bay in Queensland, Port Pirie in South Australia, and Balgo in the remote Tjurabalan region in Western Australia. Another early intervention and prevention program is Communities for Children which operates in Deception Bay, Queensland. In this Federal Government funded initiative, BoysTown works collaboratively with local agencies and

communities to assist vulnerable families improve the development of their children (up to 12 years of age). This is achieved through the development and implementation of activities such as recreational, parenting training, peer mentoring, playgroups and language outreach programs. Counselling Services also delivers the Parental and Community Engagement (PaCE) program in Logan and Ipswich. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) provides funding for this program to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children through support activities aimed at families, communities and education providers.

Clinical practice supervision is another key component of Counselling Services' work. Clinical practice supervisors are qualified psychologists and other experienced human service professionals who provide training and professional supervision to frontline staff in the form of critical incident debriefing, case reviews and the development of practice and skills to assist in dealing with clients more effectively.

Employment, Education and Training

During this research project, the Employment, Education and Training arm of BoysTown had three sections - Job Services, Training Education and Support, and Transitional Employment. These programs and services are targeted at young people aged 15 to 25 years and during the research project were located in Ipswich, Inala, Logan and Redlands in Queensland, Blacktown and Campbelltown in New South Wales, Adelaide and Port Pirie in South Australia and Balgo in the Tjurabalan region in Western Australian. A suite of programs available for young people based on their needs, included:

- Programs to assist the transition from school to work
- Employability skills training where young people can develop skills for searching and applying for jobs
- Vocational and pre-employment training where young people can acquire the necessary skills as well as learn about the obligations of work and succeeding in the work environment
- Social enterprises where young people can gain real work experience, and
- Job-seeking programs to place young people into jobs in the open labour market.

Job Services Australia Programs

BoysTown's Job Services Australia programs are funded by the Federal Government. BoysTown is a specialist youth provider in this network and focuses on assisting socially-excluded job seekers aged 15 to 25 years to obtain employment. The clients of Job Services are assisted through employability skills training, literacy and numeracy training, participation in BoysTown's personal development programs and referrals to internal and external counselling and other specialist services dealing with issues such as substance abuse, homelessness, mental health and anger management.

Training, Education and Support

Training, Education and Support consists of programs that focus on addressing the employability, vocational and pre-employment needs of young people.

Get Set for Work was one such program that targeted young people aged 15 to 17 years in the south-east Queensland sites. This was previously funded by the Queensland Government. The program provided practical activities and accredited training aimed at improving literacy and numeracy, social skills and the work-readiness of young people who struggled to make the transition from school to further education, training or work. A similar alternative education program is Flipside which is offered in Adelaide and Port Pirie for young people aged 15 to 19 years. Flipside is funded by the South Australian Government and is aimed at re-engaging young people with education, training or employment.

Alternative education is still offered as a core part of a wider program called Youth Connections which is aimed at young people aged 14 to 18 years who are disengaging or are already disengaged from education in the Ipswich, Logan and Redlands areas in Queensland. The other core component of Youth Connections is Work Options. This component is for young people aged 15 years and over where participants can be involved in employability-skills training programs, accredited vocational-skills training, work experience with local employers, and employment in BoysTown's social enterprises.

The Training, Education and Support area also provides vocational training and work experience to assist young people with their work-readiness. Skilling Queenslanders for Work at the time of the research project was a Queensland Government initiative that funded BoysTown to provide employment preparation and training to young people aged 15 to 25 years. The Job Preparation component of Skilling Queenslanders for Work

involved BoysTown developing the employability of young people through job search, communication and interview skills training and also provided vocational training in warehousing, aged care, manufacturing and civil construction. The Work Projects component of Skilling Queenslanders for Work offered vocational training and paid work experience for up to 16 weeks on community and environmental projects for young people in Ipswich, Logan and Redlands in Queensland. Participate in Prosperity is a similar program based in Logan that offered mentoring and training in manufacturing to ex-offenders. Recently, the Queensland Government announced it was discontinuing the funding for and operations of Skilling Queenslanders for Work programs which also encompass Get Set For Work and Participate in Prosperity.

In South Australia, a State Government initiative called Skills for the Future is available for young people aged 16 to 21 years who do not yet have an adequate level of vocational and non-vocational skills to be ready for open employment. This pre-employment program delivers accredited and non-accredited training to improve the personal development and vocational skills of young people. In Port Pirie, the South Australian Government funds Work for the Dole projects where young people aged 18 to 25 years gain skills in landscaping, park maintenance and construction. If young people on completion of these pre-employment programs in Training, Education and Support still are not ready for the open labour market workforce, then there is the option for relevant work experience in BoysTown's Transitional Employment programs.

Transitional Employment

The Transitional Employment section of BoysTown's Employment, Education and Training Division contains the social enterprise programs. Social enterprises are intermediate labour market programs that provide socially-excluded groups of people with opportunities to gain work skills and to develop their non-vocational skills with the objective of improving their work readiness for the open labour market (BoysTown 2010a). BoysTown operates social enterprises for young people aged 15 to 25 years in the disadvantaged socio-economic areas of Logan in Queensland, Blacktown and Campbelltown in New South Wales, Adelaide and Port Pirie in South Australia and the Tjurabalan region in Western Australia. As noted, social enterprises prepare socially-excluded young people for the open labour market through the provision of paid employment, on-the-job training and work that is relevant and mainstream. The social enterprises are operated in a real-life work environment where work is viewed as a large part of the therapy involved in a meaningful and sustainable reconnection. BoysTown has its own national award agreement which covers the terms and conditions of social enterprise employees' work.

Young people are also assisted to overcome their multi-faceted barriers to gaining and maintaining employment through ongoing case management and personal development workshops. Pre-employment training may also occur depending on the type of social enterprise and the needs of the participant. In addition, some social enterprises provide young people with opportunities to obtain accredited qualifications through TAFE.

In Western Australia, BoysTown operates construction, repairs and maintenance enterprises funded by the State Government for people in the remote Aboriginal communities of the Tjurabalan region. The Federal Government also provides joint funding for construction enterprises in this area. In south-east Queensland, landscaping enterprises are carried out in Logan with funding from the Logan City Council. A cafe enterprise operates in Wacol in partnership with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). At the time of this research project, a fencing enterprise was also operating in Logan. In New South Wales, there are landscaping and street-tree planting enterprises operating in Blacktown and Campbelltown, while graffiti-removal and asset-maintenance enterprises operate in Blacktown. The New South Wales Government provides funding for the landscaping, graffiti-removal and asset-maintenance enterprises and the street-tree planting enterprise operates on a 'fee for service' basis. In South Australia, construction and landscaping enterprises operate in Adelaide and Port Pirie. The Adelaide enterprises are funded by the Playford City Council and the Port Pirie enterprise is funded by agreements with community and commercial organisations as they arise.

In BoysTown's social enterprises, Vocational Youth Trainers individually supervise teams of four to eight young people. The Youth Trainers are responsible for teaching the young people work skills and for acting as role models in these various real-life work environments. The experiential learning also covers aspects such as functional literacy and numeracy, communication and teamwork.

The Youth Trainers are supported by Youth Workers who provide ongoing case management for young people in the social enterprises and also deliver workshops to address pertinent issues faced by youth. As part of the case management process, Youth Workers conduct the intake and assessment of young people when they enter BoysTown to determine their needs and work barriers. Following from this, a Youth Worker will complete a case plan with agreed goals with the client and then assess their progress in achieving these goals on a weekly or monthly basis until the client exits BoysTown. Depending on the program, the Youth Worker may continue to follow-up with the client for three months following exit. Youth Workers and other staff also deliver group workshops and

non-accredited training dealing with issues such as employability skills, relationships, teamwork, life skills, driver training, alcohol and other drugs, outdoor adventure, creative processes and health.

The wider management structure around the social enterprises includes Operations Coordinators, Transitional Employment Managers and Regional Managers for each state. The General Manager and National Operations Manager leads and coordinates the work of the whole Employment, Education and Training Division.



The Purpose of the Project and the Need for Research

Two things became readily apparent when meeting with BoysTown’s senior managers in 2006 and seeing the scope of BoysTown’s employment services. First, as this outline shows, BoysTown was and is an important entity in Australia’s effort to redress its youth-unemployment problem. The men and women of BoysTown have been making inroads into the disconnection with work that large numbers of youth with whom they engage demonstrate. Data from the evaluation of its Western Sydney Horticulture enterprises across 2008-2009 (BoysTown, 2010b) indicated that 78% of clients obtained employment, engaged in further training or re-engaged with education. Furthermore, 72% of trainees completed their program and maintained their “continuously in-work” outcome for at least 13 weeks. Most had received not only guidance and tutelage in the skills involved in the work of a particular social enterprise, but also had been mentored about hygiene and grooming, timeliness and proper workplace behaviours, and in the literacy and numeracy associated with the functional issues of work and workplace, costs and quantities of the materials used, travel to and from the workplace, and healthy food for lunches and smokos. They were learning also how to make basic design drawings and labelling of the sites and features of their work – such as depictions of where a homeowner wanted landscaping items placed. The completion-rate data speaks to high percentage success with these youth not only in relation to getting into work, but also to realising and dealing with personal and social skills that provide important context for continuing to grow. Second, BoysTown knew that the programs and an interlocked support system that reflected genuine caring for their clients were working, but there was a lack of verifiable evidence to explain the outcomes. Hence, BoysTown and Griffith University were brought together in a collaborative partnership to investigate the evidence behind any of BoysTown’s successes, the key components and processes in BoysTown’s model, and areas for improvement.

Literature that Informed the Project

This review outlines literature underpinning the issue that drew BoysTown into an empirical investigation of its effort, through work-readiness programs, to retrieve Australian youth whose own attempts at transition to work had been unsuccessful. It examines first what current knowledge told us of the consequences when young people fail to move forward individually and as citizens following their compulsory years of schooling and the incidence of such failure for Australian youth. It moved then to what Australia and other nations have been doing to prevent such failure. It concluded by examining what nations and institutions do when pre-emptive moves have been unproductive, to retrieve and reconnect as many of their disaffected young citizens as possible. The rationale for this investigation sits within this context.

The Dusseldorp Skills Forum (DSF) (2005) had revealed 15% of 15 to 19-year olds and 24% of 20 to 24-year olds met the cut-off key indicator in defining poor transition from school to work. These data represented young people neither in full-time education nor full-time employment, approximately 200,000 of 15 to 19-year olds and 300,000 of 20 to 24-year olds - a half-million youth at the time of our initial discussions about the project [Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), August 2006]. Five years later, 16% of Australian 15-19 year olds and 26% of 20-24 year olds are neither in full-time education nor full-time employment (Foundation for Young Australians, 2011), this despite the general unemployment rate at 5.3% (ABS, May 2011).

The problem is exacerbated when underemployment, i.e. the underutilisation of people's total work availability, is added (Lacharite, 2002), representing a grim consistency in a comparison for youth in relation to all underutilised Australians as shown for August 2009 in the ABS 2009 data (Figure 1).

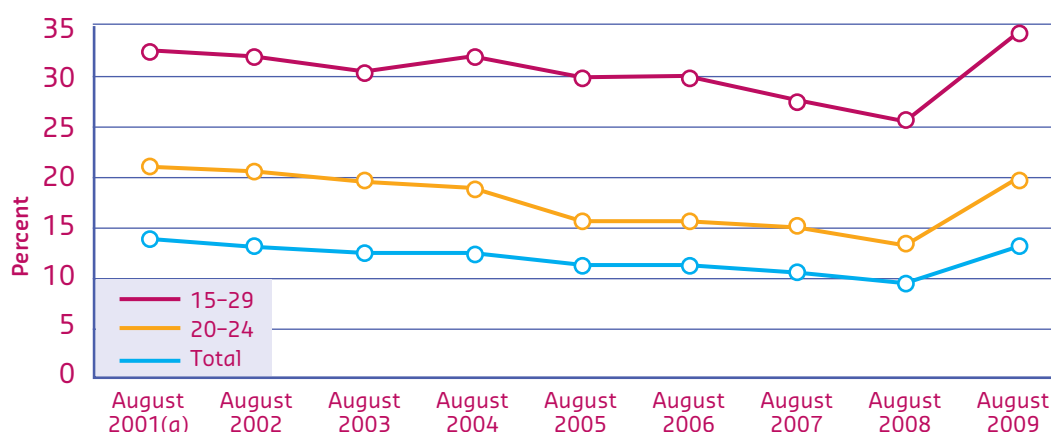


Figure 1. Labour force underutilisation rate (youth and total): Trend May 2001 - May 2009 (ABS, 2009).

Effects of this problem reach far beyond the personal consequences experienced by disengaged youth themselves, albeit that these are typically debilitating and often dire - including severe emotional problems (Higgins, 2003; Karpur, Clark, Caproni, & Sterner, 2005) and breakdown in agency – their capacities to act for themselves in the world, disrupted relationships including those involving family (Behrens & Evans, 2002; Dwyer, 2004; Henman, 2002), impediments to wellbeing and high rates of offending typically with associated arrests and incarceration (Traub & Weisstein, 2010). The heavy social and economic costs of supporting youth-in-trouble are borne by community. In addition to loss of capacity in the community's workforce, there are expenses to be paid when youth have no food or housing, no means of paying for health care and are at the far end of socially-responsible behaviour where their actions associate with policing, court and jail. Costs to keep someone in prison were estimated by the Productivity Commission in 2004 to be between \$62,000 and \$100,000 per person, per year - much higher than corresponding unemployment-expenditure data from the Department of Family and Community Services four years earlier that had placed annual costs between \$41,000 and \$46,000 per person (Gauntlett, Hugman, Kenyon, & Logan, 2000).

This expense continues to spiral. Mission Australia noted that the Juvenile Justice System in New South Wales spent \$160 million dollars in 2007-08 (Mission Australia Annual Review, 2009) and the Queensland Attorney General provided a per person 2009-costing of \$72,000. With health and family support expenditure added, the economic effects of youth disengagement amount to multibillions annually. The Smith Family estimated that youth unemployment by 2003 was an expense to Australia of \$2.6 billion per year (Muir, McGuire, Slack-Smith, & Murray, 2003). Meantime the Commonwealth Auditor-General's Report to Parliament (2009, volume vi) shows that the number of young people detained in the system had increased along with the daily cost which had now reached a staggering \$198,195 per person per year. At the same time, however, the cost of support through juvenile community-based care programs was less than \$7,300 per person per year.

Such losses spread across society. Chronically unemployed youth suffer incapacity in relation to continuation of normal growth trajectories; community suffers from the social consequences of experiencing some of its young slipping well below true agency in contributing to the common good, and in deploying resources to sustain this group in the hope of their eventual retrieval and reconnection as active and participating members of our society.

Australia's attempt to decrease numbers of unemployed youth has included encouraging those who have dropped out before completing Year 12 with the offer of its Youth Allowance to return to study for a Year 12 Certificate at school or its equivalent through TAFE (for 16-20 year olds, and for some 15 year olds; and with its Newstart Allowance program), or in an apprenticeship (for 16-24 year olds and through to its completion) or for some 25 year olds and older with Austudy. Most recently, the 2011 Federal budget offered a financial incentive to families to keep their teens at school longer with those eligible able to claim an extra \$4,200 for a child aged between 16 and 19 years as part of the Family Tax Benefit (FTB). These programs of financial support pragmatically look at credentialing outcomes as the yardstick of success, with a Certificate II (or higher) TAFE qualification and an apprenticeship suggesting an achievement of work-related skills, whereas the Year 12 Certificate and the new taxation concession are somewhat less specific.

To some extent these programs reflect Aspin and Chapman's (2000) account that:

in Australia there has been, on the part of many policy makers, educators and community members, a strong commitment to the idea of lifelong learning ... (but) until recently there has been much less clarity about the ways in which the term itself is understood and even less about ways in which it may be and should be applied. Thus, although the concept of "lifelong learning" has been used in a wide variety of contexts in Australia and has a wide currency, its meaning has often been unclear and its operationalisation and implementation have not been hitherto widely achieved on anything other than a piecemeal basis. (p. 12)

The dilemma may be that credentialing doesn't necessarily account for lifelong learning across a broad spectrum, for example, to include outcomes that Aspin and Chapman's (2000) had suggested as a policy priority for Australian government:

Lifelong learning for a more highly skilled workforce

Lifelong learning for a stronger democracy and more inclusive society, and

Lifelong learning for a more personally rewarding life. (p. 2).

White (1982) described the concept of lifelong learning as the preparation of individuals for the management of their adult lives. For many, such preparation is evident early. Cobb-Clark (2010) found that students who thought they were in control of their own lives achieved more and with such positive effect that her advice to educators was to focus

explicitly and early on establishing with all students their sense of control. Its instantiation as Cobb-Clark (2010) advocated, and the agency, goal-setting and decision-making that follows it, may indeed be critical. Transition from school to work or further study is a positive and significant step for those who do it successfully and for the nation of which they are part. Yet the high rates of youth unemployment in Australia suggest there is something wrong. Significant numbers continue to falter in taking this step.

Personal and interpersonal dissociation issues for those who fail to transition after the compulsory years of schooling include poor levels of functional literacy and numeracy, personal despondency and general inactivity, higher incidences of drug and alcohol abuse, family disconnections and homelessness, and police and court records for antisocial behaviour (Carter & Lunsford, 2005; Carter & Wehby, 2003). To these individuals, such costs are horrendous; to the nation, they represent an appalling loss of capacity and a huge charge against its social welfare provision (Figgis, 2004). With each new year, others join the ranks of those from previous years who remain unemployed and not in further education. Those still out-of-work are older and hence more costly to employ. They may have done the rounds of possible contacts and opportunities with employment agencies and are at great risk of losing belief in the functional realities of self-control that are the essence of Cobb-Clark's (2010) contention. Scarpetta, Sonnet & Manfred (2010) noted that:

beyond the negative effects on future wages and employability, long spells of unemployment while young often create permanent scars through the harmful effects on a number of other outcomes, including happiness, job satisfaction and health, many years later. ... About 30-40% of school-leavers in the OECD are estimated as being at risk, either because they cumulate multiple disadvantages (the group of so-called "left behind youth") or because they face barriers to find stable employment (the group of so called "poorly integrated new entrants")... The international evidence from evaluations of training programs for disadvantaged youth is not encouraging, and when unemployment levels rise suddenly, it may be difficult to meet both quantity and quality objectives for training programs. (p. 4)

Australia's unemployed youth – already an unbalanced representation of the unemployed per se – has further aberration in the disproportionate number of Indigenous teenagers who are included (Muir, et al., 2003). The consequences of membership regardless of race are dire. For example, young males not in the workforce have a higher mortality rate by 8.6 times than their working or studying counterparts (Muir, et al., 2003). The need to halt and reduce the trend is obvious and urgent.

Pre-emptive Attempts to Ease Youth into Work

A systematic development of transition schemes aimed at helping Australian youth who were dislocated in attempts to transition through and from school to work or further education followed from recommendations of the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce (2001). They included two which had recently been reviewed [Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) 2004a, 2004b] as our early discussions began on the current project. The two programs were Partnership Outreach Education Model (POEM) – which was a second chance for those with difficulties engaging with mainstream education, training or employment, and Career and Transition (CAT) – which sought to implement a “comprehensive career and transition system” (p. 7) for all young people.

Pilots of both programs had been evaluated as making significant inroads into the dislocation issue and had demonstrated, “at an individual level and for the society as a whole - the benefits of supporting young people with their transitions through school (including those whose re-entry to education opportunities is being tested through the POEM Pilot) and from school to further education, training and work” (p. 17). The “support” for youth was personal, development-oriented and coordinated in delivery across many service agencies available through an advisor - whom youth knew was the source of help. The reviewers observed that:

This model appears to successfully complement the State/Territory initiatives and may represent a cost effective strategy for collaborative partnerships between the Australian Government and the States and Territories for the establishment of a national youth transition system. Like the delivery of mainstream educational services, however, this model requires greater resourcing in more remote or widely dispersed regions. (p. 13)

The features of coordination and identifiable “go to” people for support in both models are reflected in what BoysTown seeks to provide in its transition to work programs – the former in its “wrap-around” care model wherein any issues of personal concern for a participant in such areas as health, justice, accommodation and socialisation are addressed through BoysTown services and the participant supported as outlined above; the latter through case management and frontline connectedness with Youth Trainers and Youth Workers assigned to each group in each program.

The Australian Government took pre-emptive measures in 2005 to address youth issues in employment. Its social policy in that year (Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2005) included a whole of government approach to supporting young people in building community partnerships. For example, the Australian Youth Forum was instituted to engage young people so that their ideas could be part of public discussion intended to influence the development of social-economic policy. The initiatives such as forums, a website and outreach visits by the Minister and a Youth Engagement Steering Committee focused on involvement and included topics that varied from the celebration of Anzac Day to suggestions for the improvement of Centrelink services to young people with disabilities. These moves reflected closely an emerging literature (e.g. Carter & Lunsford, 2005) which was emphasising youth participation and community linkages. The Government Youth website (youth.gov.au) has a suite of information available for young people and those community groups seeking information and direction in relation to youth issues including work. Nonetheless, while providing information is an important and positive move, young people still need the motivation and skill to value, access and utilise the information, and to expect that doing so will be productive (Vansteenkiste, Lens, De Witte, Feather, 2005).

Youth Forums have been used to frame Youth Policy. There has been an attempt at a national level to take a coordinated approach to skills development that forces all government departments to play a part in coordinated provision. In 2009 the Stocktake of Australian Government Initiatives for Young People made a considerable effort to ensure that all government departments understood and participated in youth activities and initiatives. Activities were grouped under six themes: Expressing yourself, Having fun and being active; Family, community and communication; Health, wellbeing and development; Pathways, work and money; Learning and skills development; and, A productive and sustainable Australia.

Some interventions aimed at addressing such issues have had stunning success. Australia-wide there have been a range of government-sponsored, school-based apprenticeship and pre-vocational programs introduced with subsidies to employers that provide a more flexible set of arrangements for all students to consider and explore positive transition from school to work. For example, South Australia in 2007 introduced into its high school system a focus on these programs in order to project a better mix of transitional pathways from school study to the next phase of life for young people. Many of these were in partnership with TAFE South Australia. This appears to have had immediate and positive results with youth unemployment. Though still high (17% for 15-24 year olds), this level is significantly below the national average of 21% for this age group and appears

to be improving further. For example, the Australian Bureau of Statistics' data (ABS, August 2009) show that the number of South Australian 15-19-year olds looking for work had fallen to 8.4% - the lowest youth unemployment rate in Australia - and TAFE and university enrolments had increased across the state with TAFE SA mid-year applications up by 28 percent and a 23 percent increase in offers of training places overall (O'Brien, 2009; South Australian Tertiary Admissions Centre, 2009a, 2009b).

In addition to in-class action at school, several programs have been established in South Australia through which employers find and offer jobs and training to younger people who have dropped out of school. For example, the Youth Employment Program (YEP110) aimed to help long-term unemployed and disadvantaged SA youths to find work by targeting 110 young people for assistance. By October 2011, it had already deployed half this number in employment and workplace learning using Vocational Education and Training (VET).

Queensland broadened its range of accessible outcomes from schooling, widened the range of education and training available to school students and instituted a system of Youth Support Coordinators to help this happen with special attention to at risk students. These changes were promoted particularly under its Education and Training Reforms for the Future (ETRF) policy. The policy was introduced in 2002, trialled (2002-2005) and is ongoing and responsive to state and national imperatives (Harreveld & Singh, 2007). In Queensland, the national 'Learning or Earning' policy requires young people after finishing their compulsory years of schooling (Year 10 or reaching age 16 years - whichever comes first) to then participate in education and training for:

- a further two years, or
- until they gain a Queensland Certificate of Education, or
- until they gain a Certificate III vocational qualification, or
- until they turn 17.

Activity aimed to alert youth to the diversity of outcome opportunities from the Senior Phase of Learning include a "Registration of Young People" system instituted in 2006 where students act on and further develop plans [Senior Education and Training (SET) Plans] that begin with the help of teachers and parents in Year 10 and then are registered with the Queensland Studies Authority. These plans map youths' education and career goals and the learning options available to them at their school, in TAFE institutes, and with other training providers. Youths' achievements in relation to their SETs are recorded, stored centrally and

reproduced on the Queensland Certificate of Education as reference documentation to show to prospective employers. The proportion of unemployment in Queensland has dropped considerably over the last 20 years for youth - those aged 15-19 years from 22.3% to 11.2% and 20-24 years from 14.0% to 5.3% (ABS, 2009, 2011). There is some evidence of a positive shift also in data from the learning element of the learning or earning objective. Just over half (51.8%) of the Queensland population aged 15-24 years was enrolled in a full-time or part-time course of study at an educational institution in 2010. This is a slight but positive change from 50.6% in 2001 (ABS, 2009, 2011).

Two aspects of the Queensland work connect directly with the ARC Project. State Government Youth Support Coordinators who work with schools, TAFE's and the community to help young people resolve personal and family issues associated with likely disengagement during their Senior Phase of Learning use a Get Set for Work program as one form of resolution. Students in this program complete work-linked preparation activities in place of what they had previously been doing which typically is academic work. In 2006, Queensland's Department of Education and Training expanded its Get Set for Work (GSFW) program by allocating an additional \$7.95m for over 1500 youth at high risk of disengaging as signalled for example, by frequent and significant suspensions or detentions at school. BoysTown has conducted several GSFW programs for the department.



What Nations and Institutions Do Where Pre-Emptive Moves Have Been Unproductive

Thus, the quantum of unemployed youth in Australia remains a concerning trend that is aligned with much international data from places such as Britain, Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. For example, Britain's Office of Statistics (March, 2011) showed youth unemployment there had reached 20.6 per cent of those in the 18-24 age cohort, a figure comparable with Australia's. Flow-on effects are similar. The forecasts for economic growth in UK have slipped from 2.0 percent to 1.5 percent while inflation has soared to 4% as the Bank of England struggles to avoid double dip recession (UK Office of Statistics, 2011).

There has been some success shown in studies in the US (Stoneman, 2002) and Europe (Auspos, Riccio, & White, 1999; Fieldhouse, Kalra, & Alam 2002) with government schemes through which unemployed youth do community work or undertake training while receiving payments, and also with programs where youth with severe personal or social emotional adjustment histories receive structured help, with the payment and better adjustment benefits appearing to be associated with better employment outcomes (Armstrong, Dedrick, & Greenbaum, 2003; Bullis, Morgan, Benz, Todis, & Johnson, 2002). Explanations (Fieldhouse, et al., 2002; Stoneman, 2002) tend to relate to increased opportunities for better adjustment associated through the relative assistance (payment/therapy) with numbers of youth moving successfully into work. However, there have been significant cautions, for example as Fieldhouse, et al., (2002) noted in their review of programs centred on the New Deal for Young People (NDYP) (Layard, 2002) which operated under various names throughout the UK from 1999 to October 2010:

Objective outcomes such as employment can be problematic, but there is strong evidence of positive impacts on employability, especially through work experience. However, our research emphasises the fact that participants are a self-selected section of young unemployed people, and there are major differences between participants and "avoiders". Most notably, non-participants were much more disaffected with the labor market and more negative about the New Deal. (p. 54)

NDYP was renamed in 2009 as the Flexible New Deal and had outcomes of 42.9% who went into employment while around 30% of leavers left without further details

of destination and 25.8% stayed in receipt of government social security benefits (UK Government Department for Work and Pensions, 2005). The scheme was replaced by the new conservative government in October 2011.

Two current initiatives by the British Government aimed at keeping their youth connected with community are The Youth Opportunity Card (YOC) and the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). The former gives some young people, aged 15-19 years, £25 (\$A63) a month to ensure they have access to positive and constructive pastimes, including at least two hours of sports. The idea is to keep marginalised young people connected with their community in constructive ways. Such an engagement is essential if pathways towards employment and training are to be kept open in the face of long-term failure to transition amongst many youth. The EMA is a response to young people dropping out of education/training because of lack of funds. The EMA provides small payments (up to £30 a week) to help meet costs and keep recipients in study.

Scarpetta et al (2010) urged improving the financial incentives for apprentices and their employers as well as suggesting that it is beneficial for young people to stay at school longer in order to obtain a recognised and valued qualification - provided employers valued the qualification. However, the co-requirement is that the later years of schooling need to offer a diverse range of choices, a move reflected in the South Australian initiative reported earlier. It was generally accepted that securing the school-to-work transition should go hand-in-hand with lowering the cost of employing low-skilled youth in their first job.

While the British Government implemented schemes for those youth still in education directed at keeping them in school rather than joining the increasingly large body of people who are long-term unemployed, there has been growth in the use of intermediate labour markets (ILMs) throughout Britain as a means of tackling long-term unemployment (Marshall & Macfarlane, 2000; Spear, 2006). Britain's ILM projects often are conducted as part of large scale national programs. For example, they were part of 3,370 projects in Scotland during 2000-2007 funded from the European Social Fund. There also is considerable interest currently in Wales where the Assembly Government under its "Go Wales" program has aimed ILM projects at reducing economic inactivity in the Convergence areas of North Wales and Regional Competitiveness and Employment areas of East Wales. In outlining the intention and scope of its large scale ILM-based initiative, the Welsh Government has provided a useful account of the ILM concept:

The Jobs Growth Wales program will provide unemployed young people aged 16-24, with a job opportunity for a six month period paid at national

minimum wage for a minimum of 25 hours per week. The Jobs Growth Wales Program commences in April 2012 and will create 4,000 jobs a year for job ready young people throughout Wales. Employers are able to claim a six month wage subsidy at National Minimum Wage for every young person on the program. The program will cater for young people that are job ready but have had difficulty securing employment. Young people will be gainfully employed for the duration of the program and the jobs created will be additional to, and not replace, positions that would otherwise be filled through usual recruitment. All job vacancies will be advertised through the Careers Wales Online Matching Service. The outcome of the program is to support young people to enter sustained employment including and where appropriate an Apprenticeship Opportunity. We will be looking at a 75% progression rate. The program will offer opportunities in the following areas:

Private Sector

This is where the majority of the jobs will be created. We will be supporting all aspects of the Private Sector from SME's to the larger Regionally Important and Anchor Companies in Wales to identify recruitment needs and match those employment opportunities with young people seeking work.

Voluntary Sector

We will be supporting community based job opportunities for young people in Wales who require a more intensive support in the work place. We will be extending the existing Wales Council for Voluntary Action's intermediate labour market pilot scheme, which is already proving successful in helping many young people who require more intensive support to reap the benefits from work experience opportunities. In recognition of the potential to further expand this support, we will commence a procurement exercise for additional contracts across the third sector, which we will implement from September 2012.

Support for Micro business

We will deliver a specific strand of support to assist micro businesses to recruit their first employee. In doing so, we will build on, and enhance, existing and planned packages of business support delivered through the Department for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science. (Welsh Government: Go Wales, 2012)

There is evidence of significant improvement in employability among long-term unemployed participants of ILM programs (Finn & Simmonds, 2003; Marshall & Macfarlane, 2000) though some note an absence of rigorous and objective evaluation of ILMs at this point in time, particularly in relation to whether increased employability comes at the expense of other sections of the community (Welsh Assembly Government, 2012), and under-researched cost-benefits (Mestan & Scutella, 2007). However, the extensive international commitment to them provides a solid basis for evaluation and this has begun to occur. For example, in a review of several evaluation studies of ILMs including Finn & Simmonds (2003) and Marshall & Macfarlane, (2000), Syrett (2008) saw that ILMs were addressing social challenges in innovative, effective and sustainable ways, concluding that what works best:

depends on particular local contexts (i.e. population characteristics, the nature of existing employment and training provision, the demands of local employers, local histories of economic development) and the needs of different groups. Services and policies therefore work best where they are planned locally in response to local circumstances and informed by sensitivity to diverse needs, engagement with people out of work and employer engagement. (pp. 1-2)

He continued,

successful interventions are characterised by: holistic interventions rather than focusing on only one aspect of employability; individualised approaches providing continuity of support and the right support at the right time; high quality personal advisors able to operate flexibly in relation to individual's needs; assessment and improvement of basic skills embarked upon at the earliest moment; continuity of training both in and out of employment; support for job search activity. (pp. 2-3)

Intermediate labour markets and social enterprises are an “emerging sector” in Australian attempts to challenge its unemployment issues, particularly with youth unemployment (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2012; Mestan & Scutella, 2007). To date, Government support through the Innovation Fund and the Jobs Fund has been for a total of 105 social enterprise projects, including intermediate labour markets and social enterprise support projects [Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2012]. These have been funded to the total value of \$73.6 million (DEEWR, 2012).

BoysTown's involvement in social enterprises since 2000 is one of the earliest in Australia and its assessment of the use of social enterprises as a pathway for disaffected youth to transition to work forms an important database for evaluation in the context of the promising outcomes reported internationally.

Synopsis

Australia's youth unemployment remains problematically high amid intensive steps by government to alleviate it through pre-emptive activity in the nation's schools and colleges and as part of the purview of The Australian Youth Forum established to strengthen its communication with youth. It also has supported a number of non-Government Agencies at local levels in an attempt to retrieve those youth already out-of-school and out-of-work, and those still in school but vulnerable, those willing to undertake specific training and general preparation for admission or re-admission to the workforce. BoysTown is one such agency and it has played an important role in reconnecting such youth through transition to work and work placement programs.

The study reported here has its rationale in BoysTown's expressed need to know more about its programs and support for youth at risk of long-term unemployment, in particular to identify evidence concerning success, and associated factors, and to ascertain evidence for improvement. The findings will better inform unemployed, disadvantaged youth, their families, government, advocacy and training organisations in choices concerned with achieving successful and sustainable transition to work. Specifically, the project aimed to:

- Capture the views of youth who successfully transition from unemployment and disaffected states to employment and positive participation in relation to the benefits for themselves, family and society
- Establish participants' accounts of training, placements and benefits in successful transition to work programs
- Broaden knowledge of what constitutes success to include accounts from participants and trainers
- Provide characterisations of self, family, society and work for those who are successful in their transition from these programs
- Explore the range of expectations that participants hold for their training, transition and sustainability in the workplace

- Describe support provided in target programs along with factors that characterise participants' response, specifically, skill development, attitudes, expectations, and health and social behaviours associated with the development, and
- Use data from the preceding to design a research-driven model of successful transition to work for disaffected youth, based on successful programs at BoysTown.



Project Methods

The project used a mixed-methods approach to provide measures of success in terms of work and other outcomes from BoysTown's transition to work programs and to capture what youth considered significant in accounting for them. Data were derived from quantitative and qualitative measures as BoysTown's youth reported what they saw as important and relevant in response to a combined survey and interview at the beginning, during and at or near the end of their programs with 40 volunteering as case studies. These data were triangulated with those provided by BoysTown's staff, employers of BoysTown's youth and others nominated by youth as significant to them.

Participants

Major participants were the 542 of BoysTown's youth who were beginning, about to begin or currently participating in a social enterprise or related program at BoysTown. The sample was youth aged between 14 and 55 years ($M = 18.8$ years; $s.d. 5.2$ years) and mostly males (M:F :: 75.1%:24.9%). Ethnicity was Caucasian (58.1%), Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (24.6%), Pacific Islander (8.3%), and not-disclosed (8.7%). Highest levels of schooling achieved by those no longer at school ($n=417$) spread relatively-evenly across Year 9 or lower (32.8%), Year 10 (37.4%) and Years 11-12 (39.7%). For those still at school ($n=98$), 79 were in their Senior Phase of Learning.

Additionally, 52 of BoysTown's staff provided data, 36 as respondents to a Staff Survey and 15 to interview. The former were service delivery staff - Youth trainers ($n=22$); Service delivery managers ($n=7$), Youth workers ($n=2$), Literacy and numeracy trainers ($n=2$), Coordinators ($n=2$), and a Regional Manager ($n=1$). The latter were executive and management staff - Chair of the Board, CEO, and section leaders.

Additional data were obtained from four employers (Appendix 6) and four people nominated by some participants as significant in their lives (Appendix 8).

Tools

Surveys

The measures were a combination of standard quantitative instruments and survey/interviews (Appendix 2) conducted with BoysTown's participants as near as possible to their

entry, mid and exit points of a program. The survey comprised demographic questions as well as complete scales from the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ12) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. In addition, items were selected from the Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale, the Outcome Questionnaire (OQ45), the Aspirations Index, the Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey and the Interpersonal and Personal Agency Scales, and following piloting in May 2008, in some cases adapted to better fit the BoysTown's client group. Survey items from the Personal and Interpersonal Agency Scale and the Aspirations Index were later adapted and added to the survey.

Surveys were conducted with a member of the research team present to assist as necessary where issues of literacy arose for respondents as readers or writers and at times became interviews where a respondent saw and took opportunity to elaborate on issues raised by a prompt in the survey. The entry measure sought along with respondents' background information, their self-assessments of work readiness and a range of personal and social skills including self-esteem and wellbeing, and expectations of their coming or recently-started experiences with BoysTown. This provided baseline data for the study. The exit survey was a repeated measure of these things with additions where appropriate to yield data depicting if and where changes existed from the point of entry concerning participants' experiences and self-assessments. Additional information from BoysTown's archive was included to identify outcomes for those who had then completed and moved on, or had failed to complete a program. Case studies were conducted with 40 of these youth to add individual description to the quantitative story.

The mid survey enabled some account to be established of the journey participants were making in transition. However, there was inconsistency in both the timing and the availability of mid responses across the sample, providing instability about these data which pre-empted its inclusion in repeated-measures time analysis.

The staff survey and interview

Surveys were sent to service delivery staff who completed and returned them as opportunity allowed and with minimal disruption to their service delivery work with youth participants, and by interview with managerial staff. In both cases, the objective was to provide respondents with opportunity to share their views, experience and reflections on the concept, operation and effects of BoysTown's transition-to-work programs.

The survey was comprised of 15 questions, eight of them open-ended, and the remainder having either Likert scale response categories (4-points: Not effective at all to Very effective) or categorical divisions (e.g. Role at BoysTown; Site at which you are working

on the program). The interview reflected the areas covered by the open-ended and Likert scale questions. Both instruments included provision for respondents to generate additional items (Appendix 2).

The employer survey and interview

Visits were made to four locations where BoysTown's graduates had been employed. In three of these, the relation with BoysTown also included ongoing work practice. In the fourth, the inclusion of graduates from a BoysTown social enterprise was about to begin. Data were collected in a semi-structured interview involving around 14 topics as shown in Appendix 2.

Procedure

The surveys captured extensive details from individuals regarding their backgrounds, their views and values and their assessment of their needs and learning from BoysTown. A major objective of the report was to contribute to the understanding of this group following the initial profiling of participants, and specifically to determine whether profiles might be associated with effects from their participation. While there is variation in the extent to which all participants provided complete and repeated measures due to absences at the time of survey for reasons such as illness, or a youth's temporary or permanent withdrawal from a program or where some team members started later than others in a particular program, there are 169 cases where across-survey comparisons have been possible along with point-to-point comparisons of information collected from all who completed measures at each of the three collection points.

Survey data were collected from several question types including a range of Likert Scale items (e.g. 1-4: Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree; Not at All to Often). Two validated scales were included measuring self-esteem (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale) and a wellbeing scale [General Health Questionnaire (GHQ12)] – with responses to individual items as well as a scale total score. The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale ranged from 0-30 and scores between 15 and 25 represented normal self-esteem while scores below 15 denoted low self-esteem. The GHQ12 ranged from 0-36 with lower scores indicating better conditions.

Data Treatment

Analyses were conducted using SPSS v18, SPSS Text Analytics for Surveys and Excel. For participants' surveys, the analysis of demographics provides description through use of

frequencies with cross-tabulations yielding two-way frequency tabulations and supporting graphical presentation. Data generally are reported by percentage of respondents and with the total number of respondents indicated for each item.

Demographics and other descriptors were based on the Entry survey report. Tables of frequencies of responses are provided to profile the sample from these data and have been tabulated by time of report (i.e. Entry, Mid or Exit). Comparisons of the mean levels of responses across groups were then undertaken, for example using t-tests and ANOVAs, providing the basis for comment on the change in the variable set across groups. In some cases consideration was given to the pattern of responses within each set. Factor analysis was used in this process to test for sub-sets of items for consideration. Reliability assessments were made to determine the consistency of responses where a number of items appeared to be measuring the same broad issue. Where reliability was high (i.e. Cronbach's alpha >.7), a superordinate variable was constructed allowing comparison of the general individual "response" with these values recoded to the range of the initial statements (e.g. 1 - 4).

Following consideration of all responses a more targeted multivariate assessment was undertaken to respond to strategic questions which are the focus of the research, notably:

- What percentage of those who start in a BoysTown social enterprise or associated program finish it, and meet the government criterion of 13 continuous weeks for full-time earning or learning status?
- What is the profile of participants entering BoysTown and what are their barriers to employment?
- Have participants changed during their time at BoysTown?
- Are there across-group differences in these changes?
- Are there differences in the characteristics of Indigenous participants?
- Are there any indicators of likely future detention – e.g. are those who were in detention prior or during the time at BoysTown different from the remainder of the group?
- Are there factors that identify those who complete their BoysTown program compared to those who withdraw?
- What congruence is there between participants and BoysTown's frontline staff concerning perceived outcomes?

Survey information for BoysTown Service Delivery Staff also were analysed using SPSS v18, SPSS Text Analytics for Surveys and Excel and are reported by number and percentage of respondents for each item. Sample size was too small for further differentiation of these data into what otherwise may have been comparisons of perspective for staff in different roles and/or staff in different programs or locations. Interview data for staff were thematically analysed using the method of constant comparison (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Findings and their impact reported in the following sections especially from participants' accounts of their outcomes and experiences reflect what they associate with their BoysTown connection and that have direct application in benefits to themselves and their social circles including society. They add to understandings of what constitutes success in programs, experience and people involved in deliberate attempts to reconnect disconnected people through work-related programs and in so doing provide a basis for designing an explanatory and predictive model of key factors in this process. Links between data sets and the Project's objectives are illustrated in Table 2.



Ethical Approval

Ethical approval of this ARC Linkage Project (LP0776519) was granted by Griffith University under Approval Authority of the University's Human Research Ethics Committee. Furthermore, ethical approval was sought and gained from BoysTown's Strategy and Research Unit.

Table 2. Datasets corresponding to the project's objectives.

OBJECTIVES	Demographics	Wellbeing & Self-esteem	Possessions	Personal Assessments	Social activities	Achieving goals	Identified needs and learning	Change - SE & WB	Change - Work Readiness	Change - Social activities	Change - Decision-making & Control	Change - Work outcomes	Profile - disadvantage	Responses	Case Studies	Model
Benefits to self, family and society	X	X						X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Accounts by participants of their experience		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Understanding success - input from participants and trainers								X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Characterisations of self, family, society and work	X			X	X	X	X								X	
Participants' expectations			X			X			X						X	
Effects - intended and observed			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Model																X

X and x indicate relative relevance of area.

Results

Key Outcomes from the Project

Participants' survey responses present a key source for investigation of the questions below and provide information which will be beneficial to BoysTown in explaining strategic points underpinning strength and/or viability for furthering their contact and transitioning work with youth. The analysis of survey data is reported here (in brief) and in Appendix 3 (full account) together with qualitative data and information from other sources (Appendices 4-8) as a context for highlighting outcomes concerning the questions:

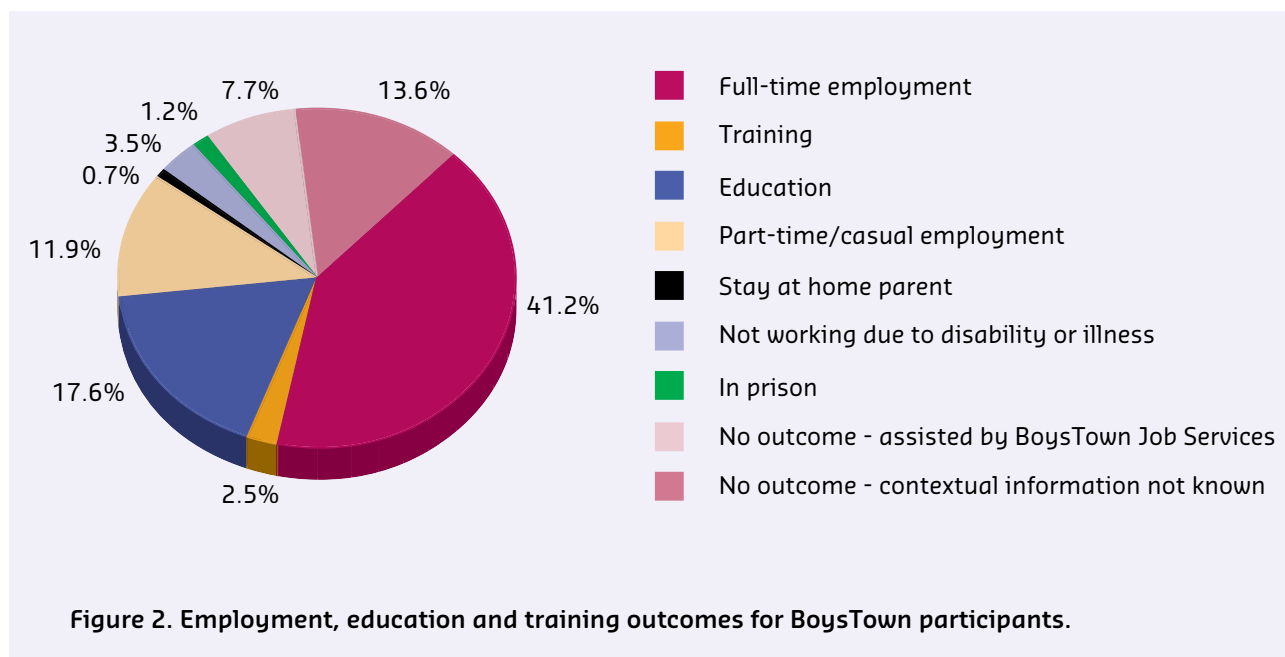
- What percentage of those who start in a BoysTown social enterprise or associated program finish it, and meet the government criterion of 13 continuous weeks for full-time earning or learning status?
- What is the profile of participants entering BoysTown and what are their barriers to employment?
- Have participants changed during their time at BoysTown?
- Are there across-group differences in these changes?
- Are there differences in the characteristics of Indigenous participants?
- Are there any indicators of likely future detention – e.g. are those who were in detention prior or during the time at BoysTown different from the remainder of the group?
- Are there factors that identify those who complete their BoysTown program compared to those who withdraw?
- What congruence is there between participants and BoysTown's frontline staff concerning perceived outcomes?

Q1. What percentage of those who start in a BoysTown social enterprise or associated program finish it, and meet the government criterion for full-time earning or learning status?

More than three-quarters (77.4%) of participants remained engaged with BoysTown and completed their program. In relation to success rate for transition into the workforce, 61.3% obtained full-time employment, re-engaged with education or continued on to further training. A further 11.9% of participants obtained part-time or casual employment. These outcomes are displayed in Figure 2. Of the participants who gained positive employment,

training and education outcomes, 89% were still engaged in their outcomes after 13 weeks and 80.3% achieved sustainable outcomes for at least 26 weeks.

The remaining participants did not achieve employment, education or training outcomes at the time of reporting the results for this report. Specifically, 7.7% of participants were being assisted by BoysTown Job Services, 3.5% were not working due to disability or illness, 1.2% were in prison, and 0.7% were stay-at-home parents.



Q2. What is the profile of participants entering BoysTown and what are their barriers to employment?

In order to develop a profile of BoysTown's participants and their barriers, descriptive analyses were conducted on the entry surveys of young people commencing their BoysTown program. The 67 (20.4%) female and 262 (79.6%) male participants in this cohort ranged in age from 14 to 55 years ($M=17.8$ years; $s.d.=4.8$ years). Moreover, 97.5% of these participants were aged 25 years and under. In terms of ethnic background, 25.5% were Aboriginal, 8.1% were Pacific Islander, 0.3% were South Sea Islander, and 6.1% were from other culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The following details describe the situation of young people when they commenced their time at BoysTown:

- Lack of stable, secure accommodation
 - 11.7% of participants surveyed were living in supported accommodation facilities and 6.3% were living in temporary or unstable accommodation. Of interest, 42% were living in

public housing. Furthermore, 36.2% were living in single-parent households, 7.4% were living with their partners and 7.4% were living with their extended family.

- The breakdown of these results by gender reveals that 9.9% of male participants and 19% of females participants surveyed were living in supported accommodation facilities and 6.2% of males and 6.9% of females surveyed were living in temporary or unstable accommodation. Of interest, 45.5% of males and 27.6% of females were living in public housing.
- Welfare or unstable financial support
 - 34% were relying on Government payments and 24.9% indicated they had no income. Furthermore, the gross level of income was less than \$100 per week for 39.7% of participants.
- Negative modelling in family employment histories
 - 45% had grown up where the adult family member did not have regular work and were reliant on welfare payments.
- No work history in full-time employment
 - 44.7% had no experience in the work force while a further 38% had previously held part-time or casual jobs.
- Long-term unemployment
 - The average amount of time spent in unemployment was 38.7 weeks, while 29.8% were in either long-term (more than 52 weeks) or very long-term (more than two years) unemployment.
- Low levels of formal education
 - The majority (87.1%) of young people entering BoysTown's programs had not completed secondary school. Only 12.9% had completed the final year of high school and 38.6% had dropped out of school before completing Year 10.

Historic barriers to their positive social inclusion through employment also included:

- Poor language, literacy and numeracy skills
- Offending and antisocial behaviour
- Problems with substance abuse
- Lack of social support
- Low self-esteem
- Poor emotional wellbeing
- Little optimism and goal setting for the future
- Constrained aspirations, and
- Maladaptive decision-making.

These data reflect a theme of disadvantage as the common core of areas in the ranging backgrounds that participants in our study brought at entry to BoysTown. Manifestations of such disadvantage in what happens to outlook, confidence and sociability are evident in data on physical and mental wellbeing, how decisions are made and self-esteem - if not as publically obvious as in the poor employment histories, substance abuse and trouble with police and the law that many have experienced. Importantly in relation to this project, such backgrounds are typically associated with long-term youth unemployment and demonstrates a need for intervention if youth are to be reconnected with society in meaningful, sustainable ways. The changes experienced by participants across these areas during their time at BoysTown are explored in the next research question.



Q3. Have participants changed during their time at BoysTown?

As part of this evaluation, surveys and interviews were implemented with social enterprise participants to assess their perception of change. The improvement across work skills and social behaviours is explicated in the rich data from case studies of 40 youth (Appendix 4) who participated in the study - and are consistent with what BoysTown management and service delivery staff have told us of their intentions and observations (Appendix 5). It is also the general observation of the small samples of employers (Appendix 5) and people nominated by some of BoysTown's youth as significant others in their lives (Appendix 8). There were a number of key improvements seen in young people from entry to completion.

Confidence in relation to work and life aspirations increased greatly. Most (91.1%) on commencing thought it was important to have a job that pays well but only 66.8% believed that it was likely to happen for them. Also, 43.9% indicated that being their own boss was important but only 31.1% stated that they thought it was likely for them. Further, 53.5% of young people surveyed on entry thought it was important to have a job that society values, while 47.1% thought they would have such a job in the future. There was strong increase in the desirability of having work. There are significant shifts in "Having a job that pays well", "Having a job that society values", and "Being financially successful". All of these variables are shown (see Tables 3 and 4) as being more achievable as the data source shifted from entry to exit sources reflecting passage of time spent in their program. There was a much lower ranking for the item, "Having a lot of expensive possessions", and no significant difference in scores across the survey times. However, as shown in the two tables that follow, there was a significant upward shift in youths' perceptions of the chances of this happening. Desires for being in charge of one's own life ($p < .05$), and being one's own boss ($p < .05$), were also stronger at statistically significant levels by the exit survey.

Table 3. Significant increases in the proportion of participants' ratings of life and work aspirations as very important.

Aspiration	Entry	Exit
Being the one in charge of your life*	79.4%	90%
Having a job that pays well***	91.1%	96%
Being your own boss*	43.9%	60.3%
Having a job that society values***	53.5%	68.7%
Being successful financially***	63.7%	93.3%

Significance of difference between groups marked by * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$

Table 4. Significant increases in the proportion of participants' ratings of the likelihood of achieving life and work aspirations as high or very high.

Aspiration	Entry	Exit
Having a lot of expensive possessions*	28.3%	37.3%
Being the one in charge of your life***	62.6%	84.7%
Having a job that pays well***	66.8%	78.7%
Being your own boss*	31.1%	47.6%
Having a job that society values***	47.1%	69.3%
Being successful financially***	48.6%	74.5%

Significance of difference between groups marked by * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$

Importantly, BoysTown's youth improved remarkably in their vision of personal futures (see Table 5). For example, 36.6% of young people were feeling hopeless about the future when they entered BoysTown. In addition, 51.1% of them knew what their goals were for the future. Significant improvements occurred in participants' optimism and goal setting.

Table 5. Significant increases in the future outlook of participants.

Future Outlook	Entry	Exit
I know what my goals are for the future*	51.1%	85.2%
I feel hopeless about the future***	36.6%	14.8%

Significance of difference between groups marked by * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$

Self-esteem and emotional wellbeing also increased greatly in relation to personal development as reflected in statistically significant levels of improvement in the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale and General Health Questionnaire (GHQ12) respectively. The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale ranged from 0-30 and scores between 15 and 25 represented normal self-esteem while scores below 15 denoted low self-esteem. Self-esteem was significantly higher when young people exited their BoysTown program ($M=21$) compared to when they commenced their BoysTown program ($M=17$)($p<.01$).

At commencement of their BoysTown program, more than half (58.1%) of respondents reported feeling useless, 20.1% indicated feeling worthless, 40.9% reported that they felt they did not have much to be proud of and 57.4% wished they could have more respect for themselves. Statistically significant enhancement of self-esteem was particularly notable concerning youth's satisfaction with themselves and positive attitude to themselves at exit, along with huge reductions in lack of self-respect, things to be proud of and feelings of uselessness that they had revealed at the entry measure ($p<.001$). The significant features of change follow here as Table 6.

Table 6. Significant improvements in various aspects of self-esteem in participants.

Self-Esteem	Entry	Exit
On the whole I am satisfied with myself***	66.7%	82.2%
I am able to do things as well as most other people**	76.8%	88.2%
I feel I do not have much to be proud of***	40.9%	20.4%
I certainly feel useless at times***	58.1%	32%
I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others**	79.8%	85.9%
I wish I could have more respect for myself***	57.4%	29.7%
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure**	27.6%	14.3%
I take a positive attitude toward myself***	65.4%	84.7%

Significance of difference between groups marked by * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$

The GHQ12 measuring emotional wellbeing ranged from 0-36 with lower scores indicating better conditions. The emotional wellbeing of participants surveyed significantly improved from the time when they commenced their BoysTown program ($M=12$) to when they exited their BoysTown program ($M=7$)($p<.01$). Half (51.9%) of the young people

commencing BoysTown were having difficulties facing their everyday problems and 26.4% felt they couldn't overcome their difficulties more so than usual in the past month. In relation to anxiety levels, 23.1% reported constantly feeling under strain, 27.8% could not concentrate on daily tasks and 17.4% were under so much stress that they were losing sleep rather more than usual. Furthermore, 29.9% felt they were not playing a useful part in things and 18.7% were unable to enjoy their normal day-to-day activities. There were significant shifts in all areas of wellbeing measured with particularly strong improvement in areas where growth was desirable, that is in better concentration, decision-making capability, playing a useful part in things, feeling reasonably happy, facing up to problems ($p<.001$), and enjoyment of what they were doing ($p<.05$). Wellbeing was better also in the six areas measured where reduction of negative affect was important – such as feelings of being constantly under strain, not being able to overcome difficulties, being unhappy and depressed, losing confidence, thinking of oneself as worthless and losing sleep through worry ($p<.001$). The significant features of change follow here as Table 7.

Table 7. Significant improvements in various aspects of wellbeing in participants.

Wellbeing	Entry	Exit
Been able to concentrate more than usual***	14.9%	35.8%
Felt capable of making decisions more than usual***	14.9%	39%
Been able to enjoy normal day-to-day activities more than usual*	14.5%	22.6%
Been able to face up to problems more than usual***	7.4%	35.3%
Felt you were playing a useful part in things more than usual***	10.7%	35.5%
Been feeling reasonably happy, all things considered, more than usual***	13.9%	30.7%
No longer felt constantly under strain***	35.2%	56.1%
No longer felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties***	31%	57.7%
Not feeling unhappy and depressed***	41.8%	64%
Not losing confidence in yourself***	40.5%	68.9%
Not thinking of yourself as a worthless person***	45.9%	72.4%
Not losing sleep over worry***	45.6%	69%

Significance of difference between groups marked by * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$

Decision-making improved significantly and relationships were better (see Table 8). Few (43.4%) young people commencing BoysTown considered that they made sure they understood the situations they were in or asked for help to do so. Further, only 53.8% felt that they typically gathered the information needed when making decisions. Yet, 62.1% of these young people felt in control of their decisions. Personal values were important in decision-making for only 67.3% of young people as they began their BoysTown programs. Towards the end of the program, there was greater agency [e.g. I am in control when I make decisions ($p<.001$)] and technique [e.g. I make sure I understand the situation I'm in before making a decision, I use help around me when I make decisions and my values are important to me when I make decisions about my future ($p<.001$)] about decision making.

Table 8. Significant improvements in participants' decision-making competence.

Decision-Making	Entry	Exit
When I have a problem, I get the information needed to deal with it***	53.8%	83.8%
I make sure I understand the situation I'm in before making a decision***	43.4%	77.5%
My values are important to me when I make decisions about my future***	67.3%	88.4%
I am in control when I make decisions***	62.1%	88.9%
I use help around me when I make decisions***	40.3%	79.2%
My best decisions are always made when I think about advice from others**	36.8%	48%
I have trouble solving everyday problems***	39.6%	21.4%

Significance of difference between groups marked by * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$

The positive changes in aspirations and decision-making are associated with youths' improved agency or ability to act upon their own world to reach their own goals. Table 9 shows that participants were significantly more likely to show personal agency by relying on their own efforts ($p<.05$) and learning new skills to reach their goals ($p<.001$). There were significant improvements in participants' interpersonal agency as shown by their abilities to cooperate with others. Relational agency was seen in the improved help-seeking of participants ($p<.001$). Finally, collective agency was demonstrated by the significant teamwork behaviours among participants ($p<.001$).

Table 9. Significant improvements in participants' agency.

Agency	Entry	Exit
I often get what I want by relying on my own efforts and ability*	30.3%	46%
I control what happens to me by making choices that are best for me***	63.9%	90%
I use the right things to help me achieve my goals***	50.7%	84.5%
I learn new skills to reach my goals***	55.2%	82%
I look for different ways to achieve my goals***	37%	64.7%
I get what I need through careful planning***	38.3%	76.5%
I control things by managing my life properly***	48.6%	76%
I do whatever I can to achieve a goal***	42.5%	67.1%
I achieve my goals by knowing when to ask others for help***	52.1%	72.6%
I reach my goals by letting others know what I need***	38.4%	53.4%
I get what I need by seeking the advice of others***	48.6%	71.1%
I get what I need by cooperating with others***	49.7%	78.3%
Our group achieves its goals through careful planning***	34%	85.1%
Our group achieves its goals by cooperating with each other***	34.7%	85.1%

Significance of difference between groups marked by * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$



In relation to literacy skills, 40.8% reported having poor writing skills, 36.9% stated they had poor reading skills, and 43.7% claimed to have difficulty with spelling. Furthermore, 45% stated that their low literacy levels made it difficult to complete forms. Over half (56.2%) believed that they had poor numeracy skills. Significant improvements were seen in participants across all measured areas of language [talking ($p<.01$) and listening ($p<.001$)], literacy [reading ($p<.001$), writing ($p<.01$) and spelling ($p<.001$)] and numeracy ($p<.001$). Furthermore, participants' functional language, literacy and numeracy significantly improved ($p<.001$). These results are displayed in Table 10.

Table 10. Significant improvements in the language, literacy and numeracy skills of participants.

Language, Literacy and Numeracy	Entry	Exit
I am good at listening to people***	87.6%	96.8%
I am good at talking to people**	75.4%	87.6%
I feel confident talking to people I have just met***	67%	83.5%
I have good writing skills**	59.2%	74.2%
I have good reading skills***	63.1%	82.1%
I can identify spelling mistakes easily***	56.3%	75.4%
It is hard for me to fill out forms***	45%	25.3%
I have good maths skills***	43.8%	66.8%
I make a budget to help me with my money***	29.9%	51.4%
I feel confident working out the price of discounted items when I go shopping***	38.3%	59.1%

Significance of difference between groups marked by * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$

The incidence of positive social interactions increased. Three of the seven survey items depicting positive social interactions indicated statistically significant improvements over time [Chat with neighbours in the last 4 weeks ($p<.001$), Eat out in the last 4 weeks ($p<.01$), and Meet with friends in the last 4 weeks ($p<.05$)] (Appendix 3). However, all seven together provided a "social interactions improvement" factor that described and predicted which youth completed the program (Appendix 3). On entry to their BoysTown program, 23.4% reported that they could not depend on their family for support and encouragement while 27.9% stated that they do not have friends to access for support. There were significant improvements in developing dependable friendships and decreases in loneliness ($p<.05$). Table 11 shows these significant improvements.

Table 11. Significant improvements in participant's social networks and interactions.

Social Networks and Activities	Entry	Exit
Meet with friends*	72.9%	83.3%
Eat out**	44.1%	56.7%
I can depend on my friends for help*	72%	80.1%
I feel lonely*	33.4%	19.8%

Significance of difference between groups marked by * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$

Over half (56.8%) of those surveyed at entry had misused alcohol and 33.5% had taken illicit drugs in the last month. The impact of these behaviours was shown through 19.6% of young people having trouble at work or school due to excess drinking or drug use. Furthermore, 25.8% of the young people had been in trouble with the police during the month before completing the survey. 11.6% reported having frequent encounters with the police. The incidence of antisocial behaviour decreased throughout the participants' time at BoysTown. Incidence figures for smoking, alcohol, drugs, physical fights and trouble with the police within the four week period prior to survey all decreased across each of the three surveys (see Table 12). This indicates significant, positive shifts. However, their combination failed to factor into description and prediction of which youth completed the program (Appendix 3).

Table 12. Significant improvements in participants' substance abuse and antisocial behaviour.

Offending and Antisocial Behaviours	Entry	Exit
Taken drugs***	47.7%	25%
I have trouble at work or school because of drinking or drug use**	28%	14.3%
I have frequent arguments**	44.9%	26.1%
Get into a physical fight***	54.1%	26.1%
Get into trouble with the police***	43.3%	22.1%

Significance of difference between groups marked by * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$

These findings show significant and important change across time in the areas of work and personal and social adjustment as participants move with BoysTown toward positive outcomes (Appendix 3). The success resulting for so many of BoysTown's youth is not only that they become work-ready, work-willing and engaged generally with the culture of work,

but that they believe themselves to be functioning much better, personally and socially. A critical finding from the study is the relative contiguity of these findings. As work skills improved, so did social adjustment although typically, participants' observations of better cooperation, communication and planning occurred earlier during their program than their accounts of improving social interactions. There is a strong likelihood that youth will stay with their BoysTown enterprise program to completion where they see their social interactions beginning to change for the better as they learn and use new awareness and skills in cooperation, communication and planning.

Participants became more talkative about work for pay, and oriented through gains in decision-making, taking responsibility and know-how related to work and working as a specific goal in their lives. PO04 who now works at BoysTown provided in the following account a sense of her positive self-discovery:

I then got a Certificate II in Information Technology and Certificate III in Business Administration (Record Keeping) because of BoysTown. Now I work as a ... and I'm learning more and more in this role. I also have more to live off. I like working here because people don't make me feel inferior. They show a genuine interest in me. (PO04)

PO04's larger statement that included the above was recorded several months after she had finished her program. It reflected her insider's view of changes in her lifeskills in social, vocational, academic and self-determination areas which research (Carter & Lunsford, 2005) indicates as critical for satisfactory and satisfying adjustment into work. Certainly, it may be additionally helpful that she found employment at BoysTown as the line above indicates. However, such awareness of change and its attribution are apparent across most of the case studies of the project (Appendix 4). For example:

Even like yeah work skills or I'm even like better at work skills and all like that. It's like built me up with being more confident and stuff like that. Actually, it's been going along all right, so.

... yeah you take it in and you watch how they do it and you take it in and it's like, oh well it's not really that hard and then you really work it out like cutting-in, like they show me like how to cut-in by painting and all. It's actually like (inaudible), so it's like, yeah. It's actually quite good to learn off other people to know how to do it properly, so.

... Oh yeah, I've certainly like changed like even more, like even my work like instead of just sitting around and doing nothing all day and stuff like that,

so yeah, I've certainly changed a lot in the time I have been here anyway, so. ... I've sort of like I've actually settled, like I said, instead of just sitting around or doing nothing or even just not doing nothing (inaudible) nah, I just couldn't do that. I need to find a job and actually get some earnings. I'm earning more now that I'm working. I spend my pay on my food and rent. That's all I have to spend it on. I'm saving the rest so it's there for an emergency just in case one day I need it. My confidence has improved. I never used to talk to people I don't know at all. The people at BoysTown built my self-esteem up just by encouraging me and always leaving me positive feedback. (BTY59)

My social skills have changed. I can talk to somebody now. I can sit there and go on with the conversation. I don't shut people out like I used to. Like "hi", "hi", "how are you?", "yep good", "bye". So now I can sit there and ask them questions and keep talking. I've always just stuck to people I know. I didn't really talk to people I didn't know but coming to BoysTown and meeting heaps of people you can't be shy. Coming here and meeting so many people it's hard not to say hello to everybody.

I understand more things that I hear and read. I try to use proper words in writing and not use slang. I didn't know anything about any office job before, but now I've learnt photocopying, faxing, and they've taught me how to use excel properly by sitting down with me and showing me how it works. Everything I've done they've sat down with me and showed me step by step how to do it. (EX05)

The pattern of broadly-based skill-development in what "graduates" saw of their successful reconnection and acknowledgement by BoysTown's people and programs is illustrated in extracts from BTY37 and BTY40:

Done RSA, RCG since BoysTown trainers did not beat about the bush in telling us how and what to do. They showed you how to help others in the same dilemma. I was wary of new people – helped me to get along with others easier- gave me dollars to get to work so I could get through work- found new skills in group work and could make on the job decisions alone to keep the job in hand.

No Cert for landscaping as had to leave. But life is on track off the dole and I got into the workforce (continuously) but for current mental illness – but BoysTown explained things in easy terms. (BTY37)

Working at Hyatt – without BoysTown would not be where I am today. Am doing a Cert III in Bridge Building. If BoysTown stay the way they are I would work for them for free. Made me more honest more open – had already got off drugs and I lived with Mum. Have a Cert II in Hort., Chem Cert, First Aid. (BTY40)

The pattern of change toward new self-belief through work, often from ominous initial expectations, is also apparent in data from the Case Studies (Appendix 4) as shown in the following comments about working in a BoysTown's social enterprise program:

I thought I'd never work. Yeah, none of my family work. (Now) I love it. I love it, I can't wait, yeah.

And, I like the field too, the horticulture field. But, yeah, I love coming to work. Well, normally we meet up here in the mornings and my boss picks me up and takes us to the work site... anything from doing paving to making planter boxes and garden beds and we've done turfing, concreting, we've done heaps.

... All of that. I didn't know how to do anything. (BTY1)

I went in to Centrelink. Oh, I went to bricklaying for a while but then it was getting too hard so I went to Centrelink. Thought I'd take the easy way out, not the right way.

Well once I get off this (BoysTown horticulture social enterprise) I'm going to keep working or, no, trying to get a job. BT40 (will) get me a job bricklaying I think, or warehousing. Either one of them, I don't know, just work, I just want to work the rest of my life. (BTY45)

Work placement outcomes following localised transition programs often included employers with whom they had participated while in a BoysTown social enterprise, such as the Abigroup, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Queensland Incorporated and APC Storage Solutions (Appendix 6). These employers liked what they saw as youth responded to the opportunities and tutelage within authentic work settings. For example:

We got three of BoysTown's young fellows from (work experience at) Kingston and placed them as labourers at Gympie where we had a project. We arranged accommodation in a house with a House Mother. They did the work and joined one of the local rugby league clubs – and Gympie won the competition. They became part of the community and are still there – one

with an apprenticeship in surveying, one with an apprenticeship in Workshop and the third is (in) labouring. The first two are sharing a house of their own now; the third met and married a girl and they are living together. (AB2)

He was one who was very bright and I lined him up with an interview for a competitor – he was going to live on the North side (of Brisbane). He got the job. (Checked with BT19, Youth Worker, BoysTown Kingston – the young man is still working there and is now married.) Also, BTEY1 downstairs was formerly with BoysTown. He's on staff now and going well. (AP1) (In my own experience, I found BTEY1 was a model of courteous efficiency. He noticed my arrival at the workplace, having observed AP2, the office staffer, was busy elsewhere. He then checked what I was there for, asked if AP1 was expecting me and was in the process of alerting him when AP2 returned and took over.)

These graduates were well integrated into the culture of their respective workplaces. Further, as we found for the whole study group, self-esteem (Appendix 3) and wellbeing (Appendix 3) had changed for the better, and communication, cooperation, planning and social interactions had improved significantly (Appendix 3). For example:

I've never been the type of person to ask questions, but now I'll ask. There are no bad facial expressions from them. You're not being ignored and they're not being annoyed... I'd say I'm more eager to do the job, because of the environment and the people. I'd say I'm more confident, way more confident. (PS03)



This greater personal and social positivity combined with employment outcomes from their post-program employability mirrors what BoysTown staff saw as a key outcome with youth's increasing competence and confidence about work (Appendix 5) and reflected in interview comments such as the following:

The social enterprise successes are astounding. They (youth) perform jobs to standard, client-satisfaction - wanting more in the future, and this is the stepping stone to future full-time work. (BT15)

... the objective (of the Social enterprise programs is) to make a change in the lives of kids and lead them to financial independence using a window on work. (BT14)

Social enterprises are the way of the future and they are starting to get government support – as social inclusion parallels social enterprises. (BT9)

It is reflected in comments about them by others whose opinions they respect. For example:

(He) seems to be doing OK – talks about what he does, talks about different plants, knows their names. He falls asleep easily, he's quietened down. At school he was in with the wrong crowd – he's done a big change. He gets up ready for work every day. Can be driving along, he'll say, "that's such-and-such a plant, or I brought this home to put in the garden". (N Other 1: Mother of BTY6 who was speaking of changes she saw and associated with his participation in a Horticulture social enterprise)

Q4. Are there across-group differences in these changes?

The significance of these two sets of changes for BoysTown is that there is very clear across-group prediction of who will make positive change. Staying-with-the-program through to its completion is at the core of this prediction.

Data from this project, particularly the qualitative information from youth (Appendices 4 and 7) provides strong evidence that BoysTown has the right programs and people to lead, guide and manage youth in successful transition – but BoysTown's leadership and other staff know there are impediments to youth's resilience. Brother Ambrose, the Chairman of BoysTown's Board, observed that "We focus on the last, the least, the lost" (Amb 01), and unsurprisingly given the statements about starting positions in some of the

excerpts above (e.g. P004, EX05, BTY,59) BoysTown's CEO, Tracy Adams, reported, "They are wary of trusting people and wary of being hurt". In relation to BoysTown's intention that these youth begin and complete programs that "did not set them up for another failure, but provided some challenge" (Br), the reality is that "Every job we do addresses some barriers at different levels" (Br).

The discriminant analysis used to align variables that explained prediction of program completion (Appendix 3) indicated that those likely to complete are youth regardless of age or gender who begin their program on a positive referral (e.g. an internal referral at BoysTown, or one from themselves or a relative or friend), who have no record in the juvenile justice system, are not Indigenous and have average or better self-esteem. Seemingly, this constellation suggests those who fit it had better socially-adaptive behaviour and histories upon entry to BoysTown than those who do not fit it. Two of the four variables involved in the discriminant function have an obvious logical connection – those without a detention record are less likely to have been referred to BoysTown from one of the juvenile justice system agencies. Additionally, because Indigenous youth are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system – and in BoysTown's clientele, it is unsurprising that non-Indigeneity is configured as part of the function.

There are two conditions associated with the critical discriminant analysis outcome that help explain the anomaly:

First, several variables have predictive power when treated singly. For example, age, familial histories of work-for-pay, being in shared rental accommodation or personal independence of income support each correlated strongly and positively with staying-with-the-program. Conversely, Indigeneity had no prediction – positive or negative. Yet, the operation of all of these single variables changes in combination with others. Thus, as illustrated in the discriminant function reported above, none of the examples noted here as singularly predictive are included in the discriminant function and Indigeneity, which was not predictive one way or the other, is incorporated.

A second consideration is that the profile inherent in the discriminant functions may be dynamic rather than fixed. The first three of its components pertain to entry, but the fourth does not, and proved to be quite variable over time as individuals engaged with the program. As the first finding shows, participants' self-esteem improved significantly and generally

and there are several examples where youth did well despite abject profiles, or in some cases, withdrew before completion where their positive profile would have suggested otherwise. Given that participants' self-esteem holds the key to explaining these inconsistencies, it should be closely monitored as participants move into and through their programs. For example:

... built confidence and can really look for a job now and I praise BoysTown to the hilt. Going back to do Cert III and Cert IV; [I've] done Cert II in Horticulture Landscaping - came out of my shell and I am not shy anymore, all training has actually worked - had low confidence now really good- they would help with housing, but I was already ok. I really like the way they teach as they show you how things work and take the time to show you with no yelling and make sure you understand. I was hanging out with the wrong crowd and got into trouble but all that came good when I went to BoysTown. It really helped that much that they taught us to work as a team. BT23 was the best trainer and it was great I really loved the work at BoysTown. Currently I am working six days a week on good money and when I finish the Cert III and IV I will start my own business and I will train others the way I have been helped. (BTY401)

the focus... on the one kid who doesn't fit the program and so to customise training offerings using case management and core skills training. (BT8)

The findings relating to change and across-group differences enable a basic profile to be established which isolates the combination of four variables (referral, Indigeneity, juvenile justice record and self-esteem) as an early identification function for those most likely to finish their social enterprise function.

Q5. Are there differences in the characteristics of Indigenous participants?

Several differences were shown for Indigenous participants. The proportion of the total sample of participants identifying as Indigenous was relatively high (24.6%; n=125) in comparison with representation in the general population (2.3%, ABS Census 2006). The greater majority was male (81.6%; n=104) a somewhat larger percentage than for the total group (75%), and 18 years or younger (67.7%) which was similar to the sample (63.7%).

In order to construct a profile of BoysTown's Indigenous clients and the barriers they face, the data was selected from Indigenous young people commencing their program prior to receiving assistance. The following details describe the situation of Indigenous

participants when they commenced their time at BoysTown:

- Lack of stable, secure accommodation
 - 9.5% of participants surveyed were living in supported accommodation facilities and 10.8% were living in temporary or unstable accommodation. Of interest, 55.4% were living in public housing. Furthermore, 38.2% were living in single-parent households, 14.5% were living with their partners and 9.2% were living with their extended family.
- Welfare or unstable financial support
 - 40.3% were relying on Government payments and 10.4% indicated they had no income. Furthermore, the gross level of income was less than \$100 per week for 20.8% of participants.
- Negative modelling in family employment histories
 - 51.4% had grown up where the adults did not have regular work and were reliant on welfare payments
- No work history in full-time employment
 - 44.3% had no full-time experience in the work force while only 32.9% had previously held part-time or casual jobs
- Long-term unemployment
 - The average amount of time spent in unemployment was 29.1 weeks, while 21.7% were in either long-term (more than 52 weeks) or very long-term (more than two years) unemployment.
- Low levels of formal education
 - The majority (87.9%) of Indigenous young people entering BoysTown's programs had not completed secondary school. Only 12.1% completed the final year of high school and 36.4% had dropped out of school before completing Year 10.

While there is a range of indicators of social disadvantage such as a prior history of detention, low levels of completed schooling, living in public housing and with family and high unemployment that all correlated highly with Indigeneity, there was also a positive

difference concerning decreases in repeat and new detentions while at BoysTown. Thus while being Indigenous is a component of the discriminant function, there is no appreciable indication of success or failure other than where its relation to the other three components is strong - i.e. for those Indigenous youth who began their program on a negative referral, who have a prior record in the juvenile justice system, and, who entered their program with self-esteem at below-average levels.

More generally, Indigenous participants began their BoysTown program in hope of achieving work as BTY214 outlined:

She (Mum) always came home ... she always worked. I'm glad I can help her out. She told me that if she had a better job she wouldn't need money from me. It's good to know you can help out.

All m' family's always worked. We look up to the ones who do and achieving their goals - like owning their own house and getting cars and licences and that.

Don't know if I'll stay in Landscaping - it's hard. Feel like having a break every now and then - but it does feel good. (I'd) like to work with a Council. I like this job here - the trainers are real laid back. They let you take a break and know if you are taking advantage.

(We) typically start with a 'Risk Assessment' - like the dog. Then, we look after the plan and the trainer gives us our job. We do it and at the end we go back to the office and talk about what we done. We sometimes drive past later. I'd like to do a retaining wall by myself. (BTY214)

Across their participation in the enterprises, Indigenous youth made significant improvements around work aspirations, quality of life, decision-making, relationships, social interactions and offending behaviour.

There was strong increase in the desirability of having work, for example, Table 14 shows there were significant shifts in the importance placed on "Having a job that pays well" ($p < .05$) and "Being financially successful" ($p < .01$) - though the perceived likelihood of these aspirations materialising remained low as the data source shifted from entry to exit sources reflecting passage of time spent in their program as shown. Interestingly, there was a significant increase in participants who thought they would achieve their goal of being their own boss ($p < .05$). Perhaps the most profound improvement could be found in the goal

setting of Indigenous participants, where 84.6% on exit had specific goals compared to 47.2% upon commencement ($p<.001$).

Table 13. Significant increases in the proportion of Indigenous participants' ratings of aspirations and goal setting.

Aspirations and Future Outlook	Entry	Exit
Importance of having a job that pays well*	86.4%	94.8%
Importance of being successful financially**	59.4%	97.3%
High or very high likelihood of being your own boss*	33.4%	50%
I know what my goals are for the future***	47.2%	84.6%

Significance of difference between groups marked by * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$

There were significant improvements among Indigenous participants in two aspects of the measured self-esteem scale. In particular, concerning Indigenous youth's greater satisfaction with themselves at exit ($p<.05$), along with substantial reduction in their feelings of uselessness ($p<.05$). The significant features of change follow here as Table 14.

Table 14. Significant improvements in various aspects of self-esteem in Indigenous participants.

Self-Esteem	Entry	Exit
On the whole I am satisfied with myself*	63.6%	83.6%
I certainly feel useless at times*	56.6%	30.9%

Significance of difference between groups marked by * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$

Significant improvements were seen in the emotional wellbeing of Indigenous youth as they progressed through BoysTown's employment programs. The GHQ12 measuring emotional wellbeing ranged from 0-36 with lower scores indicating better conditions. The emotional wellbeing of participants surveyed significantly improved from the time when they commenced their BoysTown program ($M=13$) to when they exited their BoysTown program ($M=7$) ($p<.05$).

Significant improvements were also seen in the individual aspects of emotional wellbeing measuring social functioning, anxiety and depression and confidence (see Table 16). By exit, Indigenous youth were able to concentrate and to face up to their problems ($p<.001$). They also felt that they were playing useful parts in things ($p<.01$), and were

reasonably happy, all things considered ($p<.05$). Wellbeing was better also in five of the six areas measured where reduction of negative affect was important – disagreement with the negative statements was far stronger at the exit point concerning, failure to overcome difficulties ($p<.05$), unhappiness ($p<.05$), lost confidence ($p<.01$), worthlessness ($p<.01$), and worry ($p<.05$). The one difference was that Indigenous participants' positions concerning feeling constantly under strain did not shift significantly across time.

Table 15. Significant improvements in various aspects of wellbeing in Indigenous participants.

Wellbeing	Entry	Exit
Been able to concentrate more than usual***	15.8%	47.3%
Been able to face up to problems more than usual***	9.2%	34.5%
Felt you were playing a useful part in things more than usual**	13.3%	38.2%
Been feeling reasonably happy, all things considered, more than usual*	14.5%	29.1%
No longer felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties*	34.7%	62.7%
Not feeling unhappy and depressed*	40%	68.6%
Not losing confidence in yourself**	34.7%	72%
Not thinking of yourself as a worthless person**	40%	74.5%
Not losing sleep over worry*	42.7%	72%

Significance of difference between groups marked by * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$

Three component of decision-making competence improved significantly in Indigenous participants – though not to the same extent as for the total sample (see Table 16). Specifically, there were significant improvements in information gathering ($p<.05$), data comprehension and help-seeking ($p<.01$) in relation to the decision-making processes of Indigenous youth.

Table 16. Significant improvements in Indigenous participants' decision-making.

Decision-Making	Entry	Exit
When I have a problem, I get the information needed to deal with it*	54%	90.9%
I make sure I understand the situation I'm in before making a decision*	43.2%	74.5%
I use help around me when I make decisions**	45.9%	77.2%

Significance of difference between groups marked by * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$

The positive changes in aspirations and decision-making are associated with Indigenous youths' improved agency or ability to act upon their own world to reach their own goals. Table 17 shows that participants were significantly more likely to show personal agency by achieving their goals through careful planning ($p<.05$). There were significant improvements in participants' interpersonal agency as shown by the friendliness displayed to others ($p<.05$). Collective agency was demonstrated by the significant teamwork behaviours among participants ($p<.01$).

Table 17. Significant improvements in Indigenous participants' agency.

Agency	Entry	Exit
I get what I need through careful planning*	34.2%	78.4%
I get what I need by being nice to others*	36.8%	54%
Our group achieves its goals through careful planning**	34.7%	84.7%
Our group achieves its goals by cooperating with each other**	34.8%	84.6%

Significance of difference between groups marked by * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$

The incidence of positive social interactions increased. Specifically, a significantly higher amount of Indigenous young people were meeting with friends towards the end of the program compared to when they commenced ($p<.001$), which in turn lead to a significant decrease in the number of Indigenous participants feeling lonely ($p<.01$). Table 18 shows these significant improvements.

Table 18. Significant improvements in Indigenous participant's social connections.

Social Networks and Activities	Entry	Exit
Meet with friends***	76.3%	86.6%
I feel lonely**	36.0%	11.5%

Significance of difference between groups marked by * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$

Incidence figures for smoking cigarettes and trouble with the police among Indigenous participants within the four week period prior to survey decreased from entry to exit (see Table 19). This indicates significant, positive shifts ($p<.05$). However, there were no significant differences in relation to illicit drug use, excessive drinking of alcohol, and involvement in physical altercations.

Table 19. Significant improvements in Indigenous participants' offending behaviour and cigarette smoking.

Offending and Antisocial Behaviours	Entry	Exit
Get into trouble with the police*	43.3%	22.1%
Smoke cigarettes*	47.7%	25%

Significance of difference between groups marked by * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$

In comparison to the whole participant group, there were no significant differences in areas such as substance use, literacy and numeracy. However, there were significant improvements in other personal and social adjustment areas. Specifically, the findings show significant and important change across time in the areas of aspirations for job income and autonomy, wellbeing, collective agency and offending behaviour as Indigenous participants move with BoysTown toward positive outcomes.

Q6. Are there any indicators of likely future detention?

Incarceration is a major issue for many of those supported by BoysTown. Eighty-two of the youth who participated in the study had been in prior detention (see Table 20). This represented just over 15% of the sample with a predominance of males ($n=73$), 18 of whom had been referred to BoysTown through the court or correctional system. Greatest numbers of detentions occurred among youth in the 16-18 years category, whereas in the 22-30 years age group more had detention histories than did not (Figure 3).

In comparison with prior histories of detention, few participants (3.9%; $n=21$) were detained in custody while at BoysTown indicating a substantial decrease in incidence. For those who were, there were three indicators of likely future detention – a prior record of detention, male gender and non-Indigeneity. Sixteen of the 21 who were detained had previously been in custody. Most (76.2%) were male and non-Indigenous (67.7%). The five youth detained while at BoysTown and who had no prior record were male and non-Indigenous.

Table 20. Incidence of detention among participants prior to and after coming to BoysTown (by gender).

		Detention Prior to BoysTown				Total
		Males		Females		
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
Detention while at BoysTown	Yes	14	5	2	0	21
	No	59	328	7	126	520
Total		73	333	9	126	541

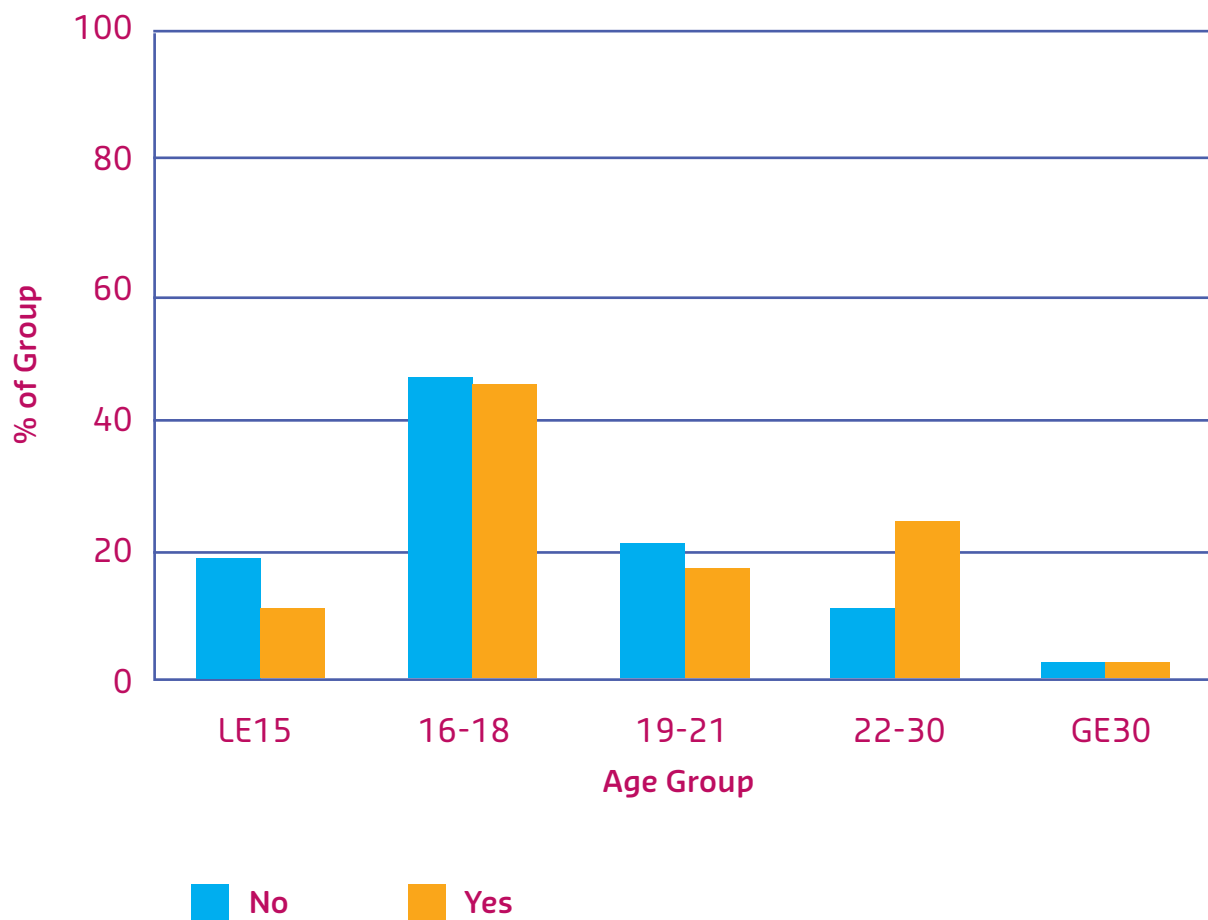


Figure 3. Age pattern of those detained prior to and after coming to BoysTown.

Incidence details for Indigenous participants in custody are shown in Table 21. Thirty-eight (30.4%; 34 males and 4 females) had prior detention histories. This is about twice the proportion for the total group with the 34 males being 89.5% of the group – a similar gender statistic for the total sample (89%).

Ten of the 38 (26.3%; 9 males and 1 female) were in detention again while at BoysTown. This is a substantially smaller proportion than for re-offenders in the total group (76.2%). A second positive comparison is that there was no incidence of detention while at BoysTown for anyone with no prior history, whereas for the total group there were five new detainees.

Table 21. Incidence of detention among Indigenous participants prior to and after coming to BoysTown (by gender).

		Detention Prior to BoysTown				Total
		Males		Females		
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
Detention while at BoysTown	Yes	9	0	1	0	10
	No	25	68	3	19	115
Total		34	68	4	19	125

In summary, 15.2% of all research participants and 30.4% of Indigenous participants had been in juvenile or adult detention prior to coming to BoysTown. During their time at BoysTown, only 3.9% of all participants returned to detention or went into detention for the first time. In addition, only 8% of Indigenous participants returned to detention during their time at BoysTown. Of note, Indigenous participants with no prior record kept their record clear while at BoysTown. This indicates that involvement in BoysTown's social enterprises and associated programs is likely to divert participants from detention.

Q7. Are there factors that identify those who complete their program compared to those who withdraw?

Remaining in the program is a key predictor of various personal development outcomes and three identifying factors have been determined as a result of the changes found to be associated with those who remained in their program. In overview:

1. Those who remained in a BoysTown program through to completion were more likely to have entered it on a positive referral (e.g. from themselves or a relative or through

an internal transfer at BoysTown), with no prior history in the juvenile justice system, be non-Indigenous and with average or better self-esteem; and,

2. Those 48 participants who did not fit this profile, but who remained in their program through to completion nonetheless, had made highly significant improvements in wellbeing (from a below-average starting level in wellbeing with an average score at entry of 22.3 improving to 32.8 at exit) and self-esteem (average score at entry 16.3 was just inside the normal range increasing by exit to 21.2 – well inside the normal range).

Participants in this category generally presented initially as being in great need. Over 60% had been unemployed for more than 20 weeks when they started their programs at BoysTown, 48.8% were on government income support, 64.6% were referred to BoysTown from income support services, 33.3% had prior histories of detention and 10% had been referred from the juvenile justice system. Furthermore:

- They were more likely to be male (91.7% of this sub-group compared with 75% of the total study group, Indigenous (39.6% compared with 24.6%), and not to have come from families where the main income earner had a steady job (34.9% compared with 59%), and
 - What appears to be critical to their success is that their relatively poor levels of wellbeing and self-esteem at the start of their time with BoysTown improved markedly – suggesting strongly positive association between these two areas of personal development and committed engagement with their program.
3. In contrast, those 45 participants who did fit this profile, but who failed to remain in their program had wellbeing and self-esteem scores within the normal range on starting at BoysTown, but made no significant improvement thereafter.

Participants in this category tended to be relatively young, with limited school experience (i.e. Year 10 completion at best) and still living with one or both parents. Few had been in detention. Few had been in work before they came to BoysTown, but all still had money for some social life with their friends. In addition:

- Gender, ethnicity and work pattern of the main income earner of their families did not factor into a prediction; and

- The relatively insignificant changes in self-esteem and wellbeing suggest that the association between these two areas of personal development and commitment and engagement with the social enterprise program had remained static throughout participants' time before withdrawing.

Data related to the previous strategic questions pertain also to **the identification of those who completed their BoysTown program compared to those who withdrew.** The four components of the first overview item (see the discriminant analysis content in Appendix 3) together provide a profile with opportunity noted for monitoring and case management of vulnerable individuals in relation to positive shifts in their self-esteem and wellbeing.

An additional factor concerns youths' espoused positions on drug-taking which changed in the course of their programs at BoysTown. The contrasting improvement over time in participants' social interactions with little change in their antisocial ones suggested that drug-taking may have remained an issue for many of BoysTown's youth. However, a contrary view is presented in the finding from an additional assessment undertaken of completion/non-completion of the program using the item, "Have you taken drugs in the last 4 weeks". The change in "Not at all" responses amongst those who completed their program from entry to exit was significantly different from that of their peers who had failed to complete their program.

This suggests a possible bias in the exit data associated with greater withdrawal from the programs by youth still taking drugs or inclined to take drugs. Alternatively, a changing predisposition toward new aversion to drug-taking may signal a youth's likelihood of sticking with the social enterprise through to completion.

Table 22. Summarised assessments of difference across time for scales calculated from factor analyses for social interactions, decision-making and self-control.

Dimension	Factor	Time	n	Mean*	s.d.	F and Significance	Comment
Social Interactions	F1 – Antisocial Behaviours	Entry	302	2.13	0.87	F_{2,723}=2.77 p=.063 ns	
		Mid	212	2.14	0.80		
		Exit	212	1.98	0.75		
	F2 – Social Interactions	Entry	304	2.29	0.63	F_{2,726}=4.078 p=.017	Entry and exit significantly different (*)
		Mid	214	2.09	0.64		
		Exit	211	2.45	0.71		
Decision-making and Self-control	F1 – Cooperation	Entry	94	2.11	0.92	F_{2,292}=58.87 p=.000	All significantly different (***)
		Mid	88	3.11	0.68		
		Exit	113	3.14	0.64		
	F2 – Cooperation	Entry	143	2.36	0.77	F_{2,389}=16.729 p=.000	All significantly different (***)
		Mid	109	2.74	0.67		
		Exit	140	2.82	0.65		
	F3 – Planning	Entry	143	2.49	0.72	F_{2,393}=25.417 p=.000	Entry and exit significantly different (*)
		Mid	109	2.90	0.62		
		Exit	144	3.01	0.57		

* Note Factor scores were rescaled to a 1-4 range reflecting the original frequency scale (1: Not at all to 4: Often).

Q8. What congruence is there between participants and BoysTown frontline staff concerning perceived outcomes?

Data sets for BoysTown frontline staff who interact with participants on a daily basis are provided in Appendix 5. Staff perceptions of the effectiveness of practice in the programs are strongest around work (technical and contextual skills) and high also for personal development areas. The relatively small difference may reflect a combination of more immediately attainable thresholds of achievement for challenges around work (e.g. steps in acquiring on-the-job skills) than around some of the personal development issues (e.g. improving family connections) and also perhaps that evidence of progression with work practices is nearer at hand and observable. If so, BoysTown's staff are likely to see change and sustainability more readily and often in participants' growth around work matters.

Alternatively, it may be that work is a more contained context within which to succeed while personal development and its socialisation present a larger, more diffuse and sometimes inopportune arena while participants are engaged at BoysTown.

Notably, very large proportions of both youth and BoysTown's frontline staff have rated BoysTown as effective across the various attributes shown (Tables 23 and 24). Staff tended to rate somewhat higher, but the discrepancies are minimal with two exceptions. The exceptions concern changes for the better in goal-setting and self-esteem where youth were a little more than 10 percentage points below staff in their rankings. Nonetheless, the overall consistency suggests that BoysTown's youth and those who work most directly with them are seeing much the same levels of connection between youths' outcomes and the assistance offered and received from BoysTown's programs. The consistency may reflect an important synergy in what youth and staff do to notice and nurture continuity as the dynamic element of any positive change. Certainly, it is a very different finding from that reported by Carter and Welby (2003) where the ratings made by adolescent employees with emotional and behavioural disorders of their own job performances were significantly more favourable than those of their supervisors, and where the supervisors felt the youth were significantly underperforming in relation to the importance of various job behaviours.

Table 23. Comparison of ratings by youth and frontline staff for BoysTown's effectiveness in providing assistance with work and technical skills.

Improvement areas	Youth ranking BoysTown as effective/ highly effective	Frontline staff ranking BoysTown as effective/ highly effective
Learning	94.7%	100%
Work skills	93.9%	100%
Work tools	92.4%	100%
Teamwork	91.8%	100%
Self management	89.8%	94.4%
Planning and organising skills	89.7%	91.7%
Problem solving	89%	91.7%
Literacy	78.4%	83.3%
Numeracy	76.8%	83.3%

Table 24. Comparison of ratings by youth and frontline staff for BoysTown's effectiveness in providing assistance with personal development.

Improvement areas	Youth ranking BoysTown as effective/ highly effective	Frontline staff ranking BoysTown as effective/ highly effective
Communication skills	93.5%	97.2%
Wellbeing	90.3%	97.2%
Social support	89.4%	94.4%
Health	88.4%	88.6%
Self-esteem	88.2%	100%
Goal setting	87%	97.2%
Drug use	86.3%	88.9%
Offending behaviour	85.1%	83.3%
Anger management	84.7%	91.7%



Summary

Employment and Social Outcomes

Participants entering BoysTown have ranging backgrounds that most typically cluster as a profile of historic disadvantage and marginalisation and through which identifiable barriers to employment have developed. The profile and barriers affect their functional literacy and numeracy, self-esteem and wellbeing, optimism about the future, sense of personal aspiration, goal-setting and decision-making that youth apply in meeting their everyday challenges. However, 61.3% of them will complete their BoysTown program and leave with more positive personal and social skills along with having joined the workforce or taken further training for a period that meets or is greater than the Australian Government's 13-week criterion for being in full-time employment.

There is significant and important change for youth in BoysTown's transition-to-work related programs across time. This change applies to young people's understanding of community expectations of work and an increased readiness and willingness for work, to personal issues of improved self-esteem and wellbeing, and, to social characteristics of greater communicability, cooperation, planning and social interactions.

Across-Group Differences

The across-group differences is shown particularly in a discriminating holistic combination of the nature of a participant's referral, his/her standing in relation to a prior record in the juvenile or adult detention system, whether he/she is Indigenous and his/her level of self-esteem. Those youth with negative ratings on referral, justice system record and self-esteem variables and who are Indigenous are overrepresented amongst those who fail to make positive changes.

Indigenous Client Group Differences

There were several differences for Indigenous youth compared to the total group. Proportionally, Indigenous youth have greater representation at BoysTown than in the Australian community. There is a higher proportion of males amongst them, and many more live with family compared with the total group. Proportionally more have detention histories on coming to BoysTown. However, proportionally fewer re-enter detention when participating in BoysTown social enterprise programs and there were no new detainees

among Indigenous participants in our sample. Critically, no significant difference existed for Indigenous youth in sticking-with-the program. Thus, while a negative part of the holistic discriminant function that predicts positive change, there is no appreciable indication of success or failure in being Indigenous where its relation to other components of the profile is weak.

Predictive Functions

There were indicators of likely future detention at least while youth are participating at BoysTown. Participants' prior record of detention, gender and non-Indigeneity apply. Those most likely to be detained while at BoysTown are non-Indigenous males who have a prior record of detention.

There are factors that allow the identification of those who complete the program compared to those who withdraw. The profile derived from these data presents most strongly as an interactive set of four variables. Those who are most likely to complete will have begun their program on a positive referral; have no prior record in the juvenile justice system, not be Indigenous; and have average or better self-esteem. It is not tenable to separate these components – for example, data from the study indicate that Indigeneity alone is not predictive of success or failure.

Key Impacts from the Project

The major impact of this project is that it provides incidence data on successful transition to work and empirical support for the work BoysTown is doing through its social enterprises and associated programs with their underlying work-as-therapy theme. Significant numbers of Australian youth from these programs not only are in work because of them, but also are healthier, happier, and more sociable.

In retrieving youth from situations of unemployment and disaffection by attending deliberately to issues of youths' personal development as well as those associated with their skills, knowledge and attitude related to jobs at the centre of the various social enterprise programs, BoysTown's approach is both therapeutic as well as work-readying.

A significant aspect of findings reported briefly above and more fully throughout Appendices 3 and 4 is its tracking of youth participants during and following involvement in training and into subsequent work placement. Paid work while youth are in transition

programs at BoysTown and the careful, attentive and responsive attention given to scaffolding their experiences deliberately toward small successes and self-confidence increased youths' knowledge, skills, attitudes and motivation for work that they themselves associated with being work-ready. In so doing, the healthier respect that these youth built for their capabilities and better wellbeing - and their recognition and respect for those who were providing the scaffolding - broke a cycle of poverty, low self-esteem, dependence on welfare and handouts, and offending, arrest and incarceration that characterised so many of the participants on entry. This finding aligns BoysTown's transition-to-work and related programs for and with Australia's disconnected youth with the National Research Priority of Promoting and Maintaining Good Health. This alignment occurred during the time of their involvement with BoysTown's transition-to-work programs and was evident in the data for those contacted long after they had moved beyond BoysTown. While numbers in the follow-up components of the research were significantly smaller than in the tracking research thus limiting the confidence of generalisation of this finding, it provides an optimistic basis for additional research to address the important question of sustainability across lengthier periods of the working lives of successfully reconnected youth and the durability of their contribution as individuals and members of Australian society to the priority goal of strengthening Australia's social and economic fabric.

A second impact of the study is the utility of a discriminant function found in the profile for those likely to complete their BoysTown program. Typically, those likely to succeed - and then to go on to intended outcomes in being-in-work or further study or training and having healthier self-esteem and wellbeing - are youth referred by themselves, family or friends or as an internal transfer from BoysTown to BoysTown's transition-to-work and related programs who have no record in the juvenile justice system, are not Indigenous and have average or better self-esteem.

A final impact of the study is that the constellation of variables involved in the significant and important changes that BoysTown's youth made across time in the areas of work and personal adjustment, model interrelationships across the agency, goal-setting and decision-making that help explain youth's new competence and confidence. The model (see Figure 4) accounts for explication of growth for youth in the mainstream of success in the program as depicted in the discriminant function above - and those who succeed despite profiles other than that associated with likely completion of their program.

This model could be used at a national level, to inform the practice of youth workers, trainers and counsellors working with marginalised youth in transition-to-work programs. This framework, grounded in the findings of the current research project, will assist the development and implementation of effective intervention strategies with marginalised youth to facilitate connection with education and work.

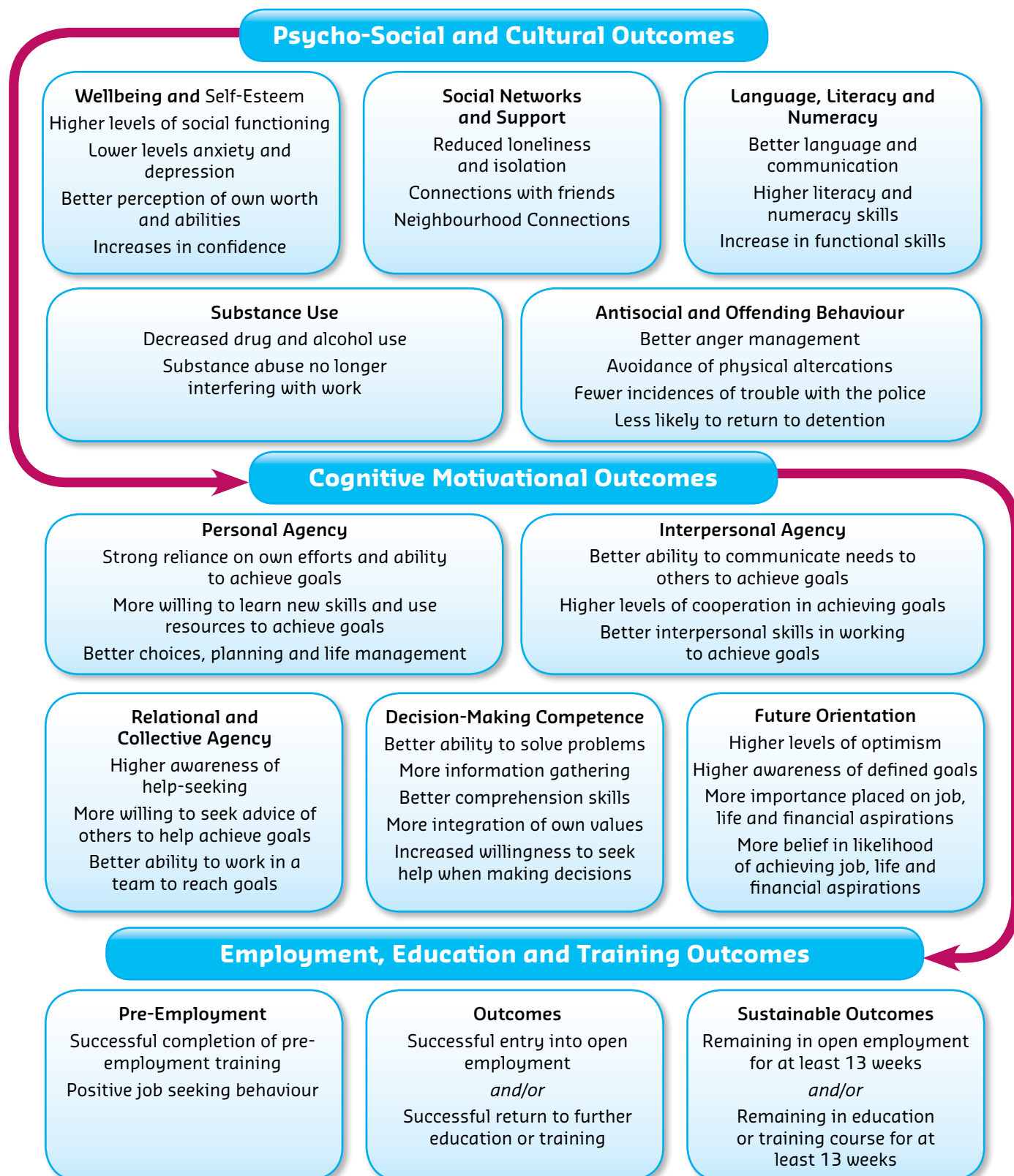


Figure 4. Model of outcomes in the transition of youth to employment.

Evidence That BoysTown's Programs Are Successful

In this project, empirical evidence provides a basis for interpreting BoysTown's "success" with its suite of programs designed with a "Work-as-Therapy" theme. These programs were intended to assist youth to reconnect personally and socially in Australian society. The evidence is in three clusters.

First, 61.3% obtain full-time employment, education or training outcomes and 89% of these participants typically are in work, education or training for at least 13 weeks after leaving BoysTown. Of interest, a further 11.9% of participants gained part-time or casual employment.

It is difficult to compare these figures with international and Australian research into social enterprise outcomes due to definitional, methodological and participant profile differences. However the authors believe that an indicative comparison can best be made with Job Services Australia (JSA) which is the Commonwealth Government's program for employment placement and support. If the definition used by the Department of Education, Employment and Work Place Relations (DEEWR) for positive outcomes (full-time and part-time employment and education outcomes) is applied to BoysTown participants, 73.2% achieved a positive outcome at exit. A comparison with positive outcomes achieved for various JSA participants at a national level (DEEWR, 2012) can be gained through a review of the Table 25. It needs to be recognised that direct comparison to labour market assistance outcomes is complex due to the higher proportion of males and Indigenous clients in BoysTown's sample compared to the national demographic groupings that DEEWR use in their quarterly reports and timing issues in relation to data collection. However, even when accounting for these issues, overall it appears that BoysTown's social enterprise and transition to work programs favourably compare with outcomes being achieved through the JSA network.

Table 25. Positive outcome rates across JSA client groups.

		Client Group			
		15-20 years	21-24 years	Males	Indigenous
Employment Assistance	Stream 3	53.6%	53.3%	47.1%	44.9%
	Stream 4	50.4%	55%	39.1%	29.8%

Note: This data is collected by DEEWR around three months after clients have participated in employment assistance

These outcome figures enumerate BoysTown's success in relation to helping unemployed youth into full-time employment.

Second, BoysTown's participants have told us that they entered their programs from wide-ranging, but typically depressed, personal and social circumstances and outlook, and with poor experiential backgrounds concerning work. These demographic data align with BoysTown's mission "To enable young people, especially those who are marginalised and without voice, to improve their quality of life", and with recent statements of its enactment of that mission, "while there have been changes in how we have delivered care over the years, our commitment firmly remains in providing support for the most disadvantaged young people in our society" (BoysTown, 2011).

BoysTown is working with those it seeks to help.

Third, there are statistically significant changes concerning work and personal and social adjustment as youth move through their programs. These changes indicate youths' improvement in their quality of life. The upward spiral of wellbeing and self-esteem measures throughout participants' time and experiences in their programs trace out positive trajectories associated with their development during the programs. Analysis of cases where participants were at the negative extreme of a prediction to fail – and did not – provides strong evidence that greatly improved wellbeing and self-esteem are configured in the personal profiles of successes amongst even the most disadvantaged cases. The "therapy" theme of BoysTown's intentions was only occasionally mentioned as such by staff as interviewees or in open-ended opportunities in the survey to describe their work. However, this character appears consistently throughout the case studies in terms of sensitivity, genuine interest and direct action in order to make a difference with each individual that each of these youth attributed to specific staff.

There were significant shifts in a number of psycho-social and cultural factors of participants. Improvements were seen in wellbeing and self-esteem areas such as social functioning, confidence and self belief. This was linked to less loneliness and isolation which in turn related to more reliable and stable connections with friends. Functional literacy and numeracy skills used in everyday and work lives also improved. Finally, the reduction in substance abuse and offending and antisocial behaviour allowed participants to start focusing on the future.

Other significant shifts occurred in participants' cognitive motivational processes, particularly in relation to outlook. Through the programs they came to value more highly being in charge of their own lives – and also regained hope and belief in being able to do so. This brighter picture suggests that their experiences with BoysTown's people and programs had promoted participants' greater independence and capacity for aspiration. Similar endorsement appears for their goal-setting, decision-making and agency in the huge gains made in relation to help-seeking, planning, cooperative activity and communication.

The many positive shifts recorded in participants' characteristics during their involvement with BoysTown are particularly established in relation to work and personal development, particularly with Indigenous youth. However, there is a notable contrast in relation to social development across the sample. Whereas, there was steep improvement in social interactions, with participants becoming more able, confident and active in their dealing with others which yielded "social interactions" as a positive factor in relation to predicting who would complete a BoysTown program, the changes that occurred at item level for antisocial interactions did not factor significantly. This contrary finding is inconsistent with sharp decreases in detention after youth started at BoysTown, and with the significant difference between completers of their programs and non-completers in relation to drug-taking suggesting this aspect of the data provides insufficient detail to be more than speculative and that the issue is worthy of further investigation. Nonetheless, participants' improvement is wide-ranging, providing the decisive index of success. Significant improvements were seen in aspirations where work and financial success are valued.

BoysTown's programs have resulted in changes for the better for those it has helped in relation to their quality of life. This includes greater capacity, understanding and participation in work. Its success with Indigenous youth is particularly strong.

Processes that Drive BoysTown's Success

Staff datasets indicate that the core processes that drive BoysTown's success are ensuring youths' buy-in to the programs (engagement-centredness), keeping the focus of BoysTown's intentions and activity centered on each youth (person-centredness) and structuring opportunities and persisting so that all individuals make tangible achievements as steps toward realising their inner potential (success-centredness). For example, the constant comparison method used to thematically analyse transcripts yielded three clusters of 23 processes to reflect that executive management staff commonly believe that BoysTown's people act to recognise and attend to youths' (a) Psycho-Social and Cultural Needs, (b) Employment and Personal Development Outcomes, and, (c) the Cognitive-Motivational Buy-in to have this happen (Figures 4-6; see also Appendix 5). The legitimacy of this belief is evident in the agreement reported in Tables 23 and 24 between frontline staff and youth in their consideration of BoysTown's effectiveness in building youths' personal development and work readiness.

For example, the first cluster (Figure 5) represents commonly-expressed views amongst BoysTown's staff that advocacy and ensuring that each youth knows that BoysTown's people are there for them to provide individual person-centered support are crucial processes used in recognising youths' psychosocial and cultural diversity. Staff acknowledged the disadvantage in most youths' backgrounds, but saw as important their actions beyond this to uncover whether and what barriers may have resulted to impede a youth's progress - and to reverse these conditions through individually-centering wrap-around support from all accessible areas. Using case management, assistance is provided to young people to overcome their personal and social barriers, for example, stabilising accommodation, addressing alcohol and drug abuse, working on mental health issues.

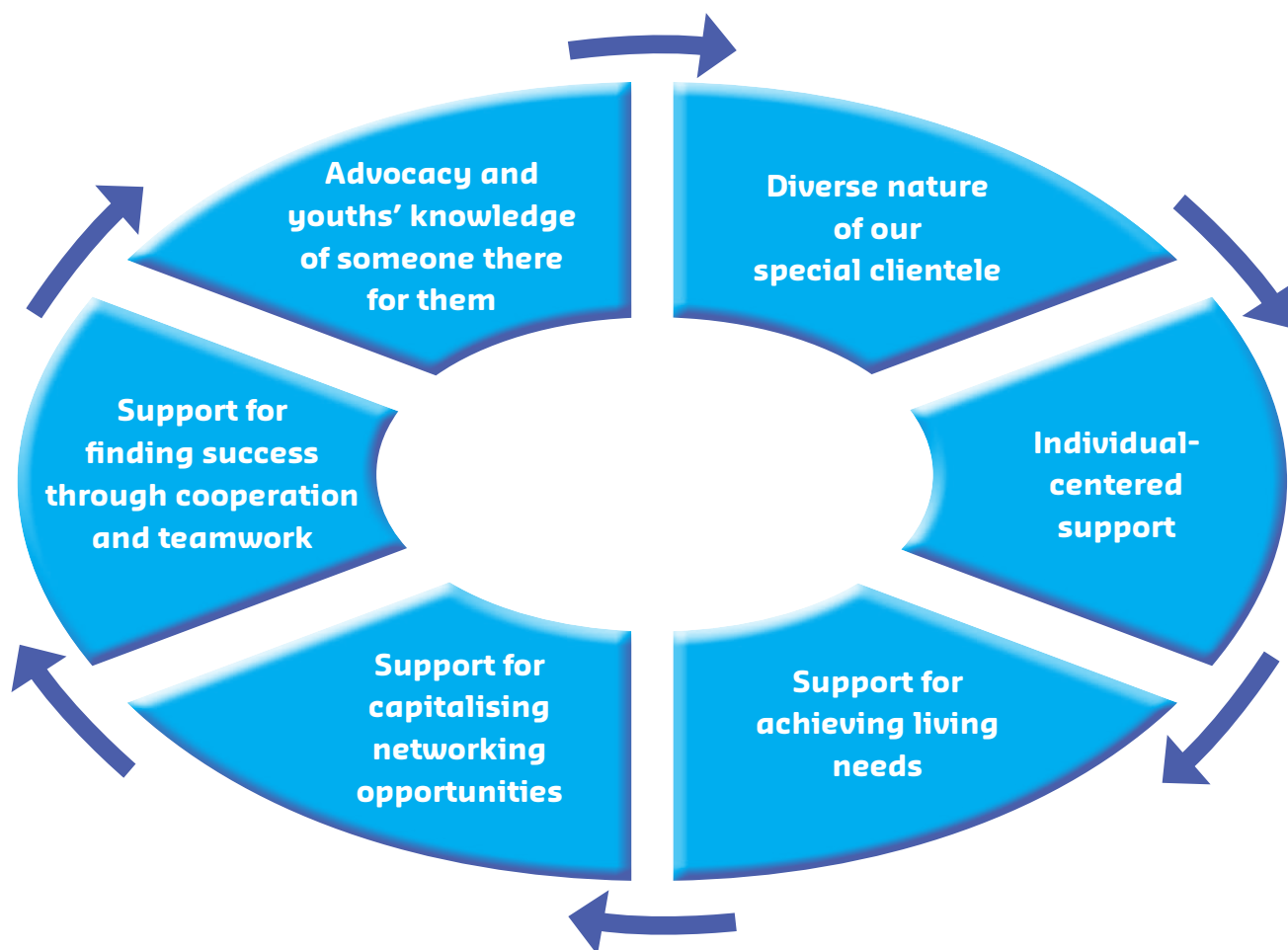


Figure 5. Recognising and attending to youth's psycho-social and cultural needs.

Similarly, the cluster of processes shown in Figure 6, capture features such as building a quality relationship with each individual and having quality staff to do so in order to acculturate youth not only into the routines, tools and skills associated with work and workplaces, but also into the important utility and acquisition of a work ethic. The quality of the mentoring and support relationship between Youth Trainers, Youth Workers and the young person highlights the importance of staff having highly developed relationship-building skills with youth, and capacity to recognise the humanity of each person - and patience and resilience to provide many chances. They include also processes that provide first-hand contact with accountability and achievability and awareness that the work done in training through the social enterprises is authentic and valued. The quality of the work skills training is that youth learn by doing, with skills-building as a core objective using materials of interest to young people. The importance of literacy and numeracy skills are emphasised through work activities, linked to each youth's literacy and numeracy development to real time and projected into achievable future applications. The support relationships are attuned to helping young people see that they have a future, one that may be far different from the "here and now" – "survival world view" that many had on entry to BoysTown, and that may once have impaired a vision of their better future.



Figure 6. Recognising and attending to youth's employment and personal development.

Another set is shown in Figure 7 of processes that are associated with youth's thinking and motivational engagement with the opportunities of their BoysTown program, that bolster their participation and self-esteem. These are processes in which Youth Trainers and Youth Workers talk through and demonstrate the authentic character of the enterprise, enact individual support for all in the enterprise including their own peers therein and in any wraparound services that feature for an individual. They also model the virtues and outcomes of persistence in acting out the La Sallian tradition of never giving up with a youth, and of finding opportunities to scaffold and praise the behaviour, communication and thinking that suggest individuals are acting on an expectation that they will achieve and valuing the effort, skills and gains that move them closer to doing so.



Figure 7. Recognising and attending to youth's cognitive-motivational buy-in.



Conceptualisation of Processes within Components of an Induction Course into BoysTown Enterprises

All participants undertake an induction course in which their basic language, literacy and numeracy skills are assessed and issues critical to safe and positive progression through the program are outlined and discussed. These include matters specific to a particular enterprise and more generally, to the values and policies guiding BoysTown's support for them throughout and following the program.

Induction course

During this induction stage, participants may encounter:

- BoysTown policies
- BoysTown Values Statement – being BoysTown
- Safety
- Group guidelines
- Program outline
- OHS White Card training
- Lasallian overview
- Provision of high visibility shirts, jumpers, trousers, work boots and hats, and
- Basic Key and Skills Builder (BKSB) assessment of language, literacy and numeracy.

The induction is an important space for BoysTown and its youth. Each finds out a little more about the other. BT14 noted, “[We] have to know who the kid is - it is not about just a product to deliver”. Part of this is ensuring that youth accept that their “voices” will be heard as promised in the mission. BT5 commented, “[Our] first job is to allow them to

believe they're worth listening to". This is a staff aspiration clearly picked up by youth in several of the case reports. For example:

Probably the fact that they actually, you know, they speak to you like you're a real person, you're not, you know, you don't feel like you're speaking to a (inaudible 05:07). (BTY58)

Yeah, like, I'm, like, (inaudible 04:51) they've almost made me welcome here, and I'm always, like, safe and pretty much, yeah, like, no one's really angry or anything. They don't laugh at you or anything, so no, I feel welcome and all that. (BTY59)

The induction is an opportune time to create with youth openness to their engagement with BoysTown becoming a viable 'third space' (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Tejada, 1999; Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, & Collazo, 2004), a new reality they can create, and one different from home and out-of-home experiences (including failed or negative workplace experiences) and that BoysTown is worth trying as an alternative. It is a trust-building time. As Brother Ambrose, BoysTown's Chairman of the Board commented:

We have to understand the reality of the situation and the construct of it. We need to understand their construct for understanding reality. We need to link this to the third space. (BT1)

Youth see it this way, too:

[Re the decision to come to BoysTown] Good - because it doesn't mean I'm on the streets (BTY109); Just to keep out of trouble, I get myself in enough trouble. (BTY 110)

Such reflections humanise the realities of conditional trust inherent in participants' quantitative data on entry that showed many were unsure about social relations. They were diffident about family, few had chatted with neighbours over the past four weeks and many felt hopeless about the future. All are constraining predispositions and for youth the reinstated optimism in being receptive to growth opportunities was a wonderful outcome.

Vocational skills

Youth Trainers lead the next section of participants' engagement. They generally have trade skills backgrounds and some have themselves come from disadvantaged backgrounds similar to participants in every group with whom they work. All use hands-on approaches

to introduce work skills relevant to the particular social enterprise (e.g. Horticulture; Graffiti Removal; Tree-planting), and to guide youth in acquiring and refining these skills and in building a work ethic. The Youth Trainers model, demonstrate, break jobs into doable tasks, and convince or cajole participants to get involved. One reluctant participant noted:

He's taught us heaps of stuff to do. I've never used a concrete saw before and he's – at first I was, no, I don't want to, I don't want to, I don't want to. He was, like, come on, just give it a go, watch me cut it. I watched him and then he gave me a go. So he gave me confidence and that. Yeah, he's tops (BTY130).

There was obvious perception and appreciation from this youth of the appropriateness of the Youth Trainer's mix of modelling and encouragement.

Typically, enterprises are linked with a government contract, are located within the local communities where most participants live and have real and must-deliver outcomes. The work is authentic with strict quality controls and timelines ("We contract for work and it is a good thing as it leads to accountability for performance and improved performance", BT1). Youth receive a wage for their work, usually somewhat higher than unemployment benefits and come off any social services benefit they were previously receiving. This switch reduces the cost to society of supporting the youth as unemployed Australians ("It is not work for the dole, but a fair day's work for a fair day's pay", BT3).

An evaluative realisation that they have switched from welfare recipient status may be an important milestone as BoysTown's youth rebuild or build a sustainable work ethic using personal and enterprise experience as their reference points. For example:

Yeah. But, now since I've worked with BoysTown, now I know you need a job and it's just a part of life so you need it. You need to always be working. Yeah. Yeah, 'cause I don't want to be on the dole ... If I went back on the dole right now, oh, I'd go back to being – doing stupid stuff. (BTY3)

But, this time last year I would have probably been, oh probably going to be on the dole for another year. I didn't know what was going to happen. A lot's changed. (BTY37)

I've been on the dole for nine years and it's hard to get back into the work routine. Now that I've been with BoysTown I've got more incentive to go now. I still don't like TAFE, I don't like going to TAFE. But, yeah, I like the job bit and working bit. (BTY53)

It adds contextual value to their engagement in the program and provides a basis for youth in their “third space” to connect pay, work, effort and respect in genuine ways. Many begin savings programs, contribute to their upkeep and encounter positive regard within the community - “They’re getting people coming up to them in the street saying, “You’re doing a fantastic job” (BT2).

Such external acknowledgement carries tacit messages about worth. These reinforce encouragement given to BoysTown’s youth within the enterprises that includes Youth Trainers’ deliberate, strategic modelling on how and why to appreciate moments of finished work, reflection on contributions and experience of satisfaction. The combination is a powerful opportunity for what has been observed elsewhere as the likelihood that disengagement can be and will be reversed [e.g. see Rudduck & Flutter (2004) who wrote of such follow-through effects in schools where “students feel that significant others in the school are able to see and acknowledge some of their strengths” (p. 70)]. In our data, the reversal is reflected in the marked improvement in participants’ well-being, self-esteem and confidence across the three test times and the association these have with youths’ growing work skills and employability.

Additionally, participants receive regular group and individual contact with their Case Manager (Youth Worker) to record, monitor, address and respond to issues generally in relation to progression concerning their welfare, ideas, attitudes and outlook. In an assessment of effects from the combination of this work alongside that of his Youth Trainer, BTY160 said, “BT26 really influenced me to start young. If I start young, I want to have something there when I’m older. Halfway through the program I sort of realised what I want to do with my life – where I want to be.” BoysTown also links some of the enterprise programs with trade qualifications, typically through TAFE. They arrange transport for participants, coordinate input on the job with discussion about what is happening in the TAFE coursework and speak about the benefits of generalisation into other work opportunities that the qualifications bring:

Yeah, he’d be telling us our plant ID. See, I didn’t get 100 out of 100 ‘cause I got spelling wrong but I got every single plant on that list I got right. BTY27 got 100 out of 100 too. That’s ‘cause BT26 drove around in the car and drummed every single plant on the list into our head and pointed out every single plant every day. Every day on the way to work, on the way home from work, he’d drum it into our heads. That’s what I liked, he full on kept teaching us over and over and over. Where at TAFE they teach you and that’s it. If you don’t pick it up that’s your problem. It’s stupid. (BTY2)

Assessment of individuals' progression is ongoing throughout the program as part of each participant's case management. Being aware of change is something BoysTown's staff members do easily – their work is about changes for the better. In addition to on-the-job training, youth meet other BoysTown staff either on the job site or in a BoysTown office.

Addressing barriers to employment

There is a suite of available assistance for young people to address their barriers to employment. Case management is provided by Youth Workers on a regular basis. In addition, there are group workshops dealing with a range of relevant issues for this target group that are facilitated by the Youth Worker, Youth Trainer, Employment Consultants, Counsellors and other staff. The focus of these workshops include employability skills, life skills, relationships, group processes, health, alcohol and other drugs, and driver training. There are also engagement opportunities for art, sports and outdoor activities.

Open discussion about what “success” in the program means and what is required to achieve success is part of this formative assessment and is individualised. It is discussed widely by Youth Workers and Counsellors, and built cooperatively and concretely by the Youth Trainer and each participant into iterative action learning cycles. Each cycle involves observing one's achievement to that point, reflecting on its strengths, planning for its improvement, and then doing what it takes to make the improvement. Each cycle aims to encourage and resource participants as they move from the equilibrium position that has evolved as an achievement into the next cycle, the action, “help[-ing] their strengths grow and mentor[-ing] positive outcomes and lead[-ing] them into practical activities that take part in community life, and therefore inclusion” (BT8).

Graduation

Graduation addresses a reality of life introduced to these youth that many ... “thought they could not access ... and that ... cut the idea of belief of worthlessness” (BT1). On graduation, participants usually have pre-arranged ongoing paid work. Those who have not, then move into BoysTown's Job Placement programs where connections are made with organisations whose work embraces skills that the youth have developed and demonstrated through trade qualifications which they have earned. Several will have been approached prior to finishing their program, “...When enterprise kids are working on a contract within sight of other contractors they are often observed and offered jobs” (BT2).

Thus, within and across the phases of BoysTown's programs, youth have been responsive to processes that were deliberately constructed and deployed to help them build something tangible and positive in their third space. For BoysTown's staff from CEO through to service delivery personnel mentioned above as Youth Trainers, Youth Workers, Counsellors and many others, patience, sensitivity and direction are very evident in their processes of interaction. There is appreciation of the smallest step that a youth or a group of youths take to address challenges to their confidence or to extend understandings of the sheer happening of a step taken – of its nature, meaning and consequences. And, there is genuine positive regard for the steppers.

Evidence for What Might Be Strengthened: Recommendations

The research underpinning this report has attempted to deconstruct what it is that BoysTown does in order to be so successful in its use of transition to work programs to help unemployed youth enter or re-enter the workforce. There is a statistical predictor that maximises the clustering of several very significant variables at entry, such that non-Indigenous youth with no histories of detention in the juvenile justice system, referrals to BoysTown from family, friends, self or from internal-transfer at BoysTown and with at least average self-esteem at entry are most likely to complete the program.

The first recommendation is made in the context of these connected predictions and relates to likelihood of completing a BoysTown social enterprise:

1. **BoysTown review operational procedures for induction and case management to ensure staff are cognisant of strengths and limitations of the entry profile as a basis for:**
 - a. Early prediction of youth who do not fit this profile and are at particular risk of not completing a transition-to-work program; and
 - b. Staff development where staff critically consider the profile and its potential uses.

Because Indigenous youth are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system – and in BoysTown's clientele, it is unsurprising that Indigeneity is configured as part of the discriminant function which projected this entry profile. In fact, the great

majority of Indigenous youth who participated in our research stayed in the program, and made successful transitions to work. The same is true for youth who had prior history in the juvenile justice system. Few reoffended while at BoysTown and most completed or are near completion of their transition-to-work programs. The two conditions associated with the critical discriminant analysis outcome that help explain the anomaly are the difference between single variable and combination of variables prediction – e.g. Indigeneity does not predict one way or the other by itself but does so in combination with the other variables of the profile – and, the operation of self-esteem as the only dynamic variable in the profile – i.e. it proved to be quite changeable over time as individuals engaged with the program.

The research shows that participants' self-esteem across the sample improved significantly with time in program perhaps explaining several examples where youth did well despite not fitting the entry profile for positive prediction. However, in other cases, participants withdrew before completion where their positive profile would have suggested otherwise. Given that participants' self-esteem holds the key to explaining these inconsistencies, it should be closely monitored as participants move into and through their programs.

The second recommendation is made concerning specific targeting of self-esteem as a locus for change, especially for those who do not fit the entry profile:

- 2. In reviewing operational procedures and staff development for induction and case management for youth who do not fit the entry profile, BoysTown should:**
 - a. Commend staff for evidence in the report of their creating opportunities around youth's success for them to evaluate their contribution and reappraise their senses of competence and worth;
 - b. Highlight the significant progress youth have made where their self-esteem has been bolstered; and
 - c. Investigate alternate strategies to strengthen the engagement of youth likely to disengage from the social enterprise program.

The research has also identified a number of interlinked variables across psycho-social, cognitive-motivational and employment outcomes that help explain the positive change achieved by most youth in BoysTown's social enterprises (Figure 4). The authors believe that this framework could inform the development of training strategies across

organisations delivering social enterprise programs to increase the overall effectiveness of practice. The third recommendation is based on this finding:

- 3. BoysTown develop training programs that could be used across the social enterprise sector to build the knowledge and skills of practitioners about how to facilitate the key enabling factors, that drive the achievement of education and employment outcomes with young people, in their practice.**

A preliminary comparative analysis of employment and education outcomes achieved by participants in BoysTown's social enterprises was made with outcomes achieved by similar participants in Job Services Australia. It would appear that BoysTown social enterprises are being effective in reducing the number of long-term unemployed youth. Consequently at a policy level there is reason to commence discussions with Australian Governments on ways to foster the growth and sustainability of social enterprises and to investigate how to develop referral pathways for young people disengaging from education to these programs. The fourth recommendation is premised on this proposition:

- 4. BoysTown convene a meeting of social enterprise service providers with a view to:**
 - a. Engaging Commonwealth and State Governments to develop an industry plan to increase and sustain Social Enterprise – Intermediate Labour Market Programs in Australia, with the aim of reducing long-term unemployment; and
 - b. Connecting with Commonwealth and State Government Education Departments to develop referral pathways for young people, at risk of premature disconnection from school, into transition to work programs as a diversionary strategy to reduce the numbers of youth entering chronic cycles of unemployment and poverty.

Conclusion

The project was conceived to determine evidence to explain outcomes BoysTown is achieving with youth through its programs where work as therapy has been thematic. In the first instance, it documented rates of successful transition to work for youth as 61.3% who after completion of their BoysTown program were in full-time work or further study/training and a further 11.9% in part-time or casual employment – 89% of these participants matching the Government's criterion for 13 weeks of continuous employment, education or training. During their programs they had acquired work skills, better communication, cooperation and planning and sociability. Codes of behaviour were modelled by BoysTown staff, and practiced and accommodated by youth – behaviour such as punctuality and readiness for each day's work, effort in doing that work, and evaluation and reflection relating to it. Alongside youths' rapidly-developing skills and knowledge pertaining to specific work, acquisition of these codes is likely to have affected BoysTown youths' employability, and capacity to stay in work once employed. Additionally, significant increases in their self-esteem and improvement in their well-being generally, included new or renewed belief and aspirations. The evidence also shows that participants came to value work, to see themselves as capable and to want to be part of the workforce. The explanation of outcomes referred by these findings is that BoysTown's youth-graduates who made the successful transition to earning or learning were healthier in mind and spirit, skilful and ready and happy to participate in society.

Retrieval through successful transition to work from troubled backgrounds and unemployment is in the best interests of Australia's disconnected youth or those at risk of disconnection, their current and future families and the society of which they are part. For such individuals, skills and healthy mindedness built during training and readiness and capability for work are prospectively-critical outcomes. So too are the possibilities for flow-on to improved psychological and social health and wellbeing. Statistically significant numbers of participants in BoysTown's social enterprises and related programs achieved positive results in both work and personal-social development areas, and completing their program was the major predictor aligned with this success. In turn, prediction of who would complete their program was indicated through discriminant analysis as a profile on entry to BoysTown of youth referred positively rather than through the juvenile justice system, who have no record in that system, who are not Indigenous and who have average or better self-esteem.

Reasons for this success as youth recounted them are that BoysTown provides a responsive, structured environment for such change. Its pay-for-work social enterprises in a supported environment encouraged them to build work knowledge and skills, attitudinal and language schemas to plan, cooperate and communicate about work, about themselves as increasingly able and interested workers and about affective positives such as their respect for effort, others and themselves. Their appraisal triangulates with what BoysTown's leadership and staff spoke of as the purpose and intentions of the programs and the predisposition of staff who conceptualise, oversee, lead and otherwise participate in them, and with what employers say about the qualities of BoysTown's graduates.

In addition, there are important indications in the database that youth whose entry records do not fit the prediction of success profile, may indeed be successful where their experiences in BoysTown's programs elevates their self-esteem and wellbeing to average and better levels. Further, there is evidence that some with positive predictions from their entry profiles may fail if in the event of participation, their self-esteem or wellbeing does not shift much from their starting levels. These findings form an explanatory constellation for the variables investigated in this study as presented earlier in Figure 4.



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