



YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

NEW SOUTH WALES

Report to the Minister for Youth on young people and the Juvenile Justice system

BACKGROUND

On 28 February 2008 the NSW Youth Advisory Council (the Council) identified the issue of Young People and the Juvenile Justice System as part of its 2008 Work Plan. The Council undertook to monitor, and where appropriate to provide advice to the Government on strategies to prevent young people from re-offending.

In particular:

1. The Council undertook to become better informed on juvenile justice issues, particularly in relation to young people who re-offend and the impacts to young people of changes made to Section 22a of the Bail Act (*Bail Amendment Bill 2007*)
2. The Council accepted the recommendation of the 2007 Council that it consult with a group of young people living in a Juvenile Justice centre to better understand the issues they face.

The Council took a number of steps in order to become better informed on juvenile justice issues, particularly in relation to young people who re-offend.

This included undertaking literature reviews of information that has direct relevance to young people and the juvenile justice system including:

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Juvenile Justice in Australia 2006-2007*, Canberra, ACT, August 2008.
- Peter Greenwood, 'Prevention and Intervention Programs for Juvenile Offenders', *The Future of Children*, Vol 18, No.2, Fall 2008, pp 185-210
- Adele Horin, 'Laws will push teenagers into adult prisons', *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 12, 2008.
- Andrew Haelser SC, Deputy Senior Public Defender, Public Defenders Office NSW, Seminar Paper; *New Bail Laws 2008*, NSW, 16 April 2008
- *Anti-Social Behaviour Pilot Project*, NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet: Directorate of Strategic Operations, no date.

- Piqueo, Alex; Steinberg, Laurence; *Rehabilitation versus Incarceration of Juvenile Offenders: Public Preferences in Four Models of Change State*, Models for Change; Systems of Reform in Juvenile Justice. No date.
- Kaye L McLaren, *Tough is not Enough – Getting Smart about Youth Crime: A review of research on what works to reduce offending by young people*, New Zealand Ministry of Youth Affairs, Wellington, New Zealand, June 2000
- *Preventing Crime and Promoting Rights for Indigenous Young People with Cognitive Disabilities and Mental Health Issues*, Australian Human Rights Commission, Sydney, March 2008

The Council also invited two guest speakers to Council meetings:

- Ms Valda Ruis, Acting Deputy Director General, Department of Juvenile Justice, 31 Augusts 2008, who provided an overview of the Departments operations and functions and answered members questions
- Ms Paula Black, Acting Centre Manager, Juniperina Juvenile Justice Centre, 29 September 2008, who helped prepare the Council on its upcoming consultations with young people in Juvenile Justice Centres

Young Offenders Advisory Council (YOAC)

At the Councils meeting on 31 August 2008, the Minister for Youth, the Hon. Linda Burney MP invited the Council to appoint a representative to the Young Offenders Advisory Council (YOAC).

The purpose of the YOAC is to provide independent advice to the Attorney General and Minister for Juvenile Justice on issues, policies and legislation likely to impact on the operations of the juvenile justice system and young offenders and to monitor and review issues, trends and research on strategies for reducing re-offending.

Representation on this panel has the potential to further enhance the Council's understanding of juvenile justice and its affects on young people over time. The Council appointed Martin Drennan as its representative for 2008.

CONSULTATIONS

On 28 and 29 October 2008 Council undertook consultations in three Juvenile Justice Centres, Orana Juvenile Justice Centre (Dubbo), Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre (Gosford) and Juniperina Juvenile Justice Centre (Lidcombe). The Council chose these three centres to ensure that it consulted with a cross-section of the Juvenile Justice population, including young men and women and young people from regional and rural areas.

When planning the consultations the Council identified four key areas it wanted to explore:

1. What is it like being in a juvenile justice centre? What is an average day is like, what are the good and bad things and what kind of courses and activities are available, how easy are they to access and what ones where the most enjoyable.
2. The amount of time young people spend on remand.
3. Young peoples experience of youth justice conferencing, community service orders and bail and supervision orders.
4. Common reasons why young people get into trouble with the law and the future plans of young people in detention. What assistance or support is currently available to young people exiting detention to assist them not to re-offend, and what sort of help they would like to receive.

The Council consulted with a total of 39 young people in Juvenile Justice centres. This groups was made up of 24 females and 25 males and ranged in age from 13 to 18 years old.

In addition to this to Council also had to opportunity to speak with centre staff, including centre managers, youth officers and clinical psychiatrists who also provided helpful insight and knowledge on issues of young people and the juvenile justice system.

To begin the consultations the Council members asked a range of questions to get a general sense of what life was like for the young people in each of the Juvenile Justice Centres.

The responses ranged across a number of issues and concerns for the young people, with key comments focusing on the general strictness, lockdowns and lack of family access.

The positive aspects of the Juvenile Justice experience were mainly centred on schooling, sporting and recreational options and activities available.

There were a range of generally negative comments.

No good things here (Boy 13, Orana).

It's shit (Boy 17, Orana).

Boring (Girls 14-18, Juniperina)

Food is crap (Girls 14-18, Juniperina)

It's not good. (Boy 18, Orana).

It sucks being here; I'm in control for 7 months. It's not good. Pretty shit. (Boy, 17, Orana).

A major concern was the lockdowns.

Lockdowns don't like them, get seven lockdowns a day, got to clean up. They make us scrub the walls and floors (Boy 14, Orana).

There are lockdowns, 3 a day. Two for 2 hours and one for 1 hour (Boy, 17, Orana).

You get 7 lockdowns a day, just do nothing sit back and lay down. Only weekends less lockdowns (Boy 18, Orana).

When you first get in you are locked down, Progress to more lenient units as behaviour improves, Seven times a day lockdown, Its boring, (Boys 16-21, Baxter)

A big issue was being able to see visitors and families.

Can't see your family, (Boy, 17, Orana).

Some family are 7 hours away, but good families visit (Boys 16-21, Baxter)

Come up from another centre was on control. I like being here cause families up here (Boy 13, Orana).

Wed, Thurs, Fri visit days 3 hours, (Boys 16-21, Baxter)

Visitors every fortnight (Boys, 17-19, Baxter)

There were other complaints about the general strictness and rules and regulations, although some felt it wasn't too strict.

It's too strict here, (Boy 13, Orana).

Family not allowed to give shoes, If some muck up all lose out (Boys 16-21, Baxter)

High risk inmates can't do hospitality - how do you improve risk level, get good write-ups, (Boys 17-19, Baxter)

Getting told what to do, (Boys 17-19, Baxter)

Easygoing, Lawns, Free time after school, Muck around but not too much, (Boys 16-21, Baxter)

There were a few general comments about the staff.

Staff some shifts alright - or not, (Boys 16-21, Baxter)

Staff are ok, (Boys 16-21, Baxter)

Workers are alright (girls 15-17, Juniperina)

School was generally seen as a positive option, and though some didn't like the programs others complained that they couldn't get into school

School alright, (Boy 18, Orana).

Good things – school (Boys 17-19, Baxter)

School – really good (Girls 14-18, Juniperina)

Some of us go to school (Boy, 17, Orana).

If we don't go to school, we gotta do a work party – gotta clean and shit. If you in school you only get one lockdown a day. We never got put in school yet, you gotta get nominated, we all wanting to go to school. You can paint and draw and do shit like that (Boy 16, Orana).

There are shit programs here. I dropped out of school (Boy 18, Orana).

Sport was a favourite activity for many.

Play sport a lot in here (Boy 18, Orana).

Its alright being in here, but not really, Playing footy, (Boy 16, Orana).

Rec - touch football, sport, weights, footy, touch footy, indoor sport, (Boys 17-19 Baxter).

Footy, Soccer, (Boys 16-21, Baxter)

Some of the young people saw a bright side.

Being in here you wake up to yourself, but I'd rather be outside (Boy 13, Orana).

It's mad, you get free food, showers and no responsibilities (Boy 17, Orana).

Food most of time ok (Boys 16-21, Baxter)

The Council members inquired about the kind of courses or activities that the young people could you be involved in asked what were the ones that they have enjoyed the most.

Courses - commercial cleaning, horticulture, (Boys 17-19 Baxter)

School not all of them go. High-risk need to develop trust, there's a point system to go to TAFE – I'm doing a TAFE course in movie directing (Boy 17, Orana).

Bricklaying, Building, Hospitality, Year 11/12, Woodwork, Horticulture, Green card, Pass Time, Bored some days, Clean rooms sat or sun, Can choose course but have to go to TAFE on your outings, Cook. This centre more sports, (Boys 16-21, Baxter)

School, there's not much here. Too many restrictions. Been here in and out since I was 12 (Boy 18, Orana).

I want to go to school (Boy 17, Orana Juvenile Justice Centre).

The Council members asked the young people about how long they had been on remand. OR How long they had spent on remand before they went to court.

First time in 'Juvey' (Boy 17, Orana).

Been on remand for a month, liked Wagga best, not many lockdowns (Boy 17, Orana).

I'm here to be sentenced, next year or 2010 (Boy 15, Orana).

In remand – 6 months, 2 months, 2 months, 5 weeks (Girls 15-17, Juniperina)

Been in here for 4 and 2 for Wagga on remand, on and off since I was 10 (Boy 17, Orana).

Remand ranges from weeks to months, (Orana).

Remand ranges from days to weeks. Usually 4 weeks. Court and the centre take too long for paper work transfers (Boy 17, Orana).

Remand – 3 months, 2 years, 3 weeks, 2 weeks (Girls 14-18, Juniperina)

On remand just got here (Boy 17, Orana).

Been on remand for a week (Boy 16, Orana).

In here for four months on remand, court kept getting adjourned (Boy 14, Orana).

Been here before for 6 months on remand (Boy 16, Orana).

How long on remand: 3 months, 19 months, 2 years, 2 Years, 2.5 months, 18 months
Remand 17 months, 9 months, (Boys 16-21, Baxter)

Thirteen months remand, 21 months, 20 something days, 4 months, (Boys 17-19, Baxter)

The Council members explored the issue of Juvenile Justice Conferencing and found that it was an unknown option for most young people. They asked if it was a positive or negative experience for the young people?

'Nuh' no experience (Boys 15-17, Orana).

What's that? (Boys 16-21, Baxter)

What? (Boys 17-19, Baxter)

A few young people had experience of Conferencing and said that it had been a positive experience.

Had done it, alright, solved the problem there and then, positive experience, (Boys 17-19, Baxter)

Good impact, better understanding of victim's perspective, felt sorry for them, was welcomed back to the shop, works well (Girl 16, Juniperina)

YJC - Yeah I've done that before. It was alright. It was better than sitting down with people and talking about it. It was a positive thing for me. Break and enter (Boy 17, Orana).

Complete an essay – goals for the future (Girls 14-18, Juniperina)

The Council members asked the young people for their experiences with bail and supervision orders.

YJJ supervision was 'alright' only had to come once a fortnight. It's pretty silly and pointless. They should help us get a job. They check on our home environment, that doesn't really help. (Boys 15-17, Orana)

Reporting 2 times a day every day, If you breach once you get one more chance then they lock you back up, I never had to report, I did, I was 14-15, Breached him because he smelt like alcohol, Another guy got locked up 2 months not fair, (Boys 16-21, Baxter)

3 years twice a day 7 days a week, sucks. Moved around a lot, hard to transfer police station Worked as an apprentice - Easier to phone, Not flexible with time. Curfew, Difficult working in Sydney to get back to report, (Boys 17-19 years, Baxter)

The Council members asked the young people about their experiences with community service orders

Better than coming in here (JJ). We did stuff with PCYC and did some clean up for 2 ½ hours a day, did that before coming in here, (Boys 15-17, Orana)

I'd rather be in here than clean up other xxx mess. Would rather be in Mudgee cause all my family's down there. Going to Bathurst after I get out here get my Year 10 Certificate. Go to TAFE get a job. Want to be welder when I get out of here. (Boys 15-17, Orana)

Yes – pick up rubbish, clean windows, help young disabled people, mow the grass, Some liked it some didn't, Some was in the community given by a judge, didn't like it, Like community service if it was voluntary or could choose what to do, (Boys 16-21, Baxter)

Mow lawns, Wash cars, Didn't like it, don't learn anything from it, Its just slavery, Breached it and got locked up again, Some would rather be out doing community service, others didn't, Some would breach on purpose just to go back to juvenile justice, (Boys 17-19, Baxter)

The Council members explored the young people's experiences with the police in their local area and discussed their backgrounds. They asked them to describe some of the things that might have contributed to them getting into trouble with the police

Drugs and alcohol, Got no money, start doing crime, Didn't know how to get birth certificate to get a job so got involved in crime, Police target areas young people go, Financial problems, don't want to ask parents for money, Seeking attention, (Boys 16-21, Baxter).

Alcohol, boredom, drugs, didn't like school, peer pressure and family (Boys 15-17, Orana)

I don't know, hanging around the wrong people, stealing (Boys 15-17, Orana)

Got kicked out of the school for calling the Deputy Principal a 'xxx' (Boy 17, Orana).

Alcohol and drugs, family problems, friends can influence choices, school, mental illness (Girls 14-18, Juniperina)

Family problems, Bored, Peer pressure, Make a name, Get a kick out of it, Friends, Not all young people follow their friends, (Boys, 16-21, Baxter)

Boredom, Drinking, Smoking weed, Too much drugs, Ice, Mt Druitt, Weed, (Boys, 17-19, Baxter)

The Council members also asked the young people what might have stopped you from getting in trouble?

More effort to get a job, (Boys 17-19, Baxter)

More youth centres, (Boys 17-19, Baxter)

Welfare bus like the condom bus, (Boys 17-19, Baxter)

The Council members asked the young people about their plans for life after detention, some expressed clear plans or intentions but many others were less certain and others didn't see a future free from crime or trouble.

I get out in 3 weeks. Been here for 4 months, get off ice, I shot it up and bombed it (oral ingestion). Get out go to rehab for 3 months and want to work at the mines in Cobar. Or finish my chef apprenticeship (Boy 17, Orana).

Going to do security license at TAFE (Girls 17-18, Juniperina)

Footy in Sydney, Get a job, No one wanted to move back to home town because it would be too easy to get back into trouble, No one wanted to get out and study, all wanted a job, (Boys 16-21, Baxter)

Doing mechanic studies outside (Girls 15-17, Juniperina)

Wants to go back to normal, do drug addiction (Girls 15-17, Juniperina)

Finish apprenticeship, Start a family, Use the courses in here to get a job on the outside, Ask the centre to find out about a Cert IV in business management, 3 not sure what they wanted to do, Some stay in their own area and some move away, try to stay out of trouble, (Boys 17-19, Baxter)

TAFE course – café program, mechanic, secretary (Girls 15-17, Juniperina)

I get out next year, want to travel. Get a job – I don't know – anything, just make my cash (Boy 18, Orana).

Was 10 when I was in JJ. Probably get a job, dunno, might do a TAFE course (Boy 17, Orana).

When I get out gunna live with my mum (Boy 17, Orana).

A common theme was to move away from their home area and away from negative influences of family and peers but many were pessimistic about achieving this

Gotta look for new mates (Boys 14-16, Orana).

Gotta stay away from my cousins, but its hard because they come looking for you (Boy 16, Orana).

Will go to Queensland when she gets out (Girl 17, Juniperina)

A group of Boys 16-21 in Baxter said that they wouldn't re-offend because they hated 'getting told what to do' and they 'just wanted to get out and do your own thing', and because they hated being away from their family

COMMENT

Through the four key areas of the Councils Consultation process, the Council become aware of a number of issues.

- Of major concern for young people in detention was the frequency of lockdowns, up to seven a day (Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre) if the young person is not attending school. This figure varied however depending on the individual centre. Some young people commented that while they could understand some lockdowns (for reasons like staff handovers) many thought there were too many and that they found them boring and felt that the time was wasted as all they do is sit around. Although the Council can understand the operational reasons for some lockdowns it is concerned by the high amount and regular occurrence of them and the impacts that regular confinement in cells with no activity can have on a young persons mental health. The Council would like to see the number of lockdowns reduced to only those required for operational reasons, and suggest that during lockdowns the young people are able to engage in some kind of activity.

Young people in the centres were also critical of the difficulties associated with receiving visitors and family (some families living up to 7 hours away), and of the restrictive rules put in place by some centres. However it is important to note that there were inconsistencies in the information collected in the consultations throughout the centres visited on a wide range of issues including lockdowns, visitor frequencies, general strictness and the programmes offered.

Many young people also commented that boredom was a problem in the centres and that there wasn't anything interesting to do.

"Nothing to do, boring, just work party and shit – doesn't help you get a job, just being a slave" (Boy 17, Orana)

On a more positive note most young people in detention saw sport as a favourite activity.

"Play sport a lot in here" (Boy 18, Orana).

The Council feels this is one area which could be enhanced, by including life skills activities as part of sports and educational programs.

School was also generally also seen as a positive activity, however concerns were raised about the difficulty and time it took for young people to be assessed before they could go to school. It was also stated that not all young people in detention were able to attend school for various reasons, and others didn't like the programs offered.

"If we don't go to school, we gotta do a work party – gotta clean and shit. If you in school you only get one lockdown a day. We never got put in school yet, you gotta get nominated, we all wanting to go to school. You can paint and draw and do shit like that" (Boy 16, Orana).

In addition to this the Council was made aware of other programs and activities available to young people in detention, however again issues of access and inconsistencies were identified between the different centres visited.

"School not all of them go. High-risk need to develop trust, there's a point system to go to TAFE – I'm doing a TAFE course in movie directing (Boy 17, Orana).

“Bricklaying, Building, Hospitality, Year 11/12, Woodwork, Horticulture, Green card, Pass Time, Bored some days, Clean rooms sat or sun, Can choose course but have to go to TAFE on your outings, Cook. This centre more sports” (Boys, 16-21, Baxter)

The Council supports young people in detention being engaged with learning, whether this is school or vocational based education, and sees this as a major protective factor for young people in preventing re-offending. The Council feels that it would be beneficial if the restrictions on a young person’s ability to become engaged in learning were eased, particularly the time it takes for a young person to be able to attend School or become involved in vocational courses. Council would also like to see life skills workshops and group discussions held in living units that all young people can access.

- Current research and the results of the consultations indicate that there is a very high population of young people in the Juvenile Justice system who are on remand awaiting court dates, for breach of bail, or because alternative bail accommodation cannot be found.

“In here for four months on remand, court kept getting adjourned” (Boy 14, Orana).

“Been in here for 4 and 2 for Wagga on remand, on and off since I was 10” (Boy 17, Orana).

Council is concerned about the large number of young people currently being held on remand and the lengthy periods of time that they spend in detention. The Council feels that this practice is having a negative impact on reducing re-offending, as research indicates that young people are more likely to re-offend if they are placed in detention for a period of time. Research which compares young people who were cautioned by Police, young people who participated in Youth Justice Conferencing and young people who were given a custodial sentence shows that young people are less likely to re-offend if they are not placed in a Juvenile Justice centre¹. Placing young people who have not yet been convicted or sentenced on remand in a Juvenile Justice facility for long periods of time will no doubt have a negative effect on the likelihood that they will re-offend.

The Council would support new initiatives which divert young people from the Juvenile Justice system into more cost effective community based programs which will reduce the likelihood of young people re-offending.

- During the consultations the Council asked the young people in the Juvenile Justice centres about their experience of Youth Justice Conferencing (YJC), Community Service Orders, and bail and supervision orders. The majority of the young people either were not aware of YJC or had never had any experience with this type of program. Those few who had participated in YJC were overall positive about their experiences.

A few more young people had experience with Community Service, however the experiences of these young people varied from positive to negative.

Mow lawns, Wash cars, Didn’t like it, don’t learn anything from it, Its just slavery, Breached it and got locked up again, Some would rather be out doing community service, others

¹ Sumitra Vignaendra and Jacqueline Fitzgerald, *Re-offending among young people cautioned by policy or who participated in a youth justice conference*, Crime and Justice Bulletin, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Number 103, October 2006.

didn't, Some would breach on purpose just to go back to juvenile justice, (Boys 17-19, Baxter)

Better than coming in here (JJ). We did stuff with PCYC and did some clean up for 2 ½ hours a day, did that before coming in here, (Boys 15-17, Orana)

Some of the young people in the centres had previously been on bail or supervision orders and had mixed experiences. The general feeling among the young people was that the bail and supervision conditions were too strict and hard to adhere to. Some young people indicated that they had breached their order because of the difficulty in reporting regularly and maintaining employment or other types of activities.

3 years twice a day 7 days a week, sucks. Moved around a lot, hard to transfer police station. Worked as an apprentice - Easier to phone, Not flexible with time. Curfew, Difficult working in Sydney to get back to report, (Boys 17-19 years, Baxter)

The Council would support the widening of the scope of the Young Offenders Act to allow more young people to participate in Youth Justice Conferencing and similar types of community-based interventions. The Council feels that there is a gap in the sentencing options available for young people between the relatively minor offences where YJC can be applied, to the more serious offences where they young person can be given a Control Order. Better utilisation of the YJC model would allow more young people to avoid being placed in a Juvenile Justice centre which would improve their chances of rehabilitation and avoiding re-offending.

Other community-based approaches which could be adopted include services for young people who are on bail or supervision orders and who are reintegrating into the community, as well as young people participating in Community Service orders. The most successful of these type of programs are those that emphasise family interactions, while those that focus on the individual are much less successful. Strategies such as intensive supervision, surveillance and deterrence are not as effective in assisting young people to avoid re-offending².

Similar community-based programs should be set up specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people which incorporate culturally appropriate tools and messages.

- Through the consultations and research the Council has become aware that there is a disproportionately high representation of young Indigenous people in Juvenile Justice centres. Of those young people in detention in 2006-2007, over one-third (36%) were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia. There is a variation between states, with the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention in NSW totalling 32.7% of the total population in 2006-2007. Research indicates that Indigenous young people are also over-represented in other areas of the Juvenile Justice system such as community based supervision³.
- During the consultations the young people identified a number of common themes which they related (either directly or indirectly) to their motivation for offending. The main themes

² Peter Greenwood, 'Prevention and Intervention Programs for Juvenile Offenders', *The Future of Children*, Vol 18, No.2, Fall 2008, pp 185-210.

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Juvenile Justice in Australia 2006-2007*, Canberra, ACT, August 2008.

that emerged from the consultations were problems with drugs and alcohol, and mental health issues.

Many of the young people consulted stated that prior to entering the Juvenile Justice centre they had been using drugs or alcohol, or both, on a regular basis. Many of the young people indicated that their offence was motivated by a need to source funds to support their problem with drugs or alcohol, or that their offence was caused by them being under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time. The young people indicated that their experiences of participating in rehab programs during their time in the Juvenile Justice system were negative. Many were concerned or confident that once they left the facility that they would resume their old lifestyles, including resuming their consumption of drugs and alcohol. Many felt that they were not given enough support to prevent them from returning to their old ways and re-offending.

Another issue that became apparent to Council members as they participated in the consultations was that many of the young people in Juvenile Justice centres had mental health issues that were not properly being addressed. Some young people themselves identified these issues and indicated that they felt that they were not receiving adequate support for their problems. Many of the females detained in Juniperina Juvenile Justice centre had ongoing problems with self-harm, while others indicated that they had experienced depression and other mental illnesses. The Council feels that more effort should be made to identify young people with mental health issues as soon as they come into contact with the Juvenile Justice system, and every effort should be made to provide them with appropriate treatment and support for these issues in order to support their rehabilitation and prevent re-offending. Placing young people with serious mental health issues in detention will not improve their mental health, and in many cases, may encourage a deterioration of their condition.

Many of the young people consulted also identified family and peers as contributing factors in their offending behaviour. Family conflict and abuse are major contributors to the risk of young people committing an offence. Research also shows that peer pressure and gang membership play an important role in influencing the choices that young people make and hence their decision to become involved in criminal activity⁴.

⁴ Kaye L McLaren, *Tough is not Enough – Getting Smart about Youth Crime*, Minister of Youth Affairs, New Zealand, June 2000.

ADVICE TO THE MINISTER

The Council would like to provide the following recommendations to the Minister on strategies to prevent young people from re-offending.

It is recommended that the Government consider the following programs and initiatives:

Early intervention

- *Early intervention services for young people with mental health issues.*
Placing young people with mental health issues in Juvenile Justice centres not only increases the chances of poor mental health outcomes for that young person, it does not address the underlying issues that may have contributed to that young person's offending. Addressing the mental health issues of young people as early as possible after their first contact with the Juvenile Justice system is a vital component in assisting young people to avoid re-offending. Ensuring that these young people have access to appropriate support and treatment for their mental health issue improves the chances of young people having a positive outcome and reintegrating into society.
- *Using the safe house model with early offenders to try and prevent them entering Juvenile Justice centres.*
For example, the Tirkandi Inaburra Aboriginal Cultural and Development Centre, which is an Aboriginal community run centre offering Aboriginal boys aged 12-15, is a culturally-based residential early intervention program aimed at reducing future contact with the criminal justice system by strengthening the boys' cultural identity, self-esteem and resilience. For more information visit the website <http://tirkandi.org.au/ourprograms.html>.
- *Early intervention with young people, with families and with communities in order to identify and negate risk factors for offending in young people.*
Research indicates that there are a number of indicative risk factors associated with young people who offend. These risk factors include a number of family components, such as family conflict, abuse and parent criminality. Risk factors also include peer and community components, such as delinquent peers, gang membership, poverty, community disorganisation and the availability of drugs⁵. Early intervention program which assist families and communities to function in a positive and appropriate manner will therefore reduce the risk factors for young people and reduce the number of young people who offend.

Programs within Juvenile Justice

- *Ensure that educational and vocational programs delivered through the Juvenile Justice system are easily accessed by young people who wish to participate. Ensure that a diverse range of programs is offered in each centre.*
During the consultations some young people indicated that they felt that they were unable to access the educational or vocational opportunities due to restrictions or regulations put in place by the centre. Also, some young people indicated that they were not interested in attending the vocational courses offered at the centre and would like there to be a bigger variety of courses available.

⁵ Kaye L McLaren, *Tough is not Enough*, as above.

- *Utilise role models with similar experiences to young people in Juvenile Justice centres who have successfully reintegrated into society to provide motivation and direction to young offenders.*
- *Provide training and support programs for families of young offenders prior to the young person being released from the Juvenile Justice system.*
Research has shown that families play a key role in supporting young people to prevent re-offending. By providing training and support for families of young people prior to their release from detention the chances of the family being able to adequately and appropriately support that young person as they reintegrate into society are increased.
- *Provide compulsory life skills and basic literacy classes for all young people in Juvenile Justice centres.*
Providing basic literacy and life skills training for young people in Juvenile Justice centres will allow these young people to develop some of the basic skills required to successfully function in society once they are released. The life skills training could include information on things such as applying for a Tax File Number, opening a bank account, writing a resume, household skills, how to rent a property, and where to seek assistance and support.
- *YAC supports recommendation 15.1 of the Wood Commission Report:*
'An after hours bail placement service should be established by the Department of Juvenile Justice similar to the Victorian Central After Hours and Bail Placement Service, that is available to young people aged between 10 and 18 years, who are at risk of being remanded in custody, or who require bail accommodation; or similar to the Queensland Conditional Bail and Youth Program Accommodation Service.'

Post release programs

- *Provide effective and integrated post release services that support young people to successfully reintegrate into society.*
These post release services should start prior to the release of the young person from detention and include counselling, drug and alcohol counselling and support, support with finding and keeping accommodation, support with accessing educational opportunities, and support with seeking employment.
- *Assist young people exiting Juvenile Justice centres to continue their education.*
Some young people in the centres indicated that they were continuing their education during their stay. Some young people indicated that they had been unsuccessful in attaining the level of education that they desired while they were outside the centre, and were studying to achieve that level while they were detained. Support should be provided to those young people who wish to continue their education once they leave the centre so that they are able to successfully complete their studies.
- *Provide safety houses for young people released from Juvenile Justice centres to support them as they readjust into society.*
For example, in Victoria the Intensive Community Placement (ICP) Program is a transitional program, which, together with the post release initiative, aims to ensure that wherever possible, there is continuity of care for the young person on their return from custody to the community. The Transitional Housing Manager - Youth Justice Housing Pathways Program provides transitional accommodation and intensive support for young people leaving custody who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. For more information visit the website <http://www.cyf.vic.gov.au/youth-justice/services>.

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