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Woodridge State High School Community Hub

Final Evaluation Report

February 2016

Introduction

Funding to provide the Woodridge State High School Community Hub (hereafter referred to as "The Hub"), was granted to BoysTown (hereafter referred to as "**yourtown**") in August 2013 by the Federal Department of Human Services Better Futures, Local Solutions - Local Solutions Fund. The two year grant was held by the "Host" - the Queensland Salvation Army. These funds were used by **yourtown**, under an auspicing arrangement, to support Woodridge State High School to establish and resource The Hub onsite from July 2013 until end of June 2015.

The Hub aimed to provide a central point for the delivery by external organisations of employment related information, support and training services at the school. The primary objective was to assist "at risk" Year 12 Woodridge State High School students, unemployed students' parents and other family members and unemployed former students to engage successfully with the labour market. Strategies to achieve this objective included individualised case management targeting student and community clients, as well as building capacity in existing local agencies to engage with and provide a range of support services to this client group.

An interim report evaluating the results of The Hub's first year of service delivery was provided to funding stakeholders in April 2015. The report detailed the outcomes achieved by the three key client stakeholder groups up to the end of June 2014, utilising program data and evaluative survey data from samples of client and community group populations. The Year 1 study findings suggested that The Hub was on track to achieve agreed training and employment benchmarks, as well as returning positive results in relation to additional agreed success indicators as outlined in The Hub Evaluation Framework, 2013.

The Local Solutions Fund Grant Agreement also required client post participation outcome data to be tracked and reported. The following report provides post program follow-up data for a sample of 57 Year 1 clients who were able to be contacted up to 12 months post program exit. In addition, this report describes the short-term outcomes for 101 Year 2 clients able to be measured at program closure, as well as longer-term outcomes achieved by a small sample of 27 Year 2 clients who were able to be contacted up to seven months following program exit .

This final evaluative study focuses on assessing the degree to which available data demonstrates The Hub program:

- 1. Assisted registered Hub clients (Woodridge High School students, family members and former students) to overcome barriers to participation in education and employment*
- 2. Supported registered current students to complete Year 12 or its equivalent*

3. *Supported registered former students and unemployed family members to obtain paid sustainable employment**

defined by **yourtown as at least 15 hours pw for at least 13 wks*

4. *Supported registered current students, former students and unemployed family members to transition to, engage in and complete further self-identified "preferred" study*
5. *Developed a funding partnership between Woodridge High School and an appropriate corporation that would ensure program continuation beyond 2015*

Overall, the study found evidence that the Community Hub program was regarded by the majority of participants as a positive influence on their lives. Seventy percent of a small sample of 27 Year 2 clients reported achieving exactly what they wanted to achieve from their time at The Hub. Positive attitudinal change relating to confidence in themselves and in their future was evidenced, and satisfaction with levels of help to achieve goals was high (89%).

Students at risk of school cancellations completed Year 12 in both 2014 and 2015 at ever-increasing rates (up to 89% in 2015) and levels of QCE achievements also rose over the period since the program commenced (up to 99% of student completions).

A benchmark achievement rate for sustainable employment and training was set at 70% of all clients, and while many clients in both years of the program completed training courses and experienced some form of employment for short periods of time (88% in Year 1 and 76% in Year 2), The Hub was not able to achieve this high target in Year 2. The final available achievement rate under a definition of "sustainable employment", was calculated as 76% in Year 1 and 57% in Year 2. Further, analysis of case management activity showed decreased levels over the second year of the program and qualitative feedback relating to perceptions of inadequate case management responses increased.

The report concludes with a brief discussion of the issues that may have impacted on the programs' inability to achieve its targets in Year 2 and a description of current efforts by Woodridge State High School and the Queensland Department of Education to continue key aspects of The Hub strategies.

Methodology

As per the Year 1 Evaluation Report, data relating to key performance indicators was collected from several sources during Year 2 including:

- the **yourtown** Client Information System,
- a spreadsheet maintained by the case manager,
- three mixed method surveys conducted via telephone by researchers from the **yourtown** Strategy and Research team. These surveys were with two distinct samples of Year 1 and Year 2 Community Hub program clients, including:
 1. Follow up data establishing the long term employment related achievements of Year 1 clients (up to 12 months following exit)
 2. Entry point data establishing Year 2 client demographics including familial work exposure, and baseline data for measuring attitudinal change
 3. Follow up data establishing the long term employment related achievements of Year 2 clients (up to 7 months following exit) and post program point data measuring attitudinal change.

Data was also sourced from the Woodridge State High School database in relation to school completion rates. Further, a semi-structured telephone interview was conducted in February 2016 with the current Woodridge State High School Hub Industry Officer to ascertain her perspective on the impact of the cessation in June 2015 of Department of Human Services funding on students and the broader Woodridge community. A brief description of strategies subsequently implemented by the school and the Queensland Department of Education (DET) to return the school to a focus on employment pathways for at risk students was also gathered.

Data issues

1. Some disparities were found between data entered into the case-manager's spreadsheet and data entered into the **yourtown** Client Information System. Where examination of the two sources resulted in different counts for several indicators of success, the inconsistencies and "work-arounds" are noted at relevant points in the report.
2. A second issue in this study's data collection, frequently found by researchers attempting post program data collection, particularly in youth populations, was that the evaluators struggled to contact clients who were no longer receiving services.

yourtown researchers have commonly found in their predominantly young client group, that clients change phone numbers frequently, or do not answer phones when caller ID shows an unfamiliar number. This impacts on the ability of the survey sample findings to be extrapolated to the total program population. Of the total 143 clients registered as receiving case management services from The Hub during Year 1, only 57 (40%) were able to be contacted post program. Of the total 101 clients registered to The Hub during Year 2, only 27 (27%) were able to be contacted post

program. Despite this, the data reported here describes the medium to longer term outcomes for those who participated in the evaluative studies.

3. A third issue arising in relation to the analysis of Year 2 client activity data was that 68 clients from Year 1 were still receiving varying levels of case management activity during Year 2. In order to most accurately represent the activities leading to client outcomes, Year 2 activity data has been reported against not only clients who were enrolled in Year 2, but also clients who were enrolled in Year 1 and continuing to receive services in Year 2. This method highlights the case manager's workload created by 169 clients in the second year of the program. The issue of high caseload in Year 2 is discussed later as a potential contributor to the reduced Year 2 program results.

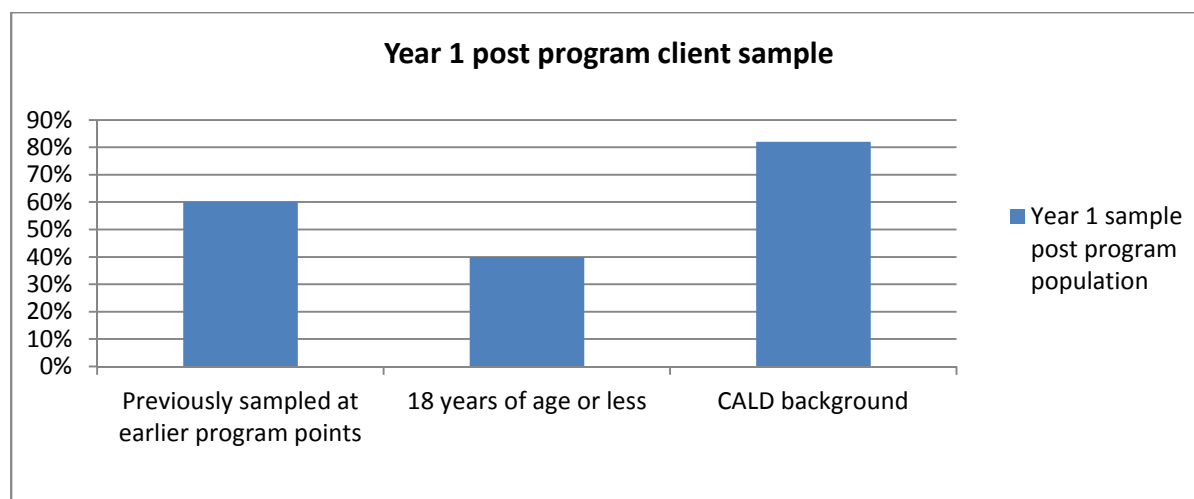
Demographics of outcome measures samples x 3

1. Year 1 post program client sample

Of the 57 clients from Year 1 able to be contacted between May and July 2015 for post program outcome data collection:

- 60% had been previously surveyed during the Year 1 interim evaluative study
- 40% were 18 years of age or less (See Figure 1)
- 56% were female/ 44% male
- 82% were from Culturally or Linguistically Diverse backgrounds (CALD), with people from the Pacific Islands comprising 60% of the total sample. One client only identified as an Australian Aboriginal person.

Figure 1: Year 1 post program client sample demographics (N=57)



This Year 1 post-program sample is generally representative of the program population, matching for student/ community split, gender and cultural background.

2. Year 2 entry point client sample

Of the 101 new clients who registered with The Hub during Year 2, 81 completed entry point surveys during the period August 2014 to May 2015.

These 81 clients were:

- Predominantly young (83% were 18 years or under) with 80% reporting being students (See Figure 2)
- 62% male and 38% female
- Mostly from CALD backgrounds (84%), with people from the Pacific Islands comprising the majority group (73%)
- Predominantly living in public housing (46%)
- Of the 38% with some kind of post school qualification at program entry point, the most common was a Certificate 3 (16%)
- Of the 12 clients who reported they were not currently studying, one third had been out of work for more than 3 months. One quarter had been unemployed for 12 months or more
- 48% of students had never held any kind of job, whereas only 7% of community or family member clients had never worked
- 27% of students described their parent or main carer as either never having worked, or as being in and out of work while growing up (See Figure 3)
- Only 7% of community member clients reported their parent or main carer as being in and out of work while they were growing up, while none reported them as not ever having worked.

Figure 2: Year 2 entry point client sample demographics (N=81)

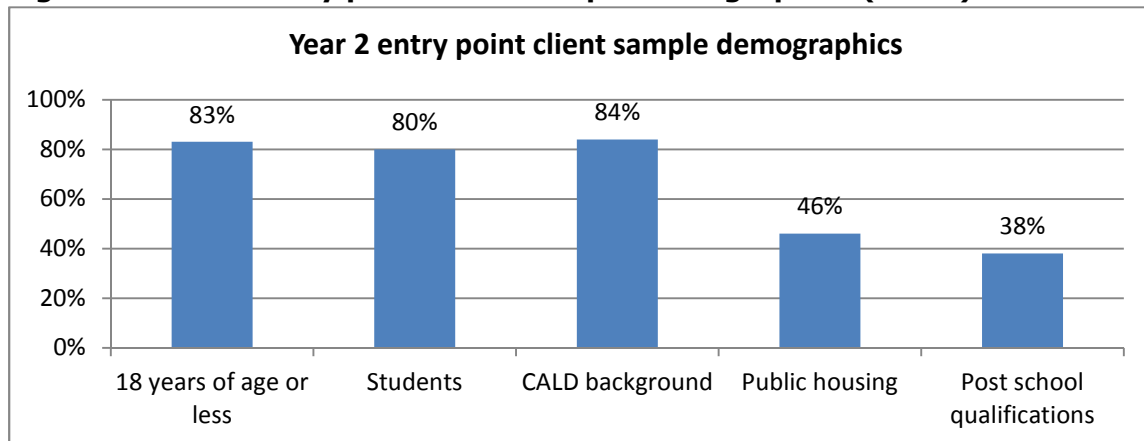
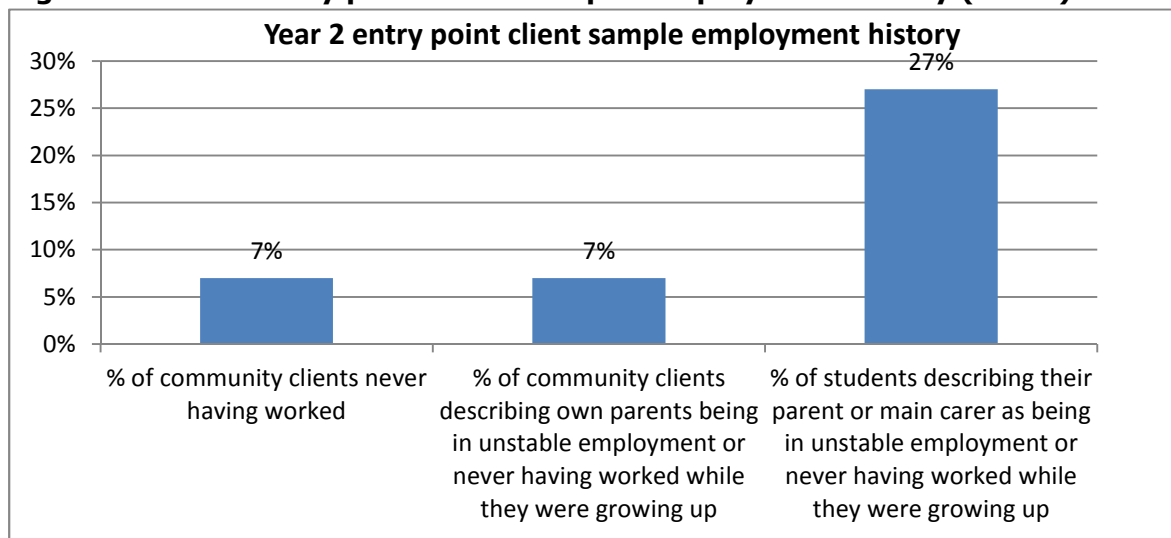


Figure 3: Year 2 entry point client sample—employment history (N=81)



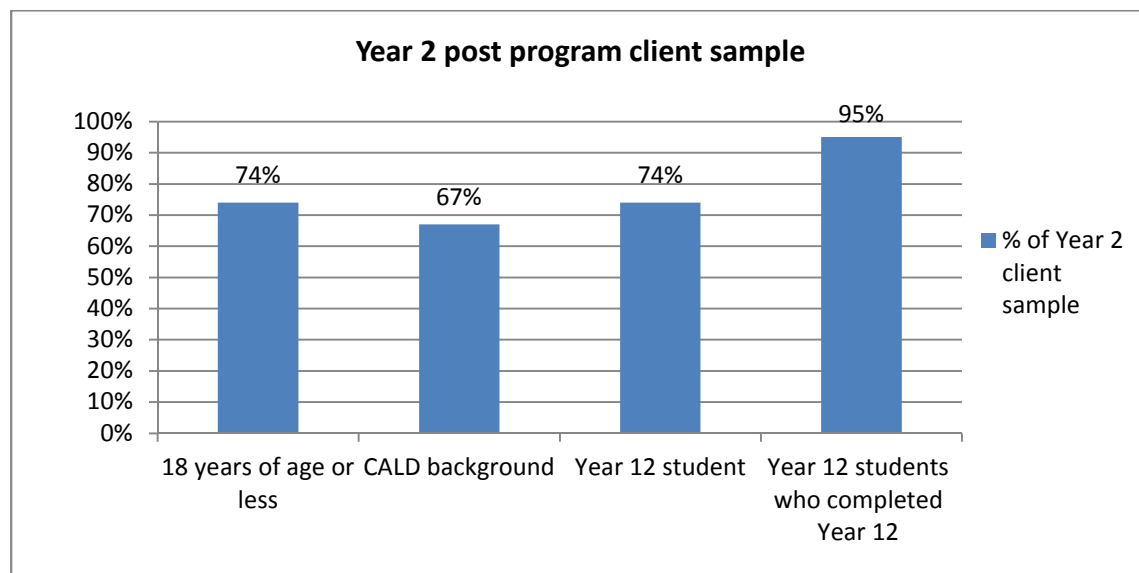
This sample, while comprising 81% of all Year 2 clients, is over-representative of students as only 60% of all the Year 1 client population were students.

3. Year 2 post program client sample

Twenty seven clients were able to be contacted up to three months after The Hub program ceased in July 2015. The interviews were conducted between July and September 2015, and for some of these clients, less than 3 months had passed since their own program exits, while up to 12 months had passed for others.

- 74% were 18 years of age or less (See Figure 4)
- 48% were male and 52% female
- 67% were from CALD backgrounds, including 63% from the Pacific Islands
- 74% were Year 12 students
- 95% of Year 12 students had completed Year 12 (n=20)
- 100% had completed Year 2 entry point surveys

Figure 4: Year 2 post program client sample demographics (N=27)



Although small, this sample generally matched the demographics of the total Year 2 client population.

Program results

Case management activity

Program staff described the primary objective of the program as one aiming to increase employment pathways for at risk Year 12 students and community members. At program conception, a model of case-management was envisioned that was adapted from employment service systems, leading to a principal focus on encouraging vocational training and job seeking endeavours, and assessing barriers to those activities. Goals were to be set with the client, and where barriers to goal achievement were assessed to exist, including need for family or mental health supports, referrals were to be made to agencies that could intervene. Additional contacts termed "casework" were to be made with clients to facilitate and monitor progress during the program. Combined, these activities were classed as "case management". One case manager was employed to deliver all direct client services to an expected 200 clients over the two year funded period while the program co-ordinator focused on community development and program management activities.

The evaluative study of this program conducted over the two years found that, rather than clients receiving a standardised case management model, a variety of service activity mixes were offered, including:

- A single intake meeting where a client was briefly assessed and directly registered into a vocational training program, with no further contact occurring between the client and The Hub case manager
- A more extensive assessment of career options occurred and clients were given a range of training courses to choose from, with limited case manager follow-up
- An even more extensive assessment of needs occurred, and a range of support services was offered, followed by more regular monitoring to ensure referral take-up.

Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data suggests the case manager's application of this spectrum of service-mix from "almost no" activity to "some" levels of activity was perceived by the majority of clients as appropriate to their needs. However a sizeable number of clients across both student and community groups, reported a perception that they had not received an adequate response to their needs. Examples of this feedback is reported under the section on "Satisfaction with case management".

To better understand the variations in service activity across clients, data from both the case-manager's spreadsheet and the **yourtown** Client Information Management System were analysed to ascertain the level of case management activity carried out during the 12 month period July 2014 to June 2015. This activity occurred with 101 clients enrolled during Year 2, plus 68 clients enrolled during Year 1 and still receiving services after June 30 2014 ($N=169$ in total).

This data was then compared with data obtained during the previous Woodridge State High School Community Hub Year 1 evaluative study to see if the extremely high caseload carried in Year 2 had affected either the service model, service quality, or both.

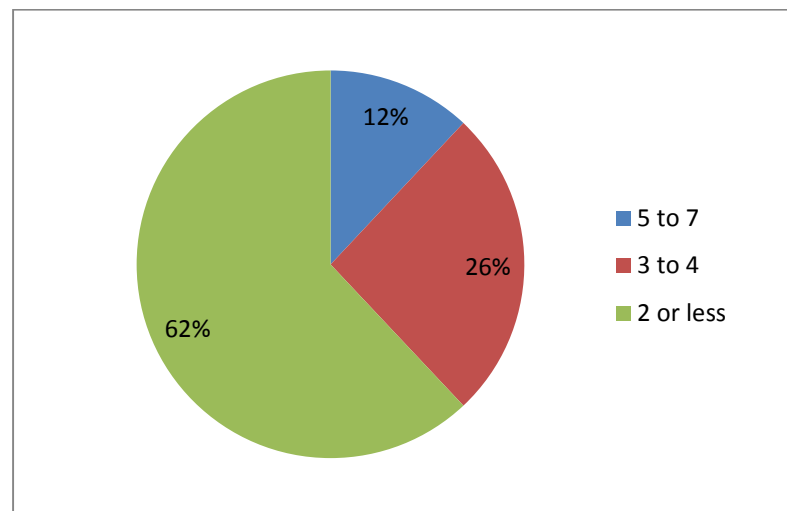
In total, 244 clients were recorded as receiving services from The Hub during the two year period July 2013 to June 2015. One hundred and forty three clients enrolled in Year 1, with 75 exited by year's end in June 2014. An additional 101 enrolled during Year 2.

The analysis below shows the following case management related activity occurring between July 2014 and June 2015 with both the 101 Year 2 clients and 68 clients from Year 1 (N=169).

- A total of 397 casework events were documented in case files for 169 clients during Year 2 compared to 382 for 143 clients in Year 1.
- Further analysis of Year 2 casework activity showed that almost half the 169 clients (48%) only received one casework event, while 29% received two to three case work events. Figure 5 highlights the limited level of casework delivered through The Hub in Year 2.
- Twenty three percent of clients received more than three casework events with the highest level of casework being 7 events (3%)
- 88 goal reviews and 2 case reviews were held across 169 clients in Year 2 compared to 79 goal reviews and 7 case reviews across 143 clients in Year 1
- Ninety one goals were set in Year 2 with 169 clients, 45% of which were reported as being fully achieved and 7% partially achieved, with a further 48% either not achieved or not reviewed by the time the program ceased in June 2015. This was compared to 185 goals set with 143 clients in Year 1. As achievement of those Year 1 goals was rolled over for almost half the clients, it is not useful to compare goal achievement between the 2 years.

Referral data is only available from the case manager’s spreadsheet distinctly separating Year 1 and Year 2 enrolled clients. This data indicates that only 39% of the 101 Year 2 enrolled clients received a referral compared to 75% of the 143 Year 1 enrolled clients.

Figure 5: Proportion of Year 2 clients x number of case work events (N=169)



There is evidence to suggest that the mean level of case work activity fell from 2.7 case work events per client in Year 1, to 2.3 in Year 2.

The program may have intended to use a case management model to support clients through employment pathways, however this evaluation found the already low levels of casework occurring in Year 1, decreased even further during the second year with 169

clients, making it difficult to demonstrate fidelity to any effective model of case management.

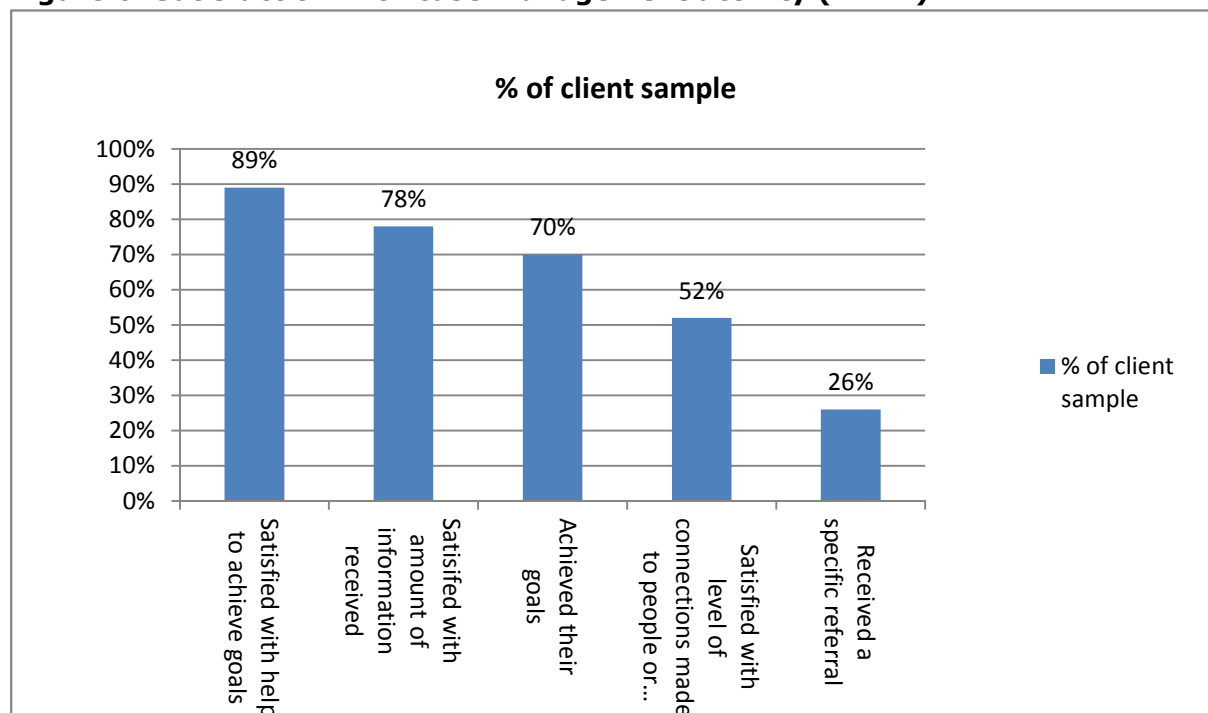
Generally low levels of casework may have been appropriate for clients with low support needs, but as this program was designed to target clients designated as being at substantial risk of exclusion from the labour market, it would appear the program activity may have been inadequate for that task. This may have contributed to the low levels of short and long-term “sustainable” employment outcomes described later in this report. However, as noted in the section on longer-term outcomes, it is clear that many clients registered with The Hub with training goals only, with no need for case management style activities, and thus contributed to limited employment outcome achievement levels.

Satisfaction with case management

Year 2 clients who were able to be contacted post program gave feedback in relation to their perception of the benefits of the case management services they experienced (N=27; Figure 6):

- 89% reported feeling satisfied with the level of help they got from their case manager to achieve their goals
- 78% reported that The Hub gave them the information they needed to help them achieve their goals
- 70% reported that overall they achieved what they wanted to achieve from their time at The Hub
- 52% reported that The Hub helped connect them to the people or agencies they needed to help them achieve their goals
- 26% reported receiving a specific referral and 100% of these seven clients reported that it was easy to follow

Figure 6: Satisfaction with case management activity (N=27)



The results of these measures highlight once again the varying levels of client need, and the difficulty of appropriately matching service responses. The majority of sampled clients were satisfied with their case manager's 'support to achieve their goals' (89%). However lower levels of satisfaction linked to information giving and being connecting to other agencies, and the low number of sampled clients reporting having received a referral, suggest that the needs assessment and referral processes inherent in traditional case management models were either not being carried out, or were less effectively carried out than the more general constructs of "support". Although 70% of sampled clients report achieving what they wanted to achieve from their time at The Hub, it is worth exploring what happened to the other 30%.

As noted earlier, the case load during Year 2 was extremely high (N=169) leading to limited opportunities to engage closely with clients and accurately assess client needs 100% of the time. This lack of ability to fully assess needs may have led to some clients not perceiving The Hub activities to be completely effective in helping them achieve their goals, whether these were 'sustainable' training (defined as "identified by the client as their 'preferred' course") or 'sustainable' employment of 15 hours a week for 13 weeks.

The following section offers a thematic analysis of the range of experiences reported by clients enrolled in both Years 1 and 2, grouped into common sets of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with:

- minimal case management activity,
- greater case management activity
- training referrals

Group 1

Satisfied clients – minimal expressed needs/ minimal assistance required

Comments below suggest that many clients were linked to The Hub program because it was a portal to a training course, and not because they were necessarily requiring the support of a case manager. This model may have been adequate for many clients like these, who knew what they wanted and just needed minimal support with resume writing or training program contact details:

"It was just enrolling in the course"

"They helped me get into the course - I knew what I wanted and they helped me get it"

"We were filling out forms and she was talking about what we wanted to do - career information - and I was supposed to go back to see her - but I had heaps of assignments and never got back there"

"(Case manager's name) was really nice but I only saw her a couple of times"

"I didn't do much with The Hub"

"Helped me with resume - she gave me pointers re: how to get work. But I got most of my information from my work experience class at school, not from The Hub"

"I only went to The Hub once"

The high levels of clients reporting at program entry point that either they (60%) or their parents/carers (94%), had work histories (discussed further in the section on "Factors impacting on success"), may support the premise that the program enrolled a significant number of clients who did not require the assistance of a case manager, and that the model of service they received was more in line with that of an information and referral service. Note however, has already been made of the lower levels of satisfaction reported with the information-giving service component and extremely low levels of referrals offered in Year 2, compared to higher satisfaction with the more general construct of "support".

Group 2

Dissatisfied clients – more extensive needs- possibly not expressed / perceptions of inadequate or inappropriate assistance

Qualitative feedback gathered during this study contributes to the argument that some clients from both student and community groups could have gained more impact if the case manager had had more time to spend in relationship building, particularly in outreach work and engaging with those who, for a variety of reasons, may have been unable to disclose their needs at point of program intake.

"I needed referral to others for more support and assistance - but (case manager's name) didn't realise - because she didn't know me well enough"

"Too busy all the time to help people"

"She could have been more hands on - not just sitting in an office and talking - more active about getting me into interviews with employers who were looking for employees"

"All they did was tell me to go to Centrelink - made me fill out a form and sent me to Centrelink - and said they know someone who could see me quickly but I had to wait a long time anyway"

"I was expecting agencies that were looking for work - I expected to be connected with employers. All I got was a better resume - which I can do myself anyway"

"Not much practical assistance was given - just info about a course"

"(I) needed more practical help - I find it hard to get to the places - I need petrol to enable me to get to the interviews"

"More support was needed - she could have asked me if I needed more help but at times I felt shy about asking"

"It did help, but not very much"

"It was helpful for writing resumes but that's about it"

Group 3

Satisfied Clients - a variety of expressed needs/ perceptions of adequate assistance

When asked what helped them achieve their goals, a third group referred to the benefits they received from getting personalised needs assessments and career and job-seeking coaching from the case manager.

"I didn't know what I was going to do and (case manager's name) took me through the steps"

"Very good ...especially for kids who don't know how to achieve their goals"

Key activities encompassed **practical job seeking support** including suggestions for referrals, referral contact details and active linking to Centrelink for Year 12 students, resume writing, and follow-up through phone calls and additional meetings scheduled with the case manager at The Hub

"(Case managers' name) helped me reach out to employers -helped me understand what they look for"

"(She gave me) resume assistance, a brief summary on how to present self, confidence building and tips"

"She helped me find vacancies that were available. She used to text me about suitable vacancies"

"Telling me about jobs coming up - and referred me to employers that were hiring"

"She helped me find vacancies that were available. She used to text me about suitable vacancies"

"She helped me to get help at Centrelink - she met us there and she knew the right person for us to talk to"

"Suggested the CV drop off at different employers and phoning them up. And that was what got me the job"

"Actually got advice on how to go for the job once I found the (vacancy I wanted) - they gave us lots of tips on how to apply"

"Just little things like photocopying and transport to job interviews"

Positive feedback was also given in relation to the benefits of **emotional support and confidence building** provided by The Hub case worker:

"I think more just talking with (case manager's name) was a confidence booster to get back into the workforce - very encouraging"

"Reminded me about appointments and did everything she could to get us up and going"

"Volunteering was hard to just rock up and say 'I want to help' but (case manager's name) gave me the confidence to do it.

"(Case manager's name) built my confidence - when I didn't return she contacted me to see how I was - that helped me"

"I gained confidence in my time at The Hub"

"Hints on life - she's the one to convinced me to do the course"

Group 4

Dissatisfied clients- training needs – perceptions of inappropriate training referrals

Feedback was also given that **some people were enrolled in courses they were not particularly interested in:**

"More options for courses and trade careers - warehousing was not my preference. I would rather try to get into electrical work - an apprenticeship"

"They put me in a course but it wasn't quite what I wanted"

"I did not want the courses they had on offer - I wasn't in need of them once I got work anyway"

This was particularly important feedback, given the program's definition of a successful training outcome being one that clients self-identified as their preferred course.

Group 5

Satisfied clients- training needs-perceptions of appropriate assistance

However other clients reported that they were **offered an adequate choice of courses** and support to get there:

"They got me to enrol in a Certificate 2 in Warehousing - found the course for me. Options of different courses were provided for me to choose. The first time she rang me to go in the course and then she drove me there when it started"

"They have enrolled me in a course in Child Care - it hasn't started yet . They helped me get the right course that was suitable for me".

"The training course – (The Hub) made it easy for me to find it, and in an area where I live"

Group 6

Disengaged clients

A small number of people contacted post-program for interview who had been registered as "clients" of the Community Hub, **reported no knowledge of The Hub** or The Hub case manager's name, instead remembering only that they had enrolled in a Certificate course.

"I don't remember (case manager's name) or The Hub"

"I do not know (case manager's name) or The Hub"

"What is the Community Hub?"

"I wouldn't like to refer someone as I didn't really need them myself"

As already noted, this group confirms that some people were registered as clients of The Hub program without receiving a level or type of activity that would fulfil the definition of the term "case management".

Cultural appropriateness and willingness to recommend to others

The Hub program was particularly aimed at supporting the development of employment pathways for clients from CALD backgrounds. Eighty four percent of 164 clients completing entry point surveys in both years 1 and 2 self-identified as CALD, with 69% identifying as Pacific Islander. Ninety seven percent of Year 1 clients surveyed at exit (N=30) and 93% of Year 2 post-program surveyed clients (N=27) gave positive feedback about the cultural appropriateness of the assistance offered.

"Staff there...really understand cultural needs".

Although only 70% of Year 2 sampled clients reported achieving what they wanted to achieve during their time with The Hub, 89% reported that they would recommend The Hub to a friend.

"I think it wasn't right for me but for others it probably would be"

"I'd recommend someone if they really needed it. (But) they need to make people more independent and find more agencies and more employers who are looking for staff"

"Maybe advertise it more - I didn't know about it, but a friend told me about The Hub - and since then I've told some friends"

Short-term outcomes

Data on short-term outcomes for clients enrolled during Year 1 has been previously reported in the Woodridge Community Hub Year 1 Evaluation Report¹. Limited data was available relating to short-term outcomes for the 101 clients enrolled during Year 2. A review of case file notes shows that some clients, including students who had had their Year 12 enrolments cancelled, were still enrolling in The Hub program up to one month before the program ceased, severely impacting proportions of short-term outcomes for Year 2.

A review of the case manager's spreadsheet showed the following results by the time the program ended in June 2015:

- 76% of Year 2 enrolled clients (N=101) either completed a training program and/or experienced some form of employment during their time with The Hub (decreased from 88% of Year 1 enrolled clients [N=143]).
- 24% achieved no training or employment related outcomes (See Figure 7)

Further analysis shows:

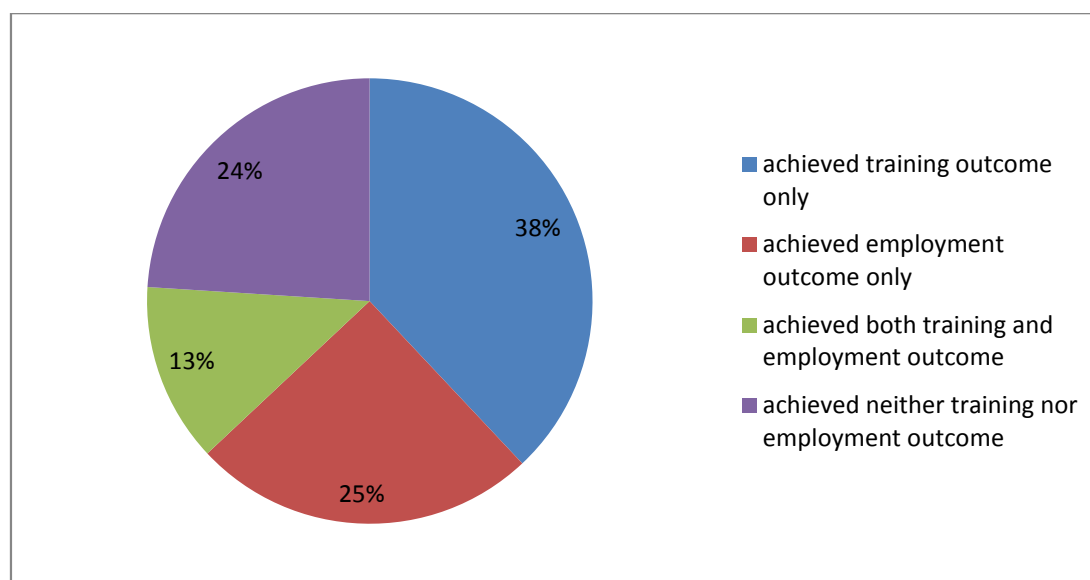
- 38% achieved a training only outcome
- 25% achieved some form of employment only outcome
- 13% achieved both training and employment outcomes
- In total, 51% completed further training
- In total, 38% achieved some form of employment during their time in the program

However when the “sustainable employment” definition is applied, the job results become severely reduced:

- 22% of all clients (N=101) experienced jobs offering more than 15 hours per week
- Only 9% achieved 13 weeks employment at jobs offering more than 15 hours per week

Although no quantitative data is available in relation to proportions of clients achieving training outcomes under the “sustainable training” definition of *self-identified preferred training course*, qualitative feedback reported above notes that not all training outcomes would have met this criteria.

Figure 7: Short-term outcomes for Year 2 clients (N= 101)



Student completions

A positive result was achieved by the Woodridge State High School in 2015 in relation to school completion and QCE achievement rates over the course of The Hub program. Data collected in February 2016 showed the school continued to see increased levels of students completing Year 12 and achieving their Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) (See Table 1 and Figure 8).

While it was not possible to gather quantitative data measuring the degree to which Year 12 completion outcomes could be attributed to The Hub activities, previous anecdotal evidence was noted in the Woodridge State High School Community Hub Year 1

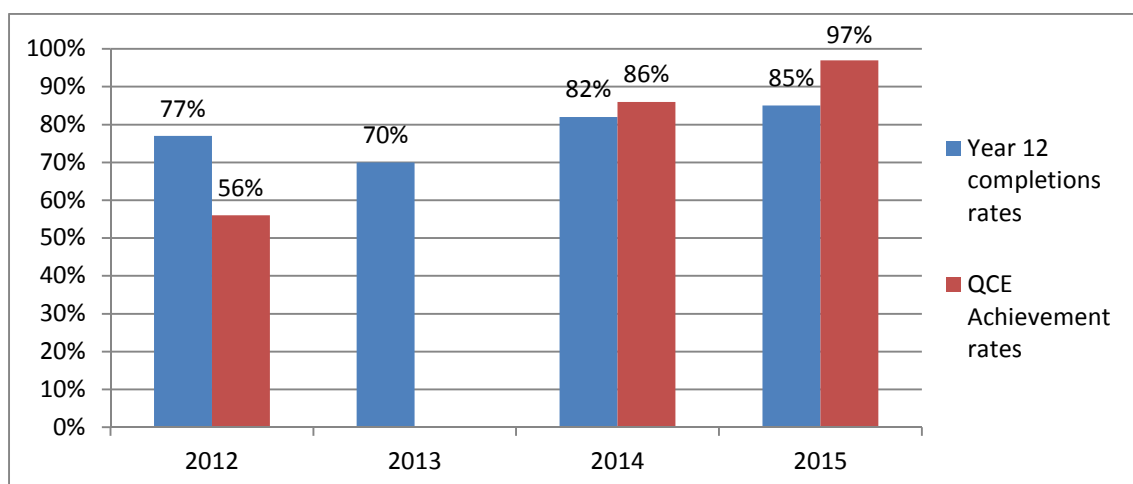
Evaluation Reportⁱ, indicating cultural shifts were being made within peer student group norms, motivating school completion behaviours as opposed to previous student norms encouraging students to “drop out”.

However feedback gathered during this evaluation from the school funded “Hub Industry Officer” who took over the role in July 2015, pointed to concerns by the school that although completion rates were improving, some students were continuing to have their enrolments cancelled. Strategies to address this are discussed in the report section on Sustainability of the Woodridge Community Hub.

Table 1: Trend data for Woodridge State High School completion rates 2012-2015

Year	No of Year 12 Commenced Students	No of Year 12 Completed Students	Year 12 Completion rates	No of QCE achievements	QCE achievement (as % of Completions)
2012	175	135	77%	76	56%
2013	166	117	70%	Data not available	Data not available
2014	188	155	82%	133	86%
2015	160	136	85%	134	99%

Figure 8: Year 12 completion and QCE achievement rates 2012-2015*



* 2013 QCE data not available

Attitudinal change

As noted earlier, clients who were case managed by The Hub were surveyed at program entry and then again post program to establish levels of achievement of a range of outcomes. One set of measures examined change in a number of psycho-social domains influencing future work prospects. Data relating to attitudinal change from 27 Year 2 post program clients offer insights into the program’s effectiveness at improving

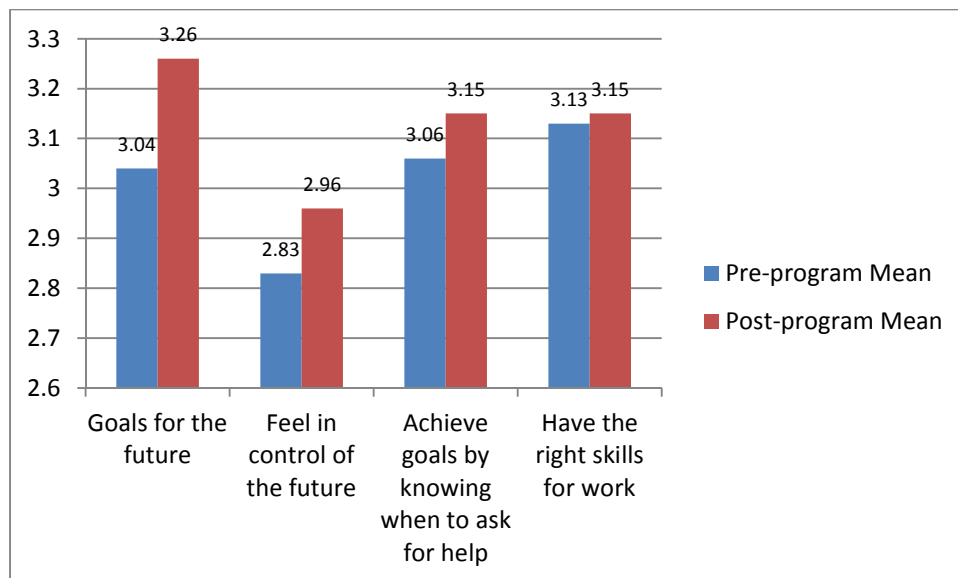
confidence about work and the future by increasing access to knowledge and skills relevant for achieving education, training and employment outcomes.

Although the results were not statistically significant to enable more generalised conclusions about all program clients, improvements occurred in the Mean results* for sampled Year 2 clients from:

- 3.04 to 3.26 for clients who reported having goals for their future (they knew what they wanted to do)
- 2.83 to 2.96 for clients who reported feeling in control of their future
- 3.06 to 3.15 for clients reporting they achieved their goals by knowing when to ask others for help
- 3.13 to 3.15 for clients reporting that they believed they had the right skills for work

*1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Agree 4=Strongly Agree

Figure 9: Year 2 changes in confidence about the future (Pre-N=81/ Post N=27)



Longer-term training and employment outcomes

A key result looked for in employment support programs is the degree to which jobs can be classed as “sustainable”. In order to understand the level of sustainability the program was able to achieve over the longer-term, attempts were made to contact past clients from both Years’ 1 and 2 at points in time of up to 12 months after program completion. The aim was to ascertain how many clients completed their training and how many experienced employment that was more than 15 hours per week and lasted for more than 13 weeks (See Table 2).

These attempts to collect follow-up data were minimally successful for Year 1 clients and even less so for Year 2, affecting the study’s ability to validly compare results for the two years. Both the sampling methodology and the margin for error caused by the smaller sample size in Year 2 post exit interviews ($N=27$ in 2015 vs $N=57$ in 2014) limit comparisons over time, so caution is advised in interpreting the results.

It should also be remembered when viewing the following employment success indicators, that a number of factors impact on any interpretation including:

- Program goals were limited for some clients to:
 - training only, or
 - employment only
- Achievement of a training only or Year 12 completion goal may have contributed to a client’s capacity to find their own jobs post-program.
- Some clients changed original employment or training goals mid-program following life changes including pregnancy or geographical relocation, affecting program benchmark achievement rates.

Table 2: Indicators of longer term success

Indicator	Year 1 (N=57)	Year 2 (N=27)
Proportion of sampled clients reporting that coming to The Hub helped them to enrol in a training course	61% (33 out of total sample of 57 clients)	52% (14 out of total sample of 27)
Proportion of sampled clients who enrolled in training reporting they completed their training course	79% (26 out of 33 clients enrolled in training)	71% (10 out of 14 clients enrolled in training)
Proportion of sampled clients reporting that The Hub directly helped them to find a job	20% (13 out of total sample of 57 clients)	11% (3 out of total sample of 27 clients)
Proportion of sampled clients reporting not being helped by The Hub to find a job, but found a job on their own at some point up to 12 months post program	60% (25 out of 44 clients who did not get jobs while at The Hub). At the time of interview, the other 19 clients (40%) had not been employed since exiting the program	46% (11 out of 24 clients who did not get jobs while at The Hub). At the time of interview, the other 13 (54%) had not been employed since exiting the program
Total proportion of sampled clients who found jobs either through the help of The Hub or on their own	67% (38 out of total sample of 57 clients)	56% (14 out of total sample of 27 clients)
Proportion of sampled clients who experienced work reporting still being in either their original job or another job at the time of interview (up to 12 months post program)	84% (32 out of 38 clients who found work either through The Hub or on their own)	60% (9 out of 14 clients who found work either through The Hub or on their own)
Proportion of sampled clients at least 3 months post program reporting their employment experience was in sustainable work (ie: more than 15 hours per week and lasting more than 13 weeks)	54% (31 out of total sample of 57 clients)	28% (7 out of 25 sampled clients where more than 3 months had elapsed since completing program)

Employment pathways

Additional recollections up to 12 months following exit, gathered from Year 1 post program clients (N=57), offer insights into their pathways to employment, including the reality that for many, jobs were often found in the months after their program exit, rather than during the program, thus limiting the program's capacity to claim attribution for the outcome.

For some, these positions had been short-term or casual jobs, while a few had maintained employment in their original position.

"(Case manager's name) helped me- She helped do role-plays before interviews. She helped me research jobs and I found one. But the longest job has only been 2 months.

"Have had a few more jobs but not working at the moment, but I am looking"

"(I've) had a lot of jobs now"

"I started out at only 4 hours per week, but at the moment I'm getting 17 hrs. But it's still only casual and I don't like the job so I'm looking for another one"

"It took me a while to find a job, but I found one a few weeks after finishing with The Hub"

"(Case manager's name) referred me to the JSA that helped me get a job

I got a job myself after doing the Cert 2 in Construction- still in that same job. Now I'm doing an apprenticeship

"I just went there to check out what they did. I was already studying security at the time. I got my own job as debt collector with a bank, but I did do some volunteer work with The Hub"

"I got a job straight after finishing my course. I have just left that job and moved to Melbourne and now I'm studying again"

"I found my own job"

"(I get) various hours -sometimes none- sometimes 3 days"

"Volunteering roles... led (to) my current job. I get 25 hours a week and the contract may last to the end of the year"

For many interviewees, no work at all has ensued since their time with the program

"Did a course recently, but no work come out of it yet"

"I still don't have a job. Things are not good"

"I haven't been able to find a job-it's really hard"

"I have not worked since I left school"

"I'm still looking for work"

However, some clients who had not found work, were nevertheless able to identify psychosocial benefits arising from their time with The Hub.

"I always saw myself as someone who would never do anything. Although I still don't have a job yet, I don't see myself in the same way anymore"

"Although I have not been able to find a job, The Hub definitely helped me. I am now doing a course at university and (case manager's name) helped give me the confidence to 'put myself out there' and try for things"

"It has helped even though I haven't been able to get a job - talking with (case manager's name) helped me understand where I wanted to go after leaving school, and helped me to know what was out there"

Findings

"Now I'm on a completely different path than I would have been otherwise"

This final evaluative study of The Hub aimed to find whether the program achieved the following objectives:

- Assisting clients to overcome barriers to participation in education and employment,
- Supporting current students to complete Year 12,
- Supporting former students and unemployed family members to obtain paid sustainable employment (defined as 15 hours per week for 13 weeks),
- Supporting students, former students and unemployed family members to transition to, engage in and complete further self-identified "preferred" study, and
- Development of a funding partnership between Woodridge State High School and an appropriate corporation that would ensure program continuation beyond 2015.

Overall, the study found evidence that the Community Hub program was regarded by the majority of participants as a positive influence on their lives. Data has been reported demonstrating many clients achieved exactly what they wanted to achieve from their time at The Hub.

The study found the highest rate of success was in the objective of student retention, with an emerging trend of increasing school completion and QCE achievement rates over the past two years. Further research is required to ascertain if the placement of The Hub inside the Woodridge State High School grounds may have contributed to a cultural shift within the larger student body towards positive school completion as suggested by the case manager during Year 1, and to extend current insights into this trend. With the continuation of some elements of the Federal Department of Human Services funded Hub model through new Queensland Department of Education funding, this research may be possible.

Yet despite these achievements, and in the interests of extending the current knowledge around program and service model development, it is worth briefly exploring those program related factors which may have prevented The Hub from achieving even higher levels of employment and training effectiveness. As already noted, there was a wide range of client satisfaction levels with case management activity, and the lower rates of sustainable employment and training outcomes in Year 2 deserve some discussion.

Factors impacting on success

Program barriers to employment and training outcomes

While descriptive data has been presented to suggest that many clients received a range of psychosocial benefits assisting them to overcome employment and educational

barriers, a specific quantitative employment and training outcome benchmark for measuring program success was set at commencement in July 2013. This figure was for **70% of registered clients to achieve either completion of a self-identified preferred training course, or 15 hours of employment per week for 13 weeks.**

The difficulty of correlating multiple and conflicting data sources, missing data, and the inability to follow-up all clients post-program, severely impedes a categorical statement as to whether the program achieved its 70% success criteria, however there is evidence to suggest that it came closer to this benchmark in Year 1 than in Year 2.

- Year 1 data showed that by the end of the first year, 23 clients out of the registered 143 had been able to achieve 13 weeks work of 15 hours per week (20% - as reported in the Year 1 Woodridge Community Hub Evaluation Reportⁱ). The case manager's own spreadsheet was updated at some point during Year 2 to amend that figure to 44 clients (31%) of the 143 registered in Year 1 achieving sustainable employment.
- The follow-up survey suggested that 54% (31) of the sampled 57 clients achieved sustainable employment at some point either during or after program exit, but this small dataset is not able to be extrapolated to the program population.
- Year 1 training outcomes were estimated by the case manager at 95 clients out of 143 (66%) completing their course, however there is no information for this group indicating to what degree the courses were "preferred".
- Of these outcomes, 30 clients achieved both training and employment, resulting in a unique count of ***76% of Year 1 clients achieving the program benchmark** at some point during their time with the program.

**This figure does not include a downward adjustment for clients who would not have identified their training course as "preferred".*

Year 2 data demonstrated a substantial deterioration in these outcomes:

- Only nine out of 101 Year 2 enrolled clients were recorded as achieving 13 weeks employment by the time the program ended (9%).
- Seven out of the sample of 25 clients interviewed at least 3 months post program, reported having achieved this outcome (28%), but this small dataset cannot be extrapolated to the program population.
- Quantitative data showed 51% of Year 2 clients (52) completed a training course, yet there is some qualitative evidence to suggest that not all of these courses were "preferred" by the client.
- Of the employment and training outcomes recorded by the case manager at program end, 3 clients achieved both, resulting in ***57% of the unique count of clients achieving the program benchmark in Year 2** by the end of the program.

**This figure does not include a downward adjustment for clients who would not have identified their training course as "preferred"*

High caseload affecting assessment capacity

Note has already been made of the extremely large size of the case manager's caseload during Year 2. Yet even in Year 1, the case load was 143 clients, and with such excessive numbers it would be reasonable to assume that adequate relationship building and trust development leading to comprehensive and holistic needs assessments would have been difficult to conduct with every client. It is not surprising therefore, that a diverse range of qualitative feedback in relation to satisfaction with the program was gathered during this study, with clients at one end of the spectrum offering examples of thorough needs assessment and appropriate case management type responses, to the far other end, where several registered clients reported they did not know the case manager, or recognise the name of The Hub less than 12 months after they had been exited from the case manager's spreadsheet. It is doubtful that clients in the latter half of the spectrum received an holistic assessment effectively addressing the broad range of factors potentially impacting the client's capacity to obtain and maintain work.

High caseload affecting needs response capacity

It could safely be assumed that the lag effect of Year 1 clients, continuing to receive services during the second year alongside the new Year 2 clients, would also severely affect the capacity of the case manager to most appropriately match frequency of service responses to needs, even when these had been adequately identified through a satisfactory assessment process.

Both client groups who articulated their needs and those who did not, may have responded more positively to additional outreach monitoring and case reviews, if more time had been available for case management activities. Yet the extremely low levels of documented casework activity, particularly in Year 2, could only have assisted those clients with low level employment and training barriers. It is possible that clients who had low levels barriers and were able to articulate these minimal support needs, were the clients who were generally able to achieve the reported sustainable outcomes.

Case identification

The above study findings suggesting many clients neither needed nor received a case management service, relates to the issue of appropriate identification of program clients. The funding agreement was that the program was to address intergenerational unemployment, yet an unclear number of student and community clients were registered to The Hub, whose barriers to employment were low, had a reasonable level of familial experience with employment, and who would probably not have required a case management model of service response.

The funding agreement identified The Hub target groups to be:

1. At risk Year 12 students
2. Unemployed parents and family members of students, and
3. Unemployed former students.

It is worth noting that the case manager reported at the end of Year 1 that no clients fell into the second group, thus impacting on the program's ability to affect intergenerational changes.

In addition, over the two years of the study, 120 students were surveyed at program entry point in relation to their family's work history. Sixty eight percent reported that their main parent or carer was in steady work, while another 23% reported that their parent/carers was in and out of work. Only 8% reported their parent/s or main carer had never worked.

Of the 46 community clients surveyed at program entry point, 23% had experienced full-time permanent work, while 61% had experienced part-time or casual work. Sixteen percent reported never having worked. In relation to their own family histories of work: 90% reported their parent/s or main carer had been in steady employment, while 5% reported their parent/s or main carer had been in and out of work. Another 5% reported their parent/s or main carer had never worked.

These figures would suggest the program was registering clients from families with a vast range of familial employment experiences. The role of the case manager in offering "career coaching" and job-seeking tips in addition to information and/or referral services, may have been extremely valuable to some clients with limited exposure to the labour market, while unnecessary to others with more work exposure. Once again, the excessively high caseload would have created extreme difficulty for the case manager in managing the "match" between need and response efficiently, as well as effectively.

Sustainability of the Woodridge Community Hub

The final objective of the Woodridge State High School Community Hub program, was to ensure the continuation of the program following cessation of the Department of Human Services funding. The original thinking was that this would be best achieved through sourcing the support of a corporate partner. Although no corporate partner has been found to fund the full range of original Hub's objectives, it would appear an interim measure is currently taking place, one which is concentrating on student retention and pathways to employment.

Woodridge State High School has been funding a project officer, titled Hub Industry Officer, three days a week to take over some of The Hub's student focused casework activities over the past eight months. This position sits under a new Department of Education role - Employment Connections Officer (ECO). This latter role is taking responsibility for setting up similar programs to The Woodridge Community Hub in several other schools in the Logan area.

Information gathered from The Hub Industry Officer (HIO) in February this year is that following cancellation of 20 Year 12 student enrolments in 2015, the school acknowledged the critical nature of The Hub program in supporting at risk Year 12 students to complete their schooling, and undertook to fill the gap left by the ending of the **yourtown**/Woodridge State High School partnership. Together with DET, the school has reinstated case meetings and individualised case planning with at risk students and reintroduced limited access to job skills workshops and links to **yourtown** jobactive agencies and training agencies. The school has developed what is colloquially referred to as "Year 13" to support students from 2015 who have not yet transitioned to training or job placement agencies.

The HIO reports the program is using an holistically scoped needs assessment process with Year 12 students at risk of school cancellation to discuss issues beyond employment

goals, and relating to issues including family breakdowns, financial problems, and deaths of parents. Students who require additional assistance are being referred to the school guidance officer. Follow-up calls have been made to students to monitor progress and limited community outreach is occurring with families requiring additional support. Data is being collected on activity outputs by DET, but it is not known to what degree outcomes are currently being measured.

Recommendations for program model improvement

1. Woodridge State High School to continue to seek funding for returning to a broader approach to addressing intergenerational unemployment, including targeting unemployed family members of Year 12 students at risk of school cancellation.

2. Case identification be more closely managed to ensure the program targets highly disadvantaged clients with the greatest barriers and the least exposure to the labour market.

3. Caseloads are capped at levels that facilitate adequate case management processes, with time built in for relationship and trust building which can facilitate higher levels of personal disclosure of employment barriers during needs assessment. Caseloads of highly disadvantaged clients should be set at no more than 50 at any point in time.

4. Case management activities to include increased outreach and casework activity, and case reviews to ensure that service responses remain relevant to changing or emerging client needs.

ⁱ Hawke, P. 2015, Woodridge State High School Community Hub Year 1 Evaluation Report, BoysTown <http://www.yourtown.com.au/downloads/rep/BT-Woodridge-State-High-School-Community-Hub-Year-1-Evaluation-Report.pdf>