LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry: Inquiry into Victoria's criminal justice system

Hearing Date: 6 September 2021

Question[s] taken on notice

Directed to: Ms Julie Edwards, Jesuit Social Services

1. **THE CHAIR Page no. 20**

   Question asked.

   The accurate figure for natural ageing out of criminal activity

   Response:

   In terms of any info/evidence around 'ageing out' of criminal behaviour, I have had a look and there is not much in the Australian context, but have added a link below from the Australian Institute of Criminology that looks at the impact of structural ageing on crime trends through a SA case study. Also, below are a couple of links to research that addresses the subject directly and supports the case that crime tends to peak in adolescence or early adulthood and then decline with age (the Harvard link points to some longitudinal research that has become highly cited).

   Australian Institute of Criminology report:
   https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi431

   Relevant overseas research:
   https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/sampson/files/2003_crim_laub.pdf

   https://sk.sagepub.com/books/the-nurture-versus-biosocial-debate-in-criminology/n24.xml

2. **MS MAXWELL Page no. 21**

   Question asked.

   …obviously you provide an enormous number of programs and support for other organisations and stakeholders. Do you have evaluations on those programs? And if so, are you able to provide those to us as a committee so that we can utilise those in our deliberations upon our report, because I think it is really beneficial for us to see what is working, how it is working and the data, whether it be qualitative or quantitative data, that actually supports that.

Response:

See included:

- Our 2020 report on Community Correction Orders in West Metropolitan Melbourne, Victoria
- Our 2013 YJCSS Final Evaluation Report (unfortunately the most recent YJCSS Review which was commissioned by the department has not been released so we can't include that)
- The 2010 KPMG evaluation of group conferencing.

LC LSIC Inquiry into Victoria's criminal justice system
Response to question on notice
Public hearing 6 September 2021
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Exploring the profile, needs and experiences of people on Community Correction Orders in west metropolitan Melbourne, Victoria

Jesuit Social Services
July 2020

Victorian Legal Services
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Jesuit
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Building a Just Society

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- Jesuit Social Services' Human Research Ethics Committee
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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 5

PART 1: INTRODUCTION 10

1.1 Project Background 10
1.2 A focus on Melbourne's west 13
1.3 Method 15
1.4 About this report 17

PART 2: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS 19

2.1 Age and gender 19
2.1 Suburb of residence 20
2.2 Country of birth, residency and language spoken at home 21
2.3 Dependent children 22
2.5 Housing status and suburb of residence 22

PART 3: JUSTICE SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT OF PARTICIPANTS 23

3.1 Previous justice system involvement 23
3.2 Nature of recent offending 24
3.3 The demographic composition of the CCO participant sample compared with Victoria's prison population 27

PART 4: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF PARTICIPANTS 29

4.1 Secondary level attainment 29
4.2 Overall educational attainment 30
4.3 Current involvement in training and future intentions 32

PART 5: EMPLOYMENT AND JOB SEEKING STATUS OF PARTICIPANTS 33

5.1 Income source 34
5.2 Industries in which participants reported having the most experience 35
5.3 Experiences of employment 35
5.4 Financial well-being among interviewees 36
5.5 Experiences of unemployed and job seeking participants 37
5.6 Self-identified barriers to employment 40

PART 6: SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS AND WELLBEING AMONG INTERVIEWEES 43

6.1 Background experiences of interviewees 43
6.2 Participant's intimate partner relationships and experiences as parents 44
6.3 Friendships and social networks 45
6.4 Mental health issues and problematic drug use 46
6.5 Involvement in recreational or structured activities 46

PART 7: ENGAGEMENT WITH REHABILITATIVE OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORT 47

7.1 Access to services and programs 47
7.2 Community work program participation 48
7.3 Valued aspects of services 50

PART 8: DISCUSSION 53

8.3 Study Limitations 61

PART 9: CONCLUSION 63

REFERENCES 67

APPENDIX 1: Employment Pathways Assistance needs assessment questionnaire 70

APPENDIX 2: Employment Pathways Advice service information and consent form 72

APPENDIX 3: Analysis of ETE characteristics by gender and country of birth 73

APPENDIX 4: List of most serious offence/most serious charge categories (Corrections Victoria) 74

LC LSIC Inquiry into Victoria's criminal justice system
Response to question on notice
Public hearing 6 September 2021
Received 17 September 2021

List of Tables & Figures

Table 1	Table 1 Most serious offence leading to CCO (self-reported)	26
Table 2	Comparison of highest reported educational attainment of populations of Australia, Victoria, City of Brimbank and CCO sample	31
Figure 1	Participants by age segment (%, N=200)	19
Figure 2	Ages of participants in years by gender (N=200)	19
Figure 3	Participants by LGA and metropolitan region of Melbourne (n=197)	20
Figure 4	Region of birth of participants (N=200)	21
Figure 5	Dependent children among participants (n=197)	22
Figure 6	Participants' housing status (N=200)	22
Figure 7	Age of first involvement in the justice system (n=173)	23
Figure 8	Length of time served in an adult prison (n=44)	24
Figure 9	Offence categories (n=193)	25
Figure 10	Most serious charges among sample of people on CCOs (n=193) compared with Victoria's prison population, 2016-2017 (%)	28
Figure 11	Secondary level educational attainment of participants (N=200)	29
Figure 12	Employment and job seeking status of participants (N=200)	33
Figure 13	Income source of participants (n=199)	34
Figure 14	Most significant industry area of work experience (n=175)	35
Figure 15	Longest length of previous employment among unemployed job seeking participants (n=94)	38
Figure 16	Length of unemployment among those seeking work (n=99)	39
Figure 17	Length of unemployment among job seeking women and men (%, n=66)	39
Figure 18	Main barrier to gaining employment among unemployed job seeking participants (n=71)	40
Figure 19	Employment status by time spent in adult prison compared to CCO only (n=147)	42
Figure 20	Community work program activities of participants (N=200)	48
Figure 21	Community work activities of participants by gender (N=200)	49

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CCO	Community Correction Order
CV	Corrections Victoria
EPA	Employment Pathways Advisor
EPS	Employment Pathways Service
ETE	Education, Training and Employment
DJCS	Department of Justice and Community Safety (State Government of Victoria), formerly DoJR
DoJR	Victorian Department of Justice and Regulation (State Government of Victoria), now DJCS
LGA	Local Government Area
WMR	West Metropolitan Region (of Melbourne)

Executive Summary

The Community Correction Order (CCO) sentencing option was introduced in Victoria in 2012 to replace several other non-custodial orders (Sentencing Act 1991 [Vic], s.48). The CCO was described in a judgment case handed down by the Supreme Court of Victoria as being appropriate in a broad range of cases, including cases where a prison sentence may be appropriate, with sentences able to address the "particular circumstances of the offender [1] and the causes of the offending" (Victorian Court of Appeal, para. 2). To this end, the order includes standard conditions (e.g., that no further offence is committed) and discretionary conditions set for each individual by the court. These discretionary conditions are described as "variably coercive, prohibitive, intrusive and rehabilitative" (Victorian Court of Appeal, para. 2) and include unpaid community work (referred to in other contexts as community service), medical treatment and curfews. Overall, this sentencing option is understood to thereby fulfil both punitive and rehabilitative purposes, simultaneously promoting the best interests of the community and the person and potentially directing people away from Victoria's over-burdened prisons.

The use of community based sanctions is supported by a body of evidence indicating that responses to offending that are solely punitive have, at best, no impact on reoffending and, at worst, a negative impact (Gendreau et al., 1999, Nagin et al., 2009, Cullen et al., 2011). While studies show that there are greater rates of reoffending among people sentenced to prison compared with those on an alternative sanction (Cid and Martí, 2012, Cullen et al., 2011), there is currently little evidence to support the effectiveness of CCOs in reducing recidivism (Gelb et al., 2019).

Unfortunately, recent internal reports indicate that the system in Victoria may not be working as well as it could be to maximise the opportunity presented by CCO sentences. For example, the completion of CCOs was 56.4% in 2018-19 and the lowest in Australia (Productivity Commission [PC], 2020), with a range of implementation and systemic issues identified as being in need of urgent attention (Victorian Auditor General, 2017). While there has been investment into addressing such issues, the effects remain to be seen. Others point out that, while community work is a prominent component of the CCO (ordered in 76% of cases; Gelb et al. 2019), "not much attention has been paid in the literature to the issue of identifying or determining effective models for the operation of community service schemes" (community work) (Turner and Trotter 2013, p.44).

A review undertaken for this study identified scarce research attention to people on CCOs. For this reason, there is limited understanding of the circumstances and needs of this group, the extent to which they experience inclusion in the mainstream community (e.g., education, training and employment/ETE) and their experiences in the system while they are on a CCO, especially the extent to which CCOs are experienced as rehabilitative.

The current study aims to improve understanding about the needs of this specific group and how the system can better support rehabilitative pathways. This report presents analysis of mixed methods data derived from two sources:

1. surveys completed by 63 women and 137 men (N=200) on CCOs in Melbourne; and,
2. in-depth interviews with a sub-set of 20 participants from part 1.

Participants were recruited through a community work program site located in the City of Brimbank, a local government area in the west metropolitan region (WMR) of Melbourne that includes some of Victoria's most disadvantaged suburbs. This is pertinent given the demonstrated inter-connectedness of place-based disadvantage and justice system involvement (Vinson, 1999; Vinson and Rawsthorne,2015).

The study was conducted as a component of a larger project that investigated how services and programs in the City of Brimbank can improve the recidivism outcomes of people on Community Correction Orders and involved consultation with local stakeholders. The project was conducted by Jesuit Social Services with funding received from the Victorian Legal Services Board and support given by Corrections Victoria (CV).

The structure of this report proceeds as follows. After outlining some of the main demographic characteristics of the group **(Section 2)**, and the broad nature of their justice involvement **(Section 3)**, the report examines the educational and employment background and current involvement of participants **(Sections 4 and 5)**. Section 6 explores holistic aspects of wellbeing of participants with particular attention to: family background experiences; social connectedness and social supports; physical and mental health issues (including problematic drug use); involvement in structured or recreational activities and quality of employment among those who were employed.

[1] Where possible, labels such as 'offender' and 'criminal' are avoided in this report as they have potentially pejorative connotations and were associated with stigmatising experiences for participants in this study

Section 7, investigates participants' access to appropriate formal supports to address issues linked to justice system involvement; and their experiences in community work programs. **Section 8** discusses key findings and study limitations followed by consideration of implications for practice and areas for future investigation in **Section 9.**

The report is intended to be of specific relevance to service providers, policy makers and planners in both justice and intersecting government and community sectors in the local WMR of Melbourne, Victoria.

Given the general paucity of published work with people on community based orders, the implications of this study may be of relevance to professionals in other contexts as well. It is hoped that it may also inform future research investigating ways to improve outcomes experienced among this group – including, but not limited to, rates of reoffending.

The following is a summary of key findings under four key research questions.

Research question 1: What are the main demographic and justice-related characteristics of this group?

Demographic Characteristics:

- The sample of 200 adults included 63 women and 137 men (31.5% vs 68.5%).
- The average age was 34.9 years (range 19-61 years).
- 52% of participants had dependent children under the age of 18 years.
- Approximately two thirds of participants (n=127, 63%) were born in Australia and 37% (n=72) were born overseas.
- There were three Aboriginal participants (1.5%).
- 75% of participants resided in western metropolitan Melbourne (with the most common LGAs being the City of Brimbank, 26% and the City of Melton, 23%).

Justice-related characteristics:

- The average age of reported first involvement in the justice system was 24.4 years.
- Just over a quarter of participants (26.5%, n=46) were reportedly involved in the justice system as juveniles (age 17 years or younger).[2]
- A quarter (25%) had reportedly spent time in an adult prison (n=49; range 1 week to 9 years).
- Fifteen participants (7.5%) had spent one or more years in prison.[3]

[2] This may be higher as Victoria has had a dual track system in place for some time, meaning that it is possible for vulnerable young people to remain in the juvenile justice system until the age of 21 years. It was not reported whether 18-21 years olds were processed as juveniles or adults (see "Limitations" section).
[3] It is possible that some of these participants were serving a parole period or a "CCO Imprisonment Order" (a prison term followed by a CCO) when engaged by the employment pathways program. However, the needs assessment survey did not collect in depth information about the participant's justice record.

Research question 2: Are there identifiable trends in relation to educational attainment and engagement in employment among this group?

Participation in the workforce, education or training activities:

- **Overall levels of disengagement from ETE pathways were high.** Approximately two thirds of participants (67%) who were able to engage in ETE activities were not doing so.
- **Long term unemployment was a common experience.** Of 104 participants who were reportedly job seeking, approximately two thirds (66%, n=69) had been unemployed for more than a year and over a quarter (26%, n=27) had been unemployed for five or more years.

Tertiary level educational attainment and experiences:

- The most striking characteristic of tertiary education experiences was the **common attainment of one or more 'Certificate' level qualification** as the highest qualification, particularly Certificates I and II. These low level certificates rarely appeared to lead to employment.
- Interviewees confirmed that the urgent need for an income, combined with experiences of undertaking courses that haven't led to employment, contributed to **reluctance to embark on further training.**

Secondary level educational attainment and experiences:

- Participants had **lower than average levels of educational attainment** (compared to Victorian and City of Brimbank populations).
- Interviewees commonly discussed having **very poor educational experiences**, characterised by disruption and often underpinned by **troubled home environments** including living in out of home care (n=4), family violence and refugee experiences (n=3).
- 15% of the survey sample reported having lower than year 9 level attainment.

Employment experiences:

- The majority of interviewees spoke about having **disjointed careers** traversing multiple industry types and some had **limited or no employment history.**
- Engagement in **precarious, low paying forms of work and underemployment** were common experiences among those who were working.

Research question 3: Are there common areas of need or barriers to participation in the mainstream community?

Main issues and areas of need reported by participants:

- **Mental health issues** (e.g. anxiety, depression and PTSD) and/or **problematic alcohol and/drug use** were common experiences associated with justice system involvement.
- The majority of interviewees were **socially isolated**, having **limited social support** from informal networks.
- Many reported having **troubled personal relationships**. Experiences such as separation from a spouse/s, estrangement from children, recent contact with child protective services, family violence were some commonly mentioned issues.
- There were **very low levels of participation in recreational and social activities.**
- **Financial hardship** was reported by all interviewees with unmanaged debt and reliance on others for housing being very common.
- **Women had a range of distinct needs** and experiences compared to men. This was often heavily shaped by child care responsibilities.

Barriers to participation in the community:

- Having a **justice record** was the self-reported main barrier to employment for 38%. **Employer reluctance** to hire them and **community work obligations** were related factors identified in interviews.
- Interviewees commonly spoke about how their **community work was "unnecessarily drawn out"** as they were allocated program hours only one or two days a week, regardless of their availability. This **prolonged time they spent out of the workforce.**
- A **health issue, impairment or injury** was a commonly identified 'main' barrier to employment (reported by 11%).
- **Motivation or confidence** was the third most commonly mentioned main barrier to employment (reported by 10%).

Research question 4: What is the extent and nature of engagement with services and rehabilitative opportunities?

Access to services and support programs:

- Though many participants described having actively taken steps to address issues that were recognised as a 'problem', there was **little evidence to suggest that the participants in this study were receiving adequate support** to address self-identified needs or to improve their inclusion in the community.
- The majority of service encounters described by participants in this study appeared to be associated with an element of coercion, thus potentially undermining benefits.
- **Employment services were the most common service type accessed by participants;** however, dissatisfaction levels were very high and many disengaged as a result.
- Those who accessed specialist employment providers, such as disability specialists appeared to have better experiences; however, numbers of such participants were small.
- Specialist alcohol and drug and psychological services were accessed by some participants.
- There was an identified need for assistance in the following areas: social isolation and social support, family and relationship functioning, use of violence in and out of the home, financial counselling and financial literacy, and the geographical accessibility of services.
- Participants placed the **highest value on the quality of interpersonal interactions** with professionals (above the functional role of the service). These included qualities of staff genuineness, respect, and willingness to help.

Experiences of community work programs:

- Participants in this study emphasised that they **wanted to "give back" or "repay" their debt** to the community.
- Participants gave the most negative assessments of community work programs when there were not clearly articulated links to community benefit.
- **No individual was able to identify any useful skills** that they had gained from any community work program and commonly described the work that they had undertaken as **time-wasting, punitive and demeaning,** linking these experiences to poor self-esteem and a perception of worthlessness.
- **Interactions with community corrections staff appeared to have a significant role** shaping program attendance, with significance of such interactions appearing to be amplified due to the common experience of social isolation.
- Male interviewees did not appear to benefit from the group environment of community work programs, with some describing how the **group environment had a negative impact** on them.
- The majority of women (86%) of women participated in the "light duties" compared to 25% of men. It appeared that this **over-representation of women in a program with the lowest skill requirement** was shaped by dominance of men in other programs and lack of availability of other appealing or suitable programs.
- Meeting **child care needs** was a barrier to attending programs and services, particularly for women and single parents.

Discussion and implications

In the context of Victoria's burgeoning prison population, there is a stronger case than ever for ensuring that CCOs are used by the courts wherever appropriate and that those who receive these sentences have the support and opportunities that they need to make positive changes towards living crime-free lives.

There has been remarkably little research attention given to peopleon community based orders such as CCOs in Australia and internationally.

In summary, the following key issues identified among this group are likely to have a significant bearing on health and wellbeing outcomes, as well as recidivism rates:

- Lower than average educational attainment often underscored by difficult or traumatic childhood experiences.
- Limited engagement in employment and, among those who were working, engagement in tenuous low paying employment.
- High levels of social isolation and common experiences of troubled personal relationships.
- Low levels of self-esteem, self-confidence and poor hope for the future exacerbated by the stigmatising impact of having a justice record.
- Ongoing complex needs including poor mental health, problematic alcohol and/drug use and involvement in the child protection system impacting capacity to focus on meeting justice system requirements.

Among this cohort there were people whose distinct needs exacerbate their vulnerability to experiencing poor outcomes and who require targeted consideration. These include women, people from culturally diverse groups, young people, single parents and people with cognitive impairments.

The data collected in this study has provided insights into participants' engagement in rehabilitative activities including therapeutic services and programs as well as mandatory community work, producing two key findings:

1. Limited evidence of access to supportive or therapeutic services to address identified needs or improve inclusion in the mainstream community.
2. Experiences of community work program involvement as solely punitive, unnecessarily protracted in length with little evidence of skill-building or rehabilitative elements.

What can we learn about approaches to practice from the experiences of participants on CCOs?

The conclusion of this report outlines key features for delivery of effective therapeutic services and community work that emerged from analysis of the experiences of participants. These features are consistent with, and reiterate, existing understandings about 'what works' in relation to program or service delivery with people in the justice system (e.g., Andrews, 2001; Andrews et al., 2011; Barnett and Howard, 2018; Borzycky, 2005; McGuire, 2013; Turner and Trotter, 2013).

Key elements of therapeutic programs:

- Delivery of multi-modal support, holistic and tailored forms of support.
- A relational approach to service provision.
- Emphasis on building confidence and motivation.
- Long term support.
- Programs that minimise use of coercion.
- Programs that are geographically accessible.

Key elements of community work programs:

- Placement in productive and valued community work roles.
- Opportunity for interaction with community members.
- Opportunity to build skills including 'soft' skills.
- Pro-social interactions with supervisors and others who are supportive of the individual and who encourage positive change.
- Individual or small group placements where possible.
- Collaborative approaches to arranging work placements using a strengths-based approach.
- Efficiency of placements.

The following areas for future investigation are discussed:

- Provision of effective ETE support to this group.
- Provision of training opportunities that are aligned with local employment opportunities.
- Rigorous evaluation of community work programs.
- Improved understanding of service use patterns among people on CCOs.
- Training to improve skills in pro-social modelling among corrective services staff.
- Investigation of ways to improve accessibility of CCOs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people living in rural and remote locations.
- Investigation of ways to improve support to children and family of people on CCOs and to maximise their role in rehabilitation where appropriate.

1: Introduction

1.1 Project background

Across Australia, the overall rate of incarceration is 2.1 times higher than it was 30 years ago (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019 [ABS], Carcach and Grant, 1999), having a direct economic cost totalling more than $3.4 billion across Australia in 2017-18 (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision [SCRGSP], 2019). The large and increasing expenditure on incarceration in Australia is concerning in light of considerable research finding that imprisonment either has no deterrent effect or, in some cases, leads to a slight increase in reoffending (Gendreau et al., 1999, Nagin et al., 2009, Cullen et al., 2011). There is also a large body of evidence showing that imprisonment has a deleterious impact on an individual's physical, psychological and social wellbeing, as well as that of their family members, having a ripple effect throughout the community. The trend towards increased use of custodial measures in Australia is contrasted by a decrease in their use in other comparable countries including New Zealand, England and Wales, Canada and the United States/U.S. (Gelb et al., 2019).

In Victoria, the context of this study, the rate of imprisonment increased by almost 50% in ten years (ABS, 2019) and is at its highest point since the late 19th Century (Sentencing Advisory Council [SAC], The increased use of remand [4] and changes in the use of parole (early release) are understood to be some factors behind the dramatic increase (SAC, 2016). Victoria's prison system is the most costly in the country (SCRGSP, 2019); nevertheless, rates of recidivism are high. In 2018-19, 57% of people sentenced to prison in Victoria returned to either community corrections or prison within two years of release (Productivity Commission [PC], 2020).

There is a prevention case to support the use of alternative sanctions such as diversion programs and non-custodial orders. On the measure of recidivism alone, studies have found that there are greater rates of reoffending among people sentenced to prison compared with those on an alternative sanction (Cid and Martí, 2012, Cullen et al., 2011, McGuire, 2013, Wermink et al., 2010).

There is also a cost-benefit case supporting the use of community based sanctions. For example, the cost of imprisonment in Victoria in 2018-19 was almost ten times greater than the cost of managing a person in the community (at $317.90 vs $40.28 per person per day, respectively, in Victoria for 2018-19; Productivity Commission [PC], 2020). Accordingly, the use, availability and effectiveness of alternatives to imprisonment demand ongoing attention among scholars, policymakers and justice advocates – both in Victoria and more generally.

The Community Correction Order

The Community Correction Order (CCO) was introduced in Victoria in 2012 to replace several other non-custodial orders (Victorian Court of Appeal, 2014). [5,6] Though it is generally imposed for offences that would not ordinarily have resulted in a custodial sentence, it may also be appropriate for more serious offences where a custodial sentence would have been previously imposed, and can be served in addition to a prison sentence (i.e., a combined sentence). A guideline judgement handed down by the Supreme Court of Victoria in 2014 described the CCO as:

> ***… a flexible sentencing option, enabling punitive and rehabilitative purposes to be served simultaneously. The CCO can be fashioned to address the particular circumstances of the offender and the causes of the offending, and to minimise the risk of re-offending by promoting the offender's rehabilitation. (Victorian Court of Appeal, para. 2),***

The CCO includes standard or core conditions (including that no further offence is committed) and, consistent with a flexible approach to meeting both punitive and rehabilitative aims (described above), it may include certain discretionary conditions set by the court. These are described as "variously coercive, prohibitive, intrusive and rehabilitative" (Victorian Court of Appeal, para.1) and include unpaid community work, drug and alcohol testing and treatment, medical treatment or curfews (Sentencing Act 1991 [Vic], s.48). The maximum length of a CCO imposed for one or more offences is between two and five years. In giving sentencing guidelines, the Supreme Court of Victoria reported the following:

> ***The conditions and length of a CCO should be structured in the least restrictive way possible, having regard to the circumstances of the offence, the offender and the sentencing purposes to be achieved. (Victorian Court of Appeal, para.80)***

In summary, the intention of the order is to simultaneously promote the best interests of the community and the person.

Since its introduction, various legislative amendments have impacted the use of CCOs. For example, in 2014, courts were encouraged to impose a CCO in place of a suspended sentence (phased out in Victoria from 2011-14) (Sentencing Amendment (Emergency Workers) Act 2014 [Vic]), consistent with a general policy approach stating that incarceration should be a 'last resort' response to offending. This view is evident in a guideline judgment handed down by the Supreme Court reviewing the use of CCOs:

> ***Any period of imprisonment must be understood for what it is: onerous, unpleasant, oppressive and burdensome. It is, as it should be, the last available punitive resort in any civilised system of criminal justice. Public discussions about the need to deter crime by the imposition of heavier sentences are not always obviously, or at least apparently, informed by an appreciation of the significance of full-time incarceration upon men and women who receive such sentences. (Victorian Court of Appeal, para. 104)***

Since this time, however, numerous changes have narrowed the availability of the CCO option to exclude a greater number of offences, particularly violent offences (SAC, 2017a), representing a potential shift away from this stance. It is likely that this will result in lower numbers of people who are sentenced to a CCO. The use of CCOs in Victoria rose steadily until 2018 where, on an average day, 14,561 people were on the orders. In 2019, this decreased to 13,361 (PC, 2020). However, it remains to be seen whether a downward trend will continue.

The rehabilitative component of CCOs (e.g., mandatory program attendance or treatment) has been informed by a broad body of literature demonstrating that targeted, therapeutic treatment appropriate to individual needs is effective in both reducing reoffending and improving health and wellbeing outcomes among people in the justice system across a range of measures. This is consistent with the "Risk-Need-Responsivity" (RNR) approach, an evidence-based paradigm widely used in countries including Australia in programming treatment for offenders (Andrews, Bonta & Hoge, 1990; Andrews, Bonta and Wormwith, 2011).

Interventions that are most strongly based in the evidence include cognitive behavioural therapies, skills training, moral reasoning, employment schemes and multi-modal interventions (Farrall, 2012). While large systematic studies have shown that treatment that is undertaken on a voluntary basis is more effective on a range of measures than treatment which is mandated or includes any coercive element (Parhar et al., 2008); the evidence shows overall that programs that are well implemented can reduce recidivism and enhance public safety (Przybylski, 2008).

While understood to be a 'lower risk' cohort compared to prison populations, there are indications that people who are sentenced to CCOs often have similarly complex needs that underpin and exacerbate justice system involvement and increase their marginalisation within the mainstream community. For example, the Victorian Auditor General (2017) reported that three quarters of people on CCOs in 2014-15 had at least two conditions on their order and, in 2015-16, the majority (85%) had conditions relating to alcohol and or drugs. Further, analysis of data obtained through courts has shown that individual characteristics including age have a bearing on recidivism outcomes (Sentencing Advisory Council, 2017b). However, there has been less investigation into what people who have been sentenced to CCOs experience as their main issues and barriers to mainstream inclusion. For example, while the Victorian Auditor General's Office stated that CCOs provide offenders "the opportunity to maintain and improve their social and economic support networks in a community setting" while fulfilling their obligations to the community (Victorian Auditor General [VAGO], 2017), the extent to which these purported advantages are experienced has not been explored.

While reoffending rates among people on CCOs are far lower than among prisoners generally,[7] it is unclear whether this is shaped by the risk profile of the respective cohorts or if the nature of the intervention has an impact. For example, calculations of recidivism rates are imprecise (Richards, 2011) and comparison of recidivism rates between cohorts who may have vastly different characteristics, such as prior offense history, is fraught (McIvoret al., 2010). Another potential measure of the effectiveness of CCOs is the rate of completion.

[4] A custodial measure used to detain individuals who are waiting court appearance.
[5] Since this time, New South Wales and Tasmania have introduced a similar legislative provisions for use of CCOs based on Victoria's model (Gelb et al. 2019).
[6] Other orders include "Fine Conversion Order", "Fine Default Unpaid Community Work Order" and "Community Work Permit". Prisoners may also be eligible to serve part of their sentence in the community under a "Parole Order" (Corrections Victoria, 2018).
[7] Just under a quarter (24.9%) of people on CCOs in 2017 went back through the correctional system within two years compared to over half of those released from prison (53.7%) in the same period (State Government of Victoria, 2017a).

In Victoria, the completion rates of CCOs, were the lowest in Australia in 2018-19, at 56.4% (PC, 2020). An internal review of Community Correctional Services (CCS) identified a number of urgent implementation and systemic challenges potentially driving this trend. These include the following:

- system challenges in managing unexpected growth;
- legislative changes driving higher-risk offender profiles;
- broadening expectations of the services that CCS delivers—community corrections being seen as both one step away from prison and an early intervention option for offenders;
- constrained CCS resources and access to community treatment options;
- challenges in recruiting and training appropriately qualified staff;
- case management roles for managing serious offenders being filled by inexperienced staff. (Victorian Auditor General, 2017)

One of the main challenges highlighted in the above investigation and in a more recent report released by the Victorian State Government Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) is associated with meeting the needs of a "more complex cohort of offenders" (2019, p.21). This has reportedly increased the demand for support programs and services and increased waiting times for people on CCOs (Victorian Auditor General, 2017). For example, in 2017, the Victorian Auditor General reported that 40 per cent of serious risk individuals on the offending behaviour programs list waited more than three months for a pre-assessment screening. Others have identified that access to appropriate services and programs is particularly difficult for individuals in regional and remote communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These groups and people with mental health issues are understood to be particularly vulnerable to becoming entrenched in the justice system and are more likely to breach their CCO (Australian Law Reform Commission, 2017; Gelb et al., 2019).

Community work (also referred to as community service) – or the requirement to undertake unpaid work – is a prominent component of the CCO, ordered in 76% of cases (Gelb et al. 2019). The literature focused specifically on effective program practices for offenders who have been sentenced to community based orders, including the possible rehabilitative or capacity-building function of court mandated community work, is limited. McIvor (1992) notably found that reconviction rates were lower among people who believed their community service experience to be worthwhile, because it provided opportunities to learn new skills or was seen to be of value to the community. Positive experiences were associated with placements that featured high levels of contact between the person sentenced and "beneficiaries," including agencies or individuals (McIvor et al., 2010, p.52), enabling people to appreciate the tangible value of their work (Rex and Gelsthorpe, 2002).

More recently, Turner and Trotter (2013) identified factors that are well-substantiated in relation to successful community work programming. These are that community work should be: viewed as meaningful and worthwhile; favour individual placements over group work; ensure equal opportunity for participation; and, be delivered by staff employing a "pro-social modelling approach" to working with people (Turner and Trotter, 2013, p. 49). Closely related to the latter point is the quality of the relationship between the offender and their community supervisor (Trotter et al., 2012, Sapouna et al., 2015), with some researchers highlighting the influence workers may have in modelling and reinforcing certain values and behaviours (Trotter and Ward, 2013). In summary, the literature seems to indicate the rehabilitative potential of meaningful community work. However, the extent to which these principles are embedded in current practice across all regions of Victoria is unclear. Further, although there has been apparent state government investment towards addressing the general systemic and practice issues impacting CCOs, it is unclear at this stage if there has been any positive impact on completion rates or the overall outcomes of those who receive the orders (Gelb et al., 2019).

In summary, while the purpose of the CCO is described as being both punitive and rehabilitative, issues with the engagement and delivery of rehabilitative opportunities to this cohort have been identified. The current study is driven by the relative dearth of attention to this justice sub-group in the research literature more generally. It aims to improve understanding about the needs of this specific group and how the system can better support rehabilitative pathways – both through linkage of people to therapeutic programs and services to address underlying needs and participation in unpaid community work. It is only through improved understanding of the circumstances of this cohort and their experiences during their CCO that it is possible to consider ways to maximise the opportunity for rehabilitation presented by this sentence.

The current investigation is driven by the following (RQ):

RQ1: What are the main demographic and justice related characteristics of this group?

RQ2: Are there identifiable trends in relation to educational attainment and engagement in employment among this group?

RQ2: Are there common areas of need or barriers to participation in the mainstream community?

RQ4: What is the extent and nature of engagement with services and rehabilitative opportunities?

The Conclusion of this report considers what we can learn about approaches to practice from the experiences of participants on CCOs. While the findings of this report may be relevant to wider audiences, the data primarily describes a group of people who live in Melbourne's west metropolitan area (WMR). The following section outlines the justification for the geographical focus of this study.

1.2 A focus on Melbourne's west

Attention to 'place' in this study is informed by understandings of the inter-related and multi-directional nature of place-based disadvantage and justice system involvement (Vinson and Rawsthorne, 2015). In a study called 'Dropping off the Edge' (DOTE) researchers described how disadvantage tends to occur in a "web-like" structure of factors that constrain individual life opportunities (Vinson & Rawsthorne, 2015). The DOTE study showed that those living in the 3 per cent most disadvantaged postcodes in Victoria are:

- twice as likely to have criminal convictions;
- 3 times more likely to be experiencing long term unemployment;
- 2.6 times more likely to have experienced domestic violence; and,
- 2.4 times more likely to be on disability support (Vinson & Rawsthorne, 2015).

Criminology experts argue that studies have neglected investigation of the role of context in relation to understandings of the associations between disadvantage, ETE pathways and crime, and the effectiveness of interventions delivered to offenders (Sampson, 2013, Sharkey and Faber, 2014).

There has been increasing focus among planners and policy makers on the role of place-based approaches in addressing problems associated with entrenched disadvantage, including persistent offending. Further, there is growing acceptance that individualised approaches alone have limited impact on recidivism reduction (Allard et al., 2013). That is, local organisations, institutions and systems play an important role in shaping pathways of people in the justice system. Attention to how these are experienced at a local level is necessary in order to make meaningful change.

The majority of participants in this study were residents of the City of Brimbank and the City of Melton. The characteristics of these local government areas (LGAs) are described briefly below.

The City of Brimbank

The City of Brimbank is the second largest municipality in Melbourne located between 11 and 23 kilometres west and north-west of the Melbourne CBD (id.community, 2019a). In 2019, it was estimated that the population of the City of Brimbank was 209,523 (id.community, 2019a).

According to the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), an index that measures the relative level of socio-economic disadvantage and/or advantage based on a range of Census characteristics, in 2016, Brimbank was the second most disadvantaged municipality in the Greater Melbourne area, and the third most disadvantaged in Victoria (Brimbank City Council, 2018). Three suburbs in the City of Brimbank LGA (Ardeer, Albion and St Albans) represent some of the most persistently disadvantaged postcodes in Victoria (Vinson & Rawsthorne, 2015).

The municipality is culturally diverse, with 47.9% of the population being overseas born compared to a state average of 28.4% (State Government of Victoria, 2017b). In recent years, the City of Brimbank has experienced strong growth, both in residential, industrial and commercial development. It incorporates one of the largest industrial areas in Melbourne, with the main industry being chemical product manufacturing (City of Brimbank, 2018). It is also the location of important institutions, including Sunshine Hospital and a campus of the Victoria University of Technology, contributing to the diversity of services and employment opportunities in the area.

Overall, a recent report confirmed that the WMR, more generally, has a large 'blue collar' workforce having twice the concentration of jobs in the transport, postal and warehousing industry sectors compared to metropolitan Melbourne. Retail trade is also focused around key centres (SGS Economics and Planning, 2019).

Research ranking the skill level of residents in the WMR found that the City of Brimbank had the lowest proportion of residents in Skill Level 1 and Skill Level 2 jobs (the highest skill levels) and the highest share of residents in Skill Level 5 jobs (the lowest) (SGS Economics and Planning, 2019). In 2016, 52.3% of Brimbank residents aged 15 years and over indicated that they had completed Year 12 or equivalent – lower than the greater Melbourne average of 59.5% (Brimbank City Council, 2018).

Victorian employment data indicate that the level of unemployment in the City of Brimbank increased for five consecutive years up to 2018, reaching 11.66% in September 2017 (.idcommunity, 2017). This was almost twice as high as the rate of unemployment in the state of Victoria (5.9%) at the same time (.idcommunity, 2019a). In 2018, the Brotherhood of St Laurence reported that youth unemployment in the western suburbs of the Melbourne area (including, but not limited to, the City of Brimbank) was the highest in Victoria, at 18.6%. Brimbank has a crime rate higher than Melbourne or Victoria, especially for property-related crimes (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2014).

While highlighting many strengths, analysis of the social, economic and health and wellbeing profile of the City of Brimbank has confirmed that there are many ongoing community challenges. In recent years, there has been considerable investment of resources to lift outcomes in the area (Young, 2014, Taylor, 2017). Significant investment into developing detailed baseline measurements of health, education and social characteristics (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2014) has underpinned the development of a place-based initiative ("Impact Brimbank" [8]). This is a partnership between the Australian Health Policy Collaboration at Victoria University and the City of Brimbank. The extent of existing collaborative efforts in the municipality suggests that discussions about ways to better integrate services and promote greater participation of people in the justice system are aptly targeted.

The City of Melton

Approximately a quarter of participants of this study were residents of the City of Melton, which neighbours the City of Brimbank to the west. The City of Melton is located on the urban-rural fringe of Melbourne, with the central suburb, Melton, being 37km from Melbourne's CBD. The overall geographical size of the municipality is over four times that of Brimbank and it has approximately one-fifth lower population density (.idcommunity, 2019a, .idcommunity, 2019b). Unlike Brimbank, the area is not characterised by cultural diversity (State Government of Victoria, 2017b).

The City of Melton, as a whole, sits higher on the SEIFA scale of disadvantage compared to the City of Brimbank (ranking 994 compared to Brimbank 921 – with lower scores being indicative of greater disadvantage). Melton also has lower offence rates compared to Melbourne and Victoria (Melton, 2019). Being a growth area, construction is therefore also a dominant sector (SGS Economics and Planning, 2019). Nevertheless, analysis shows that, similar to the City of Brimbank, there are concentrated pockets of disadvantage in this LGA, with suburbs located closer to the Melbourne CBD having generally lower levels of disadvantage (SGS Economics and Planning, 2019).

While there is overall favourable economic growth in the area, researchers have found that some potential issues that may contribute to disadvantage include the accessibility of public transport. The City of Melton has the lowest frequency of public transport services in the WMR (SGS Economics and Planning, 2019).

The same study found that the area has a vulnerable workforce due to concentrations of lower employment skills and lower household income than in other parts of the region and compared to the Victorian state average. The City of Melton is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia, growing at around 5 4% per year (almost four times Victoria's rate of growth of 1.5%) (Melton, 2019). Therefore, while the focus of this study is primarily on the City of Brimbank, findings in this report may be of particular interest for planners in this area.

[8] Impact Brimbank website: https://www.brimbank.vic.gov.au/community/impact-brimbank

1.3 Method

This report presents an integrated analysis of mixed methods data collected from a purposive sample of individuals who had received a community based sanction and were undertaking community work at a Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) [9] site located in the City of Brimbank. The data sources include the following:

i. survey data collected from 200 adult men and women on CCOs who engaged in a Jesuit Social Services' Employment Pathways Advice program ; and,

ii. in-depth, semi-structured research interviews conducted with a subset of 20 participants from part i. [11]

The methods used to collect these data are described below.

i) Survey data

The study utilises service data of 200 male and female adult participants (n=137 men; n=63 women) of an employment pathways service (EPS) that was nested in a DJCS community work site located in the City of Brimbank between October 2017 and April 2019. Participants were on CCOs and accessed the service voluntarily and confidentially. The program (described page 16) was managed by Jesuit Social Services and not connected to the participants' justice obligations.

Data were collected in a 'needs assessment' survey spanning approximately 15 minutes in length conducted in the early stage of engagement. Items recorded include: demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, country of birth and residency status, postcode of residence, dependent children, housing circumstances); ETE background and current status; future goals; nature of justice history (e.g., recent most serious offence type, prior incarceration); disabilities and health issues; levels of confidence and motivation for job seeking, if relevant (see Appendix 1 for full instrument). The survey instrument was developed by staff at Jesuit Community College in collaboration with the Learning and Practice Development Unit at Jesuit Social Services.

Informed written consent was obtained by the EPS from participants for use of the de-identified data in this study (see Appendix 2). The sample size was limited to 200 participants, which is sufficient to identify trends; however, the purposive sampling strategy limits the potential to extrapolate findings (limitations discussed Section 8). The EPS staff also gained separate consent from eligible participants to be contacted by a researcher to participate in an in-depth interview, described next.

ii) In-depth interview data

In-depth interview data were collected in this study to gain a richer understanding of the personal circumstances of people on CCOs, with a focus on what has helped or hindered pathways out of the justice system and identifying areas of unmet need. Development of a semi-structured interview guide was informed by literature identifying factors associated with justice system involvement and best practice approaches to recidivism reduction, specifically among people on community based orders. The interview guide was refined following preliminary analysis of data from the first 100 EPS participants. This ensured that the interviews enriched understanding of the themes identified in the quantitative data and elucidated the lived experiences of participants.

Interviews were conducted by a researcher (the report author) with 20 participants (n=13 men and n=7 women) from part a), including 15 participants who were residents of the City of Brimbank and n=5 residents of the City of Melton. Interviews spanned 20-45 minutes and were undertaken face to face at the DJCS site, a local JSS site, or via telephone if a face to face meeting was not possible. Interviewees were reimbursed with a $40 shopping voucher. Interview data collection commenced in October 2018 and occurred simultaneously with the EPS, ceasing once the researcher had attempted to contact all eligible participants, with data collection ceasing in April 2019. Interviews were digitally voice recorded, transcribed verbatim and names and other identifying material was removed or changed to de-identify the participant.

[9] Formerly the Department of Justice and Regulation (DoJR).
[11] Procedures were approved by the Jesuit Social Services HREC, the Corrections Victoria Research Committee and the Justice Human Research Ethics Committee (Department of Justice and Regulation, now DJCS). Protocols are described in the report body.

Data analysis

Descriptive analysis of aggregated survey data was conducted. There was a full response rate (N=200) for most demographic questions, but a lower response to more sensitive questions (e.g., justice history). This is indicated where applicable. Responses to open ended items of the needs assessment were analysed thematically and quantified. Interview transcripts were analysed using NVivo v12 (QSR International). The initial coding strategy involved broad thematic coding of the transcripts using the interview guide as a framework and then development of sub-themes based on identification of repetition in the data through detailed line by line coding. The coded data was read by the project manager (Learning and Practice Development Unit) who assisted with identification of sub-themes and issues. Some quantification of responses was undertaken where possible. The data sources are also integrated where possible, with the EPS data contextualising and being used to confirm qualitative themes. The four research questions identified earlier (Introduction, page 13) guided analysis and structure the findings.

Governance, ethics and reporting

Development of the study approach and materials were guided by a Project Advisory Group (PAG) comprising senior Jesuit Social Services' staff. Analysis of themes was presented to the PAG who assisted with refinement of analytical categories and development of findings and recommendations. Procedures were approved by the Jesuit Social Services Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC, May 2018), the Corrections Victoria Research Committee (15/18/508698), and the Justice HREC (Department of Justice and Regulation, now DJCS; CF/18/22493). Survey data were aggregated, all interviewees have been de-identified and quotes are labelled with an interview number, gender and age.

The Employment Pathways Service (EPS)

Recruitment of participants to this study was undertaken via an Employment Pathways Service (EPS), which was embedded into the DJCS community corrections work program site in Derrimut (the City of Brimbank). The service was managed and staffed by Jesuit Community College (Jesuit Social Services) in collaboration with the Derrimut DJCS Community Correction Services site. The role of the Employment Pathways Advisor (EPA) was to improve pathways of people in the justice system by facilitating greater connection to ETE opportunities. At a practical level, this involved engaging clients face to face when attending the DJCS site as a part of their community work program. An initial needs assessment was conducted (spanning approximately 15 minutes) and, based on indicated needs, the EPA provided a linkage role to connect individuals into appropriate services and opportunities. The EPS was operational from October 2017 to June 2019. The service engaged with 220 participants over this time (200 of whom consented for their data to be used in this study).

Some outcomes associated with this program are noted in the Discussion section of this report.

1.4 About this report

This report is intended to improve understanding about the profile, needs and experiences of this group and to stimulate discussion about how collaborative approaches may be leveraged to: meet the unaddressed service needs of this group in Melbourne's WMR; increase participation in the community (with a focus on ETE engagement where this is possible and appropriate); and, improve health and wellbeing outcomes including recidivism rates. It is anticipated that, given the scarcity of research with this justice group, this report may also be of interest to a broader audience of service providers, policy makers, advocates and scholars. The structure of the remainder of this report proceeds as follows.

Sections 2 and 3 draw from EPS survey data to examine the demographic profile and the nature of justice system involvement of participants. **Section 2** outlines the main demographic characteristics of the group including: current suburb of residence; age and gender; country of birth; residency status; language spoken at home; dependent children; and, housing status. **Section 3** outlines the broad characteristics of the justice involvement of participants, including: age of first involvement in the justice system, whether they had spent time in a correctional facility as a juvenile or as an adult and the nature of the most serious, recent offence that led to the current order. It then presents a comparison of the main characteristics of the sample with Victoria's prison population.

Section 4 explores the ETE profile of participants; including secondary attainment, overall level of tertiary attainment and current involvement in training. Qualitative interview data is integrated in this section in order to offer insight into participants' past educational experiences and views on involvement in future training. Similarly, **Section 5** integrates EPS survey and interview data. It explores the past and current involvement of participants in employment, the nature of experiences in the workforce and or of job seeking, and the main barriers to securing employment for those who were unemployed.

In **Section 6**, the report draws from qualitative data to explore holistic aspects of wellbeing among interview participants with particular attention to family background experiences; social connectedness and social supports; physical and mental health issues (including problematic drug use); and involvement in activities that give meaning and purpose to life. **Section 7** draws from primarily qualitative data to investigate reported access to appropriate formal supports to address issues that may underlie or exacerbate their justice system involvement; and, experiences in community work programs.

Section 8 summarises the main findings from the study under the four research questions and limitations of the study. **Section 9** explores implications for practice and provides recommendations for future action.

LC LSIC Inquiry into Victoria's criminal justice system
Response to question on notice
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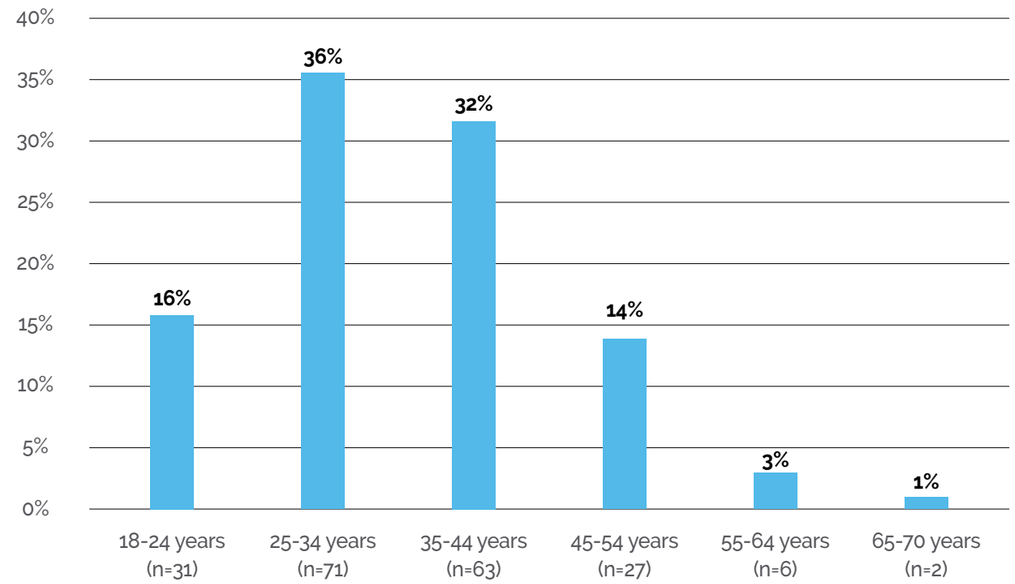
2: Demographic characteristics of participants

2.1 Age and gender

Participants ranged in age from 19 to 66 years (N=200). The average age of participants was 34.9 years and the majority of participants (67%) were aged between 25 and 44 years (Figure 1).

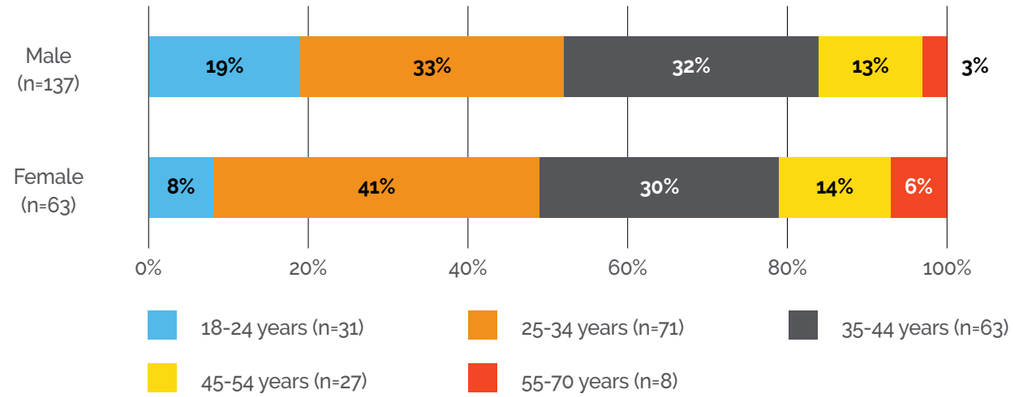
Figure 1 Participants by age segment (%, N=200)



Just over two-thirds (68.5%, n=137) of participants were male and slightly less than one-third (31.5%, n=63) were female. Representation of men and women by age segments is shown in Figure 2. The average age of females in the sample was 36 years, which is slightly older than men in the sample (34.5 years).

There were twice as many men compared to women in the youngest age bracket of 18-24 year olds; however, these young participants represented a small proportion of participants overall (n=31, 15.5%).

Figure 2 Ages of participants in years by gender (N=200)



2.2 Suburb of residence

Suburb of residence was recorded for 197 participants. These have been categorised by LGA and metropolitan region. The majority of participants (75%) lived in a western metropolitan LGA of Melbourne – an expected result given the location of the recruitment site was in the City of Brimbank. Just over a quarter (26%) of participants lived in the City of Brimbank LGA. A similar proportion of participants (23%) lived in the City of Melton.

Just under one in five participants (17%) lived in the north metropolitan area of Melbourne and 8% reported that they lived elsewhere. [12] Eighty-six (86) suburbs were mentioned in total, with the suburb of Melton being the most common suburb of residence among the full sample (n=20, 10%), followed by St Albans (n=15, 7.5%), Hoppers Crossing and Deer Park (n=8 each, 4%), Werribee and Caroline Springs (n=7% each, 3.5%). The remaining 80 suburbs were mentioned by five or less participants each.

Figure 3 Participants by LGA and metropolitan region of Melbourne (n=197).

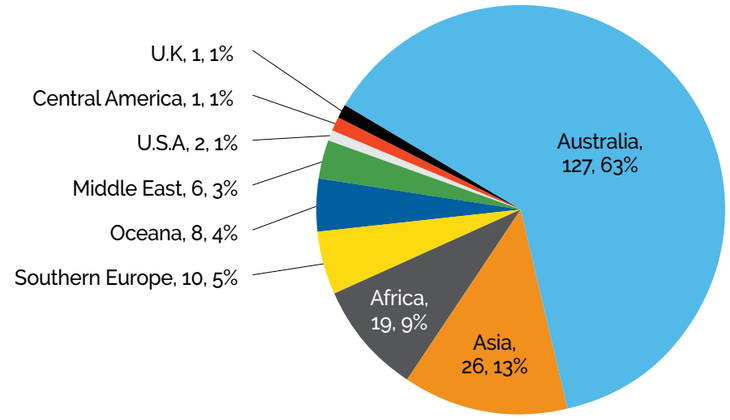
Region	LGA	Participants	Tally	Subtotal
Western	Brimbank	52	26%	75%
	Melton	46	23%	
	Wyndham	29	15%	
	Maribyrnong	13	7%	
	Hobson's Bay	4	2%	
	Moonee Valley	4	2%	
Northern	Hume	20	0%	17%
	Moreland	6	3%	
	Darebin	3	2%	
	Whittlesea	2	1%	
	Mitchell	2	1%	
Inner south east	Stonnington	2	1%	1%
	Melbourne	8	4%	6%
	Yarra	2	1%	
	Port Phillip	2	1%	
Eastern	Manningham	2	1%	1%
Grand Total		**197**	**100%**	**100%**

[12] Regions were classified using the following guide: https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/land-use-and-population-research/housing-development-data/content-container/plan-melbourne-region-lgas

2.3 Country of birth, residency and language spoken at home

Slightly few than two thirds of participants (n=127, 63%) were born in Australia and the remaining 73 participants (37%) were born overseas. Three participants were Aboriginal. The range of countries of birth was large, with 42 individual countries listed. These were categorised into broad regions using grouping devised by the United Nations, with Australia being separated from the group of countries categorised as Oceania. [13] Following those born in Australia, participants were most commonly born in Asia (n=26, 13%) [14] followed by Africa [15] (n=19, 9%). All country groupings are represented in Figure 4.

Figure 4 Region of birth of participants (N=200)



The proportion of overseas-born participants (37%) is higher than the Victorian state average, where the overall percentage of overseas-born people is 28.4% and reflects a high proportion of overseas-born participants in Melbourne's WMR (State Government of Victoria, 2017b). For example, four of 10 LGAs in Victoria with the highest proportion of overseas-born participants are located in the WMR (State Government of Victoria, 2017b). [16] Over half of overseas-born participants (53%) were Australian citizens, approximately 40% were on permanent resident visas and almost 7% were recorded as being on temporary visas.

Twenty-eight different languages were spoken at home among participants; however, the majority (65%) spoke English as their main language at home. The next most common primary languages spoken at home were Arabic (8%), Dinka (4%). Twenty-four other languages were listed by participants [17] each being spoken by 2% or fewer participants.

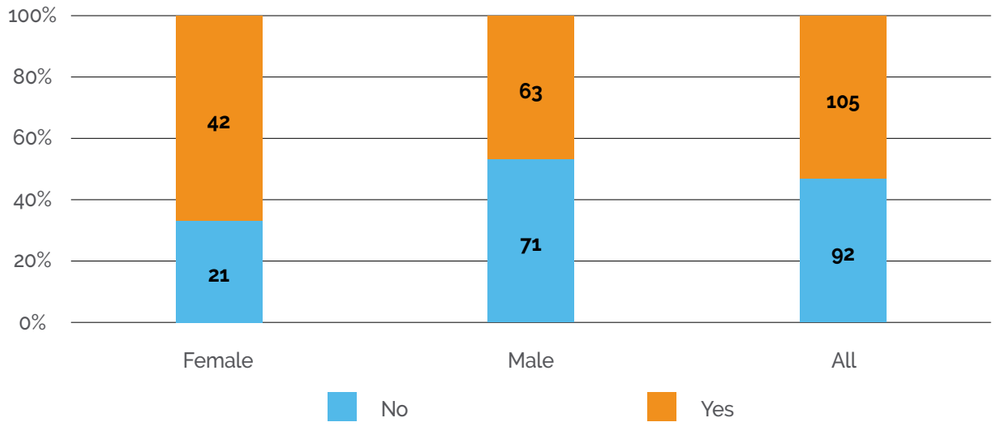
[13] See https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/. Australia was separated from the 'Oceania' category region in order to investigate the proportion of participants who were born in Australia.
[14] Broadly encompassing western, south-eastern, southern and eastern Asian countries.
[15] Sudan, Egypt and South Sudan.
[16] See the following for list of North and West Metropolitan LGAs http://www.health.vic.gov.au/regions/northwestern/index.htm
[17] The "other" languages that were reported (listed in alphabetical order) are: Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Assyrian, Bangoli, Croatian/Serbian, Dinka/Arabic, French, Greek, Italian, Korean, Macedonian, Maltese, Mandarin, Maori, Nepalese, Persian, Punjabi, Samoan, Sinhalese, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, Tongan, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese.

2.4 Dependent children

Of 197 participants who responded to the question, just over half (53.3%, n=105) reported that they have children under the age of 18 years in their care and 46% did not (see Figure 5).

No response was recorded for three participants. Two thirds of female participants (66.7%, n=42) reported that they had dependent children in their care compared with just under half of men (47%, n=63).

Figure 5 Dependent children among participants (n=197)

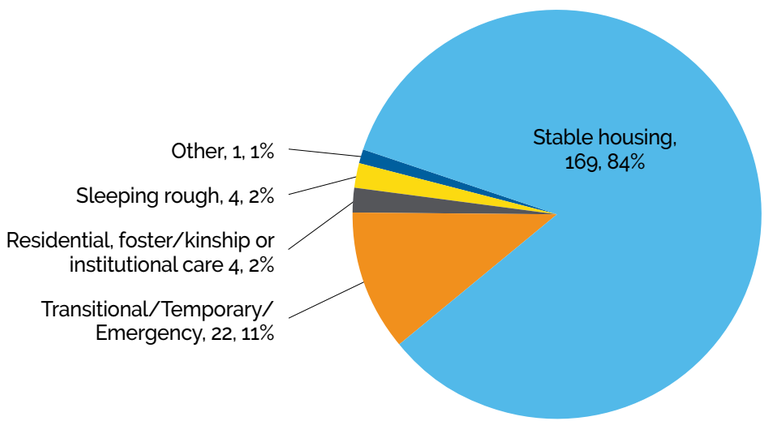


2.5 Housing status and suburb of residence

The majority of participants (84%) reported that they live in one of the following types of housing: public housing, community or social housing, private rental, or that they own their own home which were categorised as "stable housing" – represented in Figure 6. More than one in ten participants reported that they lived in transitional, temporary or emergency housing (n=22).

Four participants were "sleeping rough" at the time of engagement (e.g. in a car or another form of makeshift accommodation) or living in a residential or institutional care arrangement. Of those 26 people who reported that they were either sleeping rough or living in transitional, temporary or emergency housing, 73% were men.

Figure 6 Participants' housing status (N=200)



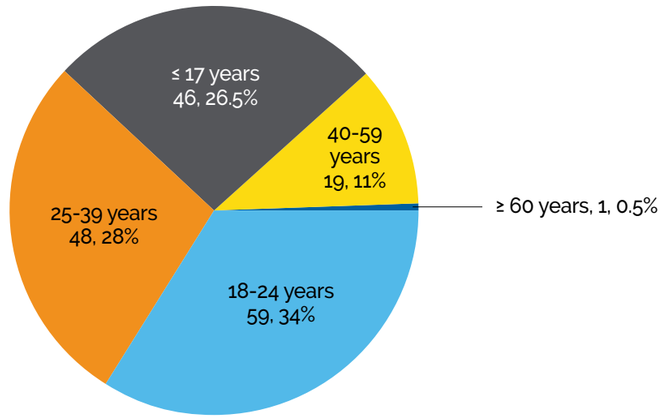
Interview participants discussed their housing arrangements in more detail than what was asked in the needs assessment questionnaire. This deeper inquiry highlighted that housing arrangements among individuals in this cohort were varied and may be less stable than indicated in the needs assessment data. For example, seven of 20 participants described living in either temporary forms of accommodation (with a family member), for example, or with a parent/s due to financial hardship or crisis. Three individuals stated that they live in Government housing. Of those who stated that they lived in a private rental, three described having an informal rental agreement (e.g., through family or friends). Of three individuals who reported that they had a mortgage, two received support from family to keep up with repayments.

3: Justice system involvement of participants

3.1 Previous justice system involvement

Participants were asked at what age they were first involved in the justice system. There were 173 recorded responses. The average age of first involvement was 24.4 years, the median age was 21 years and the range was 9-64 years. Around a quarter of respondents (26.5%, n=46) were reportedly involved in the justice system as juveniles (age 17 years or younger [18]).

Figure 7 Age of first involvement in the justice system (n=173)



Participants were asked if they had spent time in a juvenile justice or adult correctional facility. There were 190 responses. Around a quarter of participants (n=48, 25%) reported that they had spent time in an adult correctional facility. Six participants (3.1%) reported that they spent time under supervision as a juvenile.

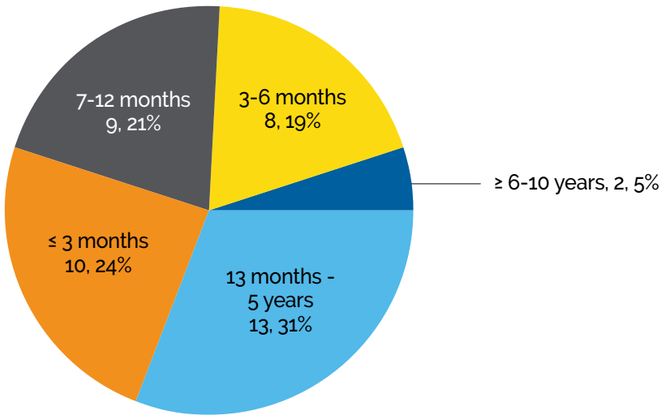
Half (n=3) of these individuals had also spent time in an adult prison. It is possible that the experience of incarceration was under-reported among this sample, with CV data indicating that almost 40% of offenders on a CCO at 30 June 2016 had one or more terms of imprisonment (Victorian Auditor General, 2017).

[18] This may be higher as Victoria has had a dual track system in place for some time, meaning that it is possible for vulnerable young people to remain in the juvenile justice system until the age of 21 years. It was not reported whether 18-21 years olds were processed as juveniles or adults (see "Limitations" section).

Participants who had spent time in an adult prison were asked what was the total length of time that they have spent incarcerated. There were 44 responses of a possible 48 (represented in Figure 8). The reported range of time spent in prison was one week to nine years, indicating that the nature of involvement in the justice system among participants was varied.

Fifteen participants had spent a substantial amount of time in jail (1 year or more), with three participants having spent five years in prison, and two having spent eight and nine years respectively. It is possible that these participants were serving a parole period or a mixed sentence when engaged by the EPA; however, this detail was not recorded (see "Limitations" heading, Section 8). The median length of reported time spent in an adult prison among the sample was 11 months (average 1.73 years – skewed by a small number of lengthier sentences).

Figure 8 Length of time served in an adult prison (n=44)



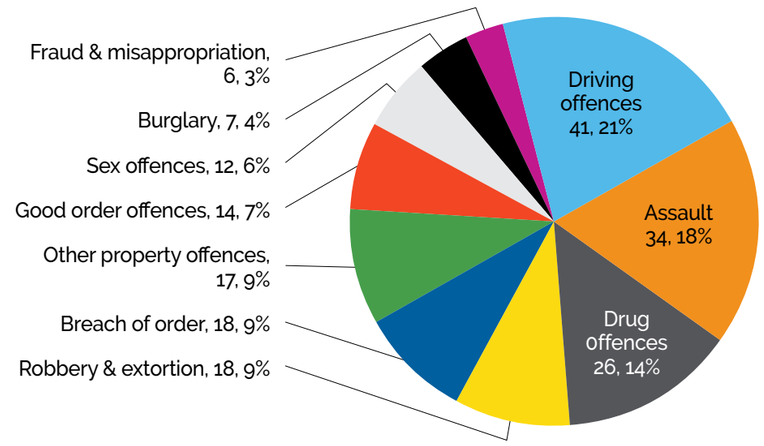
3.2 Nature of recent offending

The EPA asked participants to name the main/most serious offence that led to their current community corrections order. [19] Responses were recorded for 193 of 200 participants. Responses were verbatim recorded verbatim. Where multiple charges were mentioned, the most serious offence was recorded with reference to a Corrections Victoria (2018) guide which orders offence types by degree of severity (see Appendix 4). Data were analysed using the 10 offence categories outlined in this guide and are presented in Figure 9.

The three most common offence types reported by participants were driving offences (21%) followed by assault (18%) and drug offences (14%). Similar numbers of participants reported that their recent offence was robbery and extortion, breach of a court order or "other property offences" (which includes firearms and weapons offences, receiving or handling stolen goods, vandalism and property damage). When the categories of assault (18%) and sex offences (6%) were combined, crimes against the person comprised the most common offence category (24%). Representation in other categories is shown in Table 1.

[19] We note that these data are limited as it is self-report and is indicative only. It may not match official charges and does not reflect the individual's history of involvement with corrections or cumulative charges.

Figure 9 Offence categories (n=193)



A more detailed analysis of the offence types mentioned under each category is presented in Table 1. Assault was the most commonly reported offence type (reported by 27 participants). This was followed by theft and drug trafficking (reported by 18 participants each). In addition to the limitations described above (associated with the self-report nature of the data), we note that reporting is imprecise in some categories. For example, many participants reported "assault" but did not mention any further detail about the charge (with assault being a larger category of offence).

It is not clear to what extent this item overlaps with "intentionally causing injury" or if other types of charges have been included in this category. In four cases, violence was reportedly against a family member; however, it is unclear how many more cases were against family members. It was not possible to precisely determine what type of offence was committed in relation to "Centrelink related charges" (this one item was categorised under "fraud and misappropriation" but could also possibly a different charge such as an infringement). Other general limitations of the data presented in this report are also discussed in the conclusion.

Table 1 Most serious offence leading to CCO (self-reported)

MSO/MSC category	Offence type	Count
Assault	Assault	27
	Harassment and/stalking	4
	Intentionally causing injury	3
Sex offences	Indecent assault	9
	Sexual offences against under age person	2
	Exposure	1
Robbery & extortion	Theft	18
Burglary	Burglary	3
	Aggravated burglary	3
Fraud & misappropriation	Fraud	5
	Centrelink related charges	1
Other property offences	Firearms and weapons offences	5
	Receiving or handling stolen goods	5
	Vandalism and property damage	5
	Proceeds of crime	1
	Theft motor vehicle	1
Breach of order	Breach of an intervention order	16
	Failure to answer bail	2
Drug offences	Drug trafficking	48
	Drug possession	6
	Cultivation	2
Driving offences	Driving with a disqualified licensed or driving unlicensed	14
	Other driving offences including reckless driving, unpaid speeding fines	14
	Exceed 0.05% BAC	13
Good order offences	Infringements	6
	Affray	5
	Trespassing	2
	Perjury	1
Unknown	No response recorded	7
	Total	**200**

* Corrections Victoria (2018) used to categorise offence types (see Appendix 4).

3.3 The demographic composition of the CCO participant sample compared with Victoria's prison population

The main characteristics of this sample of people on CCOs were compared with data describing Victoria's prison population (CV, 2018). This was undertaken to draw out general similarities and differences and to elucidate areas of need among the CCO population (explored in the Discussion, Section 8).

The average age of the CCOs sample was slightly lower than the prison cohort (CCOs 34.9 years vs prison 37.6 years) and analysis by age segment found that a slightly higher proportion of participants on CCOs were aged under 25 years (CCOs 16% vs prison 12%). A smaller proportion of participants on CCOs were aged 50 years and over (CCOs 10% vs prison 14.4%).

Compared to prisoners, the CCOs sample included a lower proportion of Australian born people (64% vs 73.7% prisoners), a feature likely to be at least partly explained by the geographical location of the study, with parts of the WMR of Melbourne and the City of Brimbank in particular being characterised by cultural diversity. There was low representation of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people in the CCOs sample compared to the prison population (1.5% vs 8.5%).

The most significant finding emerging from the comparison; however, was the large proportion of women in the CCOs sample compared to Victoria's prisons (31.5% vs 7.1%) – a finding that has implications which are discussed in Sections 8 and 9.

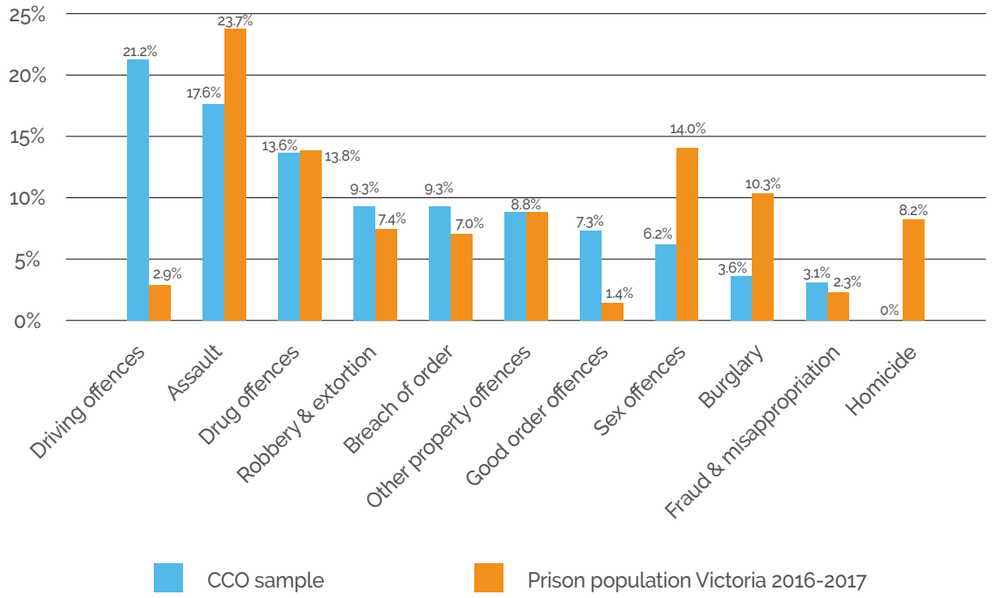
The self-report data collected from the CCOs sample on offence types were compared to data describing Victorian's prison population at a similar time (CV 2018) (see Figure 10).

Most serious charges among sample of people on CCOs (n=193) compared with Victoria's prison population, 2016-2017 (%). [21] Crimes of a particularly serious or violent nature (e.g. homicide and sex offences) preclude eligibility to receive a CCO sentence and therefore it is expected that prisoners are more likely to have committed "crimes against the person". This was found to be the case with 25% of people on CCOs and 45.9% of prisoners committing such crimes [22] (noting that, when the categories of assault (18%) and sex offences (6%) were combined, crimes against the person were still the most common, most serious and recent offence type reported by the CCO sample, discussed in Section 3.2 above). As expected, charges against the prison cohort within this category of "crimes against the person" included those that were more severe in nature (such as homicide). The prison cohort were also more likely to have committed crimes in the "burglary" category (including aggravated burglary, break and enter with intent), with 10.3% of prisoners falling into this category compared to 3.6% of the CCO sample.

Comparison of the samples showed that compared to a prison cohort, people on CCOs were more likely than those in the prison population to report that their most serious charge was a driving offence (CCOs 21% vs prison 2.9%) or a "good order offence" (CCOs 7% vs prison 1 4%).

[21] This comparison is indicative only, as it is reliant on broad, self-report information only (limitations to the study are discussion Section 9 of this report).
[22] The "crimes against the person" category includes assault (CCOs 13.5% vs prison 23.7%), sex offences (CCOs 6% vs prison 14%), and homicide (CCOs zero vs 8.2% of prisoners – noting that homicide offenders are not eligible for a CCO).

Figure 10. Most serious charges among sample of people on CCOs (n=193) compared with Victoria's prison population, 2016-2017 (%)



Source: CV, 2018

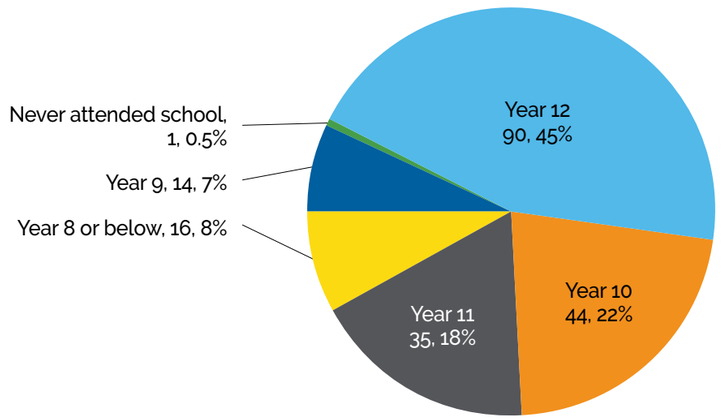
4: Educational attainment of participants

4.1 Secondary level attainment

Level of secondary educational attainment was recorded for all 200 participants (Figure 11). 90 of 200 participants (45%) reported that they gained year 12 or equivalent level of educational attainment and 40% (n=79) reported having gained either year 10 or year 11 equivalent attainment.

A small but substantial proportion of participants (15.5%, n= 31) had very low secondary educational attainment, that is, reaching year 9 or below, with one participant reporting that they never attended school. There were no significant differences in reported secondary educational attainment between males and females in the sample.

Figure 11 Secondary level educational attainment of participants (N=200)



Interviewees were asked to discuss their educational experiences. Many described experiencing serious difficulties at home which impacted on their educational trajectories. These included being in the out of home care system (4) which resulted in being placed in many different homes and moved to multiple schools, family violence (2), and death of a family member resulting in having to work (2), conflict with parents post migration (1). One participant spoke about falling pregnant as a teenager and eventually leaving school:

"I was about to start year 11 and that was when the baby got involved. I found out that there was a school for mums – young women – you can come with your own child in that school in class and I continued year 11 but it became too difficult there – he was crying too much and so I left." **(#5 female, 25yo)** [24]

Five interviewees reported reaching year 9 or lower level of educational attainment and had low levels of English language literacy:

"I found it a bit hard at the end. I struggled. I think the last couple of months I might have wagged – going around with my friends and that. I got kicked out. Because I lived with my grandparents, my grandmother said because you're not at school you need to find a job, you need to work. I was going on 16 at the time." **(#4 male, 59yo)**

Among interviewees who spoke about schooling, many discussed how school was an overall negative experience:

"I hated school" **(#9, male 41yo)**

***

Interviewer: "What was school like?"

"My experience is that I didn't want to be there, to be honest. As soon as I was old enough to get out, I went out to get job."

Interviewer: "How old were you then?"

"Fourteen, because I did year 9 but I didn't pass. So I repeated it but I didn't pass – so I only got a year 8 pass." **(#11 male, 25yo)**

[24] yo = year-old

Three participants spoke about how they were bullied at school – with two of these leaving early as a result. The participant below was asked about their experiences at school:

"Ahh, well they weren't the best. They weren't the best experiences as a new European. But… you've got to understand the whole dynamics of everything to understand how it was for a person then and how it is now. It was very racial and umm I didn't understand it. Like I didn't understand what the whole thing was about. Like I understood that I was getting punched and kicked but I didn't understand why. Like you're rejected from your group of friends, you so, so. It's your colour, your race, and there's… it was a bit different then." **(#17 male, 50yo)**

When asked about his decision to leave during year 10, the same participant said:

"Look it wasn't for being ummm… eager to learn. I just found it too much pressure, with everything that had happened. I just felt like I needed to get out. Back then you could start working apprenticeship early."
(#17 male, 50yo)

Four interviewees did not discuss their school experiences – with three of these being migrants to Australia, completing the majority of their education overseas. English was a second language for these participants and their transitions to further education and employment were impacted seriously by migration to Australia. Experiences of bullying among those interviewees who were arrived in Australia as a child or young person were relatively common among interviewees who were migrants. Some interviewees noted that they often lie about their actual attainment to employers:

Interviewer: "What is the highest level of high school that you passed?"

Year 8. "But I always say year 11 on any job application."
(#11, male, 25yo)

This admission, combined with the common experience of starting and not finishing tertiary course suggests that the actual qualifications of participants may be lower than what is reflected in the EPS data. This result can be explained by self report biases that emerged in the context of the service in which the data was collected, particularly because the focus was on employment pathways. Limitations to the data are more fully discussed at the end of this report.

4.2 Overall educational attainment

The highest overall level of educational attainment (secondary and tertiary level) of participants was analysed by ranking both secondary and tertiary data for all 200 using a guide produced by the ABS (e.g., Certificates II and I are deemed to be lower than a year 10 level qualification). [25] Equivalent measures were available using the 2016 Australian census data (ABS, 2017) for the populations of Australia, Victoria and the City of Brimbank LGA. A comparison of the data sets is shown at Table 2.

Overall, the rate of attainment of year 12/equivalent or higher levels of education among the CCO sample was almost 7% lower than the population of Victoria as a whole (65.9% vs 59%). The high level of attainment of Certificates (I, II, III or IV) among this sample compared with the general population of both Brimbank and Victoria is particularly noteworthy. Certificates were the highest qualifications for 41% of CCOs compared with 12.6% and 14.5% of the populations of Brimbank and Victoria respectively.

Conversely, there were low levels of reported attainment of bachelor or higher degrees among people on CCOs (7%, compared to 16% of Brimbank and 24.3% of Victoria).

Combined, these data indicate a stronger level of tertiary engagement in trade schools in preference to universities compared with the general population. It is also possible, however, that the completion of tertiary Certificates among the CCO sample is an artifice of involvement in the justice system (e.g., prisons), where opportunities to complete these qualifications is common.

While analysis of the EPS data highlighted that the majority of participants were likely to be disadvantaged in the job market or potentially limited to unskilled or semi-skilled types of work due to low levels of attainment, the extent of educational disadvantage was particularly highlighted among interviewees.

Some themes emerged from discussion among interviewees about tertiary education experiences. Consistent with the survey data, it was relatively common for interviewees to have undertaken multiple short courses such as forklift licence, truck licence or hospitality courses.

[25] Described at https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2900.0main+features100562016

While participants commonly described courses as "useful" or "handy", often they had not led to employment. In many cases, the decision to undertake a course had been opportunistic (e.g., offered through Centrelink employment services, undertaken in prison) rather than driven by a genuine interest or desire to seek work in the field. Further, there was not always work available that was aligned to the area of training.

Courses had often been started and not completed. For many, this was because they did not have the opportunity to undertake the practical component of the course. One participant described her experience of undertaking training in prison:

"Everything is just in theory. Where's the practical? You know what I mean? And even your theory is like ummm you answer it the best as you could and then send it off and they sent it back and they say "oh this is not good enough, try adding this" so you're not really learning, you're just going along. In the end it almost feels like it's all about just about getting the funding because the more you guys come, the more money we get – it just becomes the dollar sign, really." **(#1, female, 35yo)**

The same participant spoke about how people in the justice system were often encouraged to undertake Certificate II levels qualifications which were simply not high enough to be competitive in the job market:

"It's almost like it's just a facade. Yeah, you're providing me an education that is just so basic that is really when I get out in the real world, it's so irrelevant. It doesn't really help me get the job. It won't even help me get the job as a receptionist. Because, you know, I hand my resume, like "wow you've got Cert II" and then the next person comes along "oh, she's got a diploma and a Cert IV" (laughing). Like hahah well […] I think that they need to offer more in regards of education. Cert II is so basic. It is really basic that although it looks good that you've got a Cert II on your resume it's really not that valid. Let's be realistic… So not only am I more at a disadvantage because I've got a CRN and I've just been inside, I'm also disadvantaged because my qualifications are simply not enough."
(#1, female, 35yo)

* "Corrections Reference Number" – a unique personal identity number assigned to prisoners.

Many participants spoke about how their qualifications were incomplete or somewhat worthless because they did not have necessary practical experience. This was described by the below participant:

"I've got my plant manager's certificate, but I haven't had the opportunity to work much with plant machinery. So it's a bit difficult sometimes. I have applied for numerous jobs and I've said that I've got my ticket and they ask me how many hours that I've done and I say I haven't done much at all and they say thank you very much for applying, we'll consider you in the future and blah blah blah." **(#19, male, 33yo)**

Table 2. Comparison of highest reported educational attainment of populations of Australia, Victoria, City of Brimbank and CCO sample (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017b, .idcommunity, 2019a).

	Population of Australia	Population of Victoria*	Population of City of Brimbank^	CCO sample
Bachelor degree or higher degree	22.0%	24.3%	16.0%	7.0%
Advanced diploma or Assoc degree	8.9%	9 2%	8.0%	9.0%
Certificate IV	2.9%	2.9%	2.3%	8.0%
Certificate III	12.8%	11.5%	10.2%	19.5%
Year 12	15.7%	15.9%	21.0%	15.0%
Year 12 or equivalent or higher	**62.3%**	**65.9%**	**57.5%**	**58.5%**
Year 11	4.9%	6.2%	5.8%	9.5%
Year 10	10.8%	7.8%	8.0%	10.5%
Certificate II	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	11.0%
Certificate I	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%
Year 9 or below	8.0%	8.9%	13.0%	9.0%
No educational attainment	0.8%	1.0%	3.0%	0.5%
Not stated	10 4%	10.0%	10.3%	0%

Sources: * Australian Bureau of Statistics (2017) ^ .idcommunity (2019a).

4.3 Current involvement in training and future intentions

Seven per cent of EPS participants (n=14 of 198) were enrolled in training or an educational course at the time of the needs assessment (93% were not). Among the 184 participants who were not currently involved in study, over half (52%, n=96) reported that they were considering future training, 37.5% (n=69) were not considering future training and the remainder were unsure (10%). This sample included those who were currently employed. When employed participants were removed from analysis, the proportion of participants who indicated that they were intending to study in the future increased to 58% (n=83 of 143 respondents).

Among interviewees, there were mixed attitudes when asked about plans to undertake etraining and future education. For most of those who were unemployed, gaining employment was an urgent financial priority and they were not interested in participating in training. Many had financial responsibilities and could not afford to study – particularly those with dependent children. One male interviewee spoke about how gaining an apprenticeship would be a way to improve his financial future, however he had sole custody of two young children and could not afford to support them on an apprenticeship wage:

"But that was when I was sort of 16, 17 – they were all sort of my young, good sort of dreams. Now I'm 25 and looking at like – imagine going back to a first year's wage – it wouldn't work out." **(#11 male, 25yo)**

While financial priorities were important, there were other factors that appeared to have a bearing on interviewees' views about future study. As discussed above, many participants had undertaken numerous low level tertiary courses. Some had not been able to complete them because they could not gain practical experience. It appeared that previous experience undertaking courses that did not lead to employment led to reluctance to undertake further courses. Many were concerned about the impact of their justice record on finding employment. For example, one participant said:

"I don't want to waste the money if they're just going to say "well, with your record…" **(#7 male, 45yo)**

Others were open to continued learning while they were getting paid:

"I suppose still learning and getting paid work as well… that sort of makes sense. That would be a good option because you learn skills, you're learning more about it. Getting paid at the same time would be good." **(#4 male, 59yo)**

Six interviewees spoke about intentions to undertake further training/education; however, this was not often an immediate priority. Most spoke about how they needed to finish their community work before moving on to training or employment. Some participants also had child care responsibilities.

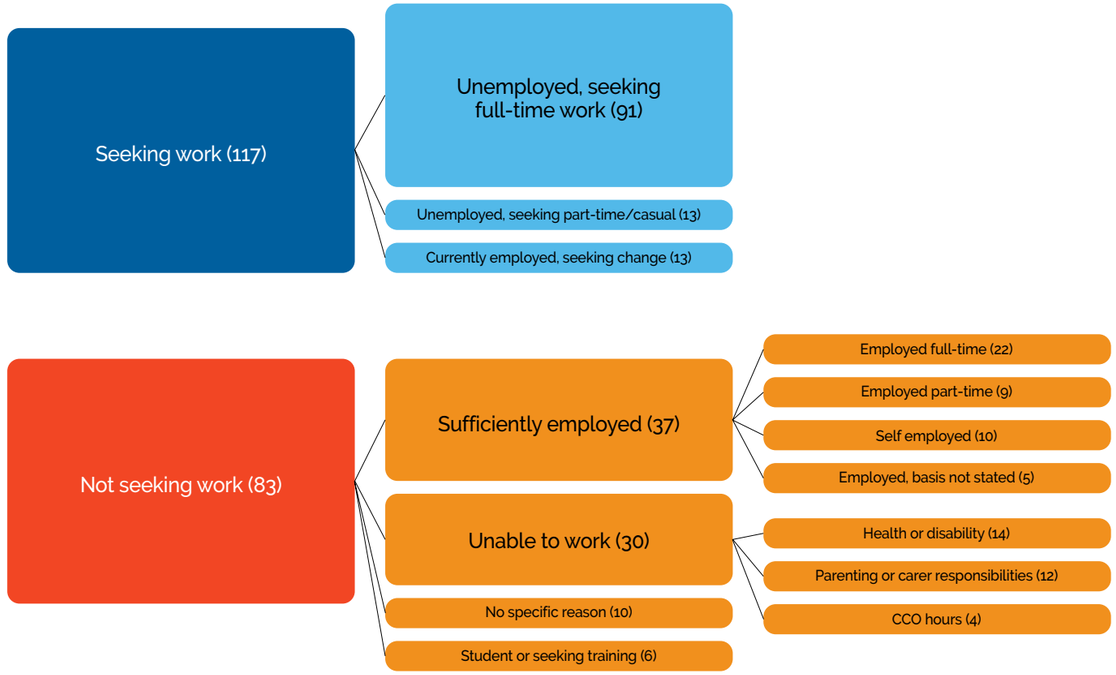
5: Employment and job seeking status of participants

The EPA asked participants a range of questions to gain an understanding of their current ETE status, if they are job seeking, intentions to engage in education/training, and the individual's circumstances or reasons if they were unemployed and not seeking work (see questions 19-25 in Appendix 1). 200 responses were recorded. The range of responses of participants are shown in the chart at Figure 12.

Over half of the sample (52%, n=104) reported that they were unemployed and seeking work. A further 13 participants (6.5%) were seeking work while they were employed. Of those seeking work, 87.5% were seeking full time work (n=91, or 45.5% of the full sample) and the remaining 13 participants were seeking part-time work (6.5% of the full sample). Thirty-seven participants (18.5%) were employed and not seeking work. Thirteen of these participants were employed full time, nine were employed on a part time basis or casually, ten stated that they were self-employed and five employed participants did not state on what basis they were employed.

When those individuals who were either current students or seeking training opportunities were removed from the sample, twenty percent of the full sample (n=40) reported that they are not engaged in education, training or employment and not seeking work. Of this group, 75% (n=30) reported that they are not able to work. Reasons were varied with 14 participants reporting that they have a health condition or a disability, 12 having carer responsibilities (9 for children and 3 for a family member) and four participants stating that their CCO obligations prevented them from gaining paid employment. Ten participants (5% of the full sample) did not specify a reason why they were not seeking work.

Figure 12 Employment and job seeking status of participants (N=200)



Analysis of unemployment status among age segments was undertaken and indicated that there were no age-related trends in unemployment (see Table 1, Appendix 3). Some gender-related trends were identified. Women were less likely to be employed and less likely to be job seeking if they were unemployed (e.g., 14% of women vs 20% of men were employed; 46% of women vs 54% of men unemployed and seeking work – see Table 2, Appendix 3). Women were more likely to be seeking part time work than men (11% vs 4% of men) and slightly more likely to be employed on a part time basis (8% vs 6%). It is likely that much of this can be explained by the higher number of women with carer responsibilities compared to men, meaning that they may only be able to work part time working hours while managing these duties. Women were more likely to report that illness or disability were their main barriers to work (reported by 11% of women compared to 5% of men seeking work).

ETE data of overseas-born participants (n=73) were compared with Australian-born participants (n=127) in order to explore if overseas-born participants experience greater exclusion from the workforce than Australian-born participants (e.g., due to potential disadvantages in English language ability, disrupted education and work history). Analysis showed that a greater proportion of overseas-born participants were employed (22% compared with 16.5% of Australian-born participants) and a lower proportion of overseas-born participants were unemployed and job-seeking (49% compared with 54% of Australian-born participants). Australian-born participants were more likely than overseas-born to report that an illness or disability was the reason that they are not seeking work (9% compared with 4% of overseas-born). It is important to note that, while overseas-born participants did not appear to experience greater unemployment, measures of employment quality (e.g., pay, conditions) were not taken. Further, this analysis is not explanatory, as many variables were not factored into analysis including years of residency in Australia, English language competency and visa type (e.g., some individuals in the sample may have arrived in Australia on skilled visas).

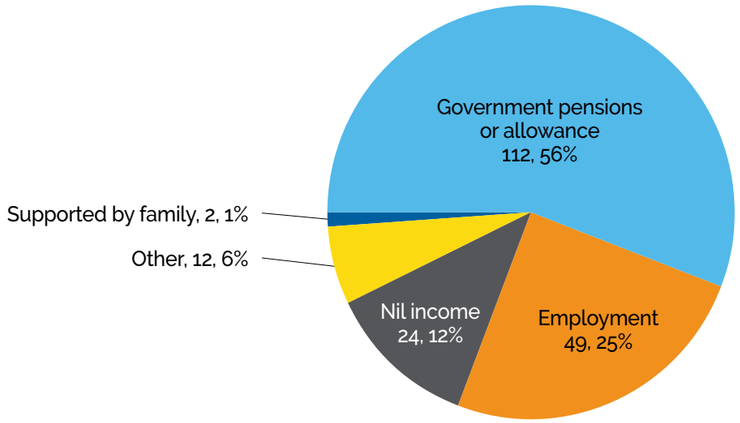
Some interviewees spoke about how the migrant experience has shaped both their educational and employment experiences in many ways, for example, due to bullying at school and discrimination by employers. However, experiences were diverse. While half the interview sample were born overseas (10 of 20), they were born in nine different countries and arrived under very different circumstances (e.g., with some being more recent arrivals, arriving as refugees, and others arriving as children with family during peace time). Numbers of participants with similar migrant experiences within this small sub-set were small and themes not clearly identifiable.

5.1 Income source

Of 199 participants, a quarter (25%) reported that their current source of income was derived from employment (see Figure 13). Over half (56%) of participants reported that their current source of income was a Government pension or allowance.

The remaining 12% reported nil income or that they were supported by family (1%). A small number of participants (6%) reported that they had an unspecified source of income, recorded as "other". No response was recorded for one participant.

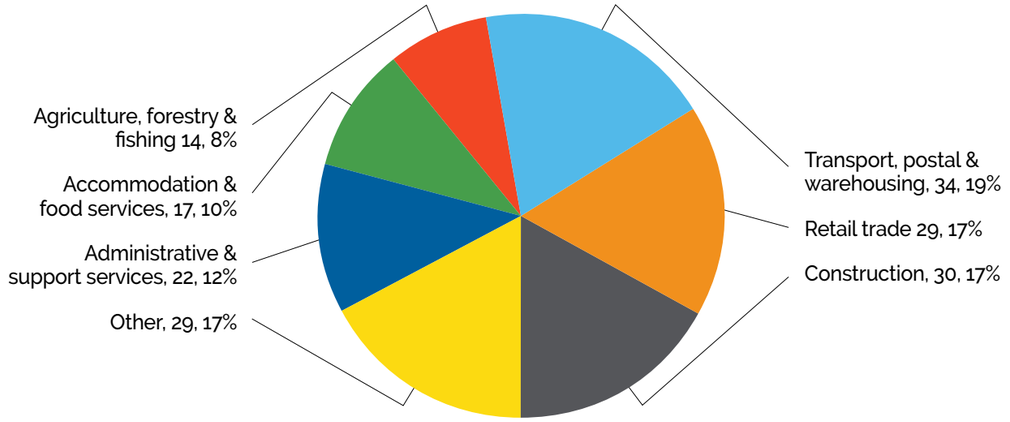
Figure 13 Income source of participants (n=199)



5.2 Industries in which participants reported having the most experience

The EPA recorded where participants had the most significant work experience. Responses were recorded for 175 participants. Entries were grouped using 19 industry categories described in the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industry Classification (ANZSIC) guide (ABS, 2006). [25] Nine participants reported that they had never worked and were excluded from analysis. Although 15 of 19 industry categories were represented (see Figure 14) the majority (83%) of participants were involved in one of six industry categories, including: transport, postal and warehousing (n=34); construction (n=30) [26] ; retail trade (n=29); administrative and support services (n=22) [27] ; and, accommodation and food services (n=17).
Four industry categories that were not mentioned by any participant included: arts and recreation services; education and training; mining; and, public administration and safety.

Figure 14 Most significant industry area of work experience (n=175)



* A small number of participants (i.e. ≤ 2) had experience in other industry categories.
These are grouped as "other" and include: electricity, gas, water and waste services; financial and insurance services; information media and telecommunications; mining; professional, scientific and technical services; rental, hiring and real estate services; and, wholesale trade.

5.3 Experiences of employment

Six of 20 interviewees reported that they were employed. While this was a small sub-sample of interviewees, some common themes among them were identified. One individual of these was satisfied with their current employment, and the remaining five reported that they either needed to find new work soon or they were actively looking for other opportunities. Four of 5 of these individuals were working part-time or casual hours.

None reported earning a living wage – the main reason driving the need for change. The only interviewee who reported that he was able to meet his basic living costs was working six day weeks and 10-11 hour working days. Nevertheless, he spoke about experiencing continued financial stress nevertheless, as he was unable to pay fines and debt and was expected to send money to family living in Africa.

[25] http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/EEEBBA8478AF7657CA25711F00146D6A?opendocument
[26] This category included carpenters, of whom there were five.
[27] Cleaners and gardeners/landscapers were some common professions listed under the "support services" component of this category.

In addition to being underemployed and being low income earners, interviewees also discussed how their employment was not secure and they were vulnerable to redundancy. The below interviewee discusses some of these issues:

Interviewer: "Have you had a job that you've really enjoyed?"

"The last one [warehousing] was alright except the pay wasn't good"

Interviewer: "What kind of work are you doing now?"

"Forklift driving"

Interviewer: "At the moment how well are you able to make ends meet?"

"Not very well. It's difficult to find a job in general, really."

Interviewer: "When you look for jobs, what kind of things do you look for?"

"Anything with good money really. Anything I can get generally. Can't really get much with the job agencies in Melbourne, they're all shocking." **(#16 male, 23yo)**

The above interviewee also spoke about being vulnerable to being made redundant. He was asked if he had any experiences of being dismissed.

"Ahh yeah sorta where they make you redundant – but then you know that there is work going because they hire people all the time" (#16 male, 23yo)

He believed that it was common for employers in his industry (warehousing) to employ staff who will complete the work for the lowest pay. Other interviewees spoke about being made redundant. Experiences of retrenchment were also relatively common; with injury being the most commonly associated reason (reported by 3 interviewees). Many interviewees had worked in jobs with short term contracts and this resulted in unemployment for some.

One interviewee spoke about how they had not been able to secure employment since their contract job ended:

"I had a job last year for about 8 months but it was a temporary job, a contract and it finished in… July I think last year – oh the year before actually. 2017. Since then I haven't really worked." **(#14 female, 30yo)**

However, this was not the experience for all. One interviewee spoke about how this had been a choice:

"So it was usually contract after contract and I didn't take time off to find a full time job. And for me it was like work is work and I'm happy to take it on. Probably the last position, that was full time, but most of them were full-time hours but contract work."

Interviewer: "How long would you say most of your contracts were?"

"We're looking around 12 years in office work."

Interviewer: "Have you ever felt like you've had job security?"

"Ummm not really. I've always had two jobs. I've always had things to fall back on. So I've never been worried about being out of work. There's always contracts and there's always work. Sometimes I sort of look forward to… being full time… but yeah it's not really been a priority it's been continuous – even if it's a 6 week contract it's often extended or I'll find the next thing pretty much straight away. With experience it became more and more likely that I'd find something straight away. In a sense it worked to my advantage because I worked with a bunch of companies, not just one company." (#7 male, 34yo)

While this interviewee seemed somewhat satisfied with having multiple jobs and emphasised that he had not had difficulty securing work when contracts ended, the strategy of having "two jobs" appeared to be a defensive strategy, with a second job adding to his sense of job security; that is, giving him "things to fall back on".

5.4 Financial well-being among interviewees

The theme of financial wellbeing was explored in in-depth interviews. Six of twenty interviewees received money from a source of employment. The remaining interviewees received money from Centrelink and this often was supplemented by family support (often in the form of accommodation).

Interviewees were asked how well they are able to "make ends meet" – that is, pay for basic necessities. Stories of financial struggle were very common. Interviewees who were paying rent or who had mortgages (of whom there were three) reported serious hardship.

"I'm going to be honest with you… when I haven't got money and I have to go see my psychiatrist or come here [to community work], I just go on the bus and I don't use Myki card. I don't want to get in trouble but I got no money so what else am I supposed to do? There is no other way. […] At the moment, nothing in my life is good. Sometimes I go to supermarket and I pinch some food. And what we are talking about is some apple or something. When you got no money, what am I going to do? How many days can you carry on without food? Just drink water?"
(#8, male, 53yo)

Four individuals experienced hardship because they were under-employed (i.e. working part-time or casual hours).

"Oh, it's a huge struggle. A huge struggle yeah. The part time hours are just barely making ends meet. If there wasn't some kind of financial support coming my way from mum and dad, I wouldn't have my house today."
(#6, male, 54yo)

Debt was reported to be "a problem" by six interviewees, with the most commonly reported forms of debt being unpaid fines and bills and loans.

Experiences of financial dependency on family members for housing were common. Among those interviewees who were able to live with family and not pay rent, or who lived in Government housing with heavily subsidised rent, most were able to "get by" solely on income from Centrelink. However, these interviewees continued to have limited resources:

"Umm I just live day by day. I don't really go out much and I don't have a car at the moment so I don't have overheads at the moment." **(#12, female, 33yo)**

One female interviewee aged 30 years had never moved out of the family home because she was unemployed. Interviewees often discussed how financial hardship and debt were a significant cause of stress (e.g., being chased by debt collectors and banks) and that having limited financial resources contributed to poor quality of life, isolation and a bleak outlook (e.g., "At the moment, nothing in my life is good"). Three interviewees reported being on a disability pension.

5.5 Experiences of unemployed and job seeking participants

Length of previous employment

Analysis of the survey data highlighted some factors associated with the ETE backgrounds of participants that were likely to be ongoing barriers to employment for participants including length of previous employment and length of (current) unemployment).

One of the EPS questions asked participants who were unemployed and seeking work were asked "What is the longest period of time that you have ever worked for an employer?" Five participants had never worked. Among the 94 participants who had previously worked (but were currently unemployed and job seeking), the average length of time was 4.5 years, with 50% reporting that the longest that they had been employed was between two and five years. Figure 15 includes the five participants who had never worked.

There were some trends that indicated that short term unemployment was relatively common. For example, among the 99 participants, almost one in five (n=19, 19%) reported that the longest they had previous been employed was 12 months or less. Conversely, five job seeking participants had worked over 20 years with one employer. However, these data require comparison to population level data on length of employment in order to form any conclusions. No gender related differences were identified.

Analysis of the EPS data found that the employment histories of interviewees were characterised by work in roles with little job security (e.g., short term contracts, casual work, informal work). This was underpinned by the low educational attainment of many participants, meaning that they were working in low skilled or semi-skilled areas. One participant, a 25 year old male who had reached year 8 level education, described changing employment fields multiple times:

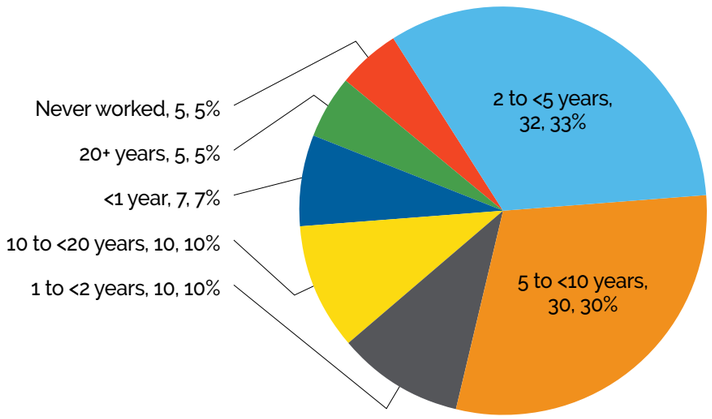
Interviewer: "Ok, so what happened after your car detailing job?"

"Carpentry job, a scrap metal job, then a carpentry guy who was ripping me off and promising me an apprenticeship but it never happened, then a paving job – cash in hand as well. I worked for about five different carpenters, just labouring, ahhh welding – that was recently actually. Ummm, plastering… tyre fitting."

Interviewer: "So you've been pretty much a Jack of all trades?!"

"Yeah, all trades pretty much except electrician and plumbing. Or tiling or air conditioning fitting."

Figure 15 Longest length of previous employment among unemployed job seeking participants (n=94)



Interviewer: "Have you managed to get any qualifications or along the way?"

***"Always off the books. They are always promising me apprenticeship but I always found it a bit hard. It was harder to try and get that – I was only ever good physically."* (#11 male, 25yo)**

Another interviewee had a similarly disjointed employment history having left school at a very young age. He reported that it had been difficult to hold down a job. He attributed this to a traumatic childhood – having lived in out of home care since the age of 10:

"I started work at the age of 13 for a company called [name of transport company]. I think it was 13 – it was when I left high school. During my life, yes, I have worked off and on. I have never been able to hold a steady job. Which has seriously depressed me."

Interviewer: "What do you think is the main reason that you have not been able to hold down a job?"

***"No stability. My life was never structured. There was constant chaos of moving around and people moving in and out of my life so I was never taught to… to stay strong. To don't give up even though I don't like it, just stick at it for quite a while. I wasn't taught those things.".* (#19 male, 33yo)**

Another participant had a disjointed employment history, with multiple job changes. They spoke about how this had not previously been a problem, but they began to find it more difficult to secure work as they aged. Now that they had a justice record, they could not find work at all, illustrating how multiple issues often converged.

Length of unemployment among job seeking participants

It is well-established that finding employment can be more difficult for those who are long term unemployed. According to the ABS (2018), an individual is considered to be "long term unemployed" when they have been unemployed and seeking work for 12 months or more. The EPA asked all participants who were unemployed and job seeking (n=104) how long they had been unemployed.

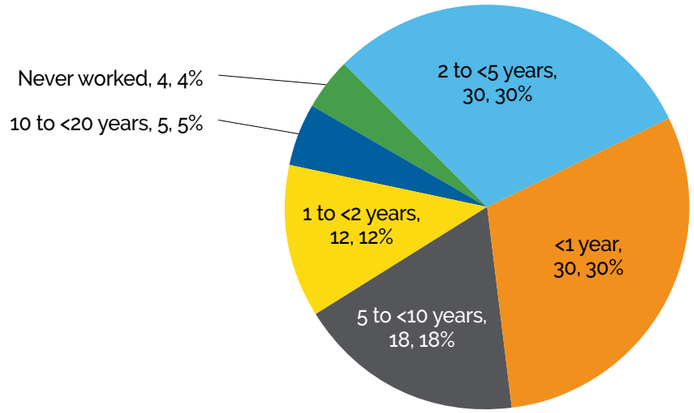
There were 99 responses. The range of responses was 1 week to 16 years. Grouped responses are represented in Figure 16. The majority of job seekers (n=69, 70%) had been unemployed for more than a year, potentially meeting the above criteria for long term unemployment (noting it was not clear if they had been actively job-seeking for the entire period of unemployment).

Participants who had been unemployed and job seeking for more than a year represented 34.5% of the entire sample (N=200 people) engaged by the EPA.

Data were collected on the type of work participants were seeking. The majority (n=86, 87%) were seeking full time work and n=13 (13%) were seeking part time work. Those who were seeking part time or casual work were more likely to have been looking for longer than a year than those seeking full time work (68% vs 84.5% of participants seeking full time work). The median length of unemployment for those who were seeking full time work was two years compared to five years among those seeking part time or causal work. It is possible that many of these participants had been out of the workforce for a lengthy time because of child care responsibilities.

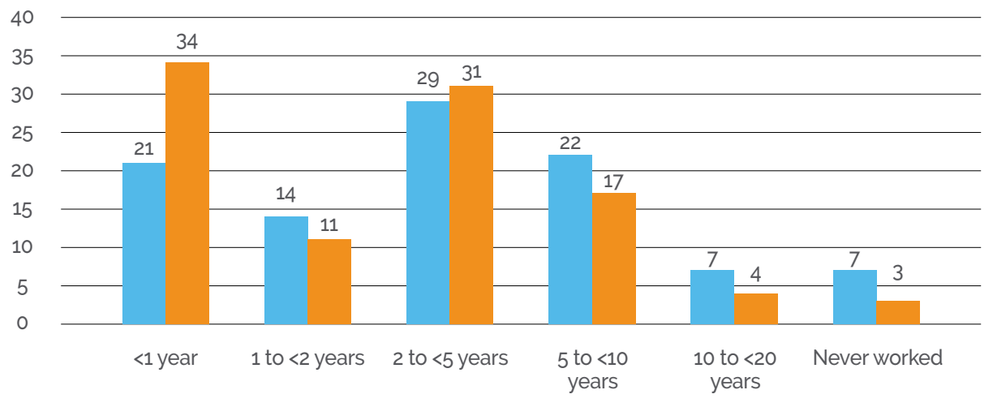
A sub group of participants (n=27, 27.2% of job seekers) had been unemployed for five or more years. Five of these participants had been unemployed for longer than 10 years and four had no employment history (three male participants, aged 21, 36, and 38 years, each of whom were seeking full time work; and a 22 year old woman with three children who was seeking part time work).

Figure 16 Length of unemployment among those seeking work (n=99)



Analysis of characteristics of unemployed participants highlights some gendered trends. For example, male job-seekers were more likely than women to have been unemployed for less than a year (34% compared to 21% of job seeking women, see Figure 17). Furthermore, 36% (n=10) of women who were seeking employment had been unemployed for five or more years compared to 24% (n=17) of male job seekers. In summary, women in the sample who were seeking employment had been unemployed for longer, meaning that they are more likely to be disadvantaged when trying to enter the labour market.

Figure 17 Length of unemployment among job seeking women and men (%, n=66)



Experiences of long term unemployment were particularly prominent in the interview sample, with many interviewees reporting that they had very limited employment experience. Four of 14 interviewees who were not engaged in ETE had been out of work for ten or more years. Two of these individuals had a cognitive impairment or a learning disability (both of whom had very limited employment history and year 9 level educational attainment). One of them spoke about this:

Interviewer: So have you been able to find employment in the past?

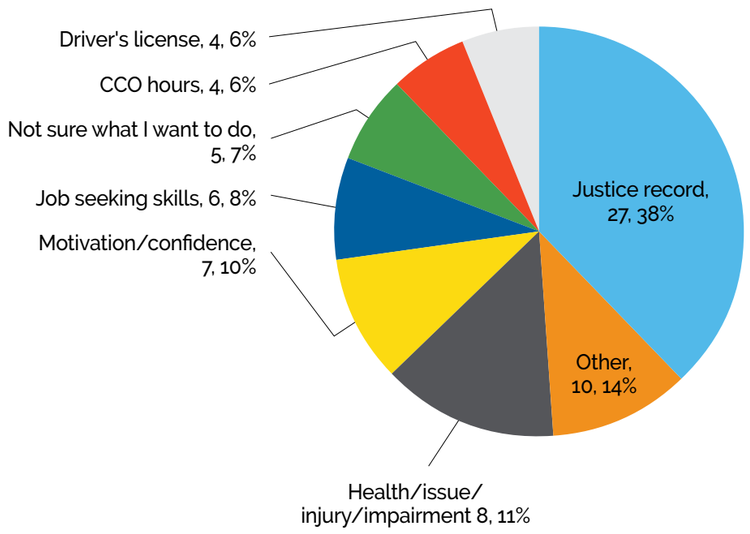
***A little bit off and on… back then in the days… I was permanent in one job that I had to leave… they found out about my disability and yeah I couldn't find any proper work… I wasn't looking for work as much… I was just on disability. And now I've been putting in and trying to find work… coz my body is still alright – like, I can work.* (#2 male, 44yo)**

Having child care responsibilities was the reason that some interviewees (two women and one man) were not seeking work; however, these responsibilities also meant that some individuals, particularly women, had a limited or no employment history. Two women had been out of the workforce for over 10 years because they were been carers of young children; however, this was exacerbated by problematic drug and alcohol use and involvement in the justice system (including community work obligations). A third woman aged 25 had never worked, having become pregnant with her first child while she was in high school and never subsequently entered the workforce.

5.6 Self-identified barriers to employment

Survey participants who were unemployed and either seeking/not seeking work (n=104) were asked an open ended question 'What is your main barrier to gaining employment?' Responses were grouped into themes during analysis and analysis is shown in Figure 18.

Figure 18 Main barrier to gaining employment among unemployed job seeking participants (n=71)



Limitations associated with having a justice record

Among the 71 respondents to this item, over a third (n=27, 38%) responded that their justice record (e.g., employer reluctance to hire, restrictions) was the main barrier. Related to this, a further four participants (6%) stated that having CCO hours prevented them from gaining employment.

Consistent with the survey data, when discussing barriers to employment, interview participants spoke most often about facing stigma and discrimination from employers associated with their record:

***"Oh it's a big barrier, yeah. It's the only thing that's actually stopping me from working. I get interviews no problem – so I have got an interview two, three times a week. It's just that I go for the interview and then they ask do I have any prior convictions… It's hard to get a job with a record though because everybody wants a background check."* (#14 female, 30yo)**

Another interviewee spoke about how having a criminal record made them more vulnerable to being retrenched:

***"They know that I've got a criminal record. I told them from the get go. But that's just it. Because I've got a criminal record. It's easy for them to just turn around and say "sorry, laters"."* (#1, female, 35yo)**

Some had not directly experienced discrimination, but anticipated that they would. This appeared to affect their confidence and motivation to seek a job. One interviewee who finished her order on the week of the interview spoke about how she anticipated experiencing discrimination:

***"Well I wasn't really looking, coz I was on CCO, I wasn't really driven or inspired to look because I have a record and I wasn't really sure if anyone would want to hire someone like me."* (#18, female, 38 years)**

As mentioned above, a small proportion of EPS participants (n=4, 6%) specifically stated that having community work hours was their main barrier to employment. However, this issue was far more prevalent among interview participants, who commonly spoke about how they planned to seek employment when their community work was complete. One interviewee spoke about delaying seeking work because they anticipated experiencing difficulty managing the issue with employers:

***"…because you are not going to say to your boss, 'I've got to go to court and I've got to do community work twice a week'."* (#9, male, 41 years)**

Health issues, impairments and injury

Health issues, injury or other types of impairments were the second most common barriers, reported by just over one in ten job seeking participants (n=8, 11%). For example, almost one in five EPS participants who were not working or not engaged in any ETE or job seeking activities (19.8%, n=22 of 111 respondents) indicated that a health condition or disability was their main barrier to ETE participation. Consistent with the EPS data, having a health issue or disability was also a prominently discussed obstacle to employment among interviewees. Six interviewees reported having serious health issues or injury that have impacted their employability.

For three, this was so serious that they were unable to work at all. Two of these participants had been retrenched due to workplace injuries.

A further five interviewees reported that they have a cognitive impairment or learning disability that have impacted their ability to learn and/gain employment. Two of these individuals were not seeking work and were on disability support due to their impairment and one had an acquired brain injury after being in a car accident, but had part time work.

Other barriers to employment

Poor motivation and/or poor confidence (grouped together) were recorded as the third most common main barrier to gaining employment (reported by n=7, 10%) – a factor that appeared to be associated with involvement in the justice system itself by interviewees. This is illustrated in the below interview excerpt:

Interviewer: "So you've found jobs that do suit you?"

"Yeah, I have"

Interviewer: "And how confident you are about getting a job?"

***"With a conviction I'm not confident at all. As soon as I kind of get to that stage… if I didn't have that conviction, I think I'd be employed by now – I'd be happy."* (#14, female, 30yo)**

Six respondents (8%) reported that they lacked job-seeking skills, five respondents (7%) reported that they were not sure what they wanted to do and four respondents reported that they did not have a driver's licence (6%).

The "other" category shown in Figure 18, representing 14% of respondents (n=10), groups seven different response types. These responses include the following: age discrimination (mentioned by a participant aged over 50 years), carer responsibilities, equipment needed (i.e. the participant could not afford the equipment needed in order to undertake a particular type of work), homelessness, over-qualified, not adequately skilled and poor work history.

Age discrimination was only mentioned by a small number of respondents as being the main barrier to employment in the EPS data but was more prominent in interviews.

Four men in the interview sample were aged 50 years or older and spoke about how they believed that their age was a barrier to employment. One interviewee spoke about how his age combined with health issues made it difficult for him to find work, illustrating the intersecting nature of issues:

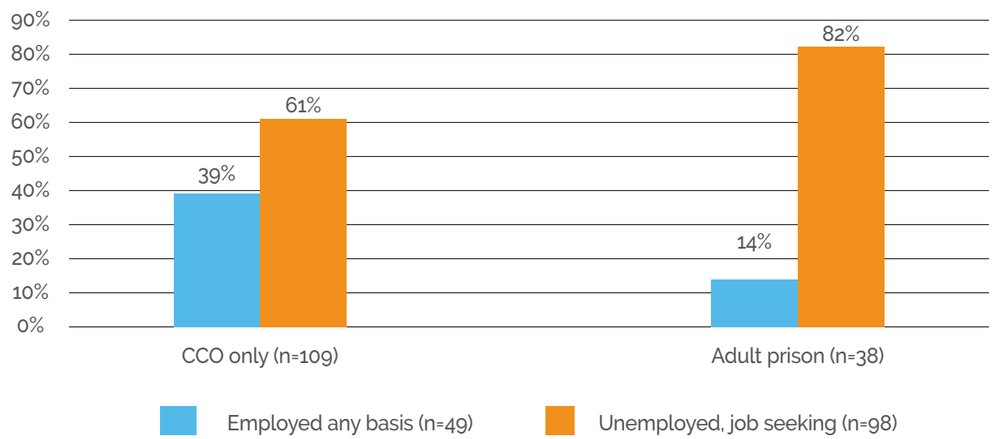
"I actually got retrenched 18 months ago, so I only started this [current] job in July this year. I got it through an employment agency called [agency name], they tend to deal with people who have some sort of - for lack of a better word – disability. I got injured in the workplace, went on 'WorkCover' and subsequently lost my job while still injured. So it's been a major uphill battle trying to find full time employment because – the workforce is ageist. I'm over 50 – they don't take into account that I've got over 35 years' experience in the industry." **(#6 male, 54yo)**

Past incarceration experience

Individuals who have served time in prison experience a number of obstacles to securing future employment. One of these is employer discrimination (Visher et al., 2008, Visher et al., 2011). Analysis of data on employment status found that those who had spent time in prsion were more likely to be unemployed (14% of ex-prisoners were employed compared to 39% of those with no reported prison history; n=147). While this analysis shows that prison experience was likely to have some correlation with current employment status, previous studies have shown that it is not the only factor determing employment outcomes post-release.

Factors such as employment history prior to incarceration, AOD use and physical health are understood to be important factors shaping employment outcomes (Visher et al., 2008, Visher et al., 2011). Further, some participants in the sample may have been limited in their ability to seek work if they had been recently released from prison due to post-release conditions. Nevertheless, those individuals who have a prison history are undoubtedly more vulnerable to marginalisation from employment than those who have never been incarcerated.

Figure 19 Employment status by time spent in adult prison compared to CCO only (n=147)



6: Social connectedness and wellbeing among interviewees

6.1 Background experiences of interviewees

Many interviewees reported having had difficult experiences as children and young people that are often associated with poorer health and wellbeing outcomes as adults. These include, but are not limited to: being brought up in out of home care, experiencing family violence, experiencing bullying at school, having a parent or family member who is incarcerated and leaving school at a young age. Some examples of these experiences are explored briefly below drawing on accounts of interviewees.

Four interviewees reported that they had grown up in either out of home or kinship care. Three of these reported having very difficult childhoods, having lived in multiple environments. For example, one woman said:

"I lived in about 18 different homes by the time I was 18." **(#12 female, 33yo)**

One had significant trauma and mental health issues associated with growing up in out of home and residential care, and having also experienced sexual abuse by a class teacher as a child. [29] One of these participants was raised by his grandparents while the remainder of his siblings were raised by his biological parents, an experience that caused him psychological damage. Another participant spoke about how he experienced violence perpetrated by a parent:

"I was in and out of home a lot."

Interviewer: "So where were you living?"

"Ahh I lived with an aunty for a year, lived at friends' houses, stuff like that."

Interviewer: "So was there trouble at home?"

"Yeah, a lot of intervention orders."

Interviewer: "Was there violence against you or members?"

"Against me." **(#16 male, 23yo)**

The above interviewee later disclosed that the violence was perpetrated by his father, eventually resulting in him moving into supported housing as a teenager. He was one of three interviewees who spoke about living in a family where there was violence perpetrated by a parent. One of these interviewees described experiencing violence at home as well as bullying at school. He moved schools multiple times because of bullying:

Interviewer: "Ok so you had quite a few disruptions to your schooling, was there anything else going on at home that contributed to that or was it just the bullying?"

"You could say that 95% of my high school or my adolescence was a mixture of DV and bullying."

Interviewer: "OK, so you had domestic violence going on at home?"

"[Between] my parents and then my parents against kids. As in, any kind of thing you could use as a weapon, they probably used."

Interviewer: "So a physically violent home…"

"Yeah so belts and sticks, electric cables, garden hoses, wooden spatulas… you name it. If it could be held in a hand and used as a punishment, they used it."

Interviewer: "I'm really sorry to hear that – it must have been incredibly tough for you."

"It wasn't as tough as the bullying in high school" **(#13 male, 26yo)**

The same participant described how his father was in the justice system:

"Oh, so my parents are living in [suburb], but my father is currently incarcerated. He has been in the justice system since the 1980s. In and out and in and out in and out and in." **(#13 male, 26yo)**

Interviewees were recruited from a low socio-demographic area and consistent with this, many described growing up in impoverished environments where resources were stretched. One participant who grew up in the City of Brimbank was asked: "Can you name one or the most positive thing about living in this area?" he responded:

"[Long pause] I don't know just living lower. Like you know, so I guess living lower, I guess when you're up higher I guess you get to know you could always be a bit lower (laughs)."

Interviewer: "What do you mean by living lower?"

"Living in poverty, living that, way you learn how to survive sort of thing."

Interviewer: "Do you think that you have lived in poverty?"

[29] This matter had been addressed through the courts.

"Oh yeah definitely."

Interviewer: "All your life"

"Yes, definitely." **(#11 male, 25 yo)**

The same participant described being one of eight kids. He described how he was encouraged to leave school after year eight so that he could contribute to the family, financially.

"Mum agreed with me when I went to work because my dad didn't work. He had carpel tunnel and nobody was really working at the house and I was the only one who started working. I was the youngest, the smallest"

Interviewer: "So when you started earning money, what happened?"

***"I got charged board. I had to start paying. My brother started paying too, but he was on Centrelink. I got a job and in the end I had to pay $80 a week and my older brother paid $80 a fortnight. I had to pay more and work more."* (#11 male, 25 yo)**

As a result of leaving school, the participant had only year 8 level income and no qualifications.

Half of interviewees (10 of 20) were born outside Australia. For all of these interviewees, English was not their first language; however, none could be considered recent arrivals. Among this group, three had lived in Australia for between 10 and 14 years and the other seven had lived in Australia for between 17 and 51 years. Among the three interviewees who had lived in Australia for under 15 years, all had arrived as refugees from African countries affected by conflict and had experienced grief and trauma (e.g., loss of family members and forced separation from family).

All migrant interviewees described other post-settlement challenges including learning the language, participating in school in Australia, cultural dislocation and family conflict. It was evident, based on descriptions of their lives that this had contributed to experiences of struggle and marginalisation and, at least inadvertently and cumulatively with other factors, to justice involvement.

Among those who had been in Australia for longer, relocation to Australia had resulted in long term disadvantage. Transitions to education and employment were seriously impacted by the migration experience. English was a newly learned language during schooling in Australia and, in combination with other post-settlement challenges, this had impacted on educational attainment.

Participants also discussed the long term impact of other challenges. Three men (aged 45, 54 and 50 years) migrated to Australia as children and discussed how racism-related bullying resulted in early school leaving. This had ongoing implications in relation to career pathways and employment opportunities. Some spoke about how they had little/no family networks in Australia – this was particularly felt during 'hard times'.

The background experiences of interviewees, commonly characterised by disruption and trauma, formed a backdrop to the troubled experiences that many had as adults, including their involvement in the justice system. Further, it is likely that experiences of grief, loss, abuse, neglect and abandonment (some described above) also underpinned difficulties that they had in their relationships as adults.

6.2 Participant's intimate partner relationships and experiences as parents

Interviewees also commonly discussed having experienced difficulties in their intimate partner relationships as adults. Very few interviewees (5 of 20) were in current partnered relationships and only two participants were living with a partner. Two of three women who were in intimate partner relationships had partners that were currently incarcerated. Social isolation was very common and there were very few participants who spoke about relying on a partner in difficult times.

Relationships with partners were commonly discussed in the context of negative factors including problematic drug use, involvement in crime and distress associated with negotiating custody of children.

There were indications that intimate partner violence was experienced in many relationships and was associated with justice involvement. Three of 13 men in the sample were on CCOs having breached an intervention order.

Two women in the sample reported that intimate partner violence was one of the factors associated with their current justice system involvement. Experiences of intimate partner violence (as survivor or perpetrator) were likely to be under-reported.

More than half of interviewees (11 of 20) had children under the age of 18 years. Many had a large number of children (i.e. four of 11 interviewees had four or more children), potentially placing pressure on limited resources. Relationships where children were involved were very commonly fractured. One participant (of 11) was living with a partner in a co-parenting relationship. The same participant was estranged from two children from a previous relationship.

Over a third of interviewees who were parents were sole parents (4 of 11). Involvement of child protection services was common. Two sole parents had custody granted to them by a court and a further four interviewees reported that child protection government services currently restricted their access to some or all of their children.

6.3 Friendships and social networks

Poor quality of social networks was reported by many interviewees, with discussion of drug and crime involved associates being common. Some participants spoke about being abandoned by friends when times got tough:

***"When you got money you got people next to you. When you're down, nobody is next to you. They know you are going to ask for help."* (#8, male, 53yo)**

Another spoke about losing friends because of his actions:

Interviewer: "Do you have many friends in the area?"

"No, I burned all of my bridges."

Interviewer: "When you say burned your bridges, what do you mean?"

***"Just ripping 'em [stealing from them]. Ripping 'em left, right and centre."* (#11, male, 25yo)**

Some spoke about having deliberately cut themselves off from friends, for example, the below interviewee:

Interviewer: "Do you have family and friends here that can give you support?"

"I wouldn't say family nah except for my children. Friends, yes, but… umm limited… because ahh the friends that I had, I don't want 'em around, you know what I mean? Coming from where I got myself into [drugs and crime], to trying to come back out the other side, I've had to cut a lot of people off from my life. And that's a choice that I don't regret because, as I said, my son is number one."

One interviewee spoke about the involvement of child protection services in her life and described the ongoing impact that this has had on her young daughter:

***"No, umm the reason that I can't work at the moment is due to with my daughter because I have DHHS involvement… due to drugs – because I was on drugs – and my daughter was taken away from me and she was 23 months old. So I had a lot to do – I had to get off drugs and fix my life, basically, to get my daughter back – which I did. And now she suffers severe anxiety if I leave her somewhere. She's been through a lot. She will not stay with anyone – I can't even go to the toilet on my own. She is very difficult to leave."* (#3, female, 40yo)**

Interviewees discussed how conflict or other difficulties in intimate partner relationships resulted in estrangement or long periods of separation from children. For example three (of 11 interviewees with children) were estranged from some or all of their children aged under 18 years.

Interviewer: "Right, and so… and family are overseas"

***"Main family overseas. I have one sister in [interstate]. She's the only family yeah I do have everyday communication with. I've got very few, but those few are more than enough."* (#1 female, 35yo)**

Another young woman reported a very similar experience when asked if she has many friends who were involved in drugs and crime:

"Nup, no longer. I did, but no longer. I have disconnected from them. It all fell out because I needed a lawyer and they weren't there to help me and so I decided, I'm getting out of this scene."

Interviewer: "Do you have many friends now?"

***"Look, I've only got about two close friends and that's all I really want, really – two girlfriends."* (#12, female, 330yo)**

For most, informal social support was derived from a parent or family members, with friends and partners being very rarely mentioned.

6.4 Mental health issues and problematic drug use

While every interviewee had a slightly different story, difficulties in close family or intimate relationships were commonly discussed and intersected with other health and social issues, particularly problematic drug use, mental health issues and justice involvement. Eight (of 20) participants described having problems with alcohol and/or illicit drugs. The below participant described how this was embedded into other difficulties, including a troubled relationship with an ex-partner and separation from her children:

"Ahhhh. I got into drugs. I lost my dad. My relationship, my previous relationship, broke down. Ummm after my dad died, arsehole [partner] cheated on me. And then ummm at the beginning we were still sharing my son we had together and his sister was getting married [overseas] at the time and then he asked me if my son could be a ring-bearer, which I thought well you know that's a family thing, that will be marvellous for him. Unfortunately the dad signed the passport and stole my son. He took off with my son and by this time I just chucked in the white towel. I just got into the drugs. I lost a lot. I lost myself. I lost everything. I went to jail. And by the time I, you know, by the time I came out, but the time they came back in the country, I was already… [says quietly] fucked… like excuse the language, but is the best way I can describe it. And at that time I wasn't really willing to fight for him because wouldn't have been fair to bring him into my life where I was a mess." **(#1 female, 35yo)**

Problematic drug use was particularly strongly linked to involvement of child protection services (reported by four interviewees). This is described by the below interviewee:

Interviewer: "So if you don't mind me asking, when did drug use start coming into the picture and become a serious problem for you?"

"Umm oh about four or five years ago?"

Interviewer: "So not that long ago, really? Was there something that triggered it then?"

"Umm a broken up relationship with my ex. It was breaking down and I turned to drugs for that. Then I met my new partner and he was on drugs too so we were together for a while and had our baby and then DHHS became involved and so we became clean after that."
(#3, female, 40yo)

No participant reported having a current problem with illicit drug use at the time of interview; however, some individuals were in the early stages of recovery and were regularly participating in drug testing as a part of their CCO.

6.5 Involvement in recreational or structured activities

Overall, the level of involvement of the interview sample in structured recreational activities or other activities in the community was very low. Twelve of 15 interviewees who were asked a question about involvement in recreational or structured activities reported that they did not currently participate in any activity outside the home with the exception of community work. Five interviewees were not asked the question explicitly (for a variety of reasons e.g., two interviewees ended the interview early, one participant had a low level of English language competency). However, none of these five interviewees indicated that they were engaged in any community activities. Interviewees described how social isolation intersected with mental health issues:

"I just have my best friends and that but mostly these days mostly to myself sort of thing. It's pretty much, going through anxiety and depression it's really impacted my life socially as well." **(Male, 45yo)**

Of the three interviewees who reported that they participated in organised recreational activities, one volunteered in her community and participated in sports and social activities. A second participant had a gym membership and reported that he took his mother to church and the third of these individuals had a gym membership only. The two male lone parents reported that they had found it difficult to participate in social activities through their children's school because they are male.

Over half of EPS interviewees (56%, n=112; Figure 13) relied on government benefits (Centrelink) as their main form of income and described how financial difficulties and lack of transport were a barrier to engaging in activities in the community.

7: Engagement with rehabilitative opportunities and support

This section explores evidence provided by participants about their engagement in services and programs that are supportive of transitions away from the justice system including community work programs.

The analysis presented in this section draws primarily from qualitative interview data but is supported by survey data particularly relating to engagement in community work programs.

7.1 Access to services and programs

Many participants appeared to have taken steps to address issues that were a problem for them (e.g., drug and alcohol use and cutting involvement with crime associated peers), but most had ongoing issues that impacted their health and wellbeing and could be potential predictors of future justice involvement.

Most prominent of these were unemployment and/ disengagement from an ETE pathway. Accordingly, the most common service type, reportedly accessed by 13 interviewees, was employment support providers. However, it is worth noting that this type of service is typically a requirement for those accessing welfare benefits and was often accessed in the context as a part of 'mutual obligation' requirements.

Very low levels of satisfaction with employment support services were reported. Several interviewees discussed receiving infrequent and impersonal contact from providers:

"I think that they [employment service providers] are just like Centrelink – just absolutely appalling – they don't bother helping at all. I'm the one looking for jobs – they don't help me like at all. I've actually told Centrelink this – I have to change job providers. They say I can't do that. So yeah they're not very helpful." **(#14, female, 30 years)**

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"Yeah I started off with one, wasn't happy with their level of support. I considered it almost non-existent. Other than the fact that I had to turn up for appointment times. And very little support came my way." **(#6, male, 54 years)**

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"I feel like one time when I signed up with that employment scheme and there wasn't really much involvement and interaction where they explain if there's anything out there for us to get a job- yeah, you know like, just go out and look for work and find a job and show us the documentation. There was no push in that direction, like is there you are interested in, is there anything we can help you with?" **(#17, male, 50yo)**

Some interviewees spoke about how agencies only considered meeting their targets and had unrealistic expectations of them. For example, a woman spoke about her experience of job searching while pregnant:

Interviewer: "Have you ever connected with any employment agencies?"

"Yeah, but they're just numbers. They are so numbers. [I went and said to them] "I'm pregnant". My belly was big. People thought that I was having twins! And I've got – I think his name was [name]. I was happy I got a job because I was pregnant! He wasn't happy because I was only casual."

Interviewer: "Oh, I see…"

"And I said to him "Are you alright? Are you fucking joking me? Do you see my belly? "I'm about to give birth in like two months bro!" **(#1, female, 35yo)**

Another spoke about being referred to a job that was inappropriate for him:

"They wanted me to be a foreman on the… like telling everybody what to do. And I'm thinking well how am I going to do that when I don't even know how to read and write? I got the job and I said to them "well I can't take that job" because how am I going to write if anybody got hurt, or anything like that. At the end of the month or year, the check up on the materials…" **(#9, male, 41yo)**

Appraisals of specialist providers appeared to be more positive, with three participants reporting being helped by disability specialist providers and one by a state-funded service, 'Jobs Victoria Employment Network' (JVEN). However, the qualitative sample was not large enough to comment on the quality of experiences across employment service types.

"Yeah, yeah WISE have been really good. They don't judge you. I'm sure that they deal with that all of the time." .
(#4, male, 59yo)

"They were supportive especially when I was on my CCO. They understood what I was… that I had to do some hours for my orders and they didn't give me as much load of having to pressurise me to look for a job at the time, so yeah." **(#18, female, 38yo)**

Interview participants who were located in the LGA of Melton found it particularly hard to access specialist providers and all interviewees spoke about how there were very few specialist providers in the local area. Although there was a justice specialist job network staff member available through DJCS, no interviewee reported accessing this service.

Disengagement from employment services was very common. One participant discussed how he was wary of involvement of services and relied on himself:

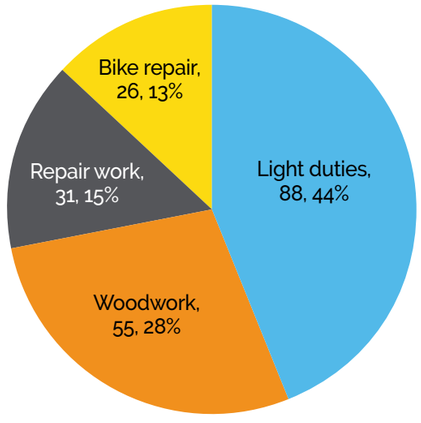
Interviewer: "I know that you've spoken to our Employment Pathways Advisor, but are you currently getting any other formal support to get a job/become job-ready?"

"They just recently … they were talking about opportunities pathways to employment for people that have a real record, and I guess I didn't take it that well. Because I was uhhh see through my experience, there's always a catch. There's always some kind of shifty night. I guess it's some form of paranoia – of not trusting. You know? I was like well what are you guys trying to get out of this. I decided to go off by myself. I got myself enrolled in some Government funded course. I didn't need their help. I don't want their help. I can do this by myself." **(#19, male, 33yo)**

7.2 Community work program participation

Participants were recruited from the Derrimut community work program (DJCS) site from a range of different programs, represented at Figure 20. The program from which most participants were recruited is referred to as "light duties" (44%), which is a program that is designed to have the lowest physical impact (performed while sitting). Activities that were performed as a part of light duties during the data collection period included unpicking labels from clothing and knitting. Over a quarter of participants (28%) participated in a woodwork program and the next most common community work programs were repair work (15%, grouped with graffiti removal, n=1) and a bike repair program (13%).

Figure 20 Community work program activities of participants (N=200)

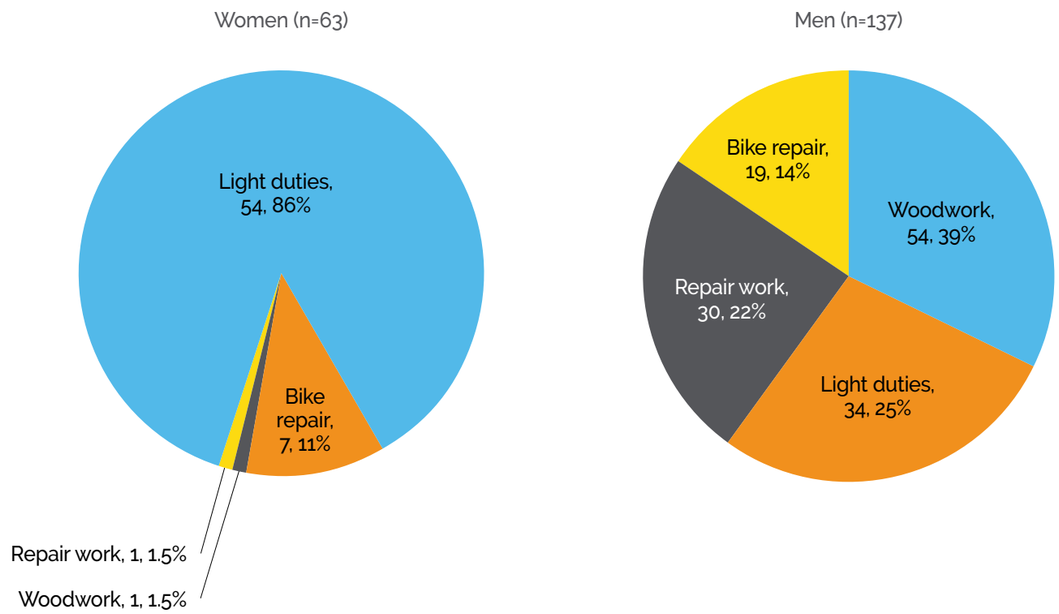


Analysis of work program involvement by gender showed some differences in program participation. Most significantly, the majority of women (54 of 63, 86%) participated in the light duties program (Figure 21).

Many of the remaining nine women participated in the bike repair program (n=7, 11%) and one female participated in repair work and the woodwork programs respectively.

By comparison, the division of men between the available programs was more even (also shown at Figure 21). The majority of men participated in woodwork (39%), a relatively even proportion of participants were split between light duties and repair work (25% and 22% respectively) and a smaller but significant number of men (14%) participated in the bike repair program (Figure 21).

Figure 21 Community work activities of participants by gender (N=200)



Analysis of the available data indicates that, although light duties is designed to cater to participants with limited capabilities, program participation may not reflect actual capability of participants. For example, over half (50 of 88 or 56%) of people who participated in the light duties program reported that they did not have a health condition, illness or disability that impacted on their ability to work (no response was reported for three participants). Women in the light duties were more likely to report that they did not have a condition or a disability compared to men (65% of women vs 43% of men), indicating that women may participate in the program for reasons other than having any limitation on their ability to work.

All interviewees reported attending community work one or two days/week. While some participants had other obligations restricting their availability to undertake community work (e.g., due to child care responsibilities or illness), most participants reported they were able to attend more frequently than they did. Some expressed frustration at this:

"They [Corrections Victoria staff] only really want to give me one or two days a week. I asked for more than that just so that I can knock it out [finish quickly]… but (sighs) they just mess you around more than anyone really […] Yeah, it's pretty much like having a job. If they don't think that you are reliable, they don't give you a few days but if you only go once a week it's going to take you a year to do it." **(#16, male, 23 years)**

Participants were asked if they gained any useful benefits from community work. Regardless of which program/s they attended, interviewees were rarely able to give examples of opportunities to develop useful skills. The 'light duties' program received the most negative feedback:

"No. Listen, no offence – I mean no offence at all – but I have not gained any [emphasis] skill from light duties. Nothing at all. Light duties is essentially unstitching and err de-badging pins from a piece of cardboard. As far as I can see, the activities that they have got us to do are more punitive than education. That's just my personal opinion." **(#13, male, 26 years)**

"Oh God no. If anything, I think it's just made me more stressed out [laughs]. Some of the people I really don't want to associate [with]. But you're pretty much sitting in one room all day together. You pretty much have no choice. But definitely there are no skills at all that you can learn from… none at all. I think it's just something that they make you do to pass time, pass the hours. It's something they can give to everyone – get them to do anything – as long as they're there then they're doing something." **(#7, male, 45 years)**

It was common for participants to describe the program as a punitive and time-wasting activity. The above participant also described the negative impact of associating with other men in the program. However, many female participants valued the 'social' group environment, regardless of the program's skill-building value.

Other programs that were more positively appraised (woodwork and bike repair) were perceived to have community benefits. For example, when asked if he had gained any skills during community work, one participant said:

"No, because half the stuff is ridiculous. Ok, right the woodwork is brilliant because you're giving back to society. It's charity work, right. That one's good. Woodwork, you're building stuff for kids. And the fixing bikes for people who need bikes – the fixing bikes one is good too. […] There needs to be a purpose, a goal. They [CCO participants] need a goal. Something to guide them, right, this is… so it's a purpose for what they are doing." **(#19, male, 33 years)**

Interviewees commonly stated that they had hoped for the opportunity to 'give back' to the community or gain skills through community work but had been let down:

"There have been other projects that I have always wanted to do – like cooking or feeding the homeless and I never got my chance to do it. They never offered it and when I asked about it, it essentially got shut down by my case worker. […] Actually, I know people who have gone to their corrections worker and asked them to put them into various things and the community corrections officers have done it. I've obviously drawn the short straw." **(#13, male, 26 years)**

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Interviewer: "Did you gain any extra skills through the work that you did through these programs?"

"None at all. I was disappointed with that because from what I understood of how this program works, they try to support you in acquiring some basic skills that you can try to transfer into the workplace. And I watched a number of guys go through that and pick up some skills – OH&S courses, first aid courses depending on how able-bodied you were from what I understand, the facility runs a forklift driver's licence. I would have loved that opportunity. None of that came my way. […] it's a lost opportunity now – it's eight months gone." **(#6, male, 54 years)**

The participant described variation in assignment to programs, determined by individual case workers and likely by program location. This was reported by others. Most prominently, participants spoke about being capable of undertaking more skilful work than what they were allocated.

7.3 Valued aspects of services

When asked about what services or programs they needed to help them to 'move on' or that would support transitions to ETE where appropriate, most interviewees spoke about the qualities of services, including: a focus on helping (i.e., a therapeutic focus - noting that most services reported were accessed in a punitive context or as a part of a welfare-system requirement); attention to individual needs; and services that considered their justice-related requirements and barriers. For example, interviewees commonly discussed the importance of subjective experiences of respect, care and genuine interest shown by staff when discussing what they needed from services:

"I guess like… having that extra support. Yeah, where you can actually go to a place where that person would actually see you as a person, go through with you, "OK, what have you got? What could we do to help you go further? Like oh, you've got Cert II, are you interested in maybe getting a Cert IV and let me see what I can do where I can lead you to that" Stuff like that, you know what I mean?" **(#1, female, 35 years)**

"I just think that having support is the main thing. Somebody to believe and help you try – that helps me, I guess. Even just having [Jesuit Social Services staff] come in when we are doing community work – even him coming in and asking what kind of work we are into, that kind of thing helps – I believe. Even if it's for a short time, it makes an impact, it really does - it does help." **(#14, female, 30 years)**

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"I want to work with somebody that is actually open. I want to work with somebody that actually loves the job and is not just there because they need to earn money too… and not about what they need to tick off the box. You're in a position where you can help us, so help us! Don't put us down. Don't degrade us further than what we already have been." **(#1 female, 35 years)**

One interviewee reflected on others and his own experiences when discussing what services are needed:

"Social support. They need a lot of support. They do need support, that's one thing… Not many people have got the comfort of having family around them. And umm, how can I say it? It's the family support and there is not a lot of places that actually do support that are close. You have got to go far away. There's not enough of that, I believe anyways. There's just a lot of pressure to get your hours done and to look for jobs and no support to help with that. That's it, more or less." **(#17, male, 50 years)**

The above participant had a health issue impacting his ability to work and highlighted that specialist and local support is important. Some interviewees reported that financial counselling and development of financial literacy skills would be valuable. Assistance with child care was also an identified area of need for many, particularly women. It was identified that meeting child care needs was very difficult and often led to absence from community work programs.

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8: Discussion

The CCO is an intermediate sentencing option that has the potential to re-direct people away from justice system involvement and help to alleviate burden from Victoria's prison system by reducing recidivist offending. Multiple government reports and literature reviews have highlighted numerous issues that potentially impact the completion rates of CCOs and underscore the need to ensure that appropriate services and programs are delivered to this group to address complex needs (Gelb et al., 2019, Trotter, 2012, Victorian Auditor General, 2017, Australian Law Reform Commission, 2017, CV, 2019). However, it is likely that, due to the overall assessment of this group as being of 'lower risk' to the community (compared to prisoners) and the relatively recent introduction of CCOs in Victoria in 2012, there has been little research attention to this justice sub-group.

This report has presented integrated analysis of mixed methods data, including: a 'needs assessment' survey conducted with 200 participants who, as a component of their CCO, attended a community work program in the City of Brimbank; and, in-depth research interview data collected from 20 of these individuals. Purposive recruitment of residents from the City of Brimbank and the City of Melton – municipalities in the WMR of Melbourne impacted by persistent socio-economic disadvantage – was undertaken for the interview component in order to gain insight into place-based experiences and the availability of local services and supports.

This study has sought to contribute to an improved understanding of the circumstances and needs of this group, their barriers to participation in the mainstream community (particularly in ETE), the extent to which they appear to be engaged in rehabilitative opportunities and to point to practice and systems learnings and area for possible future research investigation.

What follows is a summary of the key findings of this study, structured under four main headings to address the research questions.

RQ1: What are the main demographic and justice related characteristics of this group?

RQ2: Are there identifiable trends in relation to educational attainment and engagement in employment among this group?

RQ2: Are there common areas of need or barriers to participation in the mainstream community?

RQ4: What is the extent and nature of engagement with services and rehabilitative opportunities?

Implications for practice, and future inquiry are presented in Section 9, Conclusion.

Demographic and justice-related characteristics

Participants were diverse in age (range 19-61 years) with the majority of participants (67%) being aged between 25 and 44 years (average age 34.9 years). Just over two-thirds of the sample were male (68.5%), with women representing 31.5% of the sample. Over half the sample (52%) had dependent children under the age of 18 years.

Three quarters of participants lived in an LGA in the west metropolitan region of Melbourne, with participants most often residing in the City of Brimbank (n=52, 26%) followed by the City of Melton (n=46, 23%). All interview participants were purposively recruited from these LGAs. Three participants were Aboriginal (1.5% of the sample), which is a small number but approximately twice the rate of representation in the Victorian population, reflecting over-representation of this group in the justice system. [30]

Over a third of participants (n=72, 36%) were born overseas – higher than the Victorian state average of 28.4% and reflecting the rich cultural diversity of Melbourne's WMR. The most common languages spoken at home after English were Arabic (8%) and Dinka (4%).

It is noteworthy that, while the recruitment site was located in the City of Brimbank, the sample was not solely comprised of participants who live in the WMR. A quarter of all participants (n=50, 25%) reportedly resided in LGAs that required them to travel a substantial distance to attend their community work program. This is not explained in the data; however, it is important to note that inaccessibility of programs due to distance is likely to be a significant barrier to completion of CCOs. For example, recent serious driving charges were reported by about one in five EPS participants (and were likely to be more common).

[30] In the 2016 Census, approximately 0.765% of Victoria's reported having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origins (ABS 2016).

Analysis was undertaken of self-reported justice involvement, with prior involvement and particularly past incarceration being a marker of both disadvantage and complexity (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019) and associated with increased likelihood of recidivism (SAC, 2017b). The findings confirmed that many participants had previous justice involvement, with 25% reporting prior incarceration as adults. This is lower than CV records, which indicate that around 40% of people on CCOs have been incarcerated previously (SCRGSP, 2019). The discrepancy may be accounted for due to the sensitivity of this information. Just over a quarter of participants (n=46, 26.5%) reported that they first became involved in the justice system as a juvenile (that is age 17 years or younger) and six participants (3.1%) reported that they spent time under supervision as a juvenile. [31] Analysis of self-reported most serious recent crimes found that, when the assault (18%) and sex offences (6%) were combined, crimes against the person comprised the most common offence category (24%). This was followed by driving offences (21%) and drug offences (14%).

The main characteristics of the CCOs sample were compared with data describing Victoria's prison population (CV, 2018). This was undertaken to draw out general similarities and differences and to elucidate areas of particular need among the CCO group for further exploration. [32] The most significant finding emerging the comparison, was the large proportion of women in the CCOs sample compared to Victoria's prisons (31.5% vs 7.1% in 2019; SAC, 2019).

Another notable point of difference was that a higher proportion of the CCOs group were aged under 25 years (CCOs 16% vs prison 12%). Analysis of CV data indicated young people aged 18-24 years on CCOs are twice more likely to reoffend than others (SAC, 2017b).

This is consistent more broadly across the criminal justice system (Andrews et al., 2011) indicating that specific attention to the needs of this group is warranted.

Compared to prisoners, the CCOs sample included a lower proportion of Australian born people (64% vs 73.7% prisoners). This feature is likely to be at least partly explained by the geographical location of the study, with parts of the WMR of Melbourne and the City of Brimbank in particular being characterised by cultural diversity.

Of general note is the low representation of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people in the CCOs sample compared to the prison population (1.5% vs 8.5%). This cannot be explained with the available data; however, a recent report found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are less likely than non-Indigenous offenders to receive a community sentence (ALRC, 2017). The ALRC (2017) and a recent review of the literature on community based sentencing orders (Gelb et al., 2019) highlight that community-based sentences may be particularly effective with this group and identify potential ways that orders could be tailored to suit their needs.

The most serious charges recorded among our sample of people on CCOs were compared with data Victorian prisoner records. While offences categorised as "crimes against the person" were the most common among the CCO cohort, as expected, these types of crimes are more common among prisoners (reported by 45.9% vs 24%). CCO participants were more likely than those in the prison population to report that their most serious charge was a driving offence (CCOs 21% vs prison 2.9%) or a "good order offence" (CCOs 7% vs prison 1.4%).

Education, training and employment trends and related experiences

It is well established that educational attainment shapes an individual's life opportunities, with low attainment being a marker of disadvantage. In Australia, in 2018, the apparent retention rate to Year 12 was 85% (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019). It was anticipated that our sample may include a higher proportion of individuals who had lower than average levels of education as many were residents of a low socio-economic area. Indeed this was the case, with 45% reporting that they completed year 12 (not including equivalent qualifications) – which is also substantially lower than Victorian state averages and those recorded among residents of the City of Brimbank (.idcommunity, 2019a, ABS, 2017).

Interviewees commonly discussed having poor educational experiences, characterised by disruption and, in many instances, underpinned by troubled home environments and/traumatic experiences. Four interviewees had lived in out of home or kinship care and a further two had experienced violence perpetrated by a family member as children. Three had arrived in Australia as refugees. Experiences of growing up in poverty were very commonly reported. A small but substantial proportion of the survey sample (n=30; 15%) reported very low level of educational attainment (year 9 or below).

There were indications that educational attainment was likely to be over-reported among the survey sample, with very poor or minimal school attendance and associated low levels of literacy being more prominently discussed in interviews. For example, four individuals had either cognitive impairment or a learning disability impacting their schooling, discussed further in the next section.

The most striking characteristic of tertiary education experiences was the common attainment of one or more 'Certificate' level qualification as the highest qualification, reported by 41% of the sample (compared to 14.5% of Victorians), with the corollary being that very few (7%) reportedly attained a university level degree. Particular issues were associated with low level tertiary courses (especially Certificates I and II), which appeared to be undertaken opportunistically in conjunction with justice or welfare system obligations. Many were incomplete and undertaken in disjointed areas and appeared to very rarely lead to employment. The majority of interviewees spoke about having disjointed careers traversing multiple industry types and some had limited or no employment history.

While one purported advantage of serving a community based sentence (when compared to incarceration) is of being able to maintain connection to economic support (Victorian Auditor General, 2017), the study found instead that unemployment was the dominant experience. Many interviewees were limited in their capacity to participate in the workforce due to carer responsibilities and health issues/disability. However, around two thirds of participants who were able to engage in ETE activities were not doing so (n=114, 67%, excluding n=30 who were not able to work). Over half of the sample (56%) reportedly depended on government benefits as their main source of income and long term unemployment was also very common. For example, of 104 job seekers, approximately two thirds (66%, n=69) had been unemployed for more than a year and over a quarter (26%, n=27) had been unemployed for five or more years. There were also low levels of current engagement in education or training, with 7% of the sample being enrolled in a training course. Moreover, participants expressed reluctance to embark on courses in the future, framed by the urgent need to earn an income but also potentially linked to previous experiences of undertaking courses that have not led to employment.

While there is evidence in the literature of the association between employment and crime cessation; the link is not straightforward. That is, having 'any' employment is not enough to guarantee desistance from crime. For example, some studies have found that employment stability and quality of work are important variables (Uggen, 2000). This study found that, among n=50 participants who had any form of paid work, approximately a quarter (26%, n=13) were simultaneously seeking other work. Among the interview sample, most participants with work were in precarious, low paying forms of work and many were underemployed. General satisfaction with employment was low – strongly related to low income and lack of job security. Many discussed how they were vulnerable to retrenchment due to the nature of their employment (with experiences of retrenchment being common). Most were seeking other forms of work.

Common areas of need and barriers to participation in the mainstream community

Data describing areas of need and barriers to participation were primarily derived from the qualitative component of the study. However, when contextualised by empirical data highlighting issues such as widespread long term unemployment (presented above), analysis elucidates the extent of marginalisation experienced among this group. It also flags the range of likely underlying and intersecting issues that impact the health and wellbeing of individuals in this cohort and that, left unaddressed, are likely to impact rates of reoffending.

The previous section indicated that many individuals in this sample had very poor educational experiences often underpinned by difficult, unstable or damaging family environments The lasting psychological and social impacts of trauma experiences were also discussed. For example, many individuals in this cohort experienced mental health issues as adults (e.g., anxiety, depression and PTSD) and/or problematic alcohol and/drug use. Low educational attainment commonly stemmed from difficult or disrupted family environments and was undoubtedly a major ongoing barrier to gaining stable and well-paying employment for many.

[31] Nb. there were n=190 responses to these questions.
[32] Comparison is indicative only as the CCO data is self-reported and there may have been selection biases shaping the characteristics of the cohort.

One of the prominent findings in this study was the common experience of social isolation and limited social support from informal networks. Interviewees commonly described having difficult or troubled close relationships. For example, over half of EPS sample had dependent children, however, interviewees rarely reported being in intact partnered relationships. Other issues commonly mentioned, including recent or current involvement of child protective services and intimate partner violence, pointed to stress and dysfunction in many participants' social networks. Friendships were often linked to involvement in problematic drug use and offending.

Related to social isolation, there were very low levels of participation in activities that potentially provide structure, enjoyment and fulfilment to daily life among this cohort (e.g., recreational or social activities). For example, 12 of 15 interviewees reported that their community work program was the only activity that they participated in outside of the home. This meant also that, for many, the only opportunity to form new connections was in association with their community work program. Migrant participants faced extra hurdles to inclusion in the mainstream community, experiencing multiple disadvantages (e.g., having English as an additional language, isolation from family and community) and sometimes trauma experiences. However, the qualitative sample size was not large enough to draw out dominant themes among migrant groups.

Most interviewees reported growing up in poverty and all interviewees experienced current financial hardship, signalling the presence of intergenerational patterns consistent with understandings of how social-economic disadvantage is perpetuated. Financial hardship was especially severe among those who were long term unemployed. Experiences of unmanaged debt were very common. Interviewees very commonly discussed not being able to afford housing, with the majority reporting that they were financially reliant on others (usually family). Housing stability was a serious issue for 13% (n=26) of the survey cohort, who indicated that they lived in temporary housing or were sleeping rough (73% of whom were men).

It has been acknowledged in the literature that the needs of women in the justice system are very different to those of men; requiring different responses (Gelb et al., 2019, Trotter and Flynn, 2016; Trotter et al., 2012). The findings from this study indicated that this is also the case with the CCOs cohort. Analysis of the survey data indicated that women had distinct patterns of engagement in ETE activities. They were more likely to seek part time work and had, on average, been out of the workforce for longer making them less competitive in the job market. These trends were likely shaped by child care responsibilities, with two thirds (66.7%) of women in the sample stating that they had dependent children in their care compared to less than half (44.6%) of men, with the actual burden for care of children by women likely to be greater. Single parent households were very common, placing pressure on resources. Though numbers of female interviewees were small (n=7) their accounts highlighted a number of complex and intersecting issues distinct from men, including experiences of intimate partner violence and problematic drug and alcohol use linked to trauma. Of three women who had partners, two of these partners were incarcerated, another indicator of stress and disruption in close relationships generally. Recent involvement of child protective services was common and some women were negotiating ongoing custody arrangements and trauma associated with having children removed from their care.

When survey participants were asked about their 'main' barrier to employment, the most common response was 'justice record' (mentioned by 38%). It is likely that many were referring to stigma and discrimination from employers, with this having a well-documented impact on employment outcomes (Graffam et al., 2008; Varghese, 2012) and being commonly discussed. Analysis showed that those participants who had spent time in prison were less likely to be employed. Some interviewees had experiences of setbacks because of their record while others described how they anticipated encountering stigma or discrimination and how this discouraged them from seeking work. The impact of community work as a barrier to employment was also commonly discussed, with most delaying entering the workforce until their unpaid hours were complete. Related to this, interviewees commonly spoke about how their community work extended for longer than they expected due to their placement in a program only one or two times a week. This unnecessarily prolonged time they spent out of the workforce and appeared to exacerbate the punitive impact of community work. It also had a reported effect on motivation and confidence. Additional negative impacts of community work programs on individuals are discussed in greater depth under the next heading.

Confidence or motivation was a common 'main' barrier to employment named among survey participants (reported by 10%). Interview data confirmed that this was likely to be partly attributable to the impact of justice system involvement itself and, for many due to the impacts of long term unemployment. Survey participants also reported that one or more health issues, impairment or injuries was their 'main' barrier to employment (reported by 11%). This was also prominently discussed among interviewees. For example, six of 20 interviewees reported that they had a serious health issues or injury impacting their employability.

For three individuals, this was so serious that they were unable to work at all. Others with health issues or injuries were often capable of working, but could not find appropriate work or were not competitive in the market because of the combined impact of their health issue and justice record. Retrenchment due to workplace injury was particularly common and some older participants experienced age-related discrimination as an additional barrier hindering efforts to make a career change. These are examples of the generally intersecting nature and cumulative impact of issues.

Cognitive impairment including acquired brain injury are more common among justice cohorts than the general population (Schofield et al., 2006), though the extent that this is experienced among people on CCOs is not well described. Having a cognitive impairment is likely to have a strong bearing on ability to understand conditions of CCOs and other important information, thereby potentially impacting CCO completion rates. Although very few survey participants disclosed that they had a cognitive disability (n=6, 3%), a quarter of the qualitative sample (n=5) reported that they had either a cognitive impairment or learning disability that impacted their ability to participate in work (e.g. two interviewees were on disability support due to severity) [33]. Though the sample size is too small to make generalisations, the data indicate that the extent of cognitive impairments and serious learning difficulties (e.g., impacting on literacy) among this group is worth future investigation.

Engagement with services and rehabilitative opportunities

Access to services and support programs

The literature on 'offender rehabilitation' strongly emphasises the need to build in links to treatment services and rehabilitative opportunities, with research finding that punitive approaches are ineffective and can lead to poorer recidivism outcomes (McGuire, 2013, McGuire et al., 2002, Barnett and Howard, 2018). Delivery of support targeted to individual needs and timeliness of response are understood to be critical elements effective responses, and are embedded in the RNR model, an evidence-based paradigm for offender programming used prominently in a range of countries including Australia. Summarising this literature, Przybylski (2008) writes:

> ***In essence, there must be a match between the treatment approach, staff characteristics, and the learning style and personality of the offender. Programs must take into account and be responsive to the motivation, cognitive ability, age, gender, ethnicity and other characteristics of the offender. (p.38)***

It is not currently well understood how effectively the system in Victoria delivers therapeutic support to people on CCOs consistent with this approach. The Sentencing Advisory Council found that the majority of contraventions of CCOs in Victoria occur within the first three months of commencement, highlighting how critical it is to engage people early into their sentence (SAC, 2017b, p.xiii). However, a review conducted by the Victorian Auditor General (2017) indicated that wait times for pre-assessment were often longer than three months and that the system in Victoria was struggling to cope with both the level of demand and complexity of needs among this group. The literature, though diverse, emphasises the importance of program integrity, with treatment programs that are well designed, properly staffed being likely to achieve positive results – and the absence of these factors being predictive of failure (Przybylski, 2008, Lowenkamp et al., 2006).

While the cost of managing a person in the community in Victoria is currently around one tenth the cost of imprisonment (PC, 2020), Gelb and colleagues (2019) point out that the provision of treatment options and programs that align with the evidence for effective practice targeting people with complex needs in the justice system is likely to require greater investment.

Interview participants in this study were asked to discuss whether they were receiving the support that they need to assist them to 'move on', whether they had benefited from experiences of community work program activities, and what services or type of support they would benefit from. Thus, while it did not comprehensively audit the range of supports that participants accessed in association with their CCO or the timeliness of their delivery, the data gives insight into current levels of need and characteristics of programs that are valued.

It should also be noted that many participants described having actively taken steps to address issues that were recognised as a 'problem' or directly associated with their offending, such as ceasing involvement with crime associated peers and ceasing problematic alcohol use. For many, however, this claimed independence appeared to be shaped by poor previous experiences with services and a damaged sense of worthiness of support (associated with the identity of being a 'criminal' or 'offender') and there were many areas where participants appeared to be floundering. In summary, there was little evidence to suggest that the participants in this study were receiving adequate support to address self-identified needs or to improve their inclusion in the community.

[33] One of these individuals acquired a brain injury as a young adult.

The most pronounced area of identified need among this cohort was for paid employment and, accordingly, the most common service type accessed by participants was employment services. Levels of dissatisfaction with this service type were very high and experiences of impersonal and infrequent contact triggered disengagement for many. These services were often accessed as a part of Centrelink's 'mutual obligation' requirements (and attached to welfare support) and this coercive context appeared to shape experiences. Participants commonly expressed the view that they were treated impersonally and did not perceive that staff wanted to genuinely help them. Some spoke about how they had been recommended jobs that did not consider their personal situation. Those who accessed specialist employment providers, such as disability specialists, appeared to have better experiences; however, numbers of such participants were small.

In relation to seeking employment, the data indicate that assistance to manage issues such as disclosure of their criminal record to employers and to build soft skills associated with gaining employment (e.g., interview skills) would be highly valuable. However, no participant reported receiving any assistance in this area. While it was reported that structured sessions relating to employment readiness skills training had been historically provided in the area and embedded into community work hours, no such support was available through the DJCS site at the time of the study.

While effective and tailored employment-related support was an identified area of need, previous research has identified that the provision of employment support programs alone are likely to be ineffective if the kind of multifaceted needs identified here and in other studies with justice-involved people are not adequately addressed (Newton et al., 2016). Others suggest that employment should be viewed as a longer term outcome, rather than the focus of rehabilitative efforts. For example, Skardhamar (2014) recently found that employment is a consequence of cessation in offending rather than a cause.

While a small number of interviewees reported receiving counselling or psychological support, including associated with problematic drug and alcohol use, access to other helpful services or therapeutic programs targeting their needs was uncommon. No participant reported attending other types of behaviour change programs. Experiences of social isolation and limited social support were particularly prominent issues among this sample, but are seldom emphasised in offender rehabilitation models and were issues for which participants appeared to receive little or no support.

Similarly it was clear that family violence was an issue for many and it appeared that others would potentially benefit from family counselling of parenting support though it was not reported if any related services were accessed. It bears acknowledgment that there was likely to be under-reporting of referrals to services and programs.

When asked about what types of services were needed, participants commonly spoke about how specialist services were not always available in their area and many had limited or no ability to arrange their own transport. Some interviewees reported that financial counselling and development of financial literacy skills would be valuable but was not received. Assistance with child care was also an identified area of need for many, particularly women.

Another challenge associated with the rehabilitative aspect of CCOs is that treatment programs have been shown to be more effective when undertaken on a voluntary basis (Parhar et al., 2008). This has implications in relation to how many treatment conditions are imposed by courts (and the effectiveness of doing so), as well as for program implementation. Unfortunately, the majority of service encounters described by participants in this study appeared to be associated with an element of coercion, thus potentially undermining benefits.

When asked about what services or programs they needed to help them to 'move on' or that would support transitions to ETE where appropriate, most interviewees spoke about the qualities of services, including: a focus on 'helping' (rather than coercion or punishment); attention to individual needs; and services that considered their justice-related requirements and barriers.

Participants placed the highest value on the quality of interpersonal interactions with professionals, including qualities of genuineness, respect, and willingness to help. This is consistent with the literature, which emphasises the centrality of the client-worker relationship and worker skill in relation to effective practice with involuntary clients (Turner and Trotter, 2013). Trotter (2015) reports that building positive relationships (for example through empathy, humour, optimism and some self disclosure) "can be the foundation for effective outcomes when accompanied by pro-social modelling and problem solving" (in Turner and Trotter, 2013 p.18). Many of these elements are relevant to the delivery of community work programs also, which is discussed next.

Experiences of community work programs

The research investigating effectiveness of community service programs is limited. Further, Turner and Trotter (2013) note that "very few studies have primarily focused their attention on the possible rehabilitative and reparative effects of community service" (p.21). In one such study McIvor (1992) found that reconviction rates were lower among people who believed their community service experience to be worthwhile, because it provided opportunities to learn new skills or was seen to be of value to the community. Previous literature has established that positive experiences in community service were associated with placements that featured high levels of contact between the person sentenced and "beneficiaries," including agencies or individuals (McIvor et al., 2010, p.52), enabling people to appreciate the tangible value of their work (Rex and Gelsthorpe, 2002). Similarly, Wood (2012) describes the rehabilitative value of providing the opportunity, through placement in positive productive and valued roles that allow individuals to experience, practice and demonstrate ability to do something well that others value. More recently, in their review of best practice principles for community service initiatives, Turner and Trotter (2013) identified that community work should be viewed as meaningful and worthwhile.

These elements were similarly valued by participants in this study, who emphasised that they wanted to "give back" or "repay" their debt to the community. Participants gave the most negative assessments of community work programs when there were not clearly articulated links to community benefit (e.g., donation of useful goods to disadvantaged community members). However, it is noteworthy that almost all 200 survey participants were engaged in one of four programs that were operated solely on DJCS premises [34] thus participants had little or no interaction with the community.

While interviewees in this study commonly anticipated being able to build useful skills through community work, no individual was able to identify any useful skills that they had gained from any community work program. Instead, many emphasised the negative impact of the work on them.

While it is possible that activities had skill-building elements that were not recognised by participants or had not been articulated to them, participants most commonly described the work that they had undertaken as time-wasting, punitive and demeaning.

This was particularly the case for the program termed 'light duties' which involved the lowest skill level. It is possible that some participants were assigned to this program due to health issues or injury, However all interviewees who participated in the light duties program (n=14) reported that they had capacity to undertake work of a higher skill level. This experience is consistent with one review identifying that work placements designed solely for 'busywork' are common (Turner & Trotter, 2013). The deleterious impact of undertaking these types of activities on the wellbeing of participants was noted, particularly linked to poor self-esteem and a perception of worthlessness. On a related point, many participants were aware of others who had been offered opportunities to participate in more meaningful work or accredited courses and expressed disappointment in their own comparative experience.

Numerous studies discuss the quality of the relationship between the offender and their community supervisor (Trotter et al., 2012, Sapouna et al., 2015), with a "pro-social modelling" approach being identified as instrumental to success (Turner & Trotter, 2013, p. 49). Elements such as role clarification, reinforcing and modelling pro-social values, collaborative problem-solving (based on the client's definition of problems and goals) are also identified in the literature as key practice elements in working with involuntary clients in corrections contexts (Trotter, 2015). This is consistent with literature demonstrating that a strengths-based (rather than deficits focused) approach to program delivery is most effective (Maruna and LeBel, 2010).

There was some evidence of the role of the quality of interactions with corrections staff and program attendance. For example, harsh or punitive interactions with corrections staff were linked to program dropout; and, conversely, one participant reported that they attended the program because the supervisor was a 'good guy'. Numerous participants in this study specifically spoke about the 'friendly' interactions that they had with the Employment Pathways Advisor, with some mentioning that this was the only staff member in the context of community work program who had asked them about their future plans. In this study, the significance of interactions with community corrections staff appeared to be amplified due to the common experience of social isolation among participants. Overall, there was wide variation in participants' appraisals of interactions with corrections staff, suggesting that there was room for improvement in this area.

[34] Light duties (n=88, 44%); woodwork (n=55, 28%); repair work (n=31, 15%); bike repair (n=26, 13%). Noting that one participant in the repair work category undertook graffiti removal.

All participants in this study were in group-based community work programs. However, while groups appear to be the dominant approach to community work programming in Victoria generally (Victorian Auditor General, 2017) and a cost efficient way to provide programs, the available evidence points to the effectiveness of individual placements (Turner & Trotter, 2013). The qualitative findings from this study suggested that there are negative effects of group participation, particularly among male interviewees, who commonly reported that the group environment of community work created "negative associations" and undermined efforts to change. Such experiences likely had other unseen effects on participants such as damage to confidence, motivation and self-esteem. The negative views of group participation were less pronounced among women, who commonly reported 'enjoying' the program because of the opportunity for social interaction.

Of particular note was the highly gendered participation in the light duties program (with 86% of women compared to 25% of men participating on the program). It appeared that the dominance of men in other programs partly shaped women's preference to attend this program. Other researchers have similarly noted the negative impact that dominance of men at community work sites had on women, particularly exposing them to intimidating and offensive behaviour (Alder and Edwards, 1992, McIvor, 1998) [35]. It also appeared however, that there was a lack of availability of other programs that were either appealing or suitable for this group. Issues associated with program availability identified here are consistent with those identified by the Victorian Auditor General (2017), who noted that "[P]roviding sufficient and appropriate opportunities for the growing number of offenders on CCOs is an ongoing challenge for CV" (p.30).

More generally, the circumstances of women also commonly shaped their availability to participate in community work programs. Interviewees with children (including single fathers) indicated that arranging child care while they attended community work was a significant challenge – with the burden often falling on other family members. The wellbeing of children of parents on CCOs is generally overlooked; however, it is undoubtable that these issues have an impact on them. Moreover, these factors likely have a bearing on the length of completion of their CCO (as they are less available) and potentially on likelihood of breaching their order.

A note on outcomes from the Employment Pathways Service

As discussed in Section 1.3 of this report, recruitment of participants to this study was undertaken via an Employment Pathways Service (EPS), which was embedded into the DJCS community corrections work program site in Derrimut (the City of Brimbank). The role of the Employment Pathways Advisor EPA was to improve pathways of people in the justice system by facilitating greater connection to ETE opportunities.

While this initiative was not formally evaluated, positive participant outcomes were noted. Jesuit Social Services' records show that 18% of participants (n=39) enrolled in ETE-related programs as a direct result of their engagement with the EPS. That is, 23 participants enrolled in Jesuit Community College's "Skills First Reconnect" program and a further 16 participants were referred to a Jobs Victoria Employment Network (JVEN). Numerous other participants were supported in other ways, for example, connected to adult literacy services and tertiary level courses (for example, the EPA accompanied one participant to a university open day).

In-depth interview participants identified that they benefited greatly from interaction with staff from this program. This role featured informal, relationship-based support with staff employed at Jesuit Social Services (i.e., with no supervisory role). Participation was voluntary. Consistent with the findings of the study, participants valued staff friendliness, helpfulness and interest shown in their wellbeing and this can be interpreted in the context of general experiences of social isolation, marginalisation and low self-esteem.

Experience gained from implementing this service, coupled with insights gained during the research generally, suggest that there is a real and ongoing need for this type of informal support among people in this justice cohort.

Embedding the EPS service in the Derrimut Community Work Office has strengthened the relationship between Jesuit Social Services and DJCS in the City of Brimbank. It has also improved communication and information transfer between the agencies as well as referral into services and opportunities. Learnings from this program will be incorporated into consultation and advocacy activities as well as into Jesuit Social Services' program development.

[35] Nb. No interviewee in this sample reported having such experiences.

8.3 Study Limitations

The data collected in the EPS 'needs assessment' survey was obtained from a relatively large sample (N=200). However, a range of factors including the local geographical context, service context, biases associated with self-report data and the small qualitative sample mean that these data should be treated cautiously and the findings cannot be readily extrapolated to the population of people on CCOs in Victoria, although the identified issues are worth exploring in other contexts.

As mentioned in the beginning of this report, recruitment was undertaken in a persistently disadvantaged area of Melbourne, where there is higher than state average unemployment (Vinson and Rawsthorne, 2015). Further, the survey data were collected by the EPS – reflecting the characteristics of people who chose to engage in an initial assessment with the service. Both factors may have also led to over-sampling of participants with employment needs. Analysis of community work program participation is not a reflection of total program participation in the area. For example, the EPS did not have contact with many participants engaged in 'off-site' programs (graffiti removal is an example of one such program operational at the time). It is likely that individuals accessing these programs had different experience of undertaking community work to those who were working 'on-site'.

Further, there are many limitations to the 'needs assessment' data that are a product of the self-report method and the service provision context in which the data were collected. For example, reporting educational attainment may have resulted in social desirability response bias (tendency to give responses that may be favourable to the interviewer). This may have contributed to over-reporting of educational attainment and under-reporting of issues such as illicit drug use, motivation levels and prior incarceration.

Measures were taken to ameliorate the effect of reporting biases, particularly in the context of the EPS. Participants were offered written and verbal information about the nature of the service, the role of the EPA, how their information will be used by the service, the voluntary nature of their participation and the limits to confidentiality of their information (especially regarding mandatory legislation) (Appendix 2). We note that, while the response rate to the needs assessment questions was very good overall, [36] there is a lower response to some items (e.g., level of social support). This is possibly linked to the potential sensitivity of the items for some participants.

The scope of the information that was collected by the EPS and the level of detail recorded was also limited by the service provision context in which it was gathered (i.e., only information relevant to the EPS was recorded). Missing data include: details of sentences including multiple and concurrent sentences, court where the individual was sentenced in (i.e., Magistrates or higher court), historical justice records, justice system pathways, details such as child protection system involvement (including as victim and perpetrator) and problematic drug and alcohol use. It is possible that some participants in this sample were on Parole or CCO Imprisonment Orders. However, we do not believe that this is a substantial limitation, as the proportion of participants eligible for these orders was small (discussed in Section 2). The qualitative arm of the study also helped to verify some of the data as well as enriching, and helping to elucidate missing information including the social backgrounds and experiences of participants; however, the qualitative sample is small and limited to participants who were residents of the Brimbank and Melton LGAs.

[36] There was a greater than 90% response rate for 22 of 26 items that are included in this report (100% response rate for 15 of 26 of these). There was a lower but still adequate response rate of 77-84% for the remaining 4 items that are included in this report.

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9: Conclusion

In the context of Victoria's burgeoning prison population, there is a stronger case than ever for ensuring that CCOs are used by the courts wherever appropriate and that those who receive these sentences have the support and opportunities that they need to make positive changes towards living crime-free lives. There has been remarkably little research attention given to people on community-based orders such as CCOs in Australia and internationally.

This report contributes to an improved understanding of the profile of men and women in this cohort, their needs and barriers to inclusion in the mainstream community. The following key issues were identified that are likely to have a significant bearing on health and wellbeing outcomes, including the likelihood of future involvement in offending:

- Lower than average educational attainment often underscored by difficult or traumatic childhood experiences.
- Limited engagement in employment and, among those who were working, engagement in tenuous low paying employment.
- High levels of social isolation and common experiences of troubled personal relationships.
- Low levels of self-esteem, self-confidence and poor hope for the future exacerbated by the stigmatising impact of having a justice record.
- Ongoing complex needs including poor mental health, problematic alcohol and/drug use and involvement with the child protection system impacting capacity to focus on meeting justice system requirements.

Among this cohort there were people whose distinct needs exacerbate their vulnerability to experiencing poor outcomes and who require targeted consideration. These groups include women, people from culturally diverse groups, young people, single parents and people with cognitive impairments.

While these findings have particular local relevance, having been collected primarily from residents of Melbourne's west metropolitan region and from low socioeconomic backgrounds, they also bear consideration in relation to planning, policy, program development and practice in other contexts. This is particularly the case given the dearth of detailed research in this area.

Analysis has also provided insight into the extent to which the rehabilitative aspects of the CCO sentence are being realised. Recent internal reviews in Victoria indicate that the system may not be functioning as well as it could be. For example, there has been a declining rate of completion of CCOs in Victoria across several years and the rate of completion (at 59 2% in 2017-18) was the lowest in the country (the national average was 72.9%; SCRGSP, 2019). Moreover, issues have been identified in relation to the efficiency of the system in offering timely access to rehabilitative supports and community work placements (Victorian Auditor General, 2019). However, thus far, there has been very little attention to lived experiences of people on CCOs.

The data collected in this study has provided insights into participants' engagement in rehabilitative activities including therapeutic services and programs as well as mandatory community work, producing two key findings:

1. Limited evidence of access to supportive or therapeutic services to address identified needs or improve inclusion in the mainstream community.
2. Experiences of community work program involvement as being solely punitive, unnecessarily protracted in length with little evidence of skill-building or rehabilitative elements.

Detailed analysis of the accounts of participants on CCOs has provided considerable insight into program and practice elements that have the potential to improve the positive impact of this sentencing option, summarised next.

What can we learn about approaches to practice from the experiences of participants on CCOs?

Acknowledging that there is a large body of literature on effective delivery of therapeutic programs to people in the justice system, what follows is not a comprehensive discussion of every feature that is necessary to program delivery but, rather, a brief discussion of important features that emerged from analysis of the experiences of participants.

These features are consistent with, and reiterate, existing understandings about 'what works' in relation to program or service delivery with people in the justice system, (e.g., Andrews, 2001; Andrews et al., 2011; Barnett and Howard, 2018; Borzycky, 2005; McGuire, 2013). They bear repeating given that engagement with therapeutic services was low and experiences were often poor.

- **Delivery of multi-modal support, holistic and tailored forms of support** (as opposed to 'one size fits all') are some well-established key features of successful programs with people in the justice system and supported by study findings here. Participants in this study identified a range of holistic issues for which they could potentially benefit from support including problematic alcohol and drug use, mental health, education and employment transition support, family and relationship functioning, use of violence in and out of the home and financial counselling and financial literacy skill-building.
- The importance of a **relational approach to service provision**. Positive, supportive and respectful relationships with service providers were highly valued. These types of positive relationships can be instrumental to change, having the potential to supplant critical relational experiences that individuals may be lacking in their natural social networks (e.g., encouragement to persist despite setbacks).
- **Emphasis on building confidence and motivation.** Damaged self-esteem and poor self-belief were common barriers to change. Strengths-based approaches and motivational techniques are likely to be particularly effective. Building skills to manage the stigma associated with a justice record was also an identified area of need.
- **Long term support.** The conglomeration of multiple issues as well as justice system obligations was often overwhelming to participants, and goals such as gaining employment not immediately possible for many. Unrealistic expectations from services only exacerbated marginalisation. Services need the capacity to support the participant to work through smaller steps as they work towards larger goals, requiring persistence over a long period.
- **Programs that minimise use of coercion.** While coercion may be systemically viewed as a way to ensure participation in structured therapeutic activities, programs accessed in a coercive context or with elements of coercion are less effective than those accessed voluntarily. This is a complex area requiring employment of skilled staff and use of flexible approaches to service delivery.
- **Programs that are geographically accessible.** This may include provision of multiple types of specialist support through local access points.

The study also provided rare insight into experiences of community work programs. Below is a summary of practice elements that were valued among this group. We acknowledge that many of the elements identified above overlap with those identified by Turner and Trotter in their review of best practice for the operation of community service schemes (2013), with the current study providing substantial insight into the impact that poor experiences of community work programs have on individual wellbeing including their efforts to change.

- **Placement in productive and valued community work roles.** Community work program activities should have a tangible benefit to the community, enabling participants the opportunity to genuinely 'repay' their debt or make amends and to improve their sense of self-worth.
- **Improved inclusion** through engagement in community integrated work programs involving contact with or supervision by community members. Avoidance of 'sheltered workshop' programs (e.g., closed environments).
- **Building skills** including 'soft' skills such as social and job readiness skills that support a non-offending lifestyle. This could be through incorporation of non-tertiary accredited modules delivered by community service providers into community work programs.
- **Pro-social interactions** with supervisors and others who are supportive of the individual and who encourage positive change.
- **Individual or small group placements where possible.** Group work environments appeared to have a particularly deleterious impact on males in this study, contributing to a negative self view (i.e., identity as 'criminal') and undermining efforts to change.
- **Collaborative approaches to arranging work placements** with a focus on enabling individuals to use their skills and build on their individual strengths.
- **Efficiency of placements.** Periods of engagement in community work should be streamlined and condensed where possible (including possibilities for after hours and weekend attendance) so that individuals are able to focus on 'moving on' with their lives as quickly as possible.

Areas for future investigation

- It appears that mainstream employment service providers are not meeting the needs of this group. The reasons for this, and strategies to improve outcomes, require further investigation. The employment-focused service attached to this study offered informal, voluntary, relationship-based support, recording good outcomes with participants, suggesting the approach is worth further exploration
- There is an identified need to consider how to improve ETE pathways through alignment of accredited/tertiary qualifications with realistic local employment opportunities. This involves collaboration with industry and ensuring that participants have the opportunity to attain the relevant practical experience necessary to secure employment.
- The evidence base for implementation of community work programs is weak. The types of programs that are offered and the quality of implementation is likely to vary substantially across Australia and within jurisdictions. Rigorous and detailed evaluation of community work program types is needed to improve understanding of effective practice. Measurement of impact should encompass a range of variables beyond recidivism and completion rates, including subjective experiences such as impact on self-esteem, confidence, the work supervisory relationship and it should also explore the needs of particular groups including women, people with cognitive impairments and those from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- Analysis of the service usage patterns of people on CCOs in Victoria is needed, particularly to identify areas (i.e., geographical and service types) where people who have been referred to a program or service as a condition of their CCO experience delays or access issues.
- Exploration of training opportunities for corrective services staff to participate in programs that improve their skills in modelling pro-social relationships may be worthwhile. An example of one such program is Jesuit Social Services' "Modelling Respect and Equality" (MORE) program.
- The study found that there were very few opportunities for people in this cohort to improve their level of connectedness to community. Social isolation was a substantial issue. Exploration of opportunities and models that may help to decrease social isolation and improve sense of community belonging among this group is a worthwhile endeavour.
- It has been noted elsewhere that there are access issues impacting the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as well as people living in rural and remote locations on CCOs. These are issues worth further investigation that were beyond the scope of this paper.
- Children and significant others (i.e., partners and other family members) are often negatively impacted by the justice system involvement of their family member/significant other and of CCO conditions. They are a disadvantaged group whose needs are largely 'hidden'. They also potentially play a pivotal role in the person's journey towards desistance from offending. Investigation into ways to improve opportunities for support or inclusion of these groups where appropriate is recommended.

A note on the impacts of COVID-19

The final draft of this report was written during the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, with all data collection and analysis having been conducted prior. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on disadvantaged people worldwide and there are many indications that it has had, and will continue to have, a heavy impact on people involved in this study (and those in the justice system generally). In the context of Victoria thus far, people in the NWMR of Melbourne have been diagnosed with the disease at a greater rate than elsewhere in the state and the impact of shutdowns have a heavy impact on those with precarious forms of employment. The mental health toll of the pandemic is likely to be significant among the most vulnerable members of our community. Further, it is likely that much of the long term burden will be disproportionately experienced among already marginalised and disadvantaged communities, including people in the justice system, due to increased unemployment, and constraints on government expenditure.

The effects of the pandemic on the justice system itself have yet to be fully realised or described; however, prison numbers in Victoria have fallen for the first time in years, with indications that this is due to decreased use of remand (CV, 2020). While this is a reprieve for some, undoubtedly, others in the justice system have been deeply and detrimentally impacted by the pandemic. At a systems level, an increase in court backlogs has been recently identified as an issue (Parliament of Victoria, 2020). People on CCOs have been impacted by the suspension of community work group programs and changes delivery of other programs and services. It remains to be seen how well the system will cope with the challenges that lie ahead. In summary, continued pressure among advocacy groups is required to ensure that the needs of these people remain a focus in these difficult and uncertain times.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Employment Pathways Assistance needs assessment questionnaire

	Question	Brief description/category
1	Name of site (list if other)	Name of site (list if other)
2	Are you on a current community corrections order (CCO)? If NO, participant is not eligible for research study	Community corrections Y/N
3	What type of activity are you currently involved in to meet your community work requirements?	Community work activity
4	Engagement date	Engagement date
5	First name	First name
6	Participant ID	Participant ID
7	Date of birth (day/month/year)	Date of birth (day/month/year)
8	Gender	Gender
9	Suburb of residence	Suburb (type manually if not in City of Brimbank)
10	Postcode of residence *See validation page for City of Brimbank postcodes	Postcode
11	What is your country of birth?	Country of birth (skip to Q13 if Australia)
12	What is your residency status?	Residency status
13	What is the main language that you speak at home?	Main language
14	Spoken English language skills of participant (staff rated)	Spoken Engl language skills (v good, good, poor, v poor, no English)
15	Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background?	ATSI background
16	Do you have children under the age of 18 in your care?	Dependent children (Y/N)
17	What is your primary source of income?	Current income source
18	What is your current housing situation? (dropdown options)	Housing
19	What is your highest completed school level? (dropdown)	Education - school level
20	Have you done any courses since leaving high school? If none: write N/A and SKIP to Q23; If Yes: What is the highest completed level? (dropdown)	Tertiary - Highest qualification obtained
21	What is the area/field of your highest level of qualification?	Area/field of work (highest qual). Blank if none
22	Do you have any other qualifications? (refer to codes in next column if helpful to abbrev)	List other quals (e.g. 4, 7) Blank if none
23	Are you currently enrolled in any training courses?	Current training (Y/N/not sure)
24	Are you considering undertaking any training or education in the near future?	Future intent training/education
25	If yes, please name	List details
26	You mentioned that you are on a CCO… What type of offence led to your current community corrections order?	Nature of offending (re current order)
27	Have you ever served time in an adult prison? If NO, skip next question	Served time adult prison (Y/N)
28	What is the total length of time you have served in an adult prison?	Length time adult prison (days/months/years)
29	How old were you when you were first involved in the justice system i.e. attended a court?	Age first involvement justice (years)
30	Have you ever spent time in juvenile detention?	Spent time in juvenile detention (Y/N)
31	Are you employed at the moment? (dropdown options)	Employment status
32	If answered (4) NOT employed and NOT seeking work, why is this the case?	Reason not seeking employment
33	For how long have you been out of work? (Skip to Q35)	Length unemployment (months/years)
34	If (5) currently employed & job seeking, what are reasons you want change? (prompts: diff career, better pay, hours, conflict at work)	Reason seeking change
35	What is the longest time that you have ever worked for an employer?	Longest time prev employment (months/years)
36	Do you have any health issues, disability or impairment that impacts on your ability to work? Y/N	Disability, impairment, condition? If NO, skip to Q40
37	If yes, what is the main issue? (dropdown)	Nature of main disability, impairment or condition
38	Do you have any other impairments that impact on your ability to work? (dropdown options)	List any other disabilities or impairments
39	In what ways does this issue/do these issues impact you in relation to employment or education?	Nature of impact
40	What type of work have you had the most experience doing?	Most significant area of experience
41	What type of work are you seeking now? (e.g. industry, level) (dropdown options)	Type work seeking
42	How confident do you feel about getting a job?	Confidence (Very confident, confident, not confident, not at all confident, don't know, never looked)
43	How would you rate the quality of support that you have from family, partner and or friends? Note: not just financial or material	Social support (very good, good, poor, very poor, none)
44	If you were to name the biggest barrier to finding work for you what would it be? (dropdown options)	Main barrier
45	Are there any other barriers?	Other barriers
46	What is the main issue that you require assistance with?	Main area assistance needed
47	Do you have a current resume?	Resume
48	What is the best contact number for you?	Phone
49	What is your email address?	Email
50	If you no longer have contact with the participant, please state reason why	Reason no contact
	Consent items	Agrees to use of data for research (y/n)
		Agrees to be re-contacted by a researcher (y/n)

Appendix 2. Employment Pathways Advice service information and consent form

Employment Pathways Advisor
Information and consent form

Contact: Mr Byron Price, Project Officer (Jesuit Community College)
Ph. (03) 9415 8700
Email: byron.price@jss.org.au

Jesuit Social Services
Building a Just Society

About the service

Our Employment Pathways Advisor is here to learn about your needs and goals and, if it's what you want, ***help identify strategies and opportunities*** for you to move into employment and/or training.

Participation is ***not*** linked to any justice requirements (e.g., Community Corrections Order).

The service is ***voluntary*** – you do not have to participate and can stop at any time.

What information is collected about me?

The Employment Pathways Advisor will ask questions about you to help make sure that the service is ***right for you***. The questions focus on your education, employment and justice history and your future goals.

The information is recorded on a Jesuit Social Services' computer. It can only be seen by other Jesuit Social Services staff and is ***not linked to any other records*** (e.g., justice).

You ***may ask*** to see this information. If any information that is written about you is wrong, you can ***let us know*** and we will talk with you about how it should be changed.

Your information is ***confidential.*** The only time we may break this is if we are very concerned about your safety or that of other people.

This form and the information that is collected about me will be ***stored securely*** at Jesuit Social Services and will be ***destroyed after 5 years.***

Will my information be used in any other way?

Your information may be used in ***Jesuit Social Services' research*** to help us learn more about the needs of people in the justice system and strategies to improve pathways into education, training and employment. This may be published in reports or academic articles and published on our website and/or that of our funders.

We will ***never identify you*** in any information that is used (this means that you will remain ***anonymous***) and your information will remain ***confidential.***

How do I find out more or make a complaint?

If you have any questions about how information about you is used, just ask the Employment Pathways Advisor. You have a right to complain if you are not happy – just ask to speak to the following person:

Mr Garry Roach, Jesuit Social Services (General Manager Practice Development and Complaints Manager)

(03) 9421 7600

Participant Consent – tear here and pass this part of the form to Jesuit Social Services staff

I (participant's name) _____

☐ have read or have had read to me, the above information and agree to allow Jesuit Social Services to collect information about me and to use it for the purpose of working with the Employment Pathways Advice Service.

☐ I agree for information that is collected to be used in Jesuit Social Services research as described above.

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

[Office use Participant ID: _____

Appendix 3. Analysis of ETE characteristics by gender and country of birth

Table 1. Analysis of unemployment^ by age

	All CCO participants	% All	Unemployed*	% Unemployed
18-24 years	31	16%	19	16%
25-34 years	71	36%	40	34%
35-44 years	63	32%	37	32%
45-54 years	27	14%	16	14%
55-64 years	6	3%	4	3%
65-70 years	2	1%	1	1%
Totals	200	100%	117	100%

^ For this analysis, the following groups were included: Those who were unemployed and seeking work, those who were not seeking and did not specify a reason and those who specified that their CCO was the main barrier to gaining work (as per Figure 12).

Table 2. Analysis of ETE characteristics of men and women (n=200)

Job seeking status	Description	Female (n=63)		Male (n=137)	
Seeking work	Unemployed job seekers:	29	46%	75	54%
	- seeking full time work	22	35%	69	50%
	- seeking part time or casual	7	11%	6	4%
	Employed and seeking change	2	3%	11	8%
Not seeking work	Employed (any basis):	9	14%	28	20%
	- employed full time	2	3%	11	8%
	- employed part time or casual /unsure of basis	5	8%	9	6%
	- self employed	2	3%	8	6%
	Student or seeking training	1	0.5%	3	2%
	Illness/disability	7	11%	7	5%
	Parental or carer responsibilities	9	14%	3	2%
	CCO hours barrier	1	0.5%	3	2%
	No stated reason	5	8%	5	4%

Table 3. Analysis of ETE characteristics of overseas compared to Australian-born participants

		Overseas-born (n=73)		Australian-born (n=137)	
Seeking work	Unemployed job seekers:	36	49%	68	54%
	- seeking full time work	30	42%	61	48%
	- seeking part time or casual	6	8%	7	6%
	Employed and seeking change	6	8%	7	6%
Not seeking work	Employed (any basis):	16	22%	21	16.5%
	- employed full time	6	8.5%	7	5.5%
	- employed part time or casual /unsure of basis	6	8.5%	8	6%
	- self employed	4	5%	6	5%
	Student or seeking training	3	4%	3	2%
	Illness/disability	3	4%	11	9%
	Parental or carer responsibilities	4	5%	8	6%
	No stated reason	3	4%	7	6%

Appendix 4. List of most serious offence/most serious charge categories (Corrections Victoria)

MSO/MSC category	Included offence types
Homicide	murder, attempted murder, conspiracy to murder, culpable driving causing death, defensive homicide, manslaughter.
Assault	assault in company, assault causing grievous bodily harm, assault police, assault with a weapon, cause injury, cause serious injury, kidnapping & abduction, stalking offences, unlawful imprisonment.
Sex offences	rape, incest, indecent assault, sexual offences against under age person, sexual penetration, wilful/indecent exposure.
Robbery & extortion	armed robbery, blackmail, extortion, other robbery.
Burglary	aggravated burglary, break and enter with intent, burglary.
Fraud & misappropriation	deception, false pretences, forgery and uttering, fraud, misappropriation.
Other property offences	arson, criminal/property damage, handling stolen goods, other theft, possess firearms, receiving, shoplifting, theft motor vehicle, unlawful possession of stolen goods.
Breach of order	cancellation of parole, breach of intervention order, breach of suspended sentence, breach of drug order, breach of other order.
Drug offences	dealing/trafficking in drugs, import/conspire drugs, manufacture/grow drugs, possession of cannabis, possession of other drugs, use cannabis, use other drugs.
Driving offences	dangerous/reckless/negligent driving, drive under influence of drugs, driving whilst disqualified, exceed 0.05% BAC, exceed 00% BAC, refuse breath test, unlicensed driving.
Good order offences	contempt of court, escape from prison, fail to appear at court, forfeited recognizance, loitering, resist/hinder police, riot/unlawful assembly/affray, unlawful of premises/ trespassing, drunkenness offences.

Source: Corrections Victoria (2018)

LC LSIC Inquiry into Victoria's criminal justice system
Response to question on notice
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FINAL REPORT

Youth Justice Community Support Service – Evaluation

Final Report, 27 March 2013

Executive Summary

The Youth Justice Community Support Service commenced in 2008. It replaced a relatively *ad hoc* system of community support provision for young people in the Youth Justice system, which was primarily focused on post-release support from custody, with a coordinated system of support for community based Youth Justice clients. The target group for the YJCSS is young people leaving custody, young people on community orders requiring intensive support, as well as clients with a history or risk of homelessness. It was also intended that, in some circumstances, the YJCSS would provide services for pre-sentence clients with high needs.

The YJCSS service model is based on a consortium of community sector organisations working together, with community-based Youth Justice units, to provide support to young people in the community. This requires liaison with Youth Justice custodial centres for exit planning for young people in custody who will be released on parole with support provided by the YJCSS. Housing support agencies have been integrated into the YJCSS consortia to deliver the Transitional Housing Management Youth Justice Housing Pathways Initiative (THM-YJHPI), which provides a housing pathway for young people in the Youth Justice system.

This evaluation was required to review the establishment and operations of the YJCSS with a particular focus on the achievement of service system outcomes and client focused practice. The evaluation explored how the YJCSS works and the degree to which the model has improved coordination and collaboration between the Department and the community sector, and among community sector organisations. The evaluation explored opportunities for improvement and investigated performance monitoring and parole planning effectiveness. It was also required to consider the merit of expanding the YJCSS to support other Youth Justice clients.

The YJCSS program is clearly an improvement on the previous model of service delivery and is supported by stakeholders across Victoria. While client participation in this evaluation was limited, feedback from clients was positive, and improvements in client outcomes were highlighted through consultation and case studies.

The model has been effectively rolled out to all regions with inputs and outputs largely established. There is justification for the continuation of YJCSS as demonstrated by stakeholder support and improved service system outcomes. The establishment of the YJCSS has streamlined access to services, improved prioritisation of client needs, and fostered communication and collaboration between Youth Justice and YJCSS, and between agencies. The value of the Transitional Housing Management Youth Justice Housing Pathways Initiative, and the importance of stable housing, was a strong theme throughout the consultation.

The evaluation found many examples of effective case practice. This included strong communication and collaboration, client-focused care teams and proactive engagement of clients, as well as the breadth, intensity and flexibility of support provided to clients.

Regular review of YJCSS targets and funding is required, in order to ensure that resources are allocated to areas with greatest need. These reviews should include performance in service delivery and address apparent inconsistencies such as underachievement of performance targets, a degree of mismatch between identified client needs and the support provided, and the variability in the length of service provided.

The integration of the THM-YJHPI is seen as a key strength of the program, as it provides dedicated housing and support for Youth Justice clients, who can be perceived as higher risk for tenancies. Safe and stable housing is seen as a fundamental platform for young people to address the complex issues that have influenced their offending. The provision of housing and housing support is also a challenge for the YJCSS. The limited range and availability of suitable housing models has undermined efforts to provide YJCSS clients with stability and this has impacted on overall service effectiveness. The limited availability of THM properties has meant that YJCSS consortia are not able to meet their targets for the number of THM-YJHPI clients they support. Furthermore, in some cases, the THM model is not appropriate for YJCSS clients, and a broader range of housing models is required.

A challenge for the YJCSS program has been the measurement and reporting of client outcomes. While there is considerable qualitative information collected through case documentation, there is inconsistent case closure practice and little quantitative data is captured at exit through the client information system. The Youth Justice Client Outcomes tool, trialled in 2012 through Youth Justice, is applicable to YJCSS settings and it could be rolled out to consortia for use for screening, classification, needs identification, case planning and the measurement of client outcomes.

In relation to parole planning, overall efficiency has improved with a more centralised referral process, however, there are continued challenges associated with support for clients with complex or diverse needs in rural and remote areas. Youth Justice custodial workers showed mixed understandings of the YJCSS model and its role in providing support for clients leaving custody.

A final focus of the evaluation was the target group for the YJCSS. It is apparent that the YJCSS is supporting the intended target group of clients with high-intensive support needs and those at risk of homelessness. Further work is required to understand the drivers and impacts of the increasing proportion of pre-sentence clients, particularly as it coincides with a reduction in the proportion of clients on community orders.

The Final Report includes sixteen recommendations for the Department of Human Services, relating to program management, housing, connecting the YJCSS to the broader service system, program guidelines and tools, and reflection, planning and professional development.

The Department of Human Services should:

Program management

1. Continue to fund the YJCSS program across the state, with three-yearly performance reviews of consortia targets and service and support provision.
2. Undertake further work to explore the causes and impact of the increasing proportion of pre-sentence clients in the YJCSS.
3. Prioritise activity to support consistent measurement of client outcomes across the YJCSS.
4. Provide a modest injection of funding to support brokerage.
5. Support further collaboration and integration between the YJCSS and the Koori Youth Justice Program.

Housing

6. Improve the suitability, availability and range of alternative housing for youth justice clients, particularly for younger clients and those with complex needs.
7. Review the suitability of THM-YJHPI targets across each consortia.
8. In consultation with Transitional Housing Managers and consortia, undertake work to ensure more consistent tenancy management processes in the THM-YJHPI

Connecting the YJCSS to the broader service system

9. Support consortia to more consistently access therapeutic supports, which focus on trauma and attachment (including for example, mental health supports).
10. Facilitate state-wide and local networking opportunities to support consortia to liaise with relevant specialist services for partnership and workforce development.

Program guidelines and tools

11. Provide greater role clarity across stakeholders, including Youth Justice custodial services, and support positive Youth Justice and consortia relationships in each area.
12. Update the Guidelines to clarify processes and roles in referral particularly in relation to young people in custody and young people who are dual clients, and liaise with relevant programs to ensure more consistent and timely referral practice.
13. In consultation with consortia, ensure that YJCSS staff are effectively using CRISSP and expand data definitions to support consistent data collection.
14. Regularly review and update tools and templates for YJCSS to include a case closure summary, simplified referral and assessment forms and care team documentation.

Reflection, planning and professional development

15. Support Local YJCSS forums with Youth Justice and YJCSS staff and other key stakeholders, at least annually, to reflect on practice and further strengthen worker relationships.
16. In consultation with consortia, develop and implement a professional development strategy to promote best practice, with an early focus on effective referral into the YJCSS, engaging with specialists outside of the consortia, needs assessment, family violence, mental health and care team practice.

Contents

Section	*Page*
Executive Summary	2
1. Introduction and background	9
1.1 Youth Justice in Victoria	9
1.2 The YJCSS Program	10
1.3 Background and purpose of the evaluation	13
2. Methodology and participation	15
2.1 Our approach	15
2.2 Data collection sources and methods	15
2.3 Analysis	19
2.4 Limitations and caveats	20
3. Results	21
3.1 Summary of findings	22
3.2 Evaluation Topic 1: Establishment and effective operation of the YJCSS	23
3.3 Evaluation Topic 2: Measuring the outcomes of the YJCSS	39
3.4 Evaluation Topic 3: Parole planning for clients in rural and remote areas	51
3.5 Evaluation Topic 4: Key performance indicators	55
3.6 Evaluation Topic 5: Scope for further improvements to the YJCSS	58
3.7 Evaluation Topic 6: Merit of expanding the YJCSS to other Youth Justice clients	61
4. Discussion and recommendations	65
4.1 Summary of strengths, impediments and future implementation	65
4.2 Overall program management	68
4.3 Housing issues	70
4.4 Connecting the YJCSS to the broader service system	71
4.5 Program guidelines and tools	72
4.6 Reflection, planning and professional development	74
5. Conclusion	75

Appendix 1. Program Logic diagram and key assumptions 77

Appendix 2. YJCSS Interactive Framework 78

Appendix 3. Administrative data 79

Appendix 4. Regional consortia summaries 107

Appendix 5. Case studies 125

List of figures

Figure 1: Community sector community support funding since YJCSS establishment 25

Figure 2: Extent to which YJCSS is working effectively 28

Figure 3: Cultural identity of clients 29

Figure 4: Number of YJCSS referrals by year 30

Figure 5: Caseload (2008-12), ongoing compared to new cases 30

Figure 6: Length of support by VONIY rating (closed cases) 32

Figure 7: Types of support provided (proportion of occasions of support) 33

Figure 8: Extent to which joint-effort supporting factors have occurred in the YJCSS 35

Figure 9: Distribution of success ratings for YJCSS management of challenges and change 36

Figure 10: To carry out your role in the YJCSS well, how often can you rely on… 36

Figure 11: Order type of YJCSS clients (total closed cases) 37

Figure 12: VONIY ratings of clients 37

Figure 13: To what extent has the YJCSS improved… 40

Figure 14: The distribution of clients, targets, funding and actual client numbers, by region (2009-12) ... 43

Figure 15: The distribution of Youth Justice clients, YJCSS targets, YJCSS funding and actual client numbers, by region (2009-12) 43

Figure 16: To what extent do you agree the following YJCSS stages are working effectively? 58

List of tables

Table 1: Key roles and responsibilities in the YJCSS program, by stage and provider type 12

Table 2: Data collection methods 16

Table 3: Occasions of referrals not proceeding, by consortia, 2009-12 62

Table 4: Number of referrals not proceeding, by reason 62

Table 5: Order distribution in Youth Justice compared to YJCSS, by year 63

Acronyms

AFHS	Adolescent Forensic Health Service
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CRIS	Client Relationship Information System
CRISSP	Client Relationship Information System for Service Providers
CSO	Community service organisation
DHS	Department of Human Services
EIDD	Early Intervention Dual Diagnosis
ICMS	Intensive Case Management Service
MACNI	Multiple and Complex Needs Initiative
MAPPS	Male Adolescent Program for Positive Sexuality
PASA	Program and Service Advisor
THM-YJHPI	Transitional Housing Management – Youth Justice Housing Pathways Initiative
VONIY	Victorian Offender Needs Indicator for Youth
YJC order	Youth Justice Centre order
YJCSS	Youth Justice Community Support Service
YSAS	Youth Service Advocacy & Support

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1. Introduction and background

This section:

- Provides contextual background on Youth Justice in Victoria
- Describes the establishment and basic operation of the YJCSS
- Outlines the purpose of the evaluation and the structure of this report.

1.1 Youth Justice in Victoria

The Department of Human Services is responsible for the statutory supervision of young people in the criminal justice system. Victoria operates a 'dual track' Youth Justice service system. As well as providing statutory supervision for young people aged 10 to 17 years, it provides an option for some young adults aged between 18 and 20 years to be detained in a youth justice centre instead of an adult prison. The Department of Human Services (the Department) works with a number of agencies including police, courts and community sector organisations to ensure appropriate support and interventions. Services range from diversion (such as cautions and conferencing), warnings and penalties, community-based supervision (covering pre-sentence and sentenced supervision) and detention.

The Youth Justice service objectives are to:

- where appropriate, support diversion of young people charged with an offence from the criminal justice system
- minimise the likelihood of reoffending and further progression into the criminal justice system through supervision that challenges offending behaviours and related attitudes and promotes pro-social behaviours
- work with other services to strengthen community-based options for young people enabling and integrated approach to the provision of support that extends beyond the court order
- engender public support and confidence in the Youth Justice service.

These objectives are consistent with evidence which shows that effective youth justice programs focus on the factors which influence young people's offending, including both 'risk factors' such as family dysfunction and 'protective factors' such as positive role models or employment[1].

At the commencement of this evaluation, community-based Youth Justice was administered through regional Youth Justice units in each of the Department's then three metropolitan and five rural regions. In December 2012, the Department was restructured, with responsibility for service provision devolved to

[1] Noetic Solutions (2010), *Review of Effective Practice in Juvenile Justice; Report for the Minister for Juvenile Justice* (NSW), Noetic Solutions: Manuka, ACT.

seventeen areas, across four Divisions, each of which includes metropolitan and regional areas. Community-based Youth Justice is now administered through area teams, with Divisional oversight. The geographic catchment of consortia now typically covers one or two service areas.

The Department operates two youth justice centres and a youth residential centre. The Parkville Youth Justice precinct includes the Melbourne Youth Justice Centre accommodating male offenders aged from 15 years sentenced through the Children's Court and the Parkville Youth Residential Centre accommodating male offenders aged between 10 and 14 years, and young women aged from 10 to over 21 years. The Malmsbury Youth Justice Centre accommodates older male offenders aged from 18 to over 21 years, sentenced through adult courts to a Youth Justice Centre order.

Community sector organisations in Victoria have a long history in the provision of support for young offenders. Prior to the establishment of the YJCSS, funding was distributed across 21 organisations throughout Victoria ranging from community health organisations, housing services, specialist organisations and faith-based organisations.

Consistent with broader trends in public administration, the establishment of the YJCSS focused on building partnerships between government and the community sector, as well as within the community sector. Key drivers were to better target limited resources, improve efficiency and reduce duplication.

Given the specialisation within the community sector, a consortia approach was seen as a way to coordinate agencies with complementary but specialist capabilities. In each (then) region, a consortium of community service organisations was established through a submission process (with two consortia established in the Loddon Mallee region). The YJCSS relies on collaboration between the statutory Youth Justice service (including custodial centres and community-based teams) and community service consortia. The Transitional Housing Management – Youth Justice Housing Pathways Initiative (THM-YJHPI) has been integrated into the YJCSS to provide a housing pathway for young people who are involved in the Youth Justice system and at risk of homelessness.

1.2 The YJCSS Program

The YJCSS started in Melbourne in late 2008 and in non-metropolitan areas from February 2009.

The target group for the YJCSS includes Youth Justice clients requiring intensive support and clients eligible for THM-YJHPI (those with a history or risk of homelessness and who have the potential to live independently).

The YJCSS was designed to support overall objectives for the broader Youth Justice service, such as to:

- Reduce the severity, frequency and rates of re-offending and to minimise progression into the criminal justice system by young people in the Youth Justice system,
- Better service clients in their local community and facilitate their transition from the Youth Justice service system to their local community service system.
- Better prepare Youth Justice clients for adulthood, by developing their independence, resilience and positive connections to family and community.
- Better develop Youth Justice clients' capacity for meaningful educational and economic participation.

The consortia approach was intended to foster strategic partnerships among community service organisations in each region to provide a range of services tailored to meet the needs of referred young people. This would include services provided by consortia member agencies as well as referrals to services provided by other agencies in the broader service system. Desired service types cover the following areas: drug and alcohol, health, mental health, housing, education, training and employment, family support, family violence, trauma, sexual assault, legal issues, refugee support, Aboriginal services, mentoring and recreation, and others.

When the evaluation commenced, Jesuit Social Services was the lead agency for all the metropolitan consortia, with a range of partners in each metropolitan region, including Youth Support and Advocacy Services as an unfunded partner. The lead agencies in regions were Quantum Support Services (Gippsland), Centacare (Grampians), Barwon Youth (Barwon South West), Mallee Accommodation and Support (Loddon Mallee (Mallee)), St Luke's Anglicare (Loddon Mallee (Loddon)) and Brayton Youth and Family Services (Hume). The number of partner agencies varied, ranging from no consortia partners in Grampians to five partner agencies in the North-West Metropolitan region.

Another feature of the YJCSS is a single intake point, with the lead consortium agency receiving and assessing all referrals and negotiating and coordinating support with partner agencies. The *Guidelines for the Youth Justice Community Support Service (2010)* outline the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders (Youth Justice units and Youth Justice custodial centres, YJCSS consortia and Transitional Housing Managers) across the service pathway including assessment, referral, support and exit (both exit from Youth Justice and from the YJCSS).

The respective responsibilities of community-based youth justice units, custodial centres, consortia and THM within the YJCSS are summarised in Table 1 below. It shows that the YJCSS consortia are responsible for the provision of intensive support (such as case work or custodial visits for young people exiting custody) to enable young people to connect to family, education, training, employment and community, and thereby reduce their likelihood of reoffending. The consortia are also responsible for service referrals, transitional housing and support and case planning and coordination.

The support phase includes planning for support (such as participating in parole/exit planning for clients in the process of release from custody, and an initial case coordination meeting) as well as support provision and referral. During the support phase, community-based Youth Justice workers maintain responsibility for case management as part of their statutory supervision, transitioning case management to YJCSS for clients who receive post-order support.

Table 1: **Key roles and responsibilities in the YJCSS program, by stage and provider type**

	Community-based Youth Justice units	Youth Justice custodial centres	YJCSS consortia	Transitional Housing Manager
Assessment and prioritisation	Completes client assessment and develop (case management or parole) plans; determines eligibility and priority	Identifies young people in custody requiring post-release support; informs assessment and prioritisation	Consults with regional Youth Justice unit regarding potential referrals	Manages THM properties' availability and keeps Youth Justice units and YJCSS informed of availability
Referral	Initiates and gate keeps referrals with input from other services; submits endorsed referral to YJCSS, negotiates waiting list with YJCSS (where required)	Advises community based Youth Justice units of young people in custody requiring post-release support	Receives, considers and accepts referrals; negotiates support; commences initial contact	Accepts tenancy nomination as part of referral
Support phase	Undertakes statutory supervision and case-management of the community-based order; convenes care-team meetings	Coordinates support in relation to leave arrangements and exit plans	Provides intensive support, referral and THM-YJHPI housing and support	Manages 'sign up' and orientation, tenancy maintenance and neighbourhood issues; support Public Housing applications
Exit from Youth Justice (End of statutory order)	Reviews young person's progress and ongoing needs and discusses supports required with young person and the YJCSS consortium	Reviews young person's progress and ongoing support needs (on exit from custody only)	Consults with Youth Justice regarding ongoing support provision	As above

	Community-based Youth Justice units	Youth Justice custodial centres	YJCSS consortia	Transitional Housing Manager
Post-order support phase	Monitors throughput of clients in the YJCSS and tenancies in THM-YJHPI properties	No role	Allocates primary case manager and continues to provide support; reviews intensity of support and plan for exit	As above
Exit from YJCSS	Receives confirmation from YJCSS when support period has ended	No role	Undertakes exit planning with young person with links to necessary community supports; informs Youth Justice unit of case closure	Notifies Youth Justice unit and YJCSS when property becomes available.

1.3 Background and purpose of the evaluation

The Department engaged Synergistiq to assess the ongoing viability of the YJCSS as a successful, efficient and effective program for the client group. The evaluation explored the operation of the YJCSS across each region and across the State. It included process and summative evaluation, to explore the implementation of the YJCSS and assess the achievements to date, with a particular focus on service system outcomes. Prior to the evaluation, the Department developed a Program Logic which was reviewed and confirmed for this evaluation (**Appendix 1**). It shows the relationships between different elements – the drivers (which shaped the initiative), the target client group, the inputs (the resources for the service), the intended outputs, the service system outcomes and client outcomes.

The Program Logic articulates the 'theory of change' that the YJCSS is based on. It includes assumptions built into the design of the YJCSS. These assumptions were identified with the input of the YJCSS Evaluation Working Group. The primary assumption is that through improving collaboration between agencies, and between the Department and agencies, clients will receive more targeted and integrated services, which in turn will support them towards resilience and independence, and improve family and social connection as well as economic participation. The ultimate aim is to contribute to reduced re-offending.

The achievement of client outcomes is not controlled solely by the YJCSS and is impacted by many other external factors. Service system outcomes – the degree to which the service is prioritising and responding to client needs and fostering effective communication and collaboration between agencies – are largely controlled by the YJCSS and are the primary focus of this evaluation. While this evaluation did not systematically explore client outcomes, it is critical to acknowledge that service system outcomes are intended to improve client outcomes.

The evaluation scope includes the operational delivery of the YJCSS as well as the referral pathway into the service. In addition, it explored the integration of the THM-YJHPI. Community service organisations in each

consortium as well as community-based Youth Justice units and Youth Justice custodial centres were actively involved in the evaluation activities.

The evaluation will inform ongoing service directions and monitoring and reporting processes.

The Department identified six evaluation topics:

1. The establishment and operation of the YJCSS, at a regional and state-wide level
2. The service system outcomes of the YJCSS
3. Parole planning processes particularly for clients in rural and regional areas and those who are Aboriginal or have mental health issues or have a disability
4. Performance measurement and reporting
5. Opportunities for service improvements
6. The future scope of the service.

This report presents the results against the six evaluation topics, provides analysis focused on program strengths, challenges and areas for future development, and concludes with a summary of recommendations for the future development of the YJCSS, with a focus on actions for the Department, and in some cases, consortia.

Section 1, as above, provides a brief overview of the Youth Justice s in Victoria, the establishment of the YJCSS and the focus of the evaluation.

Section 2 describes the overall methodology, each data collection set, analytical methods and key caveats regarding data interpretation.

Section 3 presents the results against each evaluation topic within the Evaluation Framework with key findings highlighted.

Section 4 discusses significant findings, highlights strengths and impediments to success, and makes recommendations for the future of the YJCSS program.

Section 5 concludes the evaluation with a short summary of the key recommendations for the future development of the YJCSS.

2. Methodology and participation

This section:

- Describes our approach for this evaluation
- Details data collection methods, sources and participation
- Summarises data analysis methods, and
- Highlights methodological caveats and limitations.

2.1 Our approach

This evaluation includes process and summative elements, to explore how YJCSS has been implemented, what has been achieved and what can be further improved, particularly focusing on service system outcomes. Synergistiq developed an approach for this evaluation, informed by **Appreciative Inquiry**. Appreciative Inquiry asks 'what is working well, and how can we build upon and strengthen that?'

Appreciative Inquiry is consistent with strengths-based approaches used by workers with clients, and Synergistiq considers it a constructive and respectful way to engage with the Department and agencies about YJCSS. Given YJCSS is a relatively new program, and is still evolving, we designed an approach with the Department that would allow for **learning throughout the evaluation**, as well as at the conclusion of the evaluation. This took place through close engagement with and ongoing feedback to the Evaluation Working Group regarding data issues and interpretation, emerging themes and questions for further analysis. Learning was also fostered through the consultation design, with a strong focus on areas for improvement. In some cases, the areas for improvement related to specific local issues that could be addressed without broader program change.

The YJCSS program works across a number of levels, all of which are important for this evaluation. Our **Interactive Framework** (**Appendix 2**) represents key levels and factors that were identified as likely to influence implementation and outcomes. These include client-related factors, such as individual client characteristics, history, experience, family and neighbourhood. System-related factors include YJCSS agencies, the broader service system and the joint effort of agencies working together. Community-related factors are also likely to have an effect, such as geography, service availability and values. The Interactive Framework highlighted specific issues and questions for consideration during the evaluation, balanced by issues and questions that emerged through data collection.

2.2 Data collection sources and methods

The evaluation involved nine data collection methods (see Table 2, next page), as specified in the Department's project brief. In addition, the YJCSS Evaluation Working Group, which met on a monthly basis during the evaluation, was used to review data and early analysis. The Working Group consisted of representatives from consortia and from Youth Justice (from the then Youth Services and Youth Justice Branch, community-based Youth Justice units and the Youth Justice Custodial Services).

Table 2: **Data collection methods**

Data collection method	Focus	Coverage
Brief literature review and document scan	Intensive support, joint effort and cost benefit studies in youth justice.	Primarily national focus.
Focus groups and workshops	Implementation, practice, outcomes and future improvement	Fourteen events, 155 participants
Interviews	Implementation, practice, outcomes and future improvement	11 interviews
Service system outcomes survey	Service system outcomes and factors influencing their achievement	160 respondents
Client feedback tool	Experience, outcomes and future improvement	81 respondents
Program data	Implementation, practice, consortia performance and funding allocation	973 client records for 891 clients Funding data since prior to YJCSS commencement
Case studies	Practice, outcomes and future improvement	19 case studies
Case documentation review	Practice and outcomes	30 practice reviews
Stakeholder forum	Implementation, outcomes and future improvement	25 participants

Brief review of literature and program documentation

While a comprehensive literature review was out of scope, Synergistiq undertook a focused review of relevant literature and program documentation prior to starting data collection. This explored good practice in youth justice, and the provision of intensive support. It also looked at methodological issues related to measuring collaboration and cost-benefit analysis in the youth justice sector.

Focus groups and workshops with consortia and stakeholders

A primary data source for this evaluation was workers and managers involved in YJCSS establishment and delivery. Synergistiq visited each consortium. Depending on numbers, we held a workshop or focus group with Youth Justice and YJCSS staff. We used an Appreciative approach, based on semi-structured questions focusing on:

- What is working well in YJCSS?
- What are the challenges?
- What are possible improvements for YJCSS?

We held focus groups with Youth Justice Program and Service Advisors (PASAs), Youth Justice custodial workers in Parkville Youth Justice Precinct and Malmsbury Youth Justice Centre and members of the Youth Parole Board. We held a workshop with Department of Human Services staff across a number of relevant program areas and other key stakeholders. In total, fourteen consultation events were held, involving approximately 155 people. Participants were identified and invited through Department and YJCSS contact lists.

Interviews

Another form of stakeholder consultation was through interviews with stakeholders. Interviews were held partly to reach people who otherwise would not be involved (for example, with Department staff previously involved in the establishment of YJCSS) as well as to allow for confidential views not shared during group consultation. At the end of each workshop or focus group, participants were invited to participate in an interview if they wished to provide additional or alternative information. This option was not widely taken up. Synergistiq identified and contacted the majority of interview participants, with input from the Department. In total, eleven in depth interviews were completed.

Service system outcomes survey

The service system outcomes survey was designed for workers and managers involved in the delivery of YJCSS. In part, this was to explore opinions about the degree of success of the program in achieving the service system outcomes. It was also to explore underlying views regarding factors which influence joint effort across agencies, such as leadership, transparency and trust. The survey was distributed using Survey Monkey to Youth Justice, YJCSS staff and custodial staff via key Department and YJCSS staff. There were 160 respondents.

Client feedback tool

Extensive direct client consultation was considered out of scope by the Department, however client feedback on the program was seen as critical information, as otherwise the evaluation would be shaped largely by worker and manager views. A short feedback tool was therefore developed to assess clients' experience of the YJCSS and the degree to which they felt that the program met their needs. This was in the form of a survey, which could be completed independently or administered by a worker.

The Department and consortia staff coordinated client contact, with three criteria to support ethical engagement:

- Voluntary participation – clients were not obliged to participate, and active consent was sought
- Confidential participation – client details were not collected and all feedback was retained by Synergistiq
- Independent oversight – in cases where a worker administered the survey, the worker was not the client's key worker.

Clients (including past clients) were identified through Youth Justice and the consortia. A total of 81 client surveys were returned.

Program data review

The Department collects and monitors a range of program data, relating to:

- Client demographics
- Client pathways and service utilisation
- Consortia performance, and
- Funding distribution.

The program data for YJCSS is extracted from the Client Relationship Information System for Service Providers (CRISSP) through the Department's Corporate Reporting Tool which can be exported into Excel. CRISSP is a client information and case management information system, used by community sector organisations funded by the Department of Human Services to record demographic data for each client, as well as information related to their order type, service use and service duration. This information was used to explore service provision for clients, as well as consortia performance against program targets (for example, related to assessment completion).

The YJCSS data is regularly compiled by the Department into quarterly reports, and these were also used as a data source.

A third source of data was financial information regarding funding for transitional and community support, before and since the establishment of YJCSS. This was compiled by the Department and provided in Excel summaries.

Case studies

Nineteen case studies were prepared, using a case study template designed by the Department and distributed to community-based Youth Justice units and consortia. A mix of good practice case studies, and case studies to highlight areas for improvement were intentionally sought. Cases were selected to cover a range of pathways and different service engagement, including clients on parole, clients on community orders, clients living in THM-YJHPI properties, clients in rural areas, Aboriginal clients, clients from culturally diverse backgrounds and dual clients (Child Protection or Disability Services clients).

Review of case documentation

The purpose of reviewing case documentation was to explore documented case practice, using assessment and planning tools such as the YJCSS referral form, parole plans and client support plans. De-identified material was provided for sixteen clients who were the subject of the case studies as well as another fourteen clients who were randomly selected from stratified lists to ensure a range of cohorts were included in the review (covering factors such as order type, gender, cultural diversity and location).

The review included a descriptive focus (for example, which tools were used and how comprehensively they were completed) and a process focus (for example, which services were provided, how the young person was involved in planning and how agencies worked together). Documentation was reviewed initially individually for each client, and then compared across all clients. A total of thirty case practice reviews were completed.

Stakeholder forum

A final source of information was a stakeholder forum held in November 2012, during which interim findings were presented and discussed. There were 25 participants in the forum, comprising a mix of managers and workers from community-based Youth Justice units and custodial centres, consortia, and relevant agencies such as the Adolescent Forensic Health Service (AFHS) and the Youth Justice Homelessness Assistance Service (YJHA). The forum considered priorities for possible program improvement.

2.3 Analysis

Analysis was based on qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data included responses to closed and scaled questions in the service system outcomes survey and client feedback tool, program data from CRISSP and financial data. In addition, quantitative information was obtained through the service system outcomes survey and practice review which was coded and categorised. Quantitative analysis consisted of descriptive and factor analysis, with a focus on comparing and contrasting results across location, agency types and worker roles.

Qualitative data included consultation results, interview responses, open responses in the service system outcomes survey and client feedback tool, case study information and notes on the case documentation. The data was analysed by themes, including emergent themes as well as issues identified through the literature review and document scan. Data was initially analysed according to data collection method, with a focus on the issues within each theme, and whether views on these issues varied, for example, by location or agency.

Initial key findings from each data source were compared through triangulation to identify common issues and different perspectives. Given there was a range of perspectives on many of the themes, the report explores dominant and minority perspectives, as well as emerging issues. De-identified quotes and case study summaries are used to illustrate key points or different positions.

2.4 Limitations and caveats

There are a small number of limitations and caveats to the methodology. These were recognised during the project planning stage, and as far as possible, the evaluation was designed to minimise their impact.

Firstly, the evaluation does not directly address the extent to which service system outcomes contribute to client outcomes. The focus of this evaluation is on service system outcomes, and is based on the assumption that improved service system outcomes will improve outcomes for clients.

Secondly, there was little quantitative data available on the status of service system outcomes prior to the establishment of the YJCSS, and the evaluation has relied largely on worker perceptions of the impact of the YJCSS. This was balanced through the client feedback tool, practice review, case studies and interrogation of program data, as well stakeholder consultation.

Thirdly, another limitation is that timing of the interviews meant that a number were scheduled in December, in the lead up to Christmas. There were several late cancellations due to interviewees' workload pressures.

A number of caveats should also be highlighted regarding results and analysis. Some of the questions in the Service System Outcomes Survey used an eleven-point scale to rate, for example, the degree of change due to YJCSS. For ease of presentation, results have been converted to a five-point scale[2].

The evaluation relied on data collection and entry by Youth Justice and YJCSS staff into CRIS and CRISSP. A key assumption is that the documentation accurately described what happened with a client, and that the trajectory described in the documentation was valid.

As a result of some data quality issues, not all program data has been used to inform the results and analysis of the evaluation. There is variable data entry and categorisation practice across the consortia, for example relating to the recording of time and category of support activity. Furthermore, rules relating to particular data items and CRISSP errors meant that particular data items could not be used, such as the end date of orders and completion dates for three-month reviews of client plans.

Our conclusions regarding assessment and support through the practice review are only partial, as case documentation was incomplete for a number of the practice reviews. This was noted where it was obvious. Workshop and focus group consultations involved YJCSS workers, workers from community-based Youth Justice units and custodial centres, PASAs and Department representatives. Such group consultations can create an environment where participants are less likely to voice diverse opinions. We used a mix of individual and group discussion techniques during each consultation, and offered telephone interviews where participants had additional or alternative perspectives to address this issue.

[2] 0-2 equals 'Low', 3-4 equals 'Low-medium', 5-6 equals 'Medium', 7-8 equals 'Medium-great' and 9-10 equals 'Great'.

3. Results

This section presents results from a range of data sources that have informed the evaluation. Data is presented from:

- Workshop and focus group consultation
- Telephone interview
- Program and administrative sources
- The Service system outcome survey
- The Client feedback survey
- Practice reviews
- Case studies.

Results are presented according to the evaluation framework, against each evaluation topic as specified in the tender requirements:

1. Establishment and effective operation of the YJCSS
2. Measuring the outcomes of the YJCSS
3. Parole planning for clients in rural and remote areas
4. Key performance indicators
5. Scope for further improvements to the YJCSS
6. Merit of expanding the YJCSS to provide a service to other Youth Justice clients.

A full summary of program data is included at Appendix 3 with consortia summaries, detailing consortia make-up and client data results at Appendix 4.

3.1 Summary of findings

Evaluation Topic	Key findings
1: Establishment and effective operation of the YJCSS	• The YJCSS program has been established across the state, with inputs and outputs largely in place and being delivered, with some consortia exceeding client number targets. • The YJCSS is a significant improvement on previous service delivery and previous service system outcomes. • The proportion of pre-sentence clients has increased since YJCSS commencement, and more work is required to understand the causes and impacts of this.
2: Measuring the outcomes of the YJCSS	• Service system outcomes have been positive, with stakeholders and clients providing positive feedback on the impact of the program. • A number of impediments to outcomes have been identified, relating to the limited range and availability of housing, care team practice, consortia make-up, worker skill and client engagement. • Effective case practice includes strong communication and collaboration, consistent and client-focused care teams, a breadth of support and proactive client engagement.
3: Parole planning for clients in rural and remote areas	• YJCSS has improved the efficiency of parole planning processes, however there are continued challenges associated with support for clients with complex or diverse needs in rural and remote areas. • Custodial workers show mixed understandings of the YJCSS model and how it supports clients leaving custody.
4: Key performance indicators	• Current program indicators focus on process rather than outcome measures. • Client outcomes are qualitatively tracked through case documentation, with variable data quality and comparability. • Case closure summaries could be used to capture and document client outcomes. • The Client Outcomes Tool, piloted by Youth Justice in 2012, is transferrable to the YJCSS consortia.

5: Scope for further improvements to the YJCSS	• A number of process, practice, operational, and system improvements could be considered for future implementation and improvement of the YJCSS. • Proposed improvements cover program management, housing, links to the broader service system, program tools, reflection, planning and professional development.
6: Merit of expanding the YJCSS to provide a service to other Youth Justice clients	• The YJCSS mostly provides a service to the intended target group and has flexibly responded to higher than expected demand for support for pre-sentence clients. • In some locations, there is a higher proportion of clients with moderate needs. In other locations, client targets have been exceeded with a focus on high-intensive needs clients. • Support for clients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness is limited by a lack of available THM stock and other alternative housing models.

3.2 Evaluation Topic 1: Establishment and effective operation of the YJCSS

	Key findings
Establishment of inputs	• YJCSS has been rolled out across all regions with inputs largely established, including the provision of funding, the establishment of PASA roles, the creation of partnerships in consortia, the integration of the THM-YJHPI program, establishment of governance mechanisms and the roll-out of CRISSP. • Most consortia appear to be working well, with effective working relationships between Youth Justice and consortia. • In some locations, staff do not have access to CRISSP, despite access being mandatory.
Delivery of outputs	• Through to June 2012, the YJCSS supported 891 clients. • Outputs such as the prioritisation of clients for YJCSS, improved identification of client needs, and tailoring of services and supports represent improvements on previous service provision. • Case practice is variable, with inconsistent care team practice. This has been a focus of Departmental training and support. • While relationships generally appear to be strong, it is unclear the extent to which consortia are involved in relationship building outside of the consortia.

Consistency of target group	• There appears to be an increasing proportion of pre-sentence clients, representing a broadening of the intended target group. More work is required to understand the drivers and effects of this.

Since the commencement of the YJCSS program through to June 2012, there are 973 YJCSS client records, which comprises of records for 891 clients (See Appendix 3 for detail). In total, there were 420 clients receiving support from consortia in rural regions and 471 clients receiving support in metropolitan regions.

To what extent have the specified inputs to the YJCSS, listed in the program logic, been appropriately established (a) at a regional level, and (b) at a state-wide level?

There are a number of inputs for YJCSS as articulated in the program logic, including:

- **Funding** provided to each region
- Creation of **PASA** positions
- **Organisations partnering** in consortia to provide services to clients
- **Integration of the THM-YJHPI** program into consortia
- Central and regional **governance** mechanisms
- Rollout of **CRISSP** to consortia members.

According to feedback obtained through interviews, focus groups and workshops, the inputs have been largely, though not completely, established. This is in line with the stage of implementation of the YJCSS.

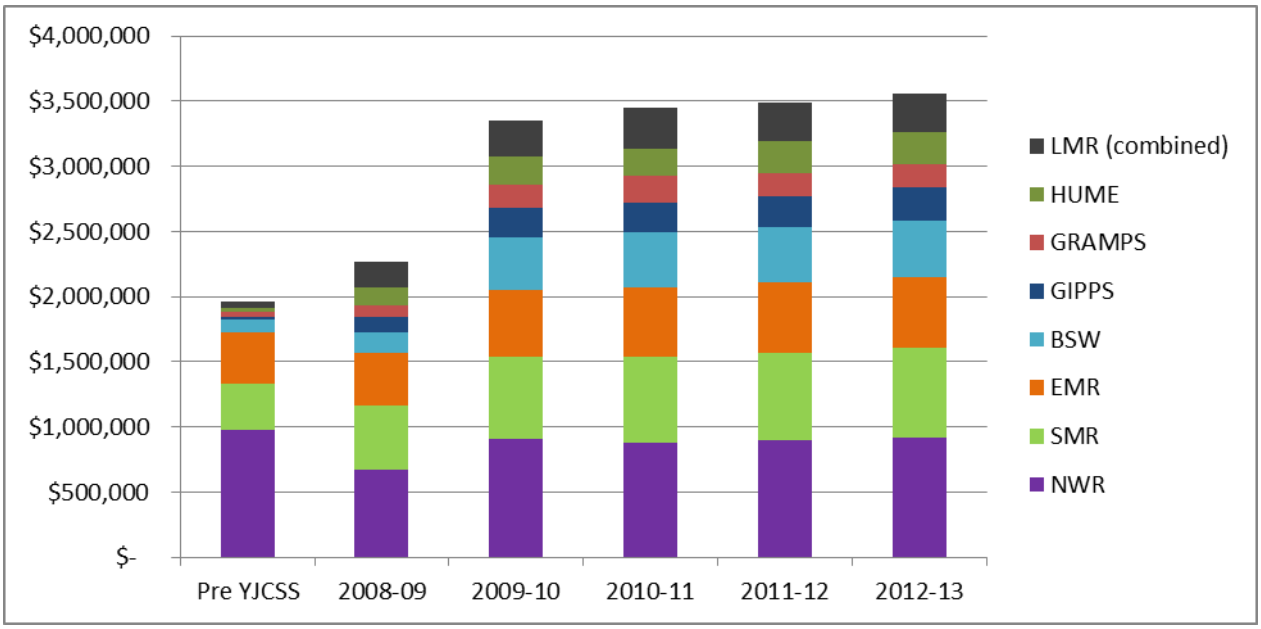
Funding

Funding has been rolled out across consortia regions, based in part on a historical model. The question of equity across consortia is discussed in Section 3.3.

An early program goal was to increase overall funding for community support. As Figure 1 (next page) shows, overall funding for community support has increased by 81 per cent since the establishment of the YJCSS[3]. The increase is greater for non-metropolitan consortia. Funding for non-metropolitan community sector organisations has increased six-fold since the establishment of YJCSS. This correlates with targets that are more consistent across the sector, and a substantial increase in Department expectations of non-metropolitan community sector organisations. Prior to the establishment of YJCSS, funding to non-metropolitan community sector organisations was linked to a target of just 37 clients. YJCSS funding to non-metropolitan consortia is now linked to a target of 180 clients.

[3] The apparent decline in funding to the North West region is because prior to the establishment of YJCSS, a number of agencies based in the region provided a metropolitan wide service, however their funding was coded to the North West regional location. Note that this funding only includes YJCSS funding distributed to consortia, and does not include non-consortia funding allocations to Care and Communication Concern Welfare Services Inc for the 'Hand-Brake Turn' program or Diversitat Geelong Ethnic Communities Council Inc for the 'U Turn' program.

Figure 1: **Community sector community support funding since YJCSS establishment**



Despite this overall increase in funding, the adequacy of funding was raised as an issue during consultation. Some participants sought increased funding for workers, and a recurring issue related to insufficient brokerage funding for YJCSS services, creating challenges for workers supporting young people, for example paying for bus tickets or groceries.

PASA positions created in each region

The intention for the establishment of the YJCSS was that PASA positions would be established in each region, with sufficient time to support partnership development and liaison between the sector and the Department. PASA positions were not established as full-time roles, and during consultation, PASAs themselves, workers and managers discussed the impacts of limited PASA time. It was further noted that in some areas PASAs were working outside of the intended PASA role, for example on child protection related matters. The value of PASAs with a strong understanding of youth justice issues, the community sector and client needs was stressed during the consultation. With the Departmental restructure, there are no longer Youth Justice specific PASAs, with PASA roles re-focused on agency relationships within local areas.

Organisations partner in consortia and work together to provide services to clients

Youth Justice and consortia are generally working well together with all consortia now established. The establishment of consortia was intended to enable specialisation and collaboration, and interviewees report variable experiences in building these partnerships at the start. Certain regions, such as Gippsland, displayed strong partnerships whereas others required more encouragement. Some agencies were accustomed to operating independently and didn't see the benefits of working together initially.

> ***Agencies (were) accustomed to working independently and didn't see the need to work together - some of them were used to providing holistic support so working with other agencies was less of an issue for them – it was a priority for the Department rather than the funded sector – for them, the benefits of working together were less obvious.***
>
> ***(Interview participant)***

However, consortia mostly appear to have been successfully established, with strong partnerships developed and clients receiving a range of services and supports.

> ***There is a strong culture of collaboration, shared roles, integrated care plans. I think this is the benefit of having it enshrined in processes early on.***
>
> ***(Interview participant)***

For some consortia, challenges persist. This is discussed below in relation to joint effort.

THM-YJHPI program integrated into consortia

While the THM-YJHPI program has been integrated into consortia, there are a number of ongoing issues regarding THM-YJHPI practice, which were raised in focus groups, workshops and interviews. A key issue is the disparity between the sub-targets for the THM-YJHPI program (which are based on two tenancies per THM property per year) and the program guidelines[4], which state that young people may reside in a THM property for up to eighteen months. The targets are intended to maintain throughput in the properties, however, THM-YJHPI clients typically have complex needs, and benefit from stable housing. The complexity of THM-YJHPI clients is reflected by a longer average duration of THM-YJHPI clients compared to non THM-YJHPI clients (45 weeks compared to 33 weeks of support, see Appendix 3).

> ***The main challenge is managing the transitional accommodation and the promise of support. One of the issues is with the targets for THM, which assume a 6 month turn around and Youth Justice designated properties often need a longer tenancy – we need to match support and tenancy and how to eke out the support if the tenancy is longer, or do you dilute it and give it to others? We should be able to be flexible.***
>
> ***(Interview participant)***

Pressure for properties is compounded by a lack of suitable housing options and restricted THM-YJHPI stock availability. Another challenge for the integration of THM-YJHPI into consortia is the routine use of notice-to-vacate processes by some THM providers. The Department does not support this practice, and states that issuing a notice to vacate on sign-up contravenes the THM program guidelines for all clients due

[4] The YJCSS Guidelines reference the Homelessness Assistance Program Guidelines section 4.1.4.

to the destabilising effect that it can have[5]. Given the authority delegated to Transitional Housing Managers via the *Housing Act* 1983, the Department can promote but not enforce better practice

Some THM support providers work more closely and flexibly with other consortia agencies, in order to meet client needs. This is reflected in some consortia where the intensive support and housing support responsibilities are shared across the whole team, which is particularly beneficial in providing clients with worker stability if they move between intensive and transitional housing supports. Departmental staff also described the challenge in working with some THM support providers to prioritise YJCSS clients for tenancy.

The issues of the range and availability of housing is discussed further in Section 3.

Governance established via central and regional implementation groups

Governance appears to be largely centrally driven. There is significant central support for the YJCSS, and regular centrally managed meetings. While this was seen as helpful during the establishment phase, and is largely well received, there was a view that this needs to shift towards stronger local structures and processes to support future delivery. It is expected that the new Departmental structure will enable a focus on local delivery.

Performance indicators and reporting have been established but there is room for greater use of these in monitoring performance. This is discussed more under Evaluation theme 5.

CRISSP rolled out to consortia

CRISSP has been rolled out to all consortia, however there are ongoing access, utility and quality issues. The Program Guidelines stress that ensuring access to CRISSP for relevant workers is mandatory for all agencies receiving funding through the YJCSS. However, in workshops, focus groups, case studies and practice reviews, it was apparent that workers do not have consistent access to CRISSP.

The Department recognises the challenges of working with CRISSP, and has established supports such as the Youth Justice CRISSP User Group to identify and resolve issues. It also provides CRISSP training and monthly support sessions, however uptake has not been strong.

The program data analysis highlighted a number of issues related to data consistency, for example, data related to activity type and duration is variable, based on different ways of counting and categorising activities, as is data entry regarding care-teams.

To what extent have the Youth Justice program and the consortia agencies delivered the specified outputs, listed in the program logic, (a) at a regional level, and (b) at a state-wide level?

Outputs identified in the YJCSS project logic include that:

- Youth Justice **flag and prioritise suitable clients** within set regional targets

[5] Homelessness Assistance Program Guidelines section 4.2.2

- Youth Justice case workers **identify client issues** and needs and make a single referral to consortium
- Consortia agencies work together to provide a suite of **services tailored to the identified needs** of referred clients (including intensive support, referrals to the broader service system, housing and support)
- Regular **case coordination** ('care team meetings') and **consultation** occurs between Youth Justice, local consortium and other service providers
- Consortia undertake **relationship building and leveraging activities** within the broader service system.

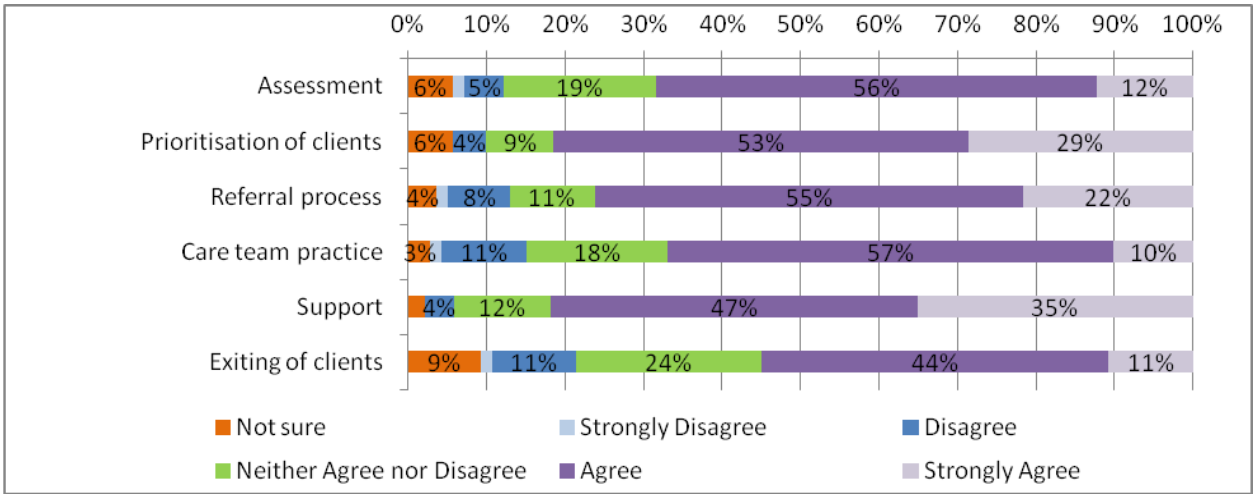
The delivery of outputs was explored through consultation, the Service System Outcome survey and program data.

Overall service delivery

The Service System Outcomes survey, which was administered to Departmental staff, including custodial workers and YJCSS staff, asked workers about their views of how different elements of the YJCSS service pathway are working. This is shown in Figure 2.

When asked to what extent they agree or disagree that different elements of the YJCSS are working effectively, 82% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that support of clients is working well, 82% agreed or strongly agreed that prioritisation is working well and 77% agreed or strongly agreed that referral was working well.

Figure 2: **To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following parts of the YJCSS are working effectively?**



Flag and prioritise suitable clients

Prioritisation of suitable clients and referral to YJCSS is generally seen as an improvement on the system prior to the YJCSS, with consultations supporting the view that appropriate clients are being referred to the program and the referral process is suitable. As noted above, most respondents to the service system outcomes survey felt that prioritisation of clients is working well, and only 5% disagreed that it is working

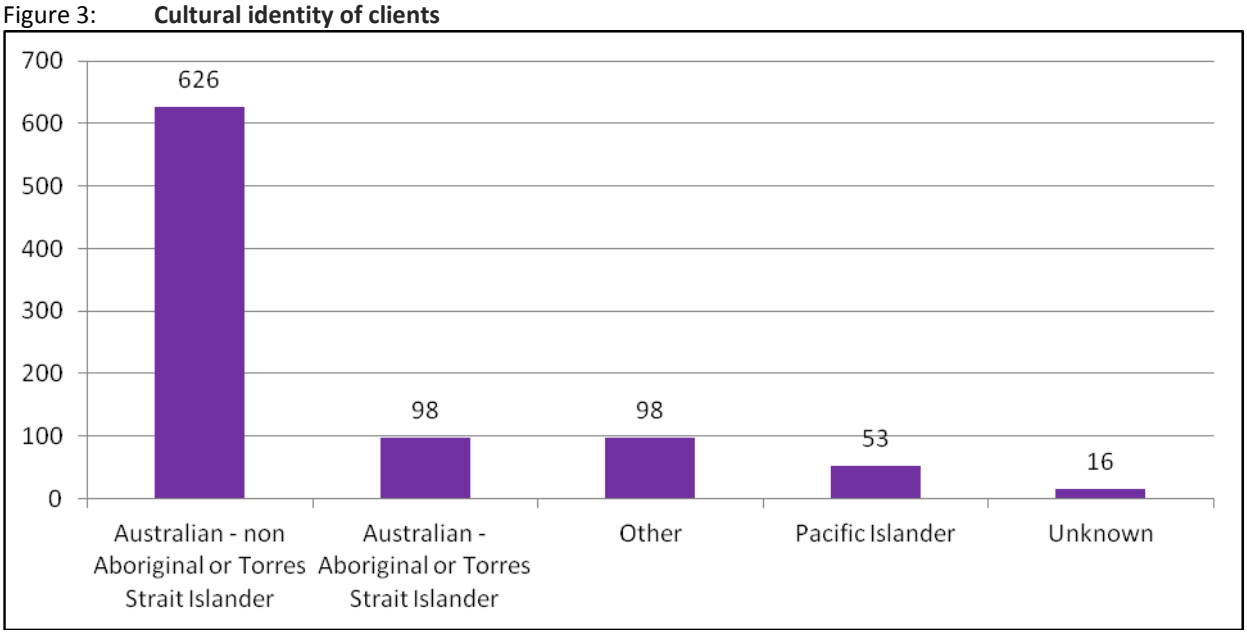
well. This should be contrasted with the program data, which shows a considerably higher proportion of clients with moderate needs are being supported by some consortia.

From the administrative data, client demographics can be assessed. It appears that demographics of YJCSS clients largely mirror demographics of Youth Justice clients in general (see Appendix 3). There is a comparable male-female split (85 males to 15 females. In total, 81 per cent of YJCSS clients identified as Australian, comprising of seventy per cent non-Aboriginal and eleven per cent Aboriginal clients. This reflects demographics within the Youth Justice system more generally. In relation to cultural identify, 93 per cent of clients had a cultural identity which matched their country of birth, seven per cent were born in Australia and identify with a different cultural identity (presumably that of their parents or ancestors), and three per cent were born overseas and identify as Australian.

THM-YJHPI clients comprised approximately 17 per cent of YJCSS clients. More than 50 per cent of THM-YJHPI clients were clients exiting custody. Clients in THM-YJHPI housing were slightly more likely to have a Victorian Offender Needs Indicator for Youth (VONIY) level of 'intensive' and less likely to have a rating of 'moderate' which supports the intuitive view that clients requiring THM-YJHPI support are more complex.

Figure 3 shows the cultural identity of clients, specifically showing Australian (Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal) clients and the number of Pacific Islander clients, which is a known over-represented group. This group includes Maori clients in addition to clients from other Pacific islands (Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Cook Islands and Nauru).

Figure 3: **Cultural identity of clients**

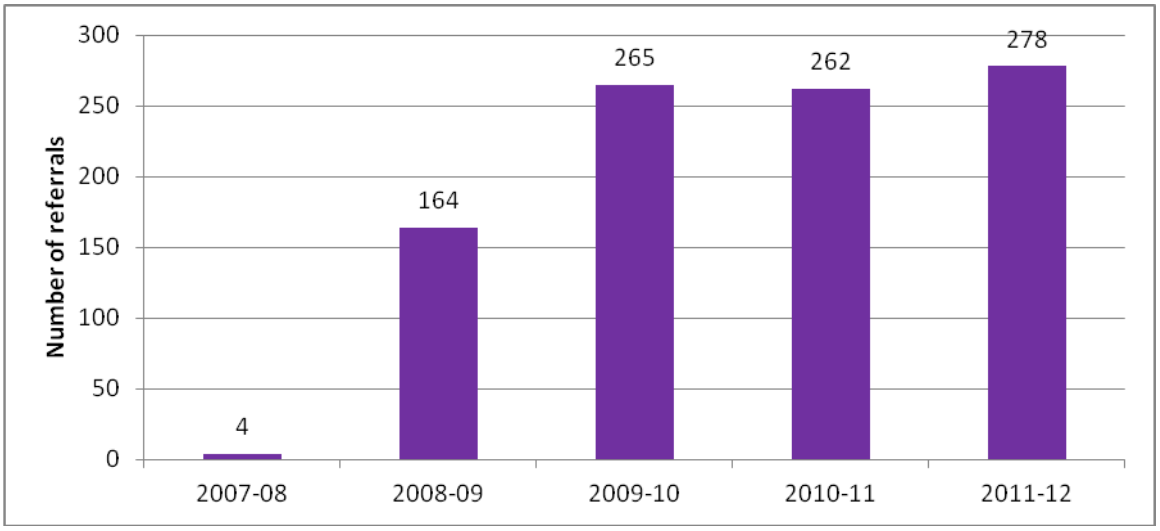


Thirteen per cent of YJCSS clients (116 clients) were Child Protection clients at the time of referral, six per cent (56 clients) were Disability Services clients at the time of referral, and two per cent (14 clients) were both Child Protection and Disability Services clients. This does not include the total number young people who have had prior departmental involvement with these services nor with housing or homelessness services.

Identifying client issues and needs and making a referral to YJCSS

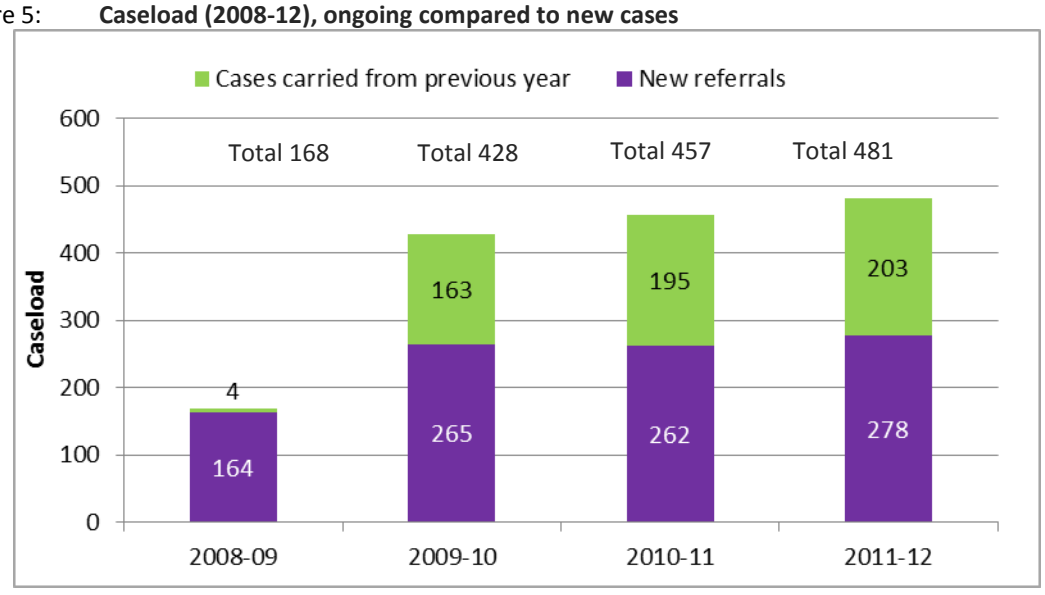
Since commencement of the YJCSS program, there has been an overall increase in the number of referrals (Figure 4).

Figure 4: **Number of YJCSS referrals by year**



In most regions, the number of referrals equalled or was slightly lower than the annual caseload target for each region. Caseload targets are discussed in detail in Section 3.3, however, it is apparent that the number of continuing cases (those 'carried' from one year into the next) has increased at a greater rate than the number of referrals (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: **Caseload (2008-12), ongoing compared to new cases**



Feedback from workshop consultations indicates that workers feel a particular strength of the YJCSS is its flexibility in allowing workers to respond to and focus on client needs, including through the diverse range of services in the consortia and in the broader range of services in the region.

An important indicator of whether client issues and needs are being effectively identified comes from the client survey tool. Over 80% of clients gave a rating of 4 or 5 when asked how well they think their worker understands their needs (with a rating of 5 representing 'really well'). In open ended responses they described their workers as being supportive and listening carefully to identify their needs. Clients referred to the practical support they were given, such as help in finding employment or making and attending appointments.

The referral process was felt to be lengthy at times, and a number of consultation participants suggested that a fast-tracked referral process would be helpful in allowing YJCSS workers to prepare more effectively, providing a more streamlined process. There appears to be variable practice across consortia regarding acceptance of incomplete referrals, with some consortia prepared to start work with initial information while others will not proceed without a complete referral. The need for earlier referrals was also raised in workshop consultations and the service system outcome survey, particularly in relation to custodial clients and dual clients. This is discussed more in Section 5.

Provision of tailored services

The intensity of support provided to YJCSS clients was seen as strength of the YJCSS model, as reported consistently in consultation. Individualised support was the most common category of response to the question of ‘what is working well’ in the service system outcome survey. The breadth and diversity of services available, and the flexibility in service delivery were also seen as strengths, which assist in the provision of tailored services to clients.

Positive practice identified included the provision of intensive and targeted supports, the provision of supports which address needs that may otherwise not be met, the capacity to deal with complex clients, and the ability to respond quickly to crises in a young person’s life.

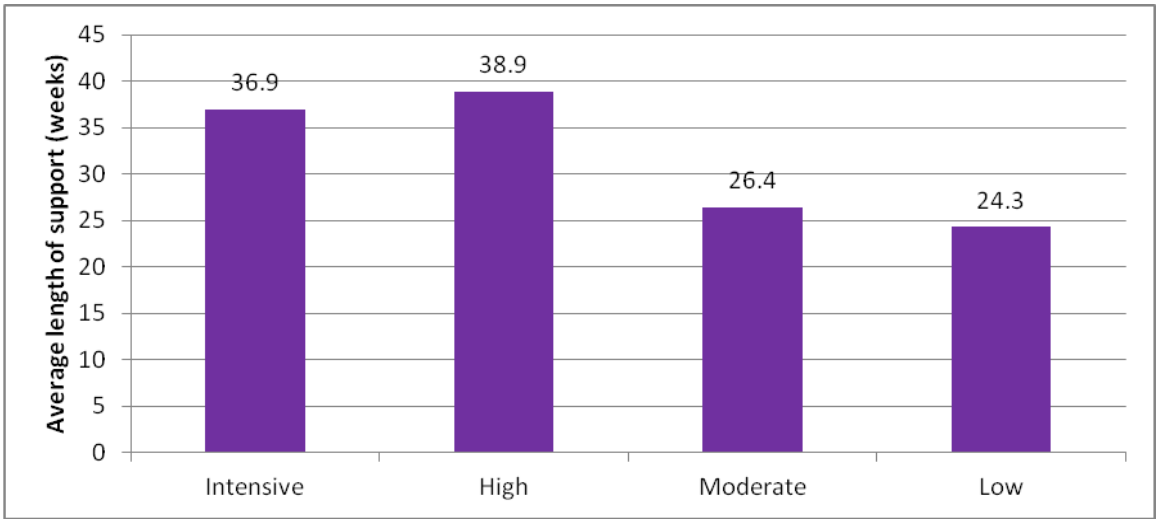
> ***Some YJCSS clients are complex and present with challenging behaviour. Options to support their transition to independence can be limited and are often not the best fit for a particular person. In these situations, YJCSS has been prepared to work with Youth Justice to develop a plan to put in place the best supports to assist the young person and hold the risk.***
>
> ***Service system outcome survey respondent***

In addition to gauging worker views about tailored supports, program data was used as a key source of information about service provision. Since the commencement of the program, YJCSS clients have received an average of 35 weeks of support. Clients exiting custody and pre-sentence clients received support for longer (average 37 and 39 weeks respectively) compared to clients on community orders (average 30 weeks). On average, clients in metropolitan regions received support for longer than clients in most rural

regions.[6] The average length of support was longest in Hume Region (47 weeks) and shortest in Loddon Region (19 weeks).

Figure 6 shows the average length of support by VONIY rating. Clients with a VONIY rating of 'high' received slightly longer periods (average 39 weeks) of support than clients rated as 'intensive' (average 37 weeks), while clients rated 'moderate' or 'low' received substantially shorter periods of support on average (26 weeks and 24 weeks respectively). This is consistent with the expectation that YJCSS support addresses client need and focuses on support for high to intensive needs clients. The actual proportion of clients by VONIY rating is variable across regions (detailed in Appendix 4).

Figure 6: **Length of support by VONIY rating (closed cases)**



The case studies highlighted an issue that is not picked up in the administrative data. Typically YJCSS support is provided for longer periods than anticipated by the Department in referral. Of the nineteen case studies, nine young people were provided support for a longer period than anticipated. In five cases close to or more than a year of additional support was provided. This was not a key theme of consultation or the interviews, but is consistent with program data about caseload. A future challenge for the program will be to balance effective support for existing clients as well as for new clients.

Support for YJCSS clients is recorded in CRISSP under twenty types of support, which have been grouped into nine categories of support. These categories are:

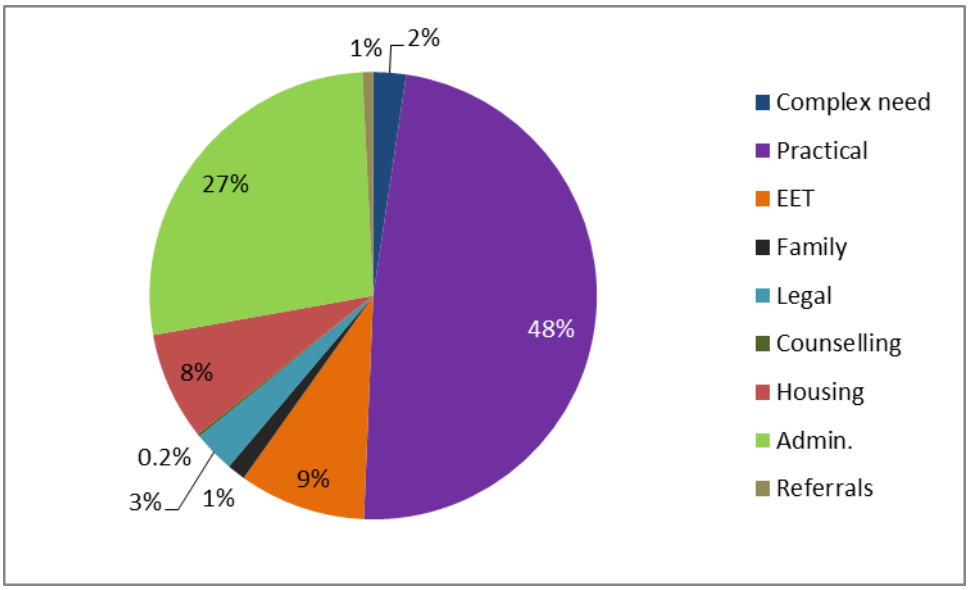
- Practical (basic support, financial support/advocacy, and general support/advocacy)
- Complex need (drug and alcohol and specialist services)
- EET (education, employment and training)
- Family (family mediation, family counselling/therapy and family support)
- Legal (legal and justice system support)
- Counselling (individual counselling/therapy)

[6] This may be impacted by a range of external factors, for example clients in THM-YJHPI housing will be listed as continuing to be involved in YJCSS even if they are not receiving intensive support and some regions may have a larger number of very complex clients who may require longer periods of support than clients with less complex or more acute needs.

- Housing (THM-YJHPI housing and other accommodation)
- Administrative (case management, intake, organisational work and case closure)
- Referrals.

Figure 7 shows that the most common type of support provided was overwhelmingly practical support, accounting for 48 per cent of all support provided. The next most common support type was 'administrative '(27 per cent), which included care team meetings and case management. Clients received an average of three types of support.

Figure 7: **Types of support provided (proportion of occasions of support)**



Clients exiting custody were provided with more housing support than clients in the pre-sentence or community order groups. Clients on community orders were provided with more support to access education, employment and training than clients in the custody or pre-sentence groups, and had less legal support. Provision of counselling, family support and referrals was reported as low across three groups, but may have been categorised as 'Basic support' or 'General support/advocacy' by staff.

Clients with a VONIY rating of 'high' received the largest range of supports, closely followed by clients with a VONIY rating of 'intensive'. Clients with VONIY ratings of 'moderate' or 'low' received a narrower range of services on average.

The average number of support types also varied by cultural identity, with clients identifying as Australian receiving a slightly narrower range of supports than clients not identifying as Australian. Aboriginal Australians were reported as receiving fewer support types (average 2.7 types) than non-Aboriginal Australians (average 3.0 types). This may be a result of Aboriginal specific support such as Koori Youth Justice, however this was not explored in detail and would benefit from further attention.

Consultations identified potential gaps in particular areas of support including family violence, trauma, disability and mental health support. This was thought to be linked to a number of factors, including a lack of specialist services within the consortia or the broader service system in each region, a lack of specialist skill in these areas amongst workers, and difficulty navigating complex mental health systems. Effectively responding to cultural diversity also emerged as a challenge, with consortia suggesting that there are likely

to be gaps in specialist cultural support for diverse groups such as Pacific Islander young people. The role of the Koori Youth Justice Program and how it links to the YJCSS was raised in consultation workshops and interviews, with participants suggesting that stronger connections need to be built with Aboriginal community controlled organisations.

The case studies and case practice reviews confirmed that there can be a mismatch between needs identified through referral and the actual supports provided through the YJCSS. For example, of the thirty case practice reviews, 29 showed evidence of an identified need not being addressed, and one case had insufficient information. The range of unmet needs (where an issue was flagged in assessment or referral but not addressed in plans) varied from one to seven per client. In some cases, this was due to an issue being mentioned as contributing to the young person's circumstances (particularly family violence, sexual assault (victim or offender) or mental illness) but not specifically flagged as an area for support, nor other supports noted. In other cases, the support need was flagged in the referral, but the subsequent plans did not explicitly address the need.

Case coordination and consultation

Care team meetings are an important component of the YJCSS coordination model. Consortia have received training in care team practice (although in some regions only in late 2012). Care team practice (both formal meetings and informal collaboration) appears to be variable, with a number of improvements suggested in workshop consultations.

Care team meetings are an emerging practice, with certain regions stronger than others (for example, Loddon Mallee received training after the evaluation had commenced). Regular attendance by all relevant stakeholders at care team meetings received the lowest rating from the service system outcomes survey respondents when asked whether they felt this was occurring in YJCSS. Department respondents were more likely to feel that there is regular attendance by all stakeholders at care team meeting and that care team practice is working well as compared to consortia respondents.

The number of care team meetings per client varied across regions, with program data indicating that Barwon South West recorded the largest number of care team meetings (average 5.8 meetings per client), and Grampians recorded the smallest number (average 0.5 meetings per client). This data excluded Loddon-Mallee Mallee where data was not entered. Data relating to care team meetings was dependent on data entry by YJCSS workers in CRISSP and hence differences between consortia may be due to variations in data entry rather than service practice.

Relationship building and leverage within broader service system

Relationships emerged as a key strength in the consultation workshops, and although relationships vary across the state, the YJCSS was generally seen as having improved relationships within the sector, and between the sector and the Department. Data from the service system outcomes survey indicated that the relationship between community based Youth Justice and YJCSS workers is considered to be strong, with YJCSS providing support to Youth Justice workers with competing statutory and administrative work. Collaboration was also identified as a strength in the survey.

Conversely, the relationship between the Department and the sector also emerged as an impediment in the service system outcome survey, with respondents feeling that there is a lack of understanding of the

role of YJCSS and a lack of collaboration. This illustrates the diversity of experience across the state and points to inconsistency. This is most acute in particular locations, where role clarity and expectations of consortia agencies and the Department do not appear to be consistently understood or supported across the YJCSS.

Joint effort in the YJCSS program

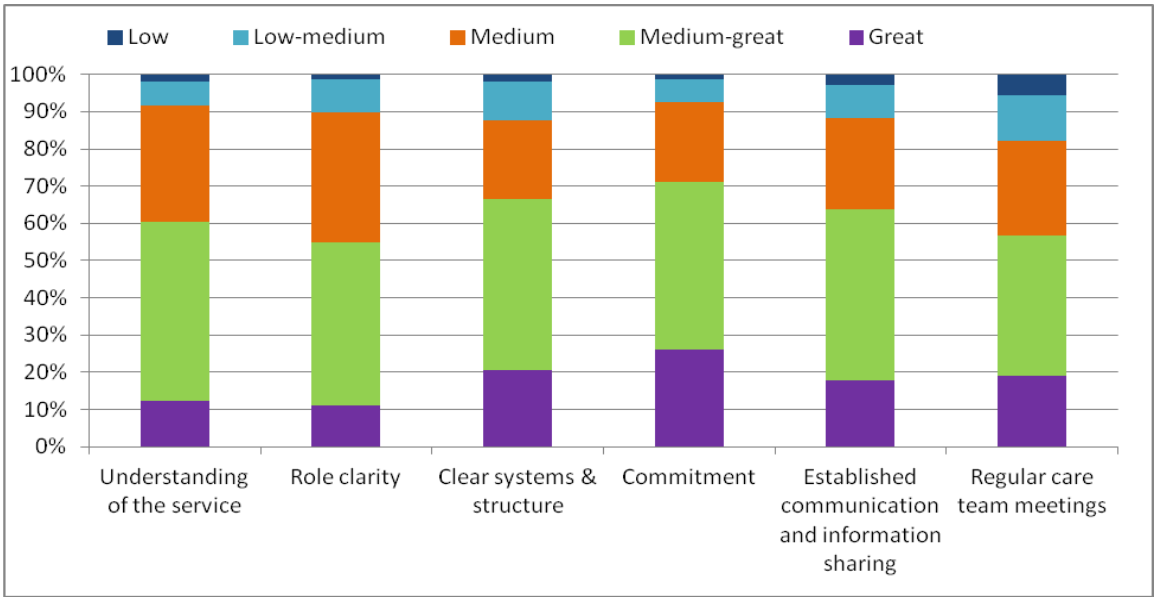
To better understand the factors that influence relationships within the YJCSS, the service system outcomes survey explored workers' views about the importance and state of various factors that were expected to influence joint effort on YJCSS. The following factors were seen as critical for joint effort:

- All stakeholders understand how the YJCSS is supposed to work
- All stakeholders have role clarity
- Clear systems and structures to support the YJCSS
- All stakeholders committed to working together
- Established practice in communication and information-sharing
- Regular attendance of relevant stakeholders in care team meetings.

These factors were all considered important or very important by almost all survey respondents. In terms of the degree to which respondents considered the factors had occurred in YJCSS, there was more variability, and this was rated lower. Figure 8 (next page) shows respondents ranked stakeholder commitment to working together (71% rated as having occurred to a great or medium-great extent) and clear systems and processes (66%) the most favourably. The view on systems and processes was somewhat divided, with over 12% of respondents considering them in place to a low or low-medium extent only.

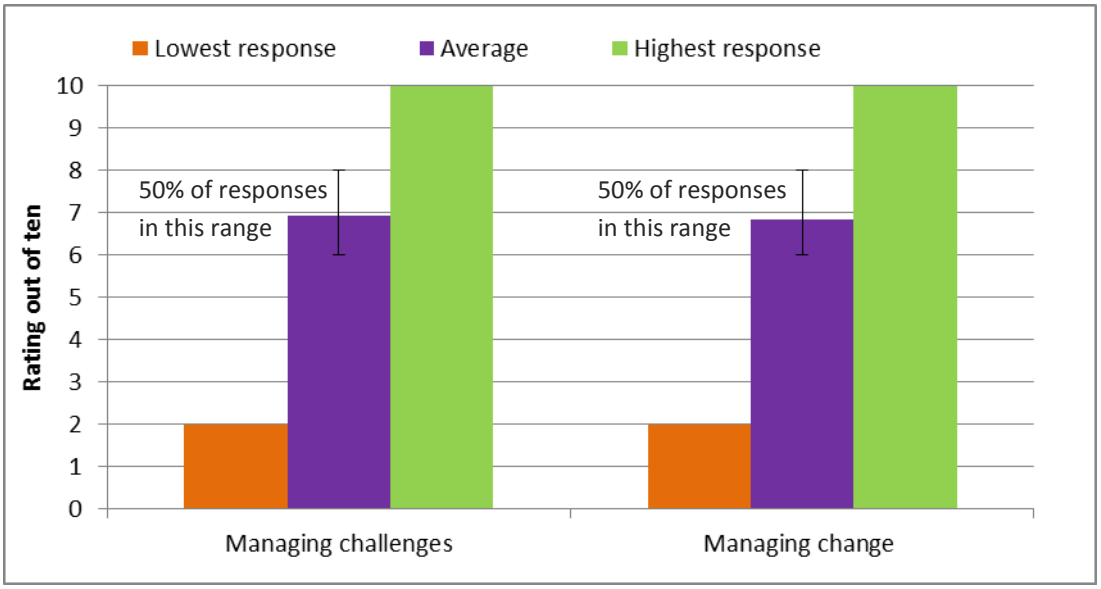
Care team meetings were seen as less established, with only 57% of respondents ranking them as occurred to a great or medium-great extent, and almost 18% ranking them as occurred to a low or low-medium extent. Similarly, role clarity rated relatively low compared to other factors.

Figure 8: **Extent to which joint-effort supporting factors have occurred in the YJCSS**



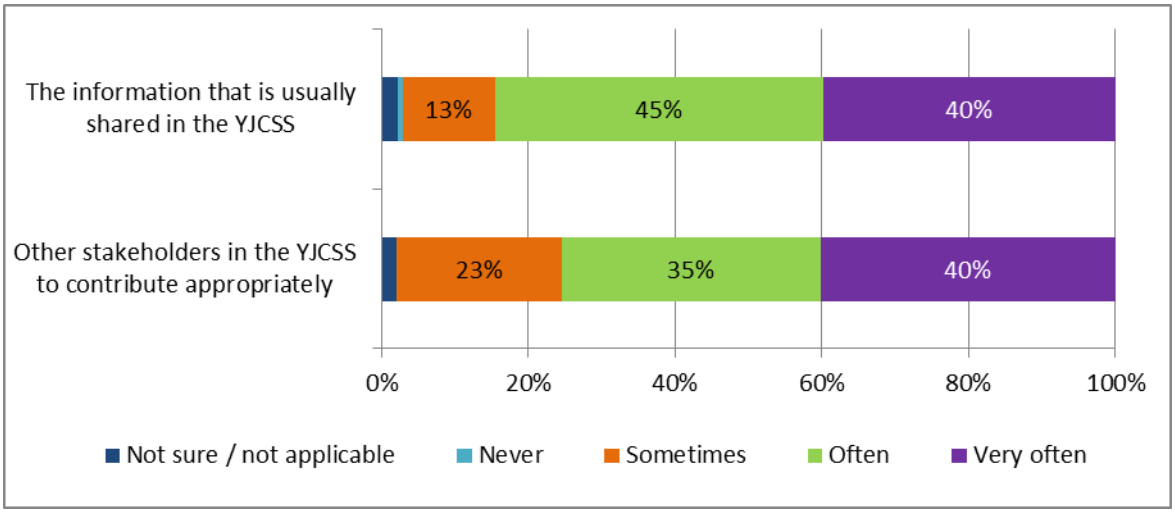
Workers were asked to rank how successful the program had been in managing challenges and change overall (Figure 9), with both areas receiving positive assessment. Consortia respondents were slightly more likely to feel that YJCSS has been successful in managing challenges and change compared with respondents from the Department.

Figure 9: **Distribution of success ratings for YJCSS management of challenges and change**



Information sharing and communication are an important factor shaping joint effort. This was seen as working well overall, although participants reported concerns about the quality and reliability of information shared between agencies. The service system outcome survey assessed the degree of trust within YJCSS, both in terms of information-sharing and trusting other stakeholders to contribute appropriately. Figure 10 shows strong trust for both factors, with 75% of respondents saying that they trust other stakeholders to contribute effectively, and 85% trusting the information that is usually shared.

Figure 10: **To carry out your role in the YJCSS well, how often can you rely on…?**



The extent to which organisations in YJCSS are building relationships within the broader system outside of YJCSS is unclear. Referrals to external organisations to provide support outside of the consortia appears to be working well overall, although through workshops, focus groups and interviews, it was reported that the

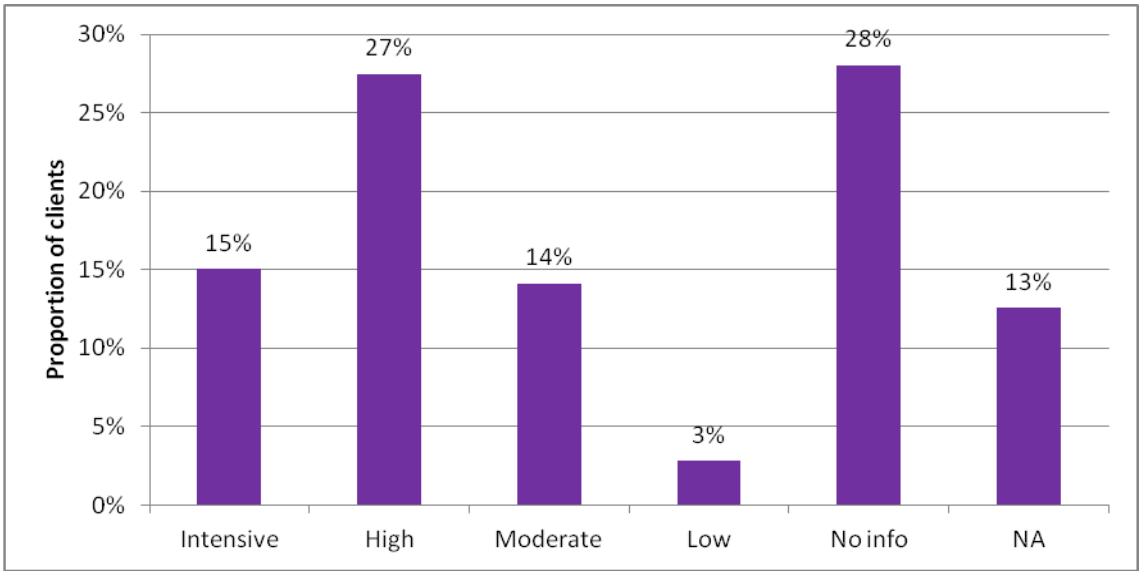
availability and capacity of services within the local area can pose problems for certain consortia, where for instance there aren't a wide range of services or those services have waiting lists. It was clear that links to particular service types (such as family violence and sexual assault services) could be improved.

The service system outcome survey explored workers' views of leadership in YJCSS, and asked where leadership currently comes from, compared to where it should come from. Responses clearly showed that respondents want a greater organisational level of commitment to YJCSS, rather than a reliance on workers and managers for leadership. Generally, Department respondents were slightly more likely than consortia respondents to report other stakeholders were not showing leadership in YJCSS.

To what extent has the YJCSS client group remained consistent with the intended target group(s) for YJCSS and are there clients within the eligible target group(s) that are not being prioritised for service?

The intent of YJCSS was to focus on high or intensive needs Youth Justice clients (or those at risk of homelessness). Although most YJCSS clients had high to intensive needs, a substantial proportion of clients had a low or moderate VONIY[7] rating (Figure 11, next page) with 3 per cent low and 14 per cent moderate. The high proportion of clients with no information reflects pre-sentence clients, as well as clients assessed using the Pilot Client Outcomes tool rather than VONIY.

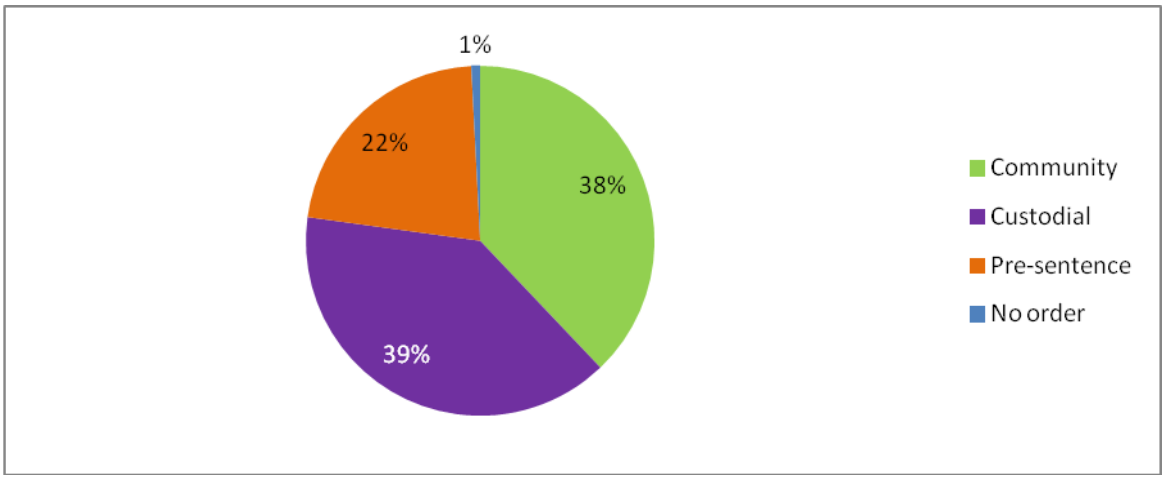
Figure 11: **VONIY ratings of clients**



Overall, 38 per cent of YJCSS clients were on community orders at the time of referral, 39 per cent were exiting custody or on parole, 22 per cent were pre-sentence clients, and one per cent was not on any order (Figure 12).

[7] The VONIY assessment rating is a 'shorthand' assessment of need. The assessment is undertaken as part of the referral and response process and does not account for any changes in the circumstances, behaviour, or attitudes of clients that may occur after referral. Although the VONIY tool has been criticised for not accurately representing client complexity and for its lack of responsiveness to change, the VONIY ratings are still used throughout this report as it is the best indicator of client complexity available within the program data.

Figure 12: **Order type of YJCSS clients (total closed cases)**



Program data shows that an increasing proportion of pre-sentence clients are being referred into YJCSS. There was a larger proportion of male clients than female clients exiting custody.

On average clients in metropolitan regions were rated as more complex than clients in regional areas. Clients who were referred to YJCSS on more than one occasion had higher VONIY ratings overall than clients who were referred once. Clients receiving THM-YJHPI support had higher VONIY ratings than those that did not, with a greater proportion being rated as having intensive needs.

3.3 Evaluation Topic 2: Measuring the outcomes of the YJCSS

	Key findings
Achievement of outcomes	• The YJCSS has improved service system outcomes, with clearer prioritisation of client needs, streamlined access to services, and improved communication and collaboration between Youth Justice and community organisations, and between consortia agencies. • Client feedback on the program is positive, with workers rated as effective and wide access to a range of supports reported. • While Custodial workers view the YJCSS less positively than other stakeholders, they may not have sufficient information about how the service works. • There is some variability between DHS and community sector views.
Impediments	• A number of impediments to outcomes have been identified, including THM-YJHPI stock availability and the limited range of alternative housing models, inconsistent care team practice, the adequacy of service breadth in consortia and worker skill, broader service system issues, engagement of young people, timely referrals, role clarity and CRISSP issues. Housing issues appear to have the most significant impact on the program and clients. • There is a need for strengthening the service system (through worker skill and referral networks) on particular issues such as family violence, trauma, mental health and disability support.
Effective case practice	• Effective case practice has been identified, including successful communication and collaboration, care team approaches, breadth and depth of support, engagement of clients, and exit planning.

To what extent were the expected service system outcomes listed in the program logic achieved?

The program logic for YJCSS lists a number of 'intermediate' service system outcomes, including:

- Improved **prioritisation of client needs** within the Youth Justice system
- **Streamlined access** to services for Youth Justice
- Improved **communication and collaboration** between **Youth Justice and community service** organisations
- Improved **coordination, communication and collaboration** between the **community service organisations servicing Youth Justice clients**

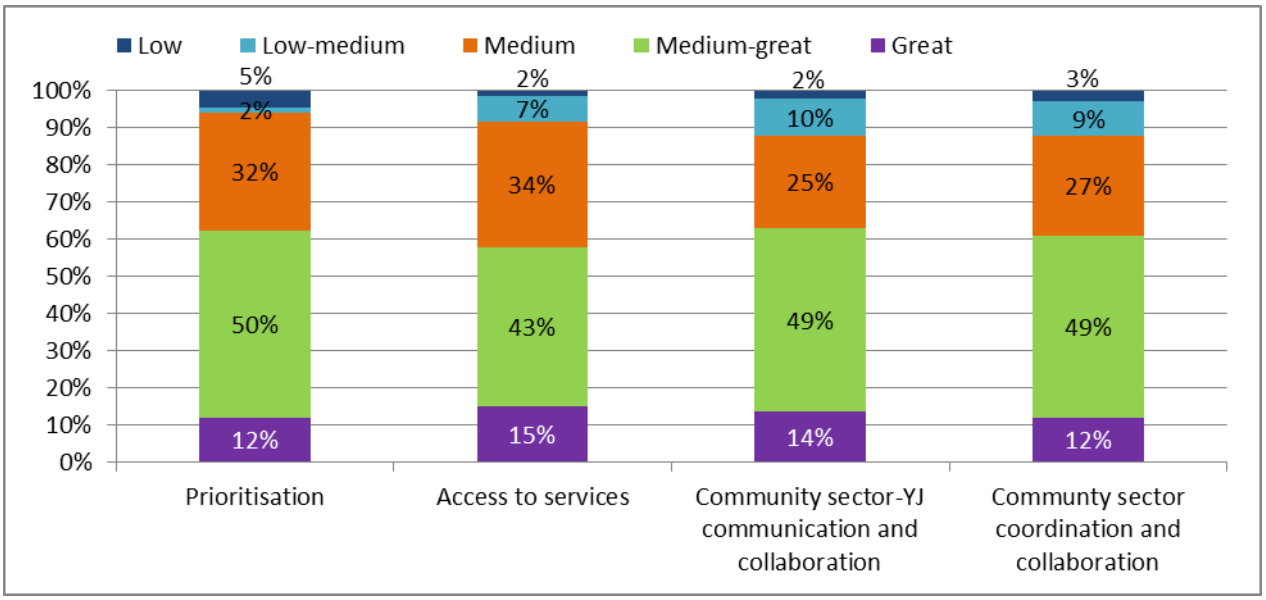
Long-term service system outcomes include a more responsive and integrated Youth Justice service system, more equitable funding distribution for community service organisations servicing Youth Justice clients, and a more targeted service system.

Overall achievement of service system outcomes

Results from the client feedback tool, service system outcome survey and consultations through workshops and focus groups all support the finding that the YJCSS has positively influenced the intermediate service system outcomes outlined in the program logic.

The service system outcomes survey explored the degree to which YJCSS had improved a number of service system outcomes. Figure 13 shows that overall respondents considered YJCSS to have improved service system outcomes across all of the key domains.

Figure 13: **To what extent has the YJCSS improved…**



Respondents ranked improvements to the prioritisation process and the relationship between the community sector and Youth Justice the highest. Consortia respondents rated the improvements to access, collaboration between the sector and Youth Justice, and collaboration within the sector more positively that Department respondents.

The number of respondents to the survey per region reflected the size of the Youth Justice and YJCSS workforce and for some consortia this was too low for statistical analysis. However, Grampians region respondents typically rated the impact of YJCSS the most positively, compared to other consortia, and respondents from Loddon Mallee – Loddon consistently rated the impact of YJCSS the lowest.

When survey responses are split by consortia staff and Department representatives, differences in ratings of the impact of the YJCSS can be observed. With regards to streamlined access to services, improved communication and collaboration between Youth Justice and CSOs, and improved coordination, communication and collaboration between CSOs, consortia staff gave statistically significantly higher ratings than did representatives from the Department. There is variability between the Department and community sector views on the impact of YJCSS on outcomes, and a lower overall perception from

custodial workers of the impact of the YJCSS as reflected in the service system outcomes survey and workshops.

Results from the client survey tool show strongly positive outcomes for the YJCSS program in a number of areas, and confirm feedback from workers about service coordination and engagement of young people.

- 93% reported that they understand what the YJCSS is
- 83% gave a rating of 4 or 5 when asked how they would rate their understanding of why they are involved with YJCSS ((1= 'I don't understand why I am involved', 5='I feel very clear about why I am involved')
- 81% of respondents gave a rating of 4 or 5 when asked how well they think their worker understands their needs (with a rating of 5 representing 'really well').

In terms of access to services, 73% of client respondents gave a rating of 4 or 5 when asked about how easy it is to access the services they use, with a rating of 5 representing 'I am always able to get the services I need'. Additionally 55% reported they rarely or never had to wait to get access to services.

Almost half of young people surveyed reported that they have regular contact with only one YJCSS worker. Around a third is in regular contact with two workers, and one in five has regular contact with more than two YJCSS workers. 84% of respondents have contact with a YJCSS worker weekly or a few times a week. 65% reported that they rarely or never have to repeat their story or information to different YJCSS workers.

With respect to service collaboration and coordination, when asked whether they felt the different services work together to support them, 82% of respondents provided a rating of 4 or 5, with 5 representing 'all of the time'.

Respondents reported that they receive a range of supports from YJCSS workers, with the most commonly listed supports being: general support, someone to talk to, assistance obtaining housing, transport (to appointments and other places), assistance obtaining employment and links with programs and services. When asked how close they are to achieving the goals they have discussed with their worker, 55% provided a rating of 4 or 5 (5=well on my way) and a further third provided a rating of 3 ('about halfway').

> ***YJCSS has helped me with moving into my own house and get back on my feet as well as supported me with my employment. Always positive support***
>
> ***Client feedback***

These findings support other data that confirm that YJCSS is achieving its intended outcomes of streamlining access to services, prioritising client needs, and fostering collaboration between services. The following section provides more detail on prioritisation, service delivery and the long-term outcome regarding funding equity.

Prioritisation of client needs

Generally, consultation participants felt that the flexibility and intensity of support provided by YJCSS allowed a prioritisation of clients' needs in the case planning and service provision provided by workers.

Consultations also indicate that YJCSS has resulted in more appropriate referrals, with clearer guidelines regarding suitability and eligibility of clients. A small number of interviewees suggested that custodial centres should be more involved in eligibility discussions, and custodial workers reflected in workshops that they would like more involvement in identifying referrals. There were variable opinions on the suitability of the assessment and referral documents, with suggested improvements to these to streamline the process. This is discussed more in section 5.

Service coordination, communication and collaboration

Results from the client feedback survey, interviews and workshops show general support for the view that YJCSS has improved coordination, collaboration and communication between Youth Justice and YJCSS agencies, and amongst YJCSS agencies. YJCSS is felt to be strengthening relationships between Youth Justice and the community sector, with a local (rather than statewide) focus thought to be effective in developing networks. Interviewees suggest that YJCSS has led to streamlined access to services.

> ***Basically, there is lots of collaboration between agencies and good communication. There is good communication between services and the justice system, and also to the centres, like Malmsbury. Everyone makes an effort to touch base with each other and keep you in the loop.***
>
> ***(Interview participant)***

Service coordination appears to be leading to improved service system outcomes by creating linkages between agencies and a coordinated approach to clients through care team meetings. Regular attendance at care team meetings by relevant stakeholders is an important element of service coordination, with variable application in practice across consortia, as discussed earlier.

Consistency in service delivery does not appear in place as expected, in part because of different service availability across regions and different consortia membership. As well as issues related to supports related to family violence, trauma and sexual assault, already discussed, workshop and interview participants referred to a lack of employment services (or a lack of linkages to employment services) in certain regions. In the time that the evaluation was underway, Youth Justice Custodial Services explored the establishment of a new approach to education, training and employment pathways for custodial clients, including the Work Out Program by Mission Australia and the establishment of the Parkville College within the centres. An issue raised regarding these new initiatives was the need for effective planning to ensure effective case planning, particularly to avoid duplication.

More equitable funding distribution

A longer-term intended service system outcome was to provide more equitable funding to the community sector for support services. Financial data shows that the funding per client is being allocated more consistently across consortia since the establishment of YJCSS, with a decline in the difference of funding per client between regions over time. Funding per client target is higher for the metropolitan consortia compared to non-metropolitan consortia. In 2011-12, funding for metropolitan consortia averaged $9,611 per client target compared to $7,250 for non-metropolitan consortia.

Figure 14: **The distribution of Youth Justice clients, YJCSS targets, YJCSS funding and actual client numbers, by region (2009-12)**

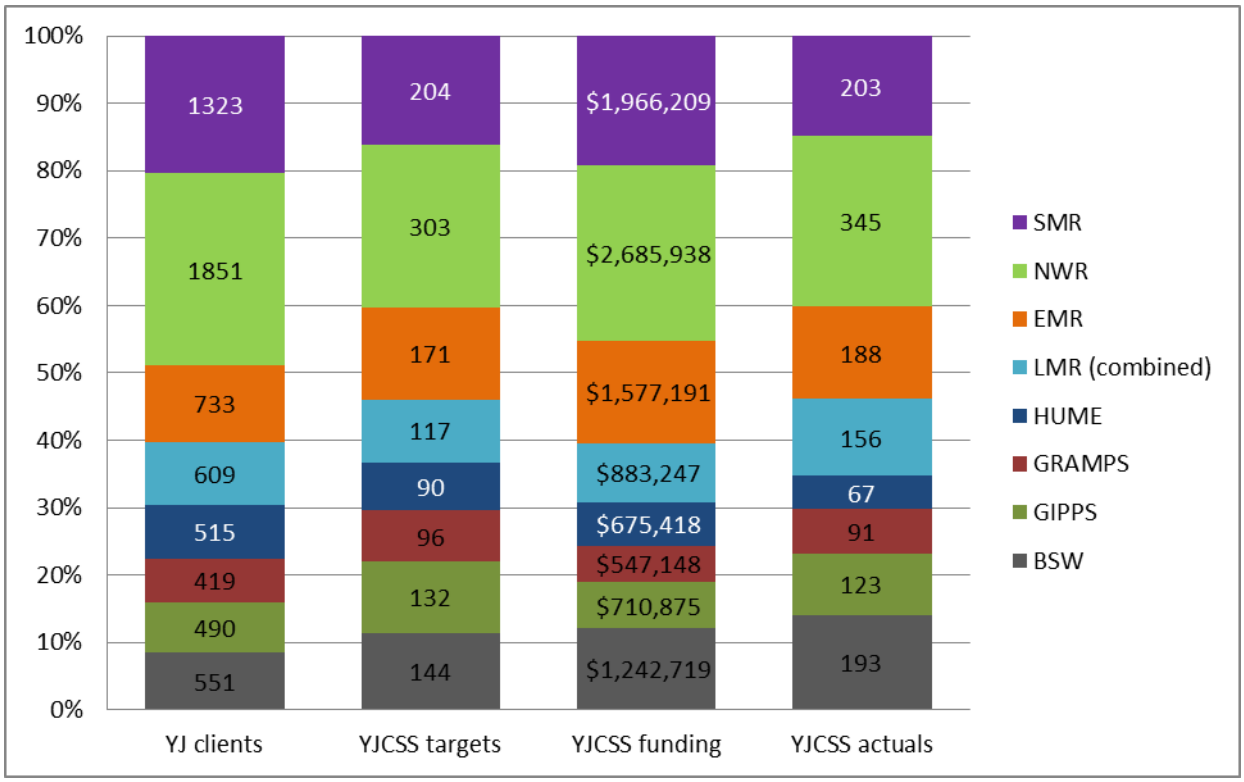
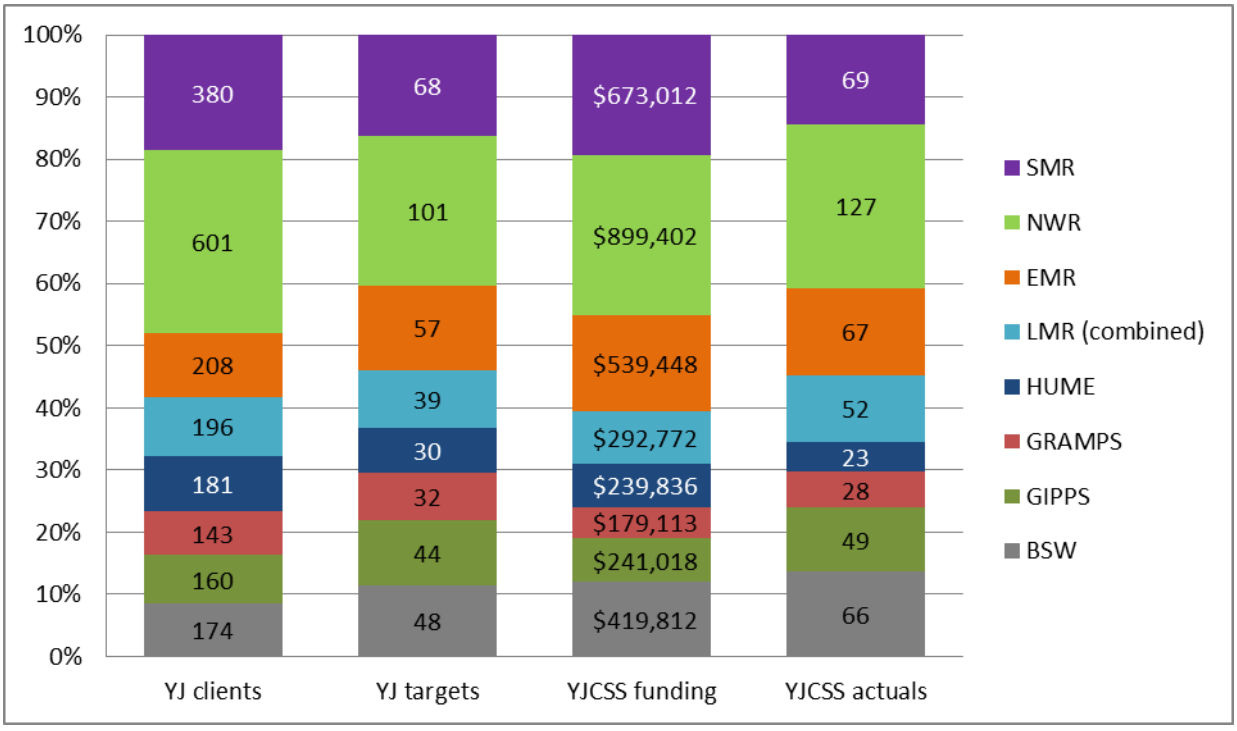


Figure 15: **The distribution of Youth Justice clients, YJCSS targets, YJCSS funding and actual client numbers, by region (2011-12)**



An important aspect of equitable funding is that consortia targets should reflect expected demand (based on total Youth Justice numbers), and that funding should reflect targets. In turn, whether consortia meet,

exceed or do not meet targets related to client numbers should inform future funding. The distribution of total Youth Justice clients, YJCSS targets and funding and actual client numbers across consortia is shown in the previous page in Figure 14, with Figure 15 showing data for 2011-12 only.

This shows that YJCSS targets in metropolitan regions are lower than the proportion of Youth Justice clients in these regions. Targets for non-metropolitan consortia are higher than their proportion of Youth Justice clients. The figure also shows the uneven distribution of funding against the targets, as well as against actual total client load.

What were the main impediments to meeting the expected service system outcomes and what are appropriate strategies to address these?

This section outlines main impediments identified through the evaluation, and strategies for addressing these are detailed in Section 6.

THM-YJHPI housing

A strong theme of focus groups, workshops and interviews was the challenges associated with housing, including a lack of available THM stock, an insufficient range of housing models, and restrictive timeframes for THM-YJHPI placements. As mentioned in Section 2, THM-YJHPI targets are not being met, and discussions with workers suggest that a lack of appropriate transition options is the main driver. Consultation participants suggested that both lack of THM-YJHPI stock and limited alternative housing options have reduced throughput, which in turn has limited overall THM property availability. Service system outcome survey respondents also identified a lack of suitable housing options as an impediment to the program and limiting client outcomes.

THM-YJHPI targets were set on the basis of an average of two tenancies per property, per year, however, THM-YJHPI clients are complex, and THM-YJHPI tenancies often exceed six months. The challenge related to housing is two-fold: there is a need for more THM-YJHPI properties to meet demand and there is a need for a broader range of housing models to complement the THM model and provide appropriate support, particularly for younger clients and those with complex needs.

Care team practice

A number of issues have previously been discussed that relate to care team practice such as the need for regular participation from relevant stakeholders, and regular proactive meetings. In some cases, the YJCSS workers reported inconsistent attendance from Departmental staff, and late exit planning when clients were exiting other programs, such as Child Protection. The results from service system outcomes survey confirmed issues raised through consultation regarding role clarity and leadership. In some cases, care teams are clearly a collaboration between Youth Justice and the consortia, but sometimes their effect is undermined by inconsistent chairing, lack of follow-through and poor documentation.

Breadth of services and worker skill

Workshop and interview participants considered that having an appropriate range of services in the consortia and in the broader regional service system was critical to achieving service system outcomes and outcomes for young people. Employment and training support is varied across different regions, depending

on which services are part of the consortia or available in the region. Support for young people in the areas of family violence, trauma, and in certain cases disability and mental health support may not be comprehensively provided.

There appears to be gaps in therapeutic support provided to young people, as reported through workshops and interviews as well as the case studies and practice reviews. While it is possible that the lower level of recorded mental health support is a data entry issue, the case studies and practice reviews show the prevalence of mental health issues and numerous cases where mental health supports are not provided effectively.

There are opportunities to strengthen the links between existing training and consultation supports, such as the Youth Justice Mental Health Initiative, rolled out to community-based Youth Justice workers in metropolitan areas and the (then) Hume region. This initiative has a focus on bridging local capacity to respond to Youth Justice clients with mental health issues.

It is unclear the extent to which consortia agencies are able to provide family violence and sexual assault support, or link in with other services who can provide that support. Interviewees also suggested that disability support (and awareness amongst YJCSS workers) may be limited.

A related issue that was reported in workshop consultations is that of workforce capability and skill. Many clients present with needs that require specialist skills and knowledge (such as family violence and sexual assault support, disability support). There appears to be an expectation that such specialist skills should be held within the consortia, either within the member services or the supporting workers themselves. These skills can be quite specialised, and not always common in workers who need to address a range of practical as well as therapeutic needs. While extending the skill base of workers is one possible response, another appropriate approach would see more extensive referrals and in some cases inclusion of specialised services in the YJCSS consortia.

Broader service system considerations

Challenges associated with a small number of clients not being supported by services in certain instances have been raised, such as where an agency in a regional area has barred a client from their service (and this is the only service of its kind available in that region).

Interviewees and workshop participants have also suggested that there is concern amongst certain parts of the sector that the consortia arrangement excludes new or smaller agencies.

Implementation issues such as monitoring poor performance within the consortia and challenges for regional and rural consortia where fewer agencies are expected to cover the breadth of services were also raised in interviews and workshops.

Engagement of young people

Youth Justice custodial workers reported varying levels of early engagement by Youth Justice workers, with one interviewee reflecting that some workers are better at connecting with young people in custody than others. Where early engagement does happen, workshop and interview participants report better outcomes for young people.

Engagement of young people and availability of housing were linked by one interviewee, who noted,

> ***The most critical is building a trusting relationship with them. And of course, housing is a number one thing. You can't do much if there is a kid who is homeless. It is hard to keep in contact and address the issues with them.***
>
> ***(Interview participant)***

A number of workshop participants also spoke of the challenges associated with such a complex client group, including dual clients, noting that engagement of YJCSS clients can be difficult and time consuming. Engagement of young people is a critical part of the YJCSS model, as reflected in workshops and interviews with workers and DHS representatives.

Timely referrals

Early and ongoing engagement with clients was considered a critical factor for effective service delivery. Interviews and workshops suggest that there are gaps in engagement with Youth Justice custodial centres, with referrals sometimes coming late in the young person's time in custody which then limits the time for required planning and collaboration. Workshop and interview participants stressed the importance of timely referrals for effective outcomes. Improvements to referral and assessment forms and processes were also suggested and are discussed in more detail under Evaluation topic 5.

Clarity of roles

A perceived lack of role clarity and inconsistent protocols for working with young people in custody appears to be a challenge for Youth Justice custodial and community based workers. There is regional variation in perceived role definition, such as the extent of client contact that community-based Youth Justice workers are expected to retain despite referral to YJCSS. The Service System Outcomes survey highlighted different philosophical positions held by consortia and Youth Justice staff.

> ***In some instances YJCSS have made contact with Youth Justice advocating on the behalf of the client that they 'don't feel like attending their YJ supervision appointments'. Youth Justice have insisted that the client attend, however, YJCSS have sent contradicting messages to clients that if they don't feel like attending that is 'ok'.***
>
> ***Service system outcomes survey respondent***
>
> ***YJCSS community agency in our region has a philosophy of strength-based practice, which is great. However, as Youth Justice has a statutory or mandated role, this creates problems as workers believe if the young person is not pro-active in accessing services, then YJCSS do not need to provide a service as they are 'voluntary'. YJCSS do not provide assertive outreach as required, at times, by Youth Justice.***
>
> ***Service system outcomes survey respondent***

Where care teams work well, staff understand the complementary roles of Youth Justice and YJCSS staff.

What type(s) of case practice(s) with clients has been working well in one or more regions and illustrates positive outcomes for clients?

The case studies and practice review demonstrate a range of case practices. The case studies are presented in full at Appendix 5 with short examples in this section to illustrate practice issues. Case practice strengths cover a range of areas: communication and inter-agency relationships, engagement of young people and their role in planning, the diversity and depth of support provided, consistency of support, and effective exit planning. The case studies show the range of client outcomes achieved through the YJCSS, such as workplace and training support, finding clients stable housing, supporting clients to develop independent living skills and supporting clients to maintain housing in the medium to long term.

Communication and inter-agency relationships

A number of case studies demonstrate the importance of clear roles and open communication between Youth Justice and YJCSS workers, as well as coordination of tasks through care team meetings. These aspects of case practice assist collaboration between workers, including information sharing. Regular communication, whether formal or informal, with agencies within as well as external to the consortia is demonstrated in a number of case studies. Sharing of key information such as psychological assessments (from Youth Justice to YJCSS) was identified as a strength. Collaboration with external support such as Koori Youth Justice Program, external youth workers, and a dual diagnosis counsellor were other examples of effective inter-agency relationships.

> ***Lance struggled with low literacy and numeracy, and was frustrated by this. Lance's care team included a Koori Youth Justice worker, who worked with the main YJCSS worker to identify and support a culturally appropriate education pathway, with Lance enrolled in a Certificate 2 of General Education.***
>
> ***Case study, Lance***

Engagement of clients and their involvement in planning

Effective and early client engagement has emerged as critical for successful case practice, and the case studies identify a number of examples of where this has worked well. Good practice shows care teams taking a non-judgmental approach and building trust with young people who can be difficult to engage, using early engagement to ensure there is plenty of time to build the relationship with the young person and also to engage with services and supports. Engaging clients can also involve building relationships with their family, and making visits to the Youth Justice custodial centres.

Workers often have to be persistent in maintaining contact with their clients. Workers report challenges around involving young people who don't want to participate or engage which can present as an issue with respect to the voluntary nature of YJCSS and the YJCSS workers. Good practice shows a degree of persistence, and recognition that disengagement is often symptomatic of the complex needs of the young person.

> ***Amy had a number of issues which made engagement a constant challenge. While the outcomes of this case study were not positive, with Amy being sentenced to custody in an***

> ***adult prison, it does show a high degree of sustained, enduring support. YJCSS provided sustained support with daily attempts to contact Amy. The worker would visit the THM property and leave notes, would walk around areas that Amy frequented, and had a phone put into her home. Even though Amy remained disengaged, the YJCSS worker continued to seek contact and had regular contact with the other Care team members about Amy's situation.***
>
> ***Case study, Amy***

One component of client engagement is the involvement of young people in their case planning, goal setting and care team meetings. This appears to be happening in most cases as illustrated by data from the case practice reviews which showed in 25 of the thirty cases reviewed, young people were involved in planning and goal setting. Involvement in care team meetings was more mixed.

> ***Brady was a complex client, with a history of sexual offending and mental health issues. Overtime, care team meetings were held in his home, and he began to chair them. Through this, Brady gained a sense of control in his life. Referrals were made to an employment program and a mental health activity program. Brady was able to maintain his THM property and YJCSS supported him with an application for public housing and affordable housing.***
>
> ***Case study, Brady***

Breadth and depth of support provided

The breadth and depth of support provided to clients is a strength in the case practice that emerges from the case studies. YJCSS workers can conduct intensive outreach, provide practical assistance such as transport, focus on skill development, and connect clients to health, financial and educational support. Case studies highlight the importance of workers taking a holistic approach to case management.

Case studies identify the importance of issue prioritisation, such as focusing on an overwhelming presenting issue before trying to address secondary issues, and having strong and effective referral links to ensure that specialist support can be engaged to address issues.

> ***Jaydon was a chronic drug user, which had limited his participation in education and employment. Initially YJCSS continued with other referrals Jaydon had received while in custody, for example his enrolment in a TAFE course, however, YJCSS recognised that his drug abuse habits would prevent ongoing employment and needed to be addressed first.***
>
> ***Case study, Jaydon***

YJCSS workers also stressed that issues relating to priorities and capacity need to be determined with the input of the client, rather than assessed solely by workers.

> ***Some [workers] look at a young person with chaotic drug use, housing, family issues, and employment, education, training tends to get left to the wayside, the worker says 'they're***

> ***not ready yet' but I can think of a kid who had a significant chroming habit and was homeless but also finished a course – so chaos doesn't exclude the possibility that education and training can be stable and positive.***
>
> ***Interview***

Working with families

Consultation and case studies illustrated the breadth of work that workers are doing with clients and their families. This relates both to instances where the client is a parent, or where the client is still living at home with their family. Workers reported challenges associated with engagement of families and providing suitable support, as well as the benefits of working with the young person's family. This also aligns with the holistic approach taken by many workers in addressing a range of needs in the broader context of the young person's life.

> ***In the case of Lance, the care team approach was able to support Lance and his partner as new parents, and also monitor how they were going with parenting. Workers took a holistic view of Lance and his family, and followed Best Interest Principles to monitor the wellbeing of Lance's child. This also meant that his identity as a father, and his desire to provide for his family, was seen as a strength, and considered in case planning.***
>
> ***Case study, Lance***

Consistent and effective care team meetings

As mentioned above, the case practice reviews indicate that there can be inconsistency in assessing client needs and issues, planning to provide support for those identified needs, and documentation of needs and support provided. Consistency appears to be an important component of effective case practice, whether that is consistency of worker or of support provided.

Care team meetings can be used effectively to ensure that all members are aware of the client's plan and can provide consistent support towards the achievement of agreed goals. Achievable plans and care team meetings that are proactive rather than reactive are important mechanisms to ensure consistent and effective support.

> ***The case of James highlights some of the limitations related to planning for complex clients. James had experienced a traumatic childhood, with exposure to family violence and multiple Out of Home Care placements. In the year he turned 18, he completed his parole, and his support from Youth Justice and Child Protection ended. Case management was transferred to YJCSS but there was no three-month review as Youth Justice and Child Protection were no longer providing support, and no longer participated in Care team meetings. Within a short period of time, YJCSS was the sole support for James, and support continued for over a year due to his complex and unaddressed needs.***
>
> ***Case study, James***

Considerations for exit planning

A number of case studies identify examples of workers considering exit planning in providing support for their clients, for example focusing on the young person's independence to ensure that they do not become reliant on the support they receive. Workers can focus on strong community connections to plan for exit.

> ***A key issue for Jane's Care team was that her support network was almost solely made up of services, and she had few friends or social connections. Given the complexity of Jane's needs, there were a number of agencies involved. Workers recognised the need to plan for social connection to build Jane's independence and reduce her reliance on professional supports. They also recognised the fundamental importance of housing security, and arranged for her THM property to be redesignated as a Leaving Care property, to provide Jane with increased stability.***
>
> ***Case study, Jane***

The case studies are included at Appendix 5 and each one includes a short summary of client outcomes, and strengths and challenges identified in case practice.

3.4 Evaluation Topic 3: Parole planning for clients in rural and remote areas

	Key findings
Effectiveness of parole planning	• The YJCSS model appears to have improved the efficiency of parole planning processes, although parole is still sometimes delayed because of a lack of suitable housing. There is a degree of duplication between custodial and community planning processes. The potential of a single access point to community support offered through the YJCSS could be better utilised by custodial centres. • The YJCSS has contributed to an overall increase of funding for support for rural and remote parole clients. • There are challenges associated with supporting parole clients with complex or diverse needs, such as Aboriginal clients, clients with mental health issues, CALD clients, and clients with a disability. • Worker skill and consortia make-up influence the ability for consortia to support parole clients effectively. • Young people in rural and remote areas continue to have more limited service options than young people in metropolitan areas and this includes clients on parole.
Improvements for parole clients	• There are opportunities to improve consistency and effectiveness of support to clients with diverse and complex needs through improved worker skill and linkages to existing programs such as Koori Youth Justice • Closer collaboration between custodial staff, community-based Youth Justice workers and YJCSS workers may facilitate more realistic and actionable parole plans. This could be achieved through Care team meetings commencing while the young person is in custody. • Earlier referrals to the YJCSS would be beneficial, and should be integrated with other referrals, such as to education, employment and training or specialist mental health supports.

How has the YJCSS impacted on the effectiveness of parole planning processes with regard to access to support services and accommodation for clients in rural and remote areas; including for those who are Aboriginal, have mental health issues or disability?

The YJCSS model appears to have contributed to an improvement in parole planning processes, as informed by consultations and interviews held with workers. The integration of housing support and support services for clients in rural and remote areas is also reported to be an improvement on previous service delivery. A major improvement arising through the YJCSS is more integrated planning and the

opportunity for a single referral through the YJCSS. Despite this, parole planning can still be somewhat inefficient, with Youth Justice custodial workers undertaking significant effort to identify potential service supports to contribute to the parole plan, and the process being duplicated once the young person is assessed by the YJCSS consortia. It does not appear that all custodial workers have a comprehensive understanding of the services provided through the YJCSS, and that in some areas there is a lack of clarity about the case planning and management responsibilities of youth justice workers, both custodial and community-based.

While there has been considerable investment in regional areas through YJCSS funding, young people in rural areas continue to face a more limited service that metropolitan clients as the range of services is wider in metropolitan areas and services can be stretched in regional areas.

The findings from the case practice review supports feedback from consultation that parole planning could better link to the YJCSS service planning and provision. A number of parole plans refer to YJCSS as one of many services that the client is receiving, suggesting that the centralised role of the YJCSS is poorly understood. A key issue was not so much the parole planning itself, but the translation and implementation of the plan into support provided by the YJCSS. Effective and earlier care team meetings while the client is in custody could inform both the parole plan and the support plan developed by the YJCSS worker.

Parole planning for Aboriginal clients

Koori Youth Justice was raised in interviews as a potential area for exploration, as there are a number of Aboriginal clients within YJCSS, who are (or could be) clients of both Koori Youth Justice and the YJCSS. The case practice review showed that where the need for Koori support was identified, this was met in four out of five cases. In contrast number of case studies showed that while clients may identify as Aboriginal, they did not want to be linked with Aboriginal specific services. There appeared to be variable relationships between the YJCSS and consortia and relevant Aboriginal organisations. There was, however, evidence through the case studies and the consultation of productive relationships between the YJCSS and Koori Youth Justice, particularly in the North West and Gippsland regions. This did not appear to be a specific parole planning issue, rather an issue for the implementation of parole plans.

Parole planning for clients with mental health issues

Case studies show a picture of complexity for YJCSS clients, with many clients presenting with complex and long-standing mental health issues and histories of trauma. Family violence, sexual assault (victimisation and offending), involvement with Child Protection and alcohol and drug abuse are common amongst case studies. Feedback from consultations suggests that mental health and therapeutic supports which focus on issues related to trauma and disrupted attachment may be variable across consortia and depend on consortia membership, referral links and worker skill.

The case practice review suggests that family violence and sexual assault histories in certain cases are identified in assessment but not followed up. Case studies illustrated instances whereby the YJCSS workers prioritise an overwhelming therapeutic need (such as chronic drug abuse) before addressing any secondary needs, however it is unclear the extent to which this approach is consistent across consortia.

In the case of custodial clients with mental health issues, good practice is based on early engagement with the YJCSS and a proactive care team approach where the YJCSS workers are able to obtain sufficient information to develop an appropriate support plan aligned with supports provided in custody. Given the role of AFHS in providing support for custodial clients with mental health issues, involvement of the AFHS clinician is seen as helpful in exit planning and early Care team meetings to establish priorities for client support once the client has left custody. The role of Malmsbury Health Service was not raised in consultation.

Parole planning for clients with a disability

In terms of overall support for clients with a disability, workshop participants suggested that disability support is variable in some areas, and largely dependent on the availability of disability support services in the consortium or with links to the consortium, or worker skill. Where the client is on the Disability Support Register, and eligible for Disability Services, this is a matter of linking in with Departmental disability case managers, however issues appear to be related to clients with mild intellectual disability or developmental delay, who have not been found eligible for Disability Services. Consultation feedback suggests that worker skill in this area can be variable, and there may be opportunities for improvement to boost worker capability in working with people with a disability.

Youth Justice Custodial workers reported a lack of custodial-based support relating to young people with disability, especially intellectual disability. This was primarily due to a long-term vacancy for a disability worker linked to the Youth Justice Custodial Centres, which was filled in early 2013. It is expected that this role will assist with case planning for clients with a disability who are leaving custody.

Parole planning for CALD clients

Specific support for culturally and linguistically diverse clients is an area that requires additional attention in terms of parole planning and YJCSS support more generally. The Parole Review Board highlighted concerns regarding CALD groups, including Maori and Pacific Islander young people and Sudanese young people, and noted that demographics will vary according to region. It appears that cultural support is inconsistently identified as a need, and even when flagged, it is not consistently provided through the YJCSS. CALD support appears to be mostly through existing family connections rather than formal programs or services.

Housing and accommodation

With respect to housing and accommodation, a number of challenges associated with the THM system have been raised, discussed in more detail throughout this report. The key issue for parole planning was that due to limited housing stock, parole can be delayed where suitable accommodation cannot be located.

> ***Suitable accommodation was not available for Jaydon on release from custody. A THM property was not available, so Jaydon was initially placed in crisis accommodation on exit from custody. As his behaviour was unstable, he was referred to a Youth mental health residential facility but he did not engage with programs provided through the facility and his drug use continued. He was then referred to a youth detox centre before going onto a long-term drug rehabilitation program. While he had limited independent living skills,***

with support a THM property may have provided a stable platform and allowed him to address other significant issues.

Case study, Jaydon

What changes could be implemented to improve outcomes for parole clients in rural and remote areas, including for those who are Aboriginal, have mental health issues or disability?

There appear to be opportunities to explore the most appropriate model of support for Aboriginal clients, in the context of existing programs such as the Koori Youth Justice Program and any further linkages that could be made with the YJCSS. Given that the make-up of consortia and supporting external services varies across regions, it is likely that support for Aboriginal clients is not consistent and is shaped by relationships between workers. There is some evidence of Koori Youth Justice workers liaising with YJCSS workers, and one opportunity is to support Koori Youth Justice workers to participate in Care team training and Care team meetings. For Aboriginal clients in custody, early case coordination meetings including YJCSS and Koori Youth Justice staff as well as relevant custodial and community-based Youth Justice workers would be beneficial.

Consultations suggested that there is variability in worker skill, confidence and ability in working with young people with mental health issues or disability. Support for these young people again relies on consortia membership, external linkages, and confidence of workers in navigating specialist service systems. Improvements to worker skill or linkages to specialist supports may supplement consortia capability.

Existing initiatives, such as the Youth Justice Mental Health Initiative, provide an opportunity to build worker skill through mental health training. Furthermore, the Department is going through a submission process regarding health and rehabilitation services across youth justice, which provides a further opportunity to improve coordination between youth justice health services and the YJCSS.

Consultations indicate that overall, young people in rural and regional areas still face a more limited service than clients in metropolitan areas, because of lower service availability in rural and regional areas. While it is economically difficult to expand service provision into rural and remote areas, opportunities relate to secondary consultation and professional development for regionally based workers.

At an operational level, earlier engagement of the YJCSS in parole planning would ensure that there was a shared understanding of client support needs and priorities. This would reduce duplication in process, and may address the proportion of client needs which appear to remain unaddressed through the YJCSS service and support.

3.5 Evaluation Topic 4: Key performance indicators

	Key findings
Suitability of performance indicators and reporting requirements	• Current program indicators are largely at the process level and do not capture client outcomes or program outcomes. • Extensive information is captured through the client case planning and review process, but data entry via CRISSP is variable in consistency.
YJ Client Outcomes indicators	• There is general agreement that systematic monitoring of client outcomes is necessary. • The Client Outcomes Tool trialled through Youth Justice could be expanded across the YJCSS, as it aligns with existing client outcomes domains used by the YJCSS. • There are opportunities to better monitor client outcomes through establishment of case closure summaries that specify client outcomes. These could be aggregated to monitor consortia and system outcomes.

How suitable are the key performance indicators and other reporting requirements to monitor the ongoing efficiency and effectiveness of the YJCSS and how can they be improved?

The implementation and performance of the YJCSS has, to date, been monitored through data collected by the CRISSP Youth Case. Six interim monitoring measures and targets are being used, all of which focus on process:

1. The number of clients receiving an initial response within five working days of referral
2. Percentage of clients receiving an initial response within five working days of referral (90% target)
3. The number of clients with a documented plan that addresses all service components within 20 days of initial contact
4. The percentage of clients with a documented plan that addresses all service components within 20 days of initial contact (90% target)
5. The number of clients whose plan is reviewed within three months
6. The percentage of clients whose plan is reviewed within three months (90% target).

The program data shows a positive trend in meeting these targets as the YJCSS program has matured.

The percentage of clients receiving an initial response within five working days of referral was not met overall, but was met in the 2011–12 financial year. The target of 90 per cent of clients having a documented plan within 20 days of initial contact was met in each year since the commencement of YJCSS. Achievement of the third target - the percentage of clients whose plan is reviewed within three months - is difficult to quantify due to inconsistencies in data entry and a defect in the CRISSP report (which was

detected and resolved during the course of the evaluation). See Appendix 3 for more detail on the performance results.

A number of data fields within CRISSP are not used to systematically monitor consortia performance or service delivery. These include:

- Total work hours
- Travel hours
- Occasions of service (by service type).

Data collection issues were raised through focus groups and workshops, as well as through analysis of the program data. This is particularly the case for data relating to the types of service delivery. Through comparison of administrative data and case notes, it is evident that not all support provided to clients is captured in the administrative data.

Performance measurement and reporting was discussed in interviews, focus groups and workshops discussions. There was a view that the performance indicators are largely focused at the process level and do not capture client outcomes. There was general agreement that there should be a focus on client outcomes to align with Departmental practice, to provide evidence for the effectiveness of the program and to inform Youth Justice and YJCSS workers of client outcomes at case closure. Workshop and focus group consultations stressed the need for client outcomes to be captured through consistent case closure processes.

The practice reviews showed that case documentation enables regular monitoring of client issues and progress, with information entered against the key Youth Justice client outcome domains. At the moment, client outcomes are largely reported in a qualitative way for case planning, management and review. This does not allow aggregation of results and seriously limits the capacity to review the relationship between practice, policy and client outcomes.

How should the Youth Justice Client Outcome indicators and associated measurement tools be implemented with community service organisations that provide the YJCSS?

A number of consultation participants suggested a focus on capturing client outcomes would strengthen the YJCSS model and allow for more meaningful data collection and monitoring. Linking case practice at case closure to the collection of outcome information was suggested as an important process improvement. Documentation of case outcomes would allow for a more informative monitoring framework that demonstrates client progress and program effectiveness, at both the consortia and system-wide levels. A simple and consistently applied case closure process was seen as a way to ensure that Youth Justice and YJCSS workers reported case outcomes at exit.

The VONIY assessment tool is the primary needs assessment tool in use for young people in the Youth Justice system. The use of VONIY for assessment and prioritisation has been recognised as limited, and work is underway in the Department to update tools through the development of an integrated client assessment tool that assesses clients and measures outcomes over time. While this work has been underway for some time, the Departmental restructure and moves toward service reform have raised the issue of broader outcomes measurement across the Human Services portfolio, for example, with an Outcomes Star methodology.

The pilot work on the Client Outcomes tool, undertaken for the Department by Deakin University, shows that the tool is suitable for screening, classification, needs identification and case planning. It is preferable over an Outcomes Star methodology because of its consistency with existing case practice, for example, it is aligned with the client outcomes domains currently used within Youth Justice. It was found to have a stronger predictive capacity than the VONIY in terms of future offending, and can be used to assess whether clients require criminogenic interventions (and those that don't). This would be an improvement on the use of VONIY to rate clients' needs from low through to intensive. The Client Outcomes tool may need adaptation for use by community service organisations, and would be a robust tool for care team meetings and planning. A longer-term focus could be integrating the tool into CRISSP and ensuring specific outcomes were included in the YJCSS performance monitoring.

The move towards client outcome measurement was seen as challenging for a number of reasons. One was the time required for client administration and data entry as well as the training required to use tools effectively. A second issue was related to professional capacity (for example, for assessment) and ways to support professional judgement. Training and resource materials would need to be developed, and regularly provided across consortia. A final issue related to the risks of client outcome measurement, when client outcomes can be challenging.

> ***The risks for the Department are that many of these measures won't change over a short time, so the Department needs to be clear about base rates and intended change – stabilising a client won't show improvement, but if offending doesn't escalate, then that is a good outcome. The Department and services need to be careful in setting outcomes targets.***
>
> ***Interview participant.***

While these issues should be considered, the benefits of a consistent client outcomes measurement tool, which can show, and quantify, changes in outcomes overtime would justify administration impacts. There are clear benefits in being able to compare and contrast client outcomes, in terms of individual and consortia practice.

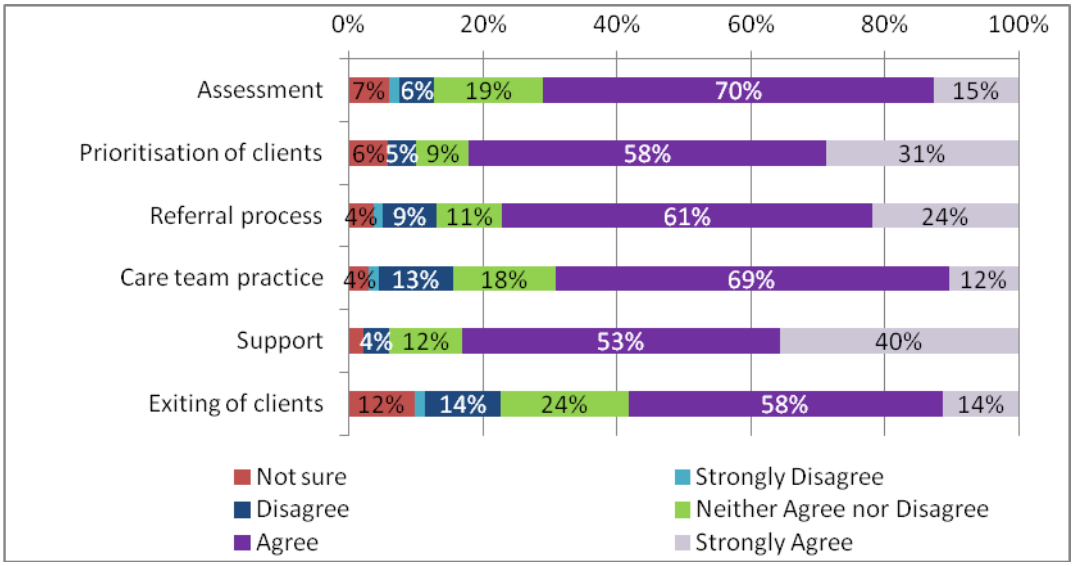
3.6 Evaluation Topic 5: Scope for further improvements to the YJCSS

	Key findings
Opportunities for improvement	• A number of possible improvements have been identified for future implementation of the YJCSS, including process improvements, operational and practice improvements, and systemic improvements. • Process improvements include amending referral and assessment forms, providing administrative support for more consistent care team documentation, clarification roles and responsibilities, and case closure summaries. • Operational and practice improvements include professional and sector development, brokerage for YJCSS consortia, earlier referral and earlier and more consistent engagement, and improvements to care team practice. • System improvements including exploring new housing models and broader service system and sector skill development opportunities.

What are the opportunities for improvement that have been identified in one or more regions that could be implemented in other regions to enhance the operation of the YJCSS?

Workers were asked the extent to which they thought various stages of the YJCSS were working effectively. There was strong agreement that all of the stages were working effectively with some variations as below. Figure 16 shows that for most stages, more than 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the stage was working effectively. The provision of support was rated the highest (93% agree or strongly agree, 4% disagree).

Figure 16: **To what extent do you agree the following YJCSS stages are working effectively?**



The process of exiting clients was rated the lowest, but this was still a positive result, with 72% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing and 16% of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that exit was working effectively. The effectiveness of care teams had a more dispersed ranking, with 82% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that care teams were working effectively, and 15% of respondents disagreeing or disagreeing strongly.

A number of improvements to the YJCSS model and influencing factors were raised in consultations with Youth Justice custodial and community-based workers, YJCSS workers and DHS representatives. They include:

- **Process** improvements
- **Operational and practice** improvements
- **System** improvements.

Process improvements

A number of process improvements were proposed in consultation workshops and interviews, including administrative improvements to care team practice. Suggestions included the development and consistent application of templates and tools for care team documentation.

Consultation participants also suggested that the referral and assessment forms could be improved, addressing concerns about length and duplication of information. Shorter referral forms were proposed, and more consistency in assessment forms used by consortia was also suggested. Clarification of roles and responsibilities between agencies was also a suggested improvement, in particular around care team roles and expectations.

Finally, it was suggested that common case closure summary reports would be an improvement and that increased information sharing at the end of a client's involvement with YJCSS would assist with outcome monitoring and reporting. This could be linked into CRISSP, with an agreed approach to monitor and report on key client outcomes on exit.

Issues related to process improvements were rated as a high priority during the Stakeholder Reflection workshop, with priorities around timely referrals and assessment and simplified but more consistently used documentation.

Operational and practice improvements

A number of operational and practice improvements were proposed in consultations, such as improvements to professional development and sharing of good practice. Joint professional development and training between Youth Justice and YJCSS staff was considered an important and achievable improvement, as well as worker forums to share good practice and build worker skills.

It was also suggested that improvements need to be made to the functionality of CRISSP, to enable better information sharing and documentation. Brokerage for YJCSS workers, with flexibility in how this brokerage can be used, was also proposed.

Improvements to practice were discussed in workshops and other consultations. More consistent engagement with young people was seen as an important improvement to practice.

The value of local networking and joint induction and professional development rated highly during the Reflection Workshop, as a means to ensure a shared understanding between Youth Justice and YJCSS and to support relationship development. The Reflection Workshop also confirmed issues related to funding, with a focus on brokerage funding.

The Reflection Workshop endorsed a more systematic approach to client outcomes measurement, as a way to better understand program effects for clients as well as to demonstrate success and identify where practice improvements are needed.

System improvements

A number of system-wide improvements were suggested in consultations such expanding the range of housing models used, increasing the availability of appropriate housing options and increasing tenancy timeframes.

The changing environment within the Department and regions was also raised at a number of workshops and in interviews. This was reported to create uncertainty about the future of particular roles and structures, which may influence the operation of YJCSS.

Given the impact of the different make-up of consortia and worker skill on supports in the areas of mental health, trauma, sexual assault and family violence, improvements to the broader service system and sector skill would also be beneficial.

Consultation participants suggest improvements to the housing model and extending the THM-YJHPI timeframes might assist in addressing these challenges. Additional funding and resources to support clients were also suggested improvements.

3.7 Evaluation Topic 6: Merit of expanding the YJCSS to provide a service to other Youth Justice clients

	Key findings
Merits and consequences of expanding YJCSS	• The YJCSS is generally supporting clients with greater need (those with high to intensive support needs and/or those at risk of homelessness). • The target group has expanded to include a greater proportion of pre-sentence clients, and there were mixed views about the suitability of this.
Need to refine current target group	• While there was agreement that the YJCSS should support young people with higher needs, in some consortia support for young people with lower needs is pursued as a preventative intervention.

What are the merits and the consequences, including the costs and intended benefits, of expanding the YJCSS to service other Youth Justice clients?

Financial data provided for this evaluation related to funding for the YJCSS consortia only. Data was not available regarding the cost of Youth Justice support for the program, nor broader Youth Justice investment (for example supervision and case management time) for YJCSS clients. For a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis, broader system costs would need to be evaluated, combining:

- Direct YJCSS funding
- Complementary Youth Justice funding
- Relevant service costs in supporting YJCSS clients.

Benefits from the YJCSS include short-medium term benefits and longer-term system savings.

Short-term benefits may include:

- Efficient case management and referral, reducing worker administration
- Earlier client engagement with necessary services and less acute presentation.

Longer-term benefits may include:

- Reduced rates of re-offending
- Client stabilisation, reducing reliance on government services and increasing economic participation.

The number of repeat clients within the YJCSS is about 8%, however, this cannot be used to estimate reoffending rates, as it may be that reoffending clients are not referred back to the YJCSS, are in custody or have received an adult sentence.

More work is required to understand the costs and benefits of the program in its current form before cost-benefit analysis can be undertaken regarding expansion, however, it can be seen that the YJCSS has had sufficient flexibility to incorporate a growing proportion of pre-sentence clients.

There was a strong view throughout the consultation, that the YJCSS is suitably targeted for clients with high to intensive support needs and/or those at risk of homelessness. Waiting list pressures and unmet demand were raised for some consortia only. In some consortia, there are higher proportions of clients with moderate (or even low) support needs, for example, Barwon South West (23% moderate to low), Gippsland (46% moderate) and Loddon Mallee-Mallee catchment (38% moderate to low).

Community-based youth justice units track information relating to unmet demand, recording the number of referrals not proceeding, and the reasons why. This is generally understood to be an underestimation, as in some cases, a referral would not be considered when demand pressures are known to be high, for example, when it is known that a THM-YJHPI vacancy is not possible. Table 3 shows the recorded unmet demand over three years, with recorded unmet demand clearly the highest in North-West Metropolitan Region.

Table 3: **Occasions of referrals not proceeding, by consortia, 2009-12**

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Barwon South West	0	1	4
Eastern	7	24	13
Gippsland	0	1	0
Grampians	0	51	23
Hume	2	17	8
Loddon Mallee – L	0	0	0
Loddon Mallee – M	0	13	0
North West	33	15	37
Southern	4	0	0
TOTAL	**46**	**122**	**85**

It should be noted that this data is submitted on a quarterly basis to the Department, and the assumption has been that if no data is submitted, then all referrals proceeded. Table 4 summarises the main reasons that referrals did not proceed, with limited THM-YJHPI availability the most significant reason for non-referral due to lack of vacancies in THM-YJHPI properties.

Table 4: **Number of referrals not proceeding, by reason**

Reason for non-referral	Number
No THM - YJHPI vacancies available	118
Other [8]	44
Limited capacity in consortia	41
Waiting list	30
Other services available	15
Referral not accepted by consortia	2
TOTAL	**250**

[8] Other refers to interstate transfers and transfers to other regions.

The evaluation did not find compelling evidence of the need to expand the YJCSS to service other clients, noting that the proportion of pre-sentence clients may be considered an expansion from the initial intent. There is recognition that the YJCSS was designed for young people with high to intensive needs as it is a more resource intensive way of providing support. More pressing issues are related to the adequacy of targets for specific consortia, the availability of suitable housing for young people at risk of homelessness and the need for modest additional funding for brokerage.

Is there a need to refine the current target group for the YJCSS or processes for prioritisation?

The program data shows that there is an increasing proportion of young people referred to the YJCSS before being sentenced. Table 5 shows the difference in representation of young people on different orders in the system as a whole compared with those using the YJCSS. This data shows clearly that there has been a growth in the proportion of pre-sentence clients and a related decrease in the proportion of young people on community orders within the YJCSS program.

Table 5: **Order distribution in Youth Justice compared to YJCSS, by year**

	2009-10			2010-11			2011-12		
	YJ	YJCSS	% difference	YJ	YJCSS	% difference	YJ	YJCSS	% difference
Custodial[9]	22%	41%	+19%	23%	38%	+15%	25%	40%	+15%
Community	36%	40%	+4%	37%	37%	0%	34%	35%	+1%
Pre-sentence	42%	19%	-23%	40%	25%	-15%	41%	25%	-16%
TOTAL	100%	100%		100%	100%		100%	100%	

Note that these values exclude those clients not on an order or listed as 'unknown'.

More work is required to understand the increasing proportion of pre-sentence clients in particular, given they now make up a quarter of YJCSS clients. Consultation did not provide definitive information on this. Some workshop and interview participants considered the increase to reflect the increasing need of young people entering the Youth Justice system. While the VONIY assessment is not used for pre-sentence clients, it was generally agreed that pre-sentence clients referred to YJCSS would have considerable issues and complex needs. Others viewed the increase as 'net-widening' and expressed concern that this could indicate alternative pre-sentence supports were insufficient or not effective.

Overall, workshop and interview participants reflected two main views in respect to the target group for YJCSS. The first view was that the target group was appropriate and that a focus on complex clients is suitable. A minority also supported YJCSS as a preventive measure for lower risk clients, such as those with VONIY assessments of 'low' to 'moderate'. The second view related more to process, whereby it should

[9] Note that the Custodial category includes imprisonment, remand, youth justice centre orders, youth parole orders and youth residential orders.

move to a 'screening out', rather than 'selecting in', approach. Consultation participants who suggested a 'screening out' process described a need for changing the process for flagging and prioritising clients.

It is unclear the extent to which these views are contradictory. The context of limited funding and resources is likely to create a focus on client prioritisation of clients, as well as there being general agreement that the current scope and focus of YJCSS on higher risk clients is effective and efficient.

4. Discussion and recommendations

This section

- presents analysis of the findings, with a focus on the progress and operation of the YJCSS overall
- identifies strengths and impediments for the program, and
- details recommendations for future implementation of the program.

A summary of these findings is presented below, across the different stages of the YJCSS model of assessment, referral, support and external links.

A more in-depth discussion of issues follows, with recommendations relating to significant findings.

4.1 Summary of strengths, impediments and future implementation

	Overall	Assessment	Referral	Support	External Links
How is it going?	YJCSS is clearly an improvement on previous services for the target client group, with intensive support provided to young people to address a broad range of practical and immediate needs. Clients report positive experiences with YJCSS, including that they feel their needs are understood and they can access the support they need. Communication and collaboration between Youth Justice and YJCSS agencies is also generally strong, and relationships have improved since commencement. The different consortia make-up and variability in the availability of services across regions contributes to a lack of consistency in service provision. Increased role clarity and more consistent care team practice would help strengthen collaboration. Lack of available and appropriate housing is a challenge for many regions and limits the effectiveness of YJCSS. The proportion of pre-sentence clients is now about 25%, which requires further attention to ensure that this is consistent with the program intention. If so, the Guidelines should be updated to reflect this focus.				

	Overall	Assessment	Referral	Support	External Links
What are the strengths of the program?	Flexibility of service provision, relationships and communication among workers, intensive support.	Comprehensive identification of needs and information-sharing.	Referral of appropriate complex clients into YJCSS.	Diverse range of services, and intensity of support. Complementary roles for Youth Justice workers and YJCSS workers. Clients feel their needs are understood and they access the support they need. Dedicated transitional housing for Youth Justice clients through the THM-YJ program	Relationships with broader service system are generally good.
What are the impediments to success?	Client outcomes and case closure not well documented. Role clarity across the service system can be further improved. Engagement with custody centres in particular is mixed. CRISSP is not used consistently to support information sharing.	Needs identified through assessment and those addressed in plans are not always consistent. While this may reflect emerging needs, it also points to the need for early care team work to discuss assessment and confirm priorities. Assessment forms used by YJCSS consortia are not consistent.	Referrals aren't always early enough, referral form and process lengthy.	Early engagement with clients in custody doesn't always happen, some support needs appear to be missed (FV, SA, trauma, mental health), and there are inconsistent approaches to identifying/prioritising client needs. Care team practice is inconsistent, including attendance and participation. YJCSS workers report a need for brokerage to support young people. There are differing expectations between the Department and YJCSS providers regarding necessary duration of support.	Some consortia have a more limited range of services involved and either external referrals are required or new specialist services could be encouraged to be members. The process and documentation of exiting of clients perceived as mixed.

	Overall	Assessment	Referral	Support	External Links
What are the opportunities for future implementation?	Professional practice forums for workers and shared training (between YJ community, custodial and YJCSS workers); improvements to CRISSP access and use; clarification of roles and expectations, measurement of client outcomes. No extension to lower risk clients as the priority should remain on clients with high or intensive needs and those at risk of homelessness. Clarity is needed regarding pre-sentence clients.	Improvements to consistency in needs identification and clear link to planning and support.	Earlier referrals; fast-track referral process; shortened referral form.	Flexible brokerage for YJCSS workers that is easily accessible; improvements to care team practice (such as documentation, expectations; role clarity and links with other relevant programs such as Koori Youth Justice). Additional resources for housing and new housing models. New consortia membership or other opportunities though increased referral to incorporate therapeutic support and specialist support (Family Violence, Sexual Assault, and Mental Health).	Explore opportunities to better access and refer to therapeutic and specialist supports (Family Violence, Sexual Assault, and Mental Health).

4.2 Overall program management

The YJCSS program is clearly an improvement on the previous model of service delivery and is supported by stakeholders across Victoria. While client participation in this evaluation was limited, feedback from clients was positive. The model has been effectively rolled out to all regions with inputs and outputs largely established. There is justification for the continuation of YJCSS as demonstrated by stakeholder support and improved service system outcomes, such as streamlined access to services, prioritisation of client needs, and communication and collaboration between Youth Justice and YJCSS, and between agencies.

There is a need for the program to provide more effective intensive support for some complex clients by providing access to a diverse range of practical and therapeutic support for young people. The practical support provided by YJCSS workers has demonstrated important outcomes for young people in fostering stability and independence. Practical support combined with stable housing facilitated through THM-YJHPI and other housing supports together with specialist support services provides an important platform for supporting client independence and social and economic participation. In turn, this impacts significantly on the likelihood of further client offending

Given these largely positive outcomes, the evaluation supports the continuation of the YJCSS. Further work is suggested regarding the distribution of targets and funding across consortia, the make-up and functioning of specific consortia and the targeting of YJCSS at more complex clients.

This evaluation assessed the YJCSS overall and did not robustly compare consortia performance, however it can be seen that while most consortia are performing well and work productively with the Department, this is not consistent across the state. Performance is primarily monitored through a small number of process oriented key performance indicators, with a small number of consortia not meeting their caseload targets. There is support and interest for systems to more consistently capture client outcomes. This was seen as beneficial for case practice, as well as communicating the cumulative impact of the program. It would also inform on the efficacy of consortia in relation to client impact.

Consideration has been given to whether it is appropriate to extend the YJCSS program, including whether the target group should be broadened. An extension to lower risk clients is not considered necessary, given the program was designed for, and is effective for, clients with high to intensive support needs.

Program data indicates that a larger cohort of pre-sentence clients are being referred to and provided support from YJCSS than was initially intended. While this may be effective, given the range of expertise available at a consortia level, more work is needed to understand this trend, and the consequences for consortia targets. In the context of resource constraints and the need for prioritisation of clients, this issue needs close monitoring to ensure YJCSS can continue to achieve its intended objectives in the future. Furthermore, the Guidelines should be updated to more clearly reflect the focus on pre-sentence clients.

The following recommendations for the Department are informed by the evidence regarding strengths and challenges for the program.

The Department should:

1. **Continue to fund the YJCSS program across the state, with three-yearly performance reviews of consortia targets and service and support provision:**

- Targets and funding should be equitably allocated across consortia based on the level of local demand from the target groups of clients (young people with high to intensive needs and/or at risk of homelessness)
- Consortia should provide access (directly or through referral networks) to a suitable breadth of services and supports that respond to client needs.

2. **Undertake further work to explore the causes and impact of the increasing proportion of pre-sentence clients in the YJCSS:**

- The growth in the proportion of pre-sentence clients coincides with a reduction in the proportion of clients on community orders. Work should explore whether and how the YJCSS support pre-sentence reflects the needs of pre-sentence clients and clients on community orders.
- Further work should also assess the outcomes for pre-sentence clients receiving support through the YJCSS, in terms of their court outcomes and subsequent diversion from or pathway into the Youth Justice system.

3. **Prioritise activity to support consistent measurement of client outcomes across the YJCSS:**

- The Youth Justice Client Outcomes tool was positively tested by Youth Justice workers and should be rolled out across the YJCSS to enable a consistent approach to understanding, assessing and planning for client needs.
- Implementation should ensure that all staff using the Client Outcomes tool are trained in how to use it, how to enter relevant data into client information systems, and how to engage with clients in the use of the tool.

4. **Provide a modest injection of funding to support brokerage:**

- Brokerage funding should be included within annual funding to all consortia, to enable low-cost support for particular clients as this would enhance the effectiveness of the support provided.
- Brokerage funding should be distributed across consortia in proportion to their client targets, and administered directly through the consortium rather than administered through Youth Justice.

5. **Support further collaboration and integration between the YJCSS and the Koori Youth Justice Program:**

- Existing good practice could be profiled and promoted across consortia, to ensure timely, effective and responsive supports for Aboriginal Youth Justice clients.
- More work is required to understand the reasons for and the impacts of the apparent lower support provided for Aboriginal clients within the YJCSS.

4.3 Housing issues

The THM-YJHPI is a valuable, yet stretched, component of the YJCSS program. The combination of transitional housing and support provides stability for clients, and properties are in high demand. The existence of dedicated Youth Justice properties is seen as critical, as Youth Justice clients can be perceived as 'risky' tenants, and less preferred that other cohorts. THM-YJHPI housing requirements and availability are posing challenges for many consortia. Given stable housing is an important platform for other support and outcomes for clients, this is an important area for consideration. A key finding of the evaluation was the importance of housing stability and the negative impact on client outcomes from the limited availability of housing.

The THM-YJHPI housing model works well for many clients who are capable of independent living. The evaluation also found a number of examples where the model was not suitable, for example, where the client was young but could not live with family, or where the client had complex needs and required higher levels of support requiring. Notwithstanding the need for additional THM-YJHPI stock, alternative models of housing provision are also required to more appropriately provide housing stability and housing exit options for youth justice clients, such as private rental brokerage, to support young people into private rental, specific inclusion of Youth Justice clients in Youth Foyers, and supported accommodation options, particularly for complex clients who require supervision or out of business hours supports. The current reviews of existing housing programs, being undertaken through the Victorian Homelessness Action Plan, provide an opportunity to consider and address the range of accommodation supports that would benefit homeless Youth Justice clients.

A second key issue appears to be related to the THM-YJHPI targets, which are based on clients staying in THM-YJHPI accommodation for an average of six months (that is, two placements per year). There is variable practice among the THM-YJHPI providers regarding the pressure to achieve this target, however an important finding was that the THM-YJHPI target was met once only, in one year by one consortium. This confirms that the targets are not realistic, and should be reviewed. Furthermore, given housing provision is not under the direct control of consortia, an alternative housing support target may be preferable.

A third housing issue was variable practice relating to the provision of notice to vacate. YJCSS workers report that this contributes to stress and uncertainty for clients, and can undermine efforts to stabilise their lives.

The following recommendations for the Department are informed by the evidence regarding the importance of housing, and a number of challenges faced in relation to housing provision and support.

The Department should:

6. **Improve the suitability, availability and range of alternative housing for youth justice clients, particularly for younger clients and those with complex needs:**

- The range of targeted housing models for Youth Justice clients should be broadened, to include support for clients to move into private rental, integrated learning and accommodation support, such as the Youth Foyer model, and supported accommodation for young people who are not able to maintain an independent tenancy.
- The Department should undertake work to ensure that eligible Youth Justice clients are targeted for housing supports such as Youth Foyers, on the basis of their needs.

7. **Review the suitability of THM-YJHPI targets across each consortia:**

- Consortia were consistently unable to meet their THM-YJHPI targets between 2008 and 2012 (with one sole exception), with the limited availability of stock the major influencing factor. THM-YJHPI targets reflect the availability of THM stock more than the performance of consortia, and the use of THM-YJHPI measures as performance indicators for the YJCSS consortia should be reconsidered.

8. **In consultation with Transitional Housing Managers and consortia, undertake work to ensure more consistent tenancy management processes in the THM-YJHPI:**

- THM providers involved in the YJCSS program should not routinely issue 90-120 day notices to vacate at tenancy commencement, as a 'no reason' notice to vacate undermines security and clients' rights, and is inconsistent with the Homelessness Assistance Program Guidelines.
- THM providers should be supported with information about good practice in tenancy management for YJCSS clients, including, for example, working collaboratively with YJCSS staff to negotiate short-term leases and develop appropriate exit strategies for clients.

4.4 Connecting the YJCSS to the broader service system

The make-up of consortia and broader service system in different regions affects the consistency of service offering and support for clients, which is likely to contribute to varying outcomes. This is a broader service system issue that is not limited to YJCSS or youth service delivery, and represents complex and long-standing limitations of service availability in Victoria. This appears to be particularly problematic in rural areas, where the range and capacity of services may be less than in metropolitan areas.

There are opportunities to re-visit consortia membership over time and look for services that can fill gaps in particular skill areas by involving new agencies and workers. In the event that the regional services available do not provide sufficient coverage in the areas required, consortia will be limited in the extent to which they can access the required skills. Building skill through professional development and training is one option, although it is likely to be costly.

Given the complex nature of YJCSS clients, and the frequency of chronic mental health issues and histories of trauma and abuse, it is important that improvements be made to consortia make-up and linkages to ensure therapeutic needs can be addressed as a matter of priority.

The following recommendations for the Department focus on improving service access and networking, and are informed by the evidence regarding the client needs and service provision. The focus here is on organisational practice in relation to working with specialist services.

The Department should:

9. **Support consortia to more consistently access therapeutic supports for clients, which focus on trauma and attachment (including for example, mental health supports):**

- Department and consortia should map the availability of specialist therapeutic supports (within consortia agencies, where possible, and in each consortia catchment) to support timely connection to therapeutic supports for young people requiring more specialist support.
- The Department should undertake more detailed research regarding young people with complex needs who are considered unsuitable for referral to the YJCSS, or who are found to be unsuitable during YJCSS service provision, in order to quantify the magnitude of unmet demand for more specialist interventions.

10. **Facilitate state-wide and local networking opportunities to support consortia to liaise with relevant specialist services for partnership and workforce development:**

- A number of areas for client support appear to be less consistently provided through the YJCSS consortia, such as family violence, sexual assault and cultural support. These gaps should be addressed through expanding consortia referral networks, expanding consortia membership and/or improving workforce capability. Facilitated networking opportunities would support agency connections, rather than worker-led relationships.
- Some consortia appear to have stronger capacity to network with relevant agencies, and across different sectors. Department-facilitated state-wide and local networking would help to ensure that consortia agencies have appropriate opportunities to build and strengthen their connection with relevant providers.

4.5 Program guidelines and tools

Communication and information exchange are foundational to collaboration between Youth Justice and YJCSS workers. For the most part, this appears to be a strong feature of the service system but appears to be mixed in certain areas, where the quality of worker relationships may affect the services provided.

Relationships between Youth Justice and YJCSS agencies are strengthening as a result of the YJCSS program, and there are opportunities to foster these relationships such as through increased role clarity. Relationships with custodial workers, for instance, are an opportunity for further improvements.

Appropriate referral and assessment processes mean that client needs are comprehensively documented and shared between Youth Justice and YJCSS workers, and suitable clients can be referred into the program. YJCSS also supports the statutory role of community-based Youth Justice workers, as YJCSS workers can pick up support needs and service coordination. Relationships with external services allow for a broader range of supports to be engaged as required.

The following recommendations for the Department focus on opportunities to provide support and improve the guidelines and tools to foster communication, collaboration and effective practice.

The Department should:

11. **Provide greater role clarity across stakeholders, including Youth Justice custodial services, and support positive Youth Justice and consortia relationships in each area:**

- Poor role clarity can undermine positive working relationships and reduce the efficiency of the YJCSS service model. Where role clarity or working relationships are known to be comparatively weak, the Department should provide support, for example through mentoring with stronger YJCSS consortia or community-based Youth Justice units with effective working relationships with consortia.
- Concerted effort is required to ensure that staff in community-based Youth Justice units, the YJCSS consortia and custodial services have a clear sense of each other's roles throughout assessment, including parole planning, referral, support and exit. For custodial clients, care team meetings should commence while clients are still in custody.

12. **Update the Guidelines to clarify processes and roles in referral particularly in relation to young people in custody and young people who are dual clients, and liaise with relevant programs to ensure more consistent and timely referral practice:**

- The Guidelines should be updated to support earlier referral to the YJCSS for young people in custody. Pre-release support should be provided up to eight weeks before release. The Guidelines should promote YJCSS involvement in exit planning, including for example any Client Assessment and Planning review, the development of a parole plan and the initial care team meeting.
- The Guidelines currently specify that case planning for dual clients (such as Child Protection or Disability Services clients) is a joint responsibility. More information should be included regarding timelines for referral into the YJCSS and participation in care team meetings. Youth Justice should liaise with programs such as Child Protection to emphasise the benefits of earlier referral and the effective care team processes, through a number of good practice examples. Participation in care team meetings should be a clear requirement, particularly at the commencement of YJCSS support and in the lead up to a client exiting their program.
- The Department should develop a suite of accessible and short resources to complement the Guidelines, such as desk-top summaries or checklists, as not all workers engage with the length and detail of the Guidelines.

13. **In consultation with consortia, ensure that YJCSS staff are effectively using CRISSP and expand data definitions to support consistent data collection:**

- Consortia should ensure that all relevant staff have access to CRISSP and participate in necessary training.
- Consortia should ensure that relevant staff update CRISSP on a weekly basis (at minimum) and record the range of activities related to support provision, referral and case process, and their duration, in line with the Youth Justice CRISSP Business Practice Guidelines.
- The Department and consortia should agree on minimum requirements regarding the threshold for reporting activities (for example, the duration of support periods which require data entry) as well

as categories for common activities (for example, basic compared to general support, case management and care teams).

14. **Regularly review and update tools and templates for YJCSS to include a case closure summary, simplified referral and assessment forms and care team documentation:**

- Building on recent work, the Department should continue to distribute and promote assessment and care team documentation.
- Good practice referral processes should be promoted across the consortia.
- A case closure summary, linked to the Client Outcomes tool, should be developed for trialling in 2013-14.

4.6 Reflection, planning and professional development

Consortia make-up, capability and skill are areas where significant variability was observed. The different consortia make-up and service types in each region determine the range of services and supports available. This can be a particular challenge when specialist skills are not carried within the consortium or within the broader service network. For example, there is considerable variation in the education, training and employment focus across consortia, with some consortia including member agencies with experience in this area, while other consortia do not have such a focus.

Generally workers demonstrate a high level of skill in delivering support in a range of areas, in areas such as practical support and education and career planning. More specialist, therapeutic skills may be lacking in some areas and this is likely to be affecting outcomes for clients where those needs are not being fully addressed through YJCSS support or effective needs assessment and referral.

The following recommendations for the Department focus on opportunities to support good practice, with a focus on worker practice.

The Department should:

15. **Support Local YJCSS forums with Youth Justice and YJCSS staff and other key stakeholders, at least annually, to reflect on practice and further strengthen worker relationships:**

- Each consortium should meet on an annual basis with relevant Youth Justice and other stakeholders to reflect on practice and identify key areas for focus for the upcoming year.
- These forums should include a mix of staff across different levels to provide opportunities for relationship building and mentoring.

16. **In consultation with consortia, develop and implement a professional development strategy to promote best practice, with an early focus on effective referral into the YJCSS, engaging with specialists outside of the consortia, needs assessment, family violence, mental health and care team practice.**

- This should include opportunities for joint professional development between YJCSS and Youth Justice staff from induction onwards.
- A strong focus should be on current good practice across the YJCSS and the broader Youth Justice system.

5. Conclusion

There was a high degree of interest and participation in this evaluation, with a broad range of data informing the discussion and recommendations. The evaluation finds that the YJCSS program has been largely operationalised as intended, with most inputs and outputs in place. The YJCSS clearly represents an improvement on previous service delivery, with greater clarity regarding service objectives, more robust prioritisation of clients receiving service, more consistent referral and a wider range of supports provided for young people, depending on their issues and needs. Some inconsistencies in practice and service support were observed across regions, with critical issues being a mismatch between original needs identification and the support provided, and a significant gap between expected service duration and the length of service provided.

The evaluation found many examples of effective case practice including strong communication and collaboration, proactive care teams, breadth, intensity and flexibility of support and proactive engagement of clients.

The evaluation identified a number of factors that limit the achievement of client outcomes including limited THM-YJHPI housing and a lack of alternative housing models, inconsistent care team practice, in some cases, limited consortia make-up, variable worker skill and challenging client engagement. A number of process, practice and operational, and system improvements could be considered for future implementation of the YJCSS including changes to forms and processes, building more consistent practice, boosting consortia capability, and exploring new housing models and service system enhancements.

In relation to parole planning, overall efficiency has improved with a more centralised referral process, however, there are continued challenges associated with support for clients with complex or diverse needs in rural and remote areas. Custodial workers also show mixed understandings of the YJCSS model for clients leaving custody.

The evaluation assessed existing performance indicators and reporting, and found that the current program indicators focus on process rather than outcome measures. Performance reporting is also limited through variable data entry. While client outcomes are tracked through case documentation, data quality and comparability is variable. This method of considering outcomes can also not be quantified or aggregated. Stakeholders would like to develop case closure summaries that quantify client outcomes.

A final focus of the evaluation was the target group for the YJCSS. The target group for YJCSS is appropriate, however further work is required to understand the drivers and impacts of the increasing proportion of pre-sentence clients. The varying emphasis on complex clients across consortia warrants further attention.

The Department of Human Services should:

Program management

1. Continue to fund the YJCSS program across the state, with three-yearly performance reviews of consortia targets and service and support provision.
2. Undertake further work to explore the causes and impact of the increasing proportion of pre-sentence clients in the YJCSS.

3. Prioritise activity to support consistent measurement of client outcomes across the YJCSS.
4. Provide a modest injection of funding to support brokerage.
5. Support further collaboration and integration between the YJCSS and the Koori Youth Justice Program.

Housing

6. Improve the suitability, availability and range of alternative housing for youth justice clients, particularly for younger clients and those with complex needs.
7. Review the suitability of THM-YJHPI targets across each consortia.
8. In consultation with Transitional Housing Managers and consortia, undertake work to ensure more consistent tenancy management processes in the THM-YJHPI

Connecting the YJCSS to the broader service system

9. Support consortia to more consistently access therapeutic supports, which focus on trauma and attachment (including for example, mental health supports).
10. Facilitate state-wide and local networking opportunities to support consortia to liaise with relevant specialist services for partnership and workforce development.

Program guidelines and tools

11. Provide greater role clarity across stakeholders, including Youth Justice custodial services, and support positive Youth Justice and consortia relationships in each area.
12. Update the Guidelines to clarify processes and roles in referral particularly in relation to young people in custody and young people who are dual clients, and liaise with relevant programs to ensure more consistent and timely referral practice.
13. In consultation with consortia, ensure that YJCSS staff are effectively using CRISSP and expand data definitions to support consistent data collection.
14. Regularly review and update tools and templates for YJCSS to include a case closure summary, simplified referral and assessment forms and care team documentation.

Reflection, planning and professional development

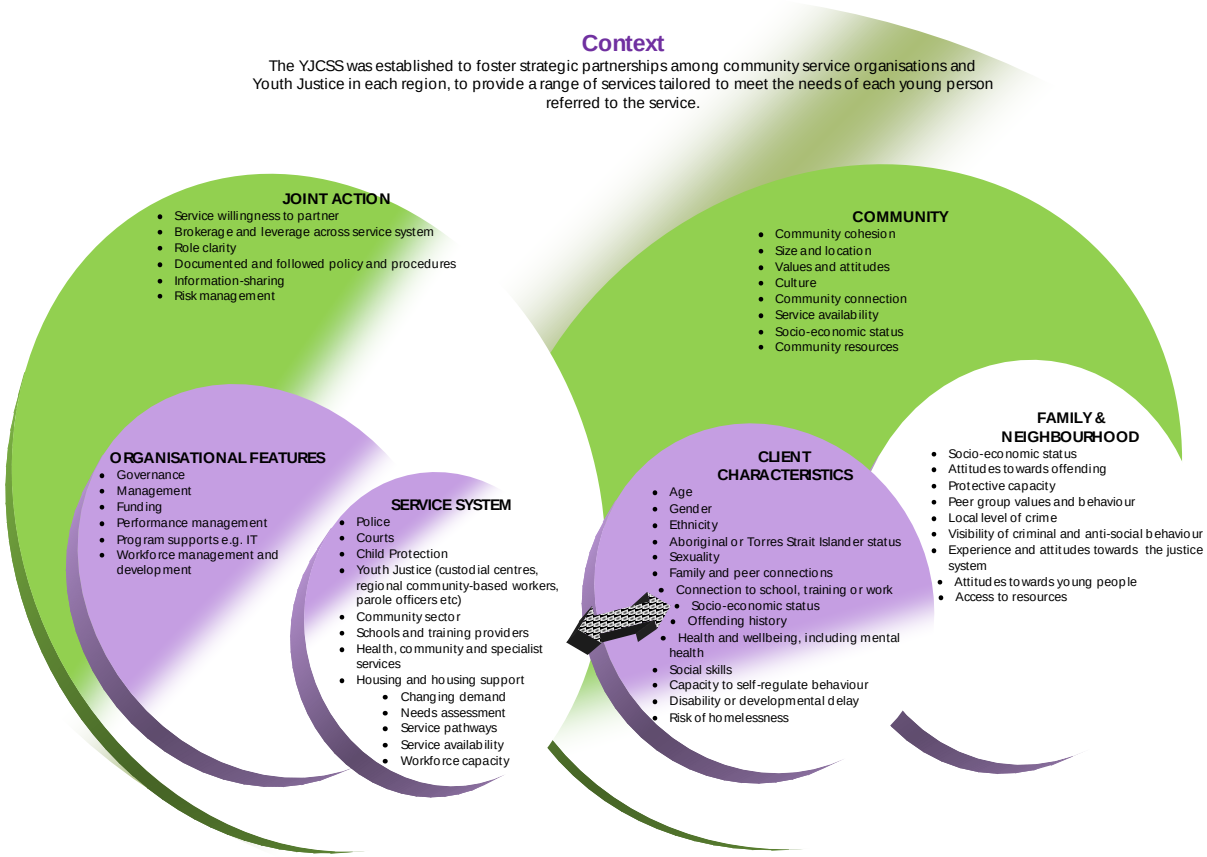
15. Support Local YJCSS forums with Youth Justice and YJCSS staff and other key stakeholders, at least annually, to reflect on practice and further strengthen worker relationships.
16. In consultation with consortia, develop and implement a professional development strategy to promote best practice, with an early focus on effective referral into the YJCSS, engaging with specialists outside of the consortia, needs assessment, family violence, mental health and care team practice.

Appendix 1. Program Logic diagram and key assumptions

Drivers	Target	Inputs	Outputs	Service System outcomes (intermediate)	Client outcome domains	Client outcomes (short-term and **medium term outcomes**)
An increase in the number and complexity of clients within the Youth Justice system To facilitate a more efficient, effective and equitable youth justice community support system across Victoria	Youth Justice clients residing in the community and those exiting custody – primarily clients with high to intensive needs THM-YJHPI program Community service organisations that provide services to YJ clients across Victoria Youth Justice program (community and custodial)	Increased funding for community-based sector Community service organisations partner in consortia and work together to provide services to Youth Justice clients in each region THM-YJHPI program integrated into consortia Youth Justice PASA positions created in each region Governance established via central and regional implementation groups State-wide key performance indicators and reporting established CRISSP rolled out to consortia	Youth Justice staff flag and prioritise suitable clients within set regional targets Youth Justice case worker identifies specific client issues and needs and makes a single referral to consortium Consortia agencies work together to provide a suite of services tailored to the identified needs of referred clients: • Intensive support • Referrals to the broader service system • Housing and support Regular case coordination ('care team' meetings) and consultation between Youth Justice, local consortium and other service providers Consortia develop referral pathways for clients within the partnership and to broader service system Consortia undertake relationship building and leveraging activities within the broader service system	Improved prioritisation of client needs within the Youth Justice system Streamlined access to services for Youth Justice Improved communication and collaboration between Youth Justice and community service organisations Improved coordination, communication and collaboration between the community service organisations servicing Youth Justice clients **Service system outcomes (long term)** A more responsive and integrated Youth Justice service system More equitable funding distribution for community service organisations servicing Youth Justice clients A more targeted service system	Recidivism Compliance with Youth Justice Order Family/Significant others/Peers Housing/Independent Living skills Financial support Alcohol and other drug use Health Education/employment/ training Engagement with community & culture	Diverted from either YJ system or a more intensive penalty (where appropriate) Supported to comply with youth justice order/special condition **Compliance with justice order, special conditions and interventions to address offending behaviour** Increased awareness of offending behaviours and triggers Improved information and awareness re: identified individual needs **Improved capacity to independently meet own needs (towards self-sufficiency)** **Increased pro-social behaviours** **Improved health and wellbeing behaviours, including addressing disability** Improved pro-social interaction with family, community and social networks Improved family, social and cultural connectedness Improved access to local services and supports **Improved participation and maintenance of education/training/employment** **Improved continuity of stable and safe accommodation**
ASSUMPTIONS						
	A dedicated Youth Justice PASA would be available in each region to develop local protocols and be a key link between the Youth justice unit and the funded agency Early evaluations would look at targets and inform equity	Increased funding supports collaboration Service environment is comparable across the regions	YJCSS will be a one-stop shop for services with referral to other services Services are available locally Consortia can leverage access to services outside the consortia YJ and CSO agencies will work together and share information	Service collaboration improves outcomes Improved relationships improve outcomes		Service itself improves outcomes for young people

Appendix 2. YJCSS Interactive Framework

The Interactive Framework, developed by Synergistiq, guides the development of evaluation and other research frameworks. It is a visual representation of the **ecological perspective** which recognises that client and service system outcomes are affected by a range of variables across a range of levels, and by the interaction between those variables. The Framework demonstrates the variety of stakeholders and issues which need to be considered in data collection, and assists in identifying the types of questions that may need to be asked of each stakeholder, based on the interplay of variables that affect them. The Framework is also helpful in defining the scope of the evaluation. In this case, the Framework highlights the interplay between the YJCSS itself and other parts of the service system and society more generally.



Appendix 3. Administrative data

Interpretation of data

This appendix reports on administrative data collected since the commencement of YJCSS program. In interpreting this data, several points should be noted.

Firstly, although it includes data for all regions, data collection appeared to be inconsistent across regions, with data being particularly limited in Loddon Mallee - Mallee Region. Data entry varied within regions and between clients. This was particularly the case for data relating to the types of service delivery. Through comparison of administrative data, case notes and consultation input, it is evident that not all support provided to clients is captured in the administrative data.

Secondly, while most YJCSS clients received a single period of support, a minority of clients received support on two or more occasions. To reduce bias – particularly in regions or client groups where the number of clients was small – the first period of support for each client was used for analysis. Data relating to cases where a client was referred on a second, third or fourth occasion was used to make comparisons between clients receiving support on one occasion and those receiving support on multiple occasions.

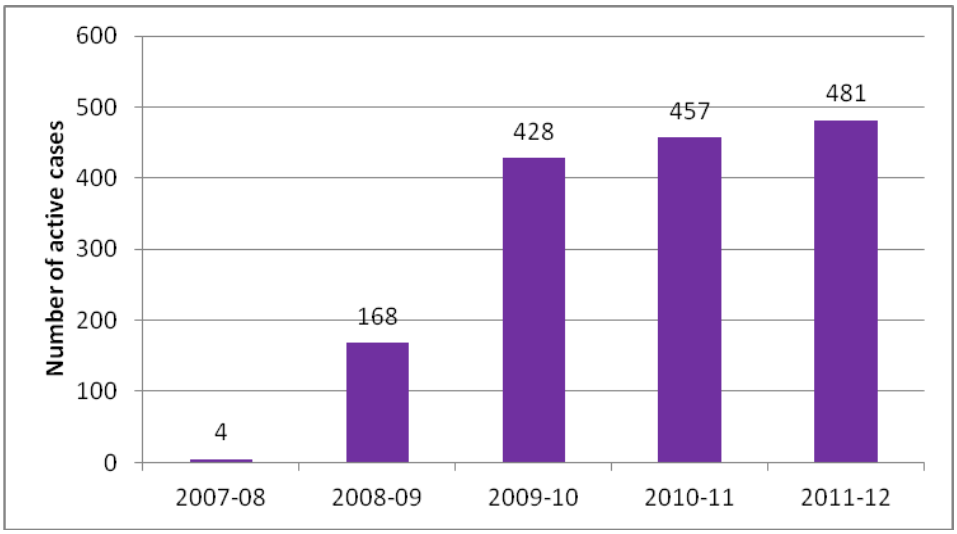
Thirdly, in some cases, totals on graphs or in text may be slightly less than the total number of clients where fields were blank or recorded as 'unknown', and proportions might not precisely equal 100 per cent due to rounding.

Finally, the values relating to 2011-12 in this report differ from those in the Interim Report as the Interim Report analysed data relating to all clients involved with YJCSS in 2011-12 regardless of when they were referred, whereas the '2011-12' category in this report refers to clients who were referred during the 2011-12 financial year.

YJCSS client characteristics

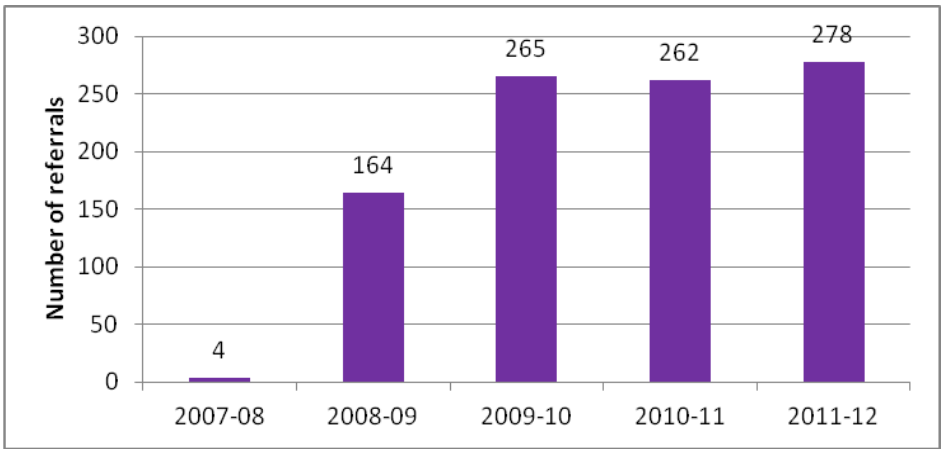
Since commencement of the YJCSS program, there has been a gradual increase in total caseload (Figure 1).

Figure 1: **YJCSS caseload by year**



It should be noted that there was a staged roll-out, with 2009-2010 the first year all consortia were operating from the start of the financial year.

Figure 2: **Number of YJCSS referrals by year**



In most consortia, but not all, caseload targets have been met, or exceeded (Figure 3).

Figure 3: **Target and annual caseload, by consortia, 2008-12**

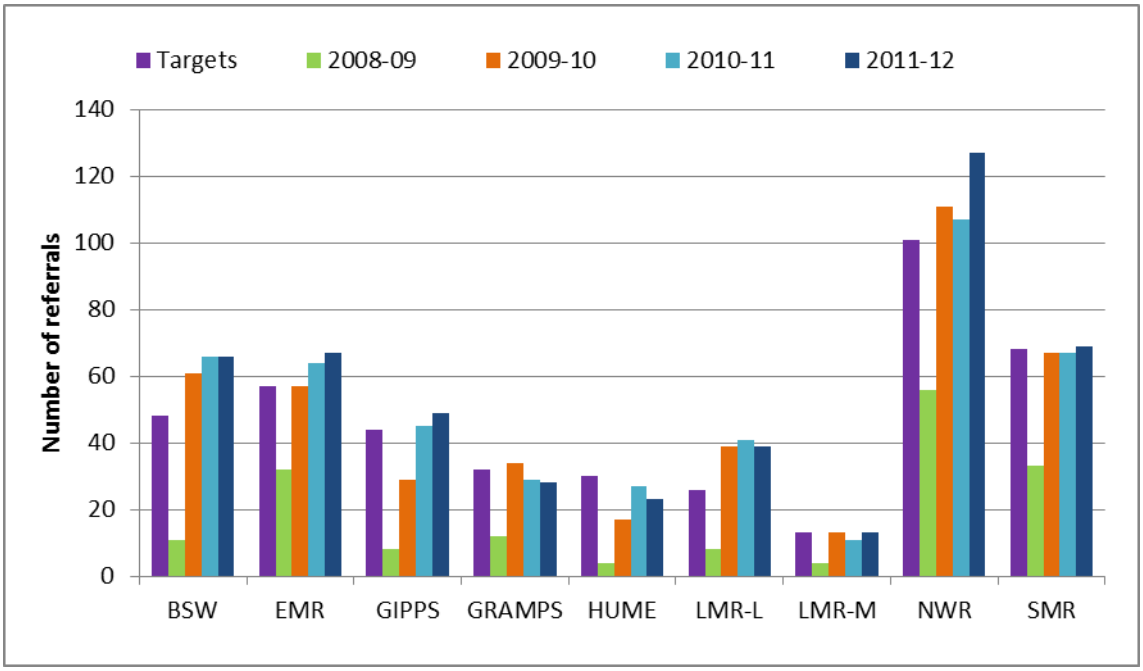


Table 1: **Target and annual caseload, by consortia, 2008-12 (values for Figure 3)**

	Targets	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
BSW	48	11	61	66	66
EMR	57	32	57	64	67
GIPPS	44	8	29	45	49
GRAMPS	32	12	34	29	28
HUME	30	4	17	27	23
LMR-L	26	8	39	41	39
LMR-M	13	4	13	11	13
NWR	101	56	111	107	127
SMR	68	33	67	67	69
TOTAL	419	168	428	457	481

The administrative data since the commencement of the YJCSS program shows 973 YJCSS client records. This comprises of records for 891 clients, of whom 810 were referred to YJCSS once, 65 were referred twice, four were referred three times and two were referred four times (Figure 4). There were no clear regional trends in regards to clients returning to YJCSS (Figure 5).

Figure 4: **Number of times client referred to YJCSS**

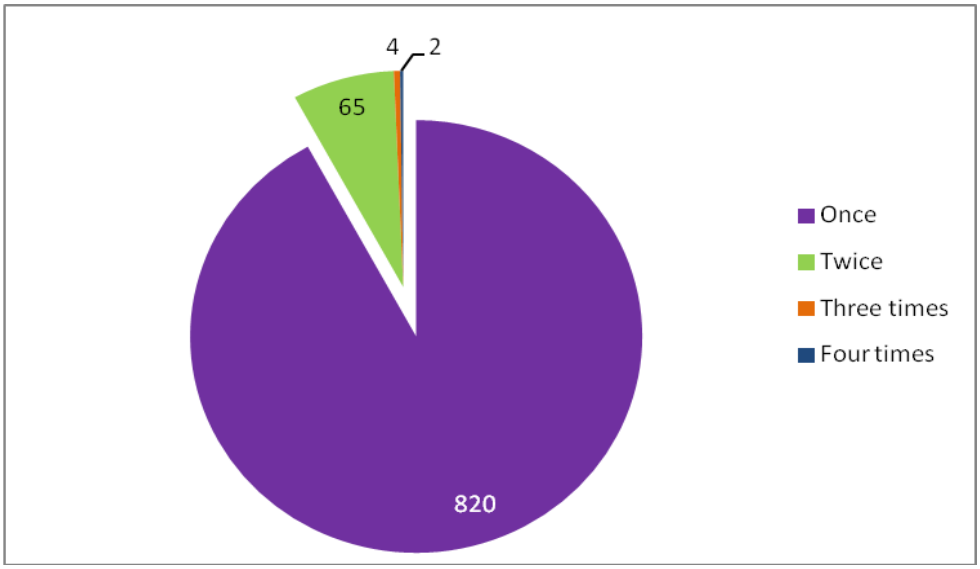
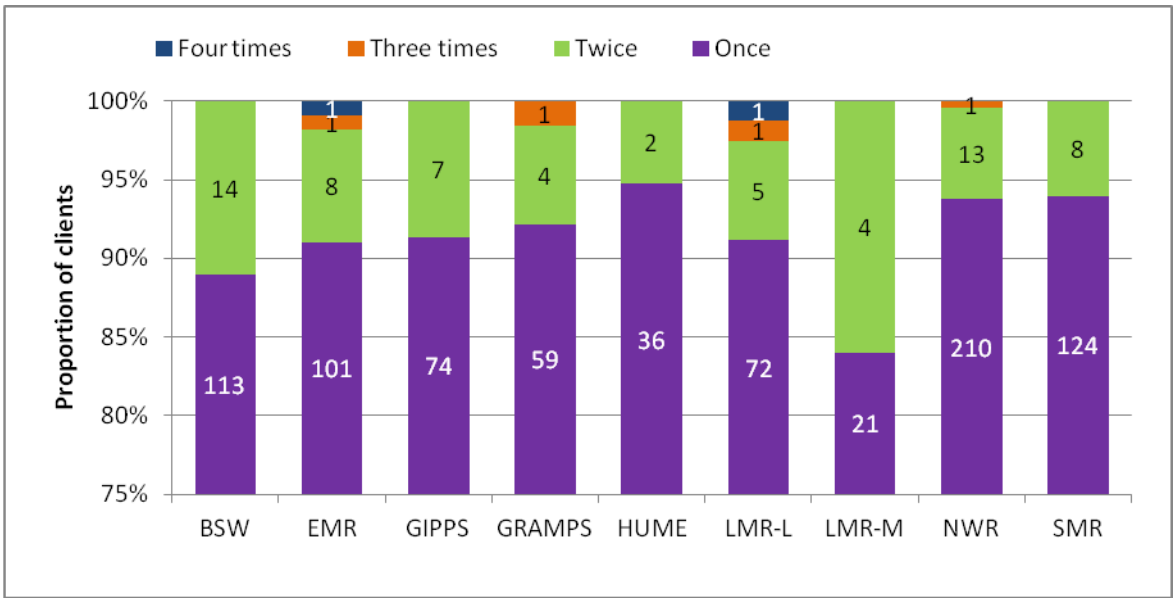


Figure 5: **Number of times client referred to YJCSS, by region**



Between 2009 and 2012 there were 757 male clients and 134 female clients. The mean and median age was 17 years old. The average age and age range was similar for both male and female clients (Figure 6).

Figure 6: **Age and sex of clients**

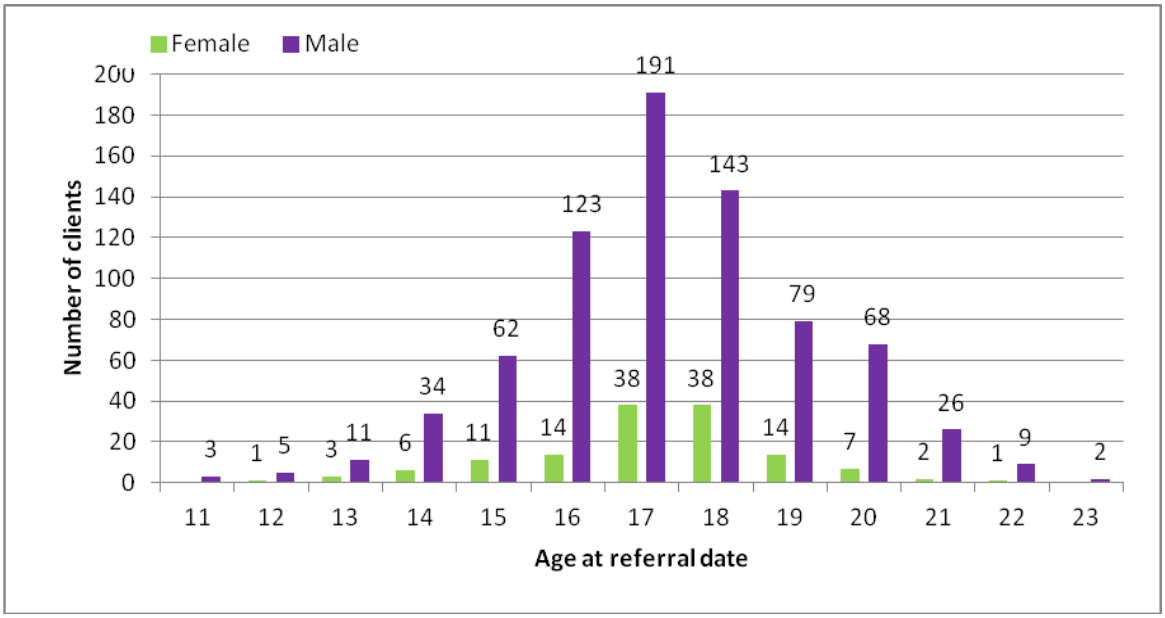
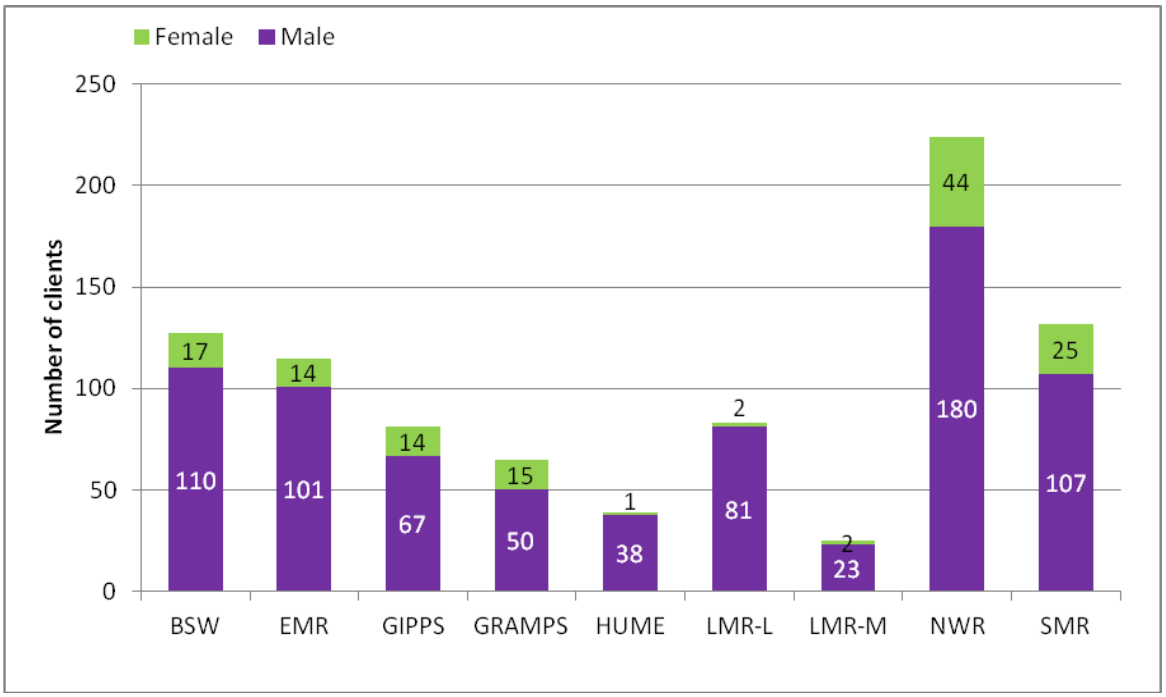


Figure 7 shows the number of clients by region. The majority of clients in all regions were male, with the proportion of female clients ranging from 2% (two clients) in Loddon to 23% (fifteen clients) in Grampians. In total there were 420 clients receiving support from consortia in rural regions and 471 clients receiving support in metropolitan regions.

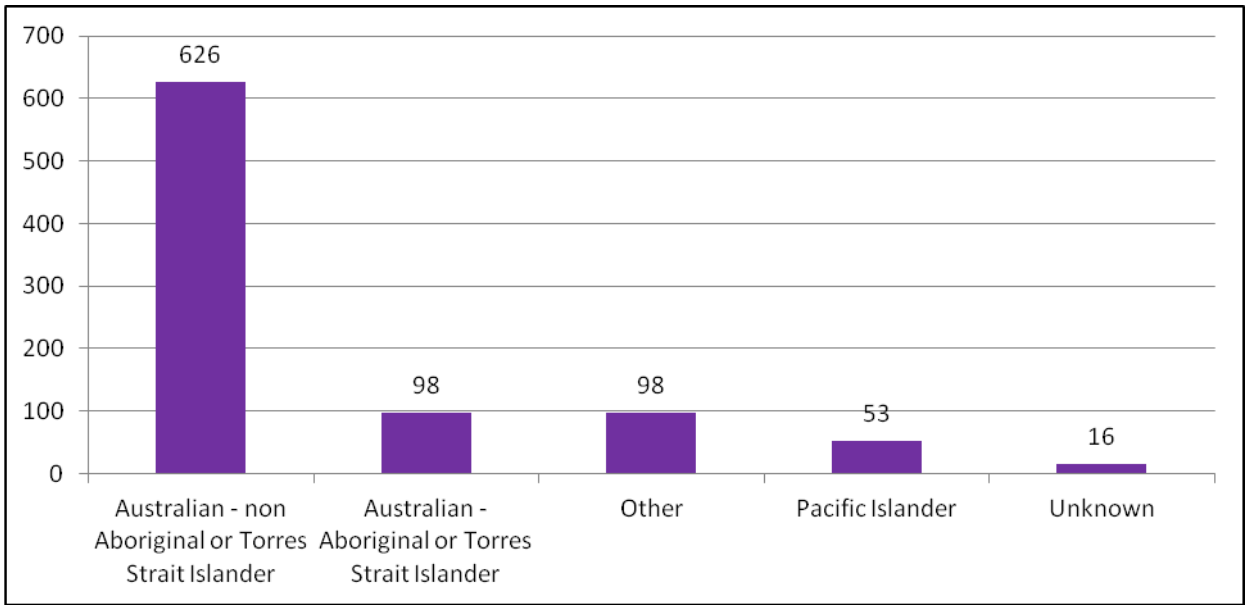
Figure 7: **Breakdown of male and female clients by region**



In total, 81 per cent of YJCSS clients identified as Australian, comprising of seventy per cent non-Aboriginal and eleven per cent Aboriginal clients. The next most common cultural identity was New Zealander (4%), with a broad range of other cultural identities represented. In relation to cultural identity, 93 per cent of clients had a cultural identity which matched their country of birth, seven per cent were born in Australia but identify with a different cultural identity (presumably that of their parents or ancestors), and three per cent were born overseas but identify as Australian. Cultural identity rather than country of birth is used throughout this report as it is likely to be more closely linked to the client's perception of self and hence experience of culture.

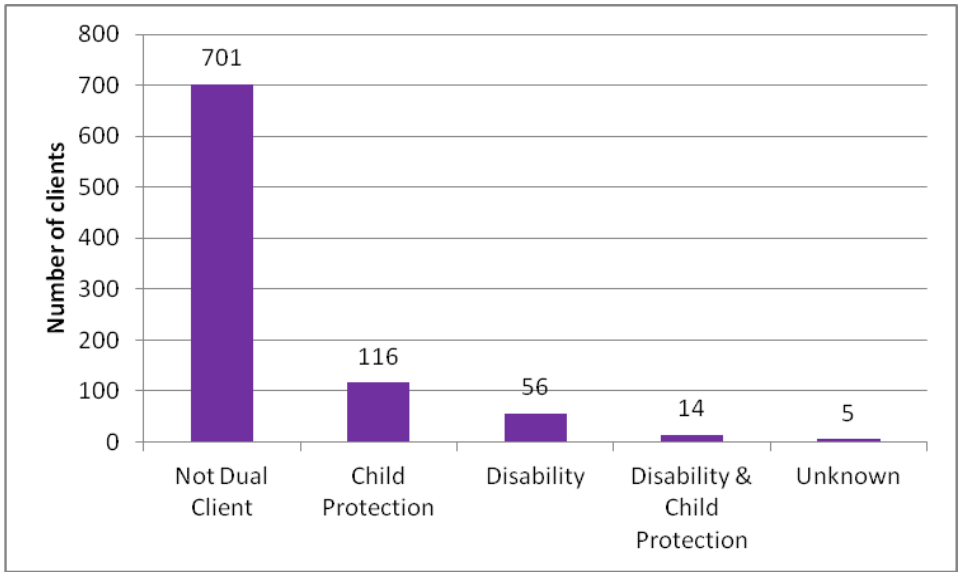
Figure 8 shows the cultural identity of clients, showing Australian (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) and other cultural identities, with a specific count of Pacific Islander clients, as this is an over-represented group of particular interest. This group includes Maori clients in addition to clients from other Pacific islands (Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Cook Islands and Nauru).

Figure 8: **Cultural identity of clients**



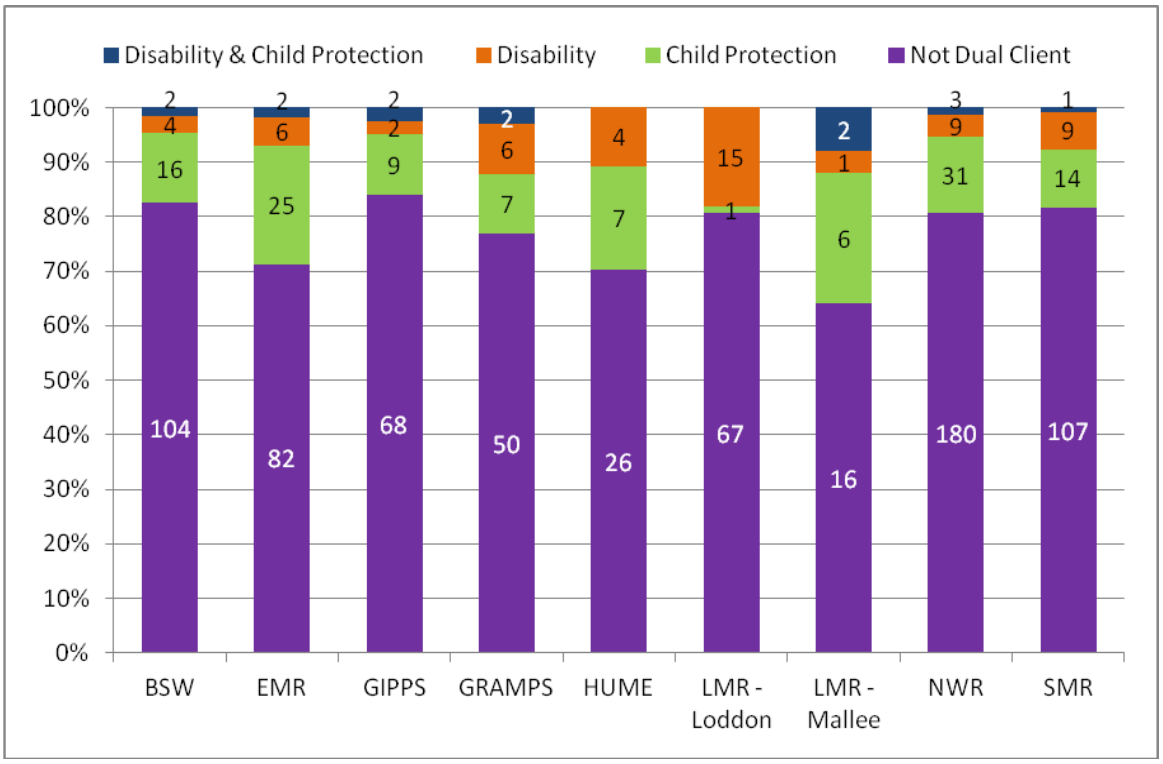
Thirteen per cent of YJCSS clients (116 clients) were Child Protection clients at the time of referral (Figure 9). Six per cent (56 clients) were Disability Services clients at the time of referral, and two per cent (14 clients) were both Child Protection and Disability Services clients. This data set captures current involvement rather than lifetime involvement with Child Protection or Disability Services.

Figure 9: **Number of dual clients**



The proportion of dual clients was approximately consistent across regions (Figure 10), with the exception of Mallee region which had a larger proportion of dual clients, though the small number of clients in this region means that these numbers may not be representative of a broader trend.

Figure 10: **Number and proportion of dual clients by region**



The VONIY assessment rating is a 'shorthand' assessment of need. The assessment is undertaken as part of the referral and response process and does not account for any changes in the circumstances, behaviour, or attitudes of clients that may occur after referral. Although the VONIY tool has been criticised for not accurately representing client complexity and for its lack of responsiveness to change, the VONIY ratings are still used throughout this report as it is the best indicator of client complexity available within the program data. Although the range of service provision may also be an indicator of complexity, this data has its own limitations as discussed below, and using range of service provision as an indicator for complexity would not account for case plans which focus on addressing the client's most immediate needs before addressing further needs. Hence, VONIY ratings are a useful indicator but should be viewed as indicative only. Also to be noted is that there are no VONIY ratings for clients of Southern Metropolitan Region who are exiting custody due to an error in the referral system.

Although most YJCSS clients had complex needs, a substantial proportion of clients had a low or moderate VONIY rating (Figure 11). The most common rating was 'high'. On average clients in metropolitan regions were more complex than clients in non-metropolitan areas (Figure 12), and as expected, clients who were referred to YJCSS on more than one occasion had higher VONIY ratings overall than clients who were referred once (Figure 13, next page).

Figure 11: **VONIY ratings of clients**

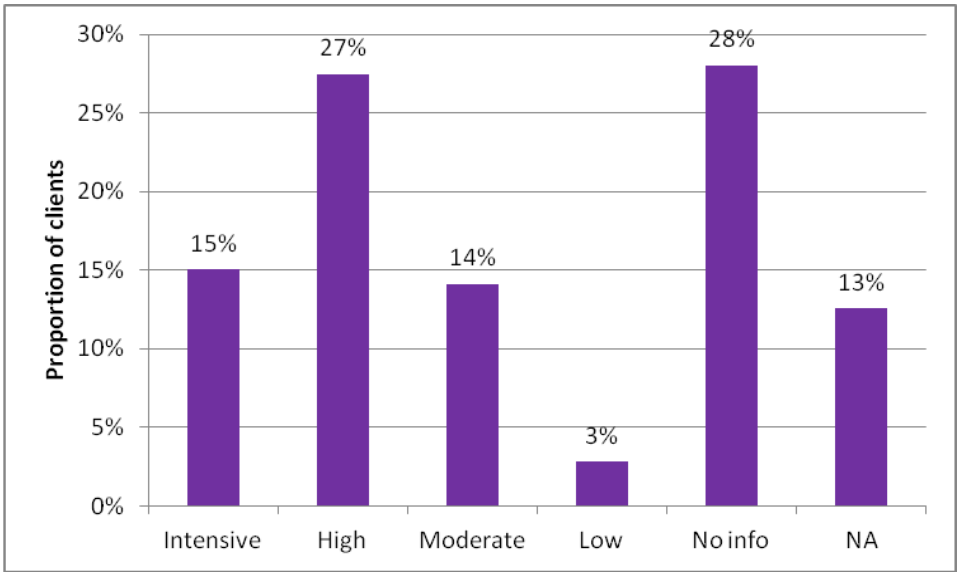


Figure 12: **VONIY ratings of clients by region**

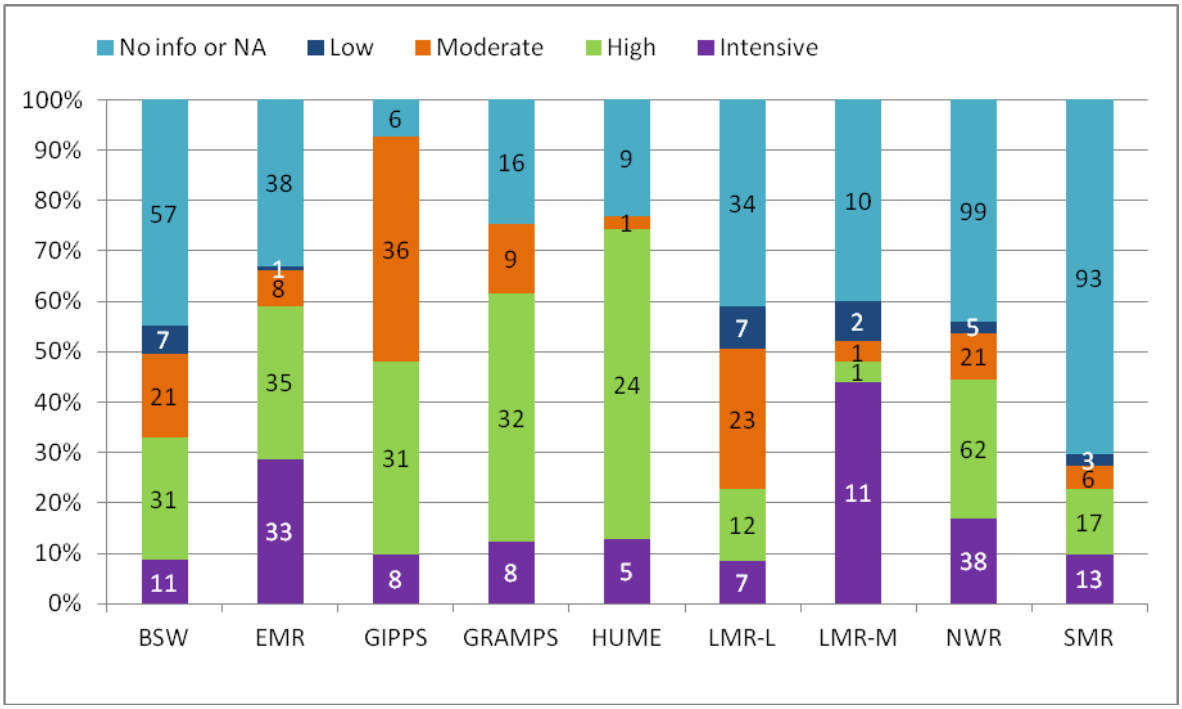
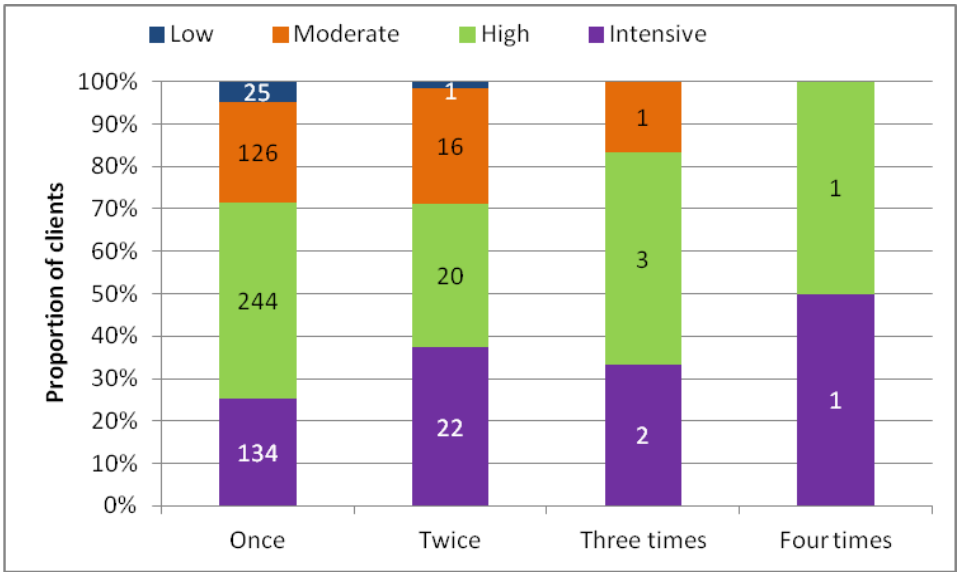


Figure 13: **VONIY rating by number of entries into YJCSS**



Order type

Clients were grouped into three categories, referring to the type of order at the time of referral to YJCSS. These categories were community, custodial and pre-sentence. The groupings are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: **Order categories**

Category	Listed order at referral (alphabetical)
Community	Interstate community order, probation with conviction, probation without conviction, youth attendance order, youth supervision order with conviction, or youth supervision order without conviction
Custodial	Imprisonment, remand, youth justice order, youth parole order, or youth residential order
Pre-sentence	Deferral of sentence, deferral of sentence (PSR), supervised bail, supervised deferral of sentence, or YJCAS – supervised deferral of sentence

A small number of clients from North West Region were listed as transition clients who were not on an order. This group has mostly been excluded from comparisons of clients by order type due to the small numbers.

38 per cent of YJCSS clients were on community orders at the time of referral, 39 per cent were exiting custody, 22 per cent were pre-sentence clients, and one per cent were not on orders (Figure 14). There was a larger proportion of male clients than female clients exiting custody (Figure 15).

Figure 14: **Order type**

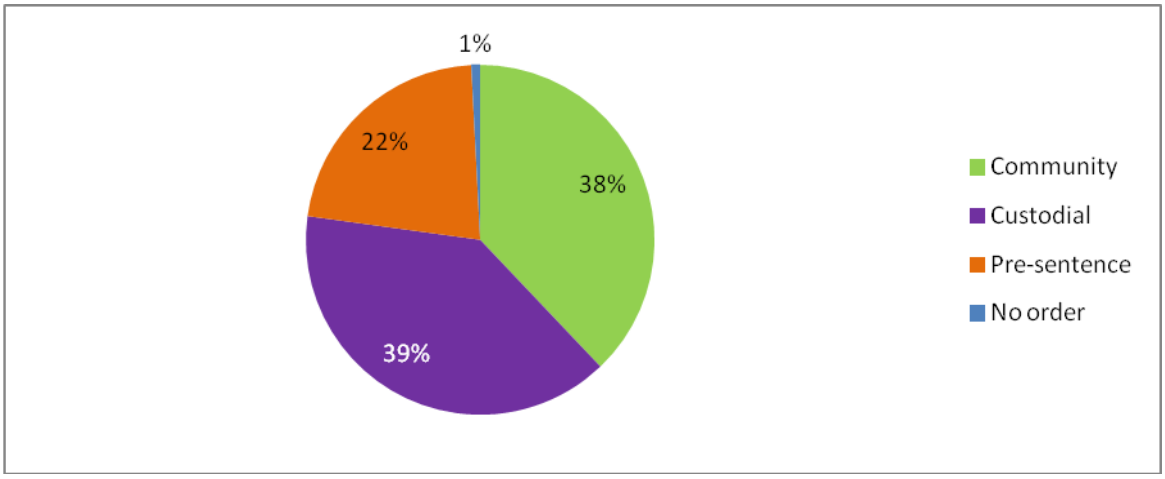
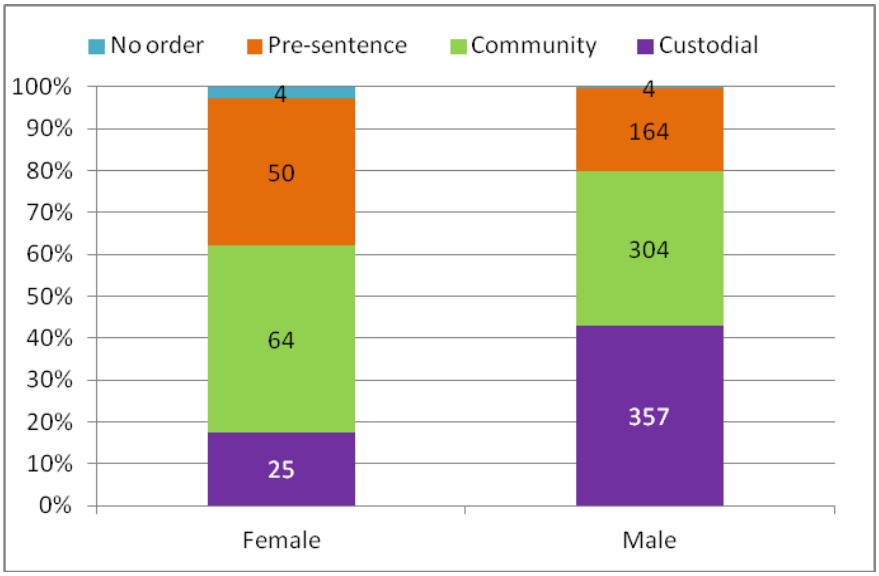
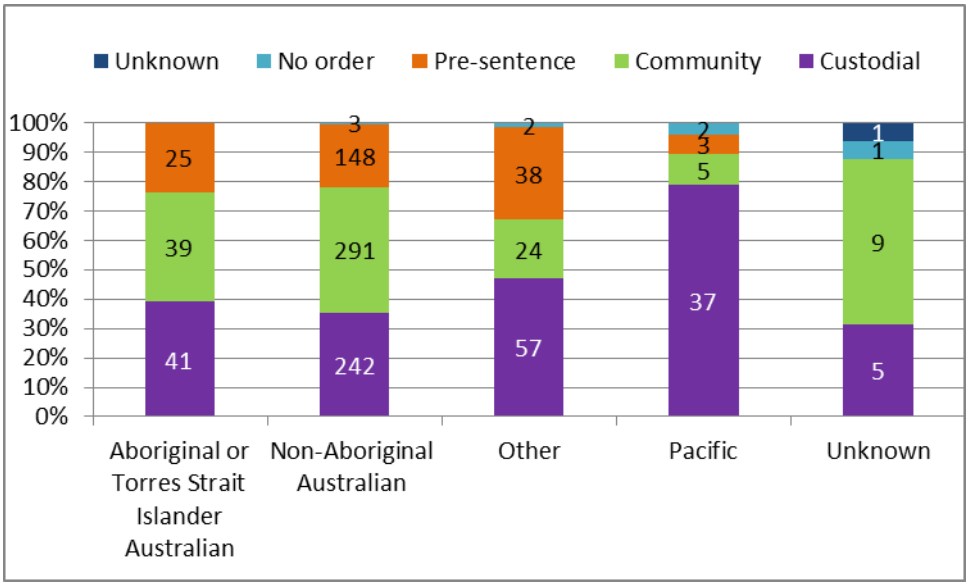


Figure 15: **Order type by sex**



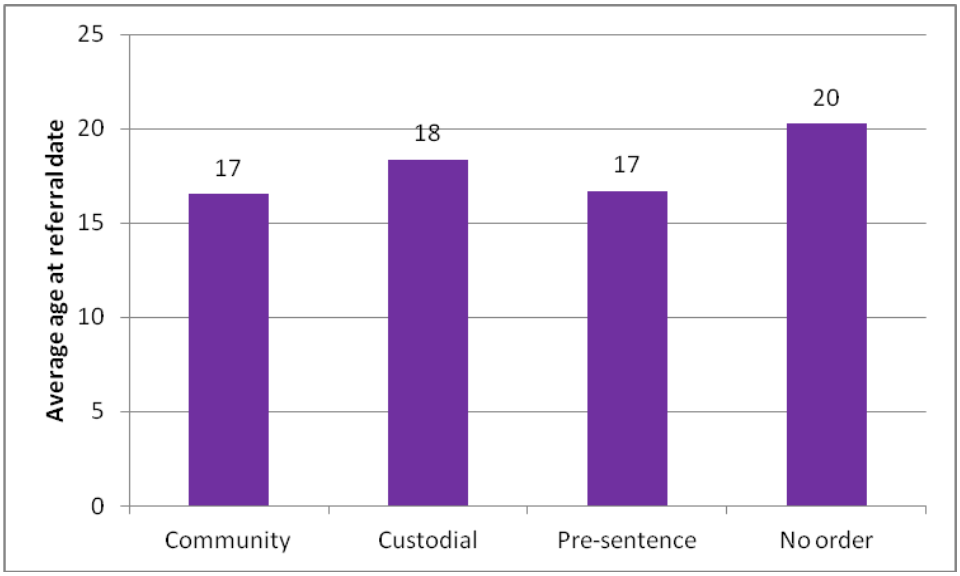
Australian clients (Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and non Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander) were more likely to be completing a community order than non-Australian clients. Pacific Islander clients in particular were more likely than clients of other cultural groups to be exiting custody (Figure 16, next page).

Figure 16: **Order type by cultural identity**



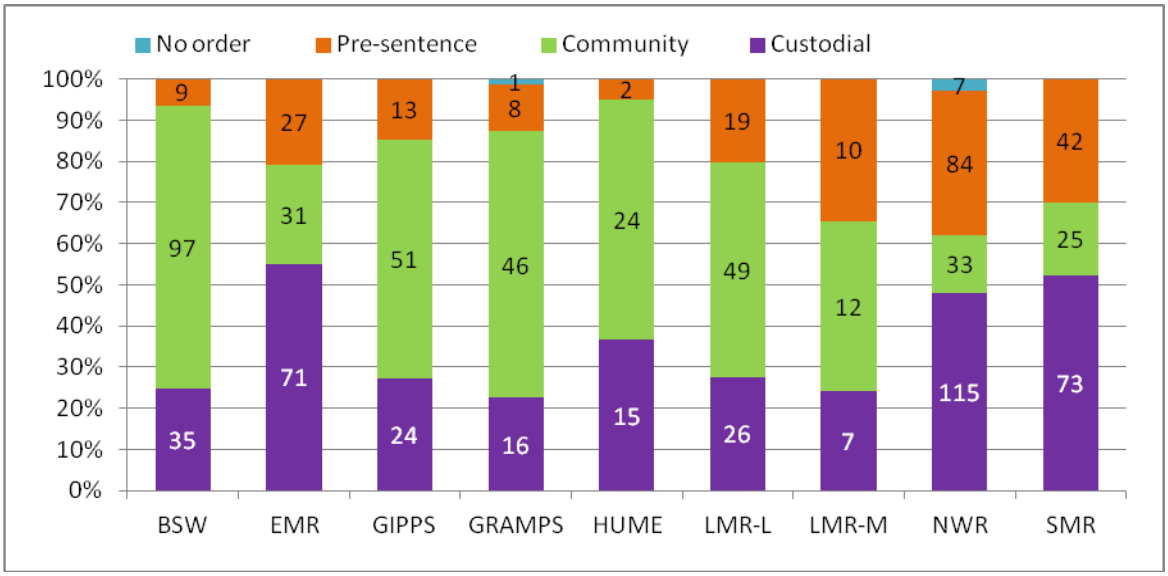
Clients on custodial orders were slightly older (average age 18) than pre-sentence clients or those on community orders (average age 17), as shown in Figure 17. The seven clients from North-West Region were listed as 'no order' were older than clients in the other categories (average age 21) and were transition clients from the previous post-release support program.

Figure 17: **Average age by order type**



The proportions of pre-sentence clients and those on custodial and community orders varied between regions (Figure 18). A larger proportion of YJCSS clients in metropolitan regions were exiting custody than those in rural regions.

Figure 18: **Order type by region**



YJCSS targets

The implementation and performance of the YJCSS has, to date, been monitored through data collected by the CRISSP Youth Case. Six interim monitoring measures and targets are being used, all of which focus on process:

1. The number of clients receiving an initial response within five working days of referral
2. Percentage of clients receiving an initial response within five working days of response (90% target)
3. The number of clients with a documented plan that addresses all service components within 20 days of initial contact
4. The percentage of clients with a documented plan that addresses all service components within 20 days of initial contact (90% target)
5. The number of clients whose plan is reviewed within three months
6. The percentage of clients whose plan is reviewed within three months (90% target).

The program data shows a trend of improvements in meeting these targets as the YJCSS program matures (Figure 19). Pooling all data, the first of these targets was not quite met overall (Table 3), but were met in the last two financial years. Both Grampians and Mallee regions reported that all clients received an initial response within five working days of referral. Where this field was marked as 'NA', these clients were excluded from analysis. Note that, as consistent with other sections of this report, the data in this section refers to a client's first referral rather than subsequent entries.

Figure 19: **Proportion of clients receiving an initial response within 5 working days**

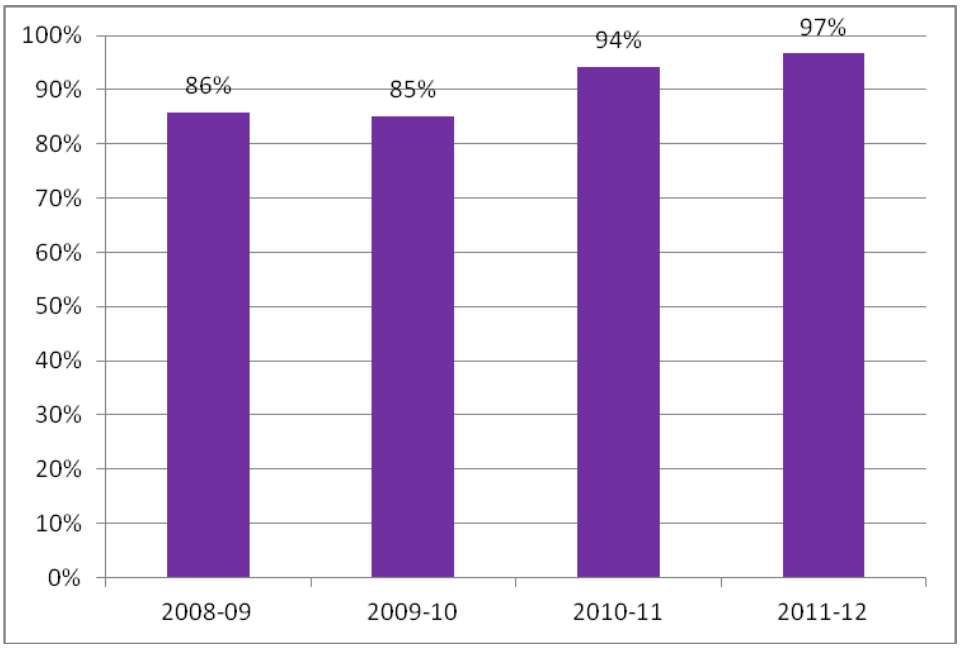


Table 3: **Clients receiving an initial response within five working days of referral**

	Yes	No	NA	% Yes[10]
Regions				
BSW	117	10	0	92%
EMR	100	15	0	87%
GIPPS	57	24	0	70%
GRAMPS	65	0	0	100%
HUME	34	5	0	87%
LMR-L	78	5	0	94%
LMR-M	22	0	3	100%
NWR	208	15	1	93%
SMR	122	7	3	95%
Overall				
Rural	373	44	3	89%
Metro	430	37	4	92%
TOTAL	**803**	**81**	**7**	**91%**

[10] Excluding NA

The target of 90 per cent of clients having a documented plan within 20 days of initial contact was met in each year since the commencement of YJCSS (Figure 20, Table 4).

Figure 20: **Clients with a documented plan within 20 days of initial contact**

Table 4: **Clients with a documented plan within 20 days of initial contact**

	Yes	No	NA	% Yes[11]
Regions				
BSW	122	5	0	96%
EMR	97	16	2	86%
GIPPS	66	15	0	81%
GRAMPS	55	10	0	85%
HUME	36	3	0	92%
LMR-L	58	25	0	70%
LMR-M	9	16	0	36%
NWR	192	21	0	90%
SMR	107	21	12	84%
Overall				
Metro	396	58	14	87%
Rural	346	74	0	82%
TOTAL	**742**	**132**	**14**	**85%**

[11] Excluding NA

Achievement of the third target is difficult to quantify due to inconsistencies in data entry, where the distinction between 'no plan' and 'not applicable' was not consistent or reliable. Hence the data is presented in Figures 21 and 22 without comment on whether the target was met. The value of this data is in providing indicative results for regions where there is less uncertainty, for example, Barwon South West, and showing the variation in data entry between regions. Improved data entry practice would enable reporting on whether targets are being met.

Figure 21: **Proportion of cases reviewed within three months**

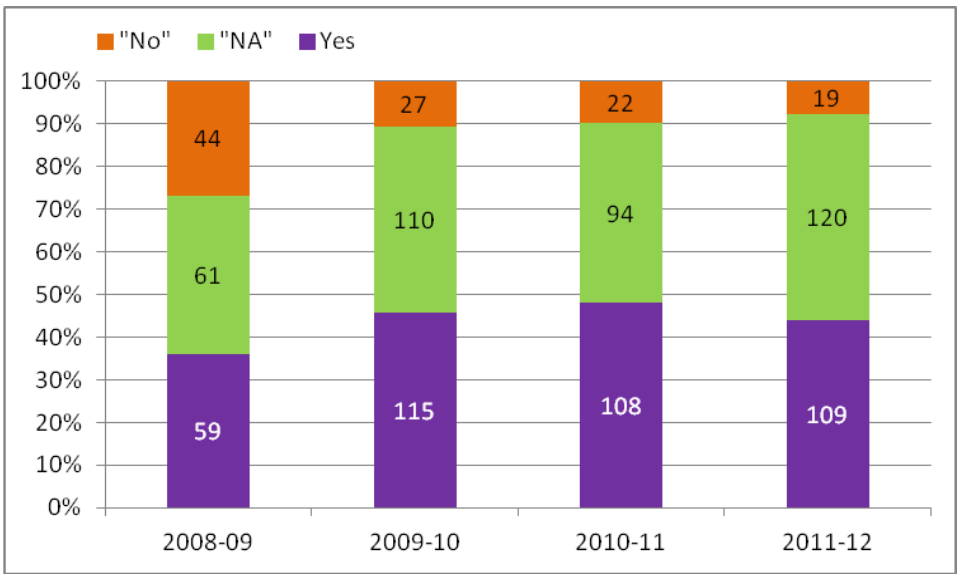
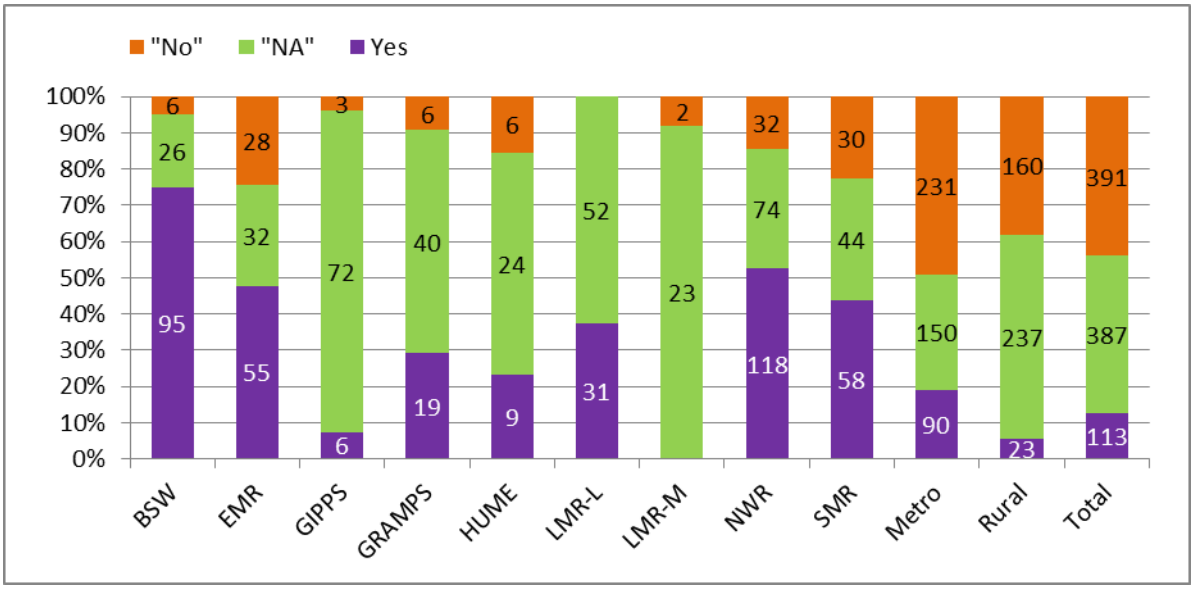


Figure 22: **Proportion of cases reviewed within 3 months, by region**



Service delivery

Since the commencement of the program, YJCSS clients have received an average of 35 weeks of support. Clients exiting custody and pre-sentence clients received support for longer (average 38 weeks) compared

to clients on community orders (average 30 weeks) (Figure 23). Clients who were referred a second, third or fourth time received shorter periods of support with each subsequent referral (Figure 24).

Figure 23: **Average length of support by order type (closed cases)**

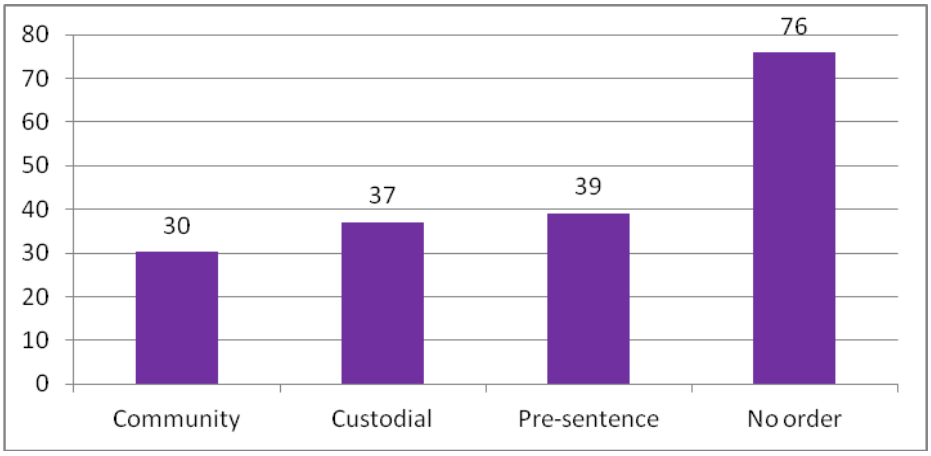
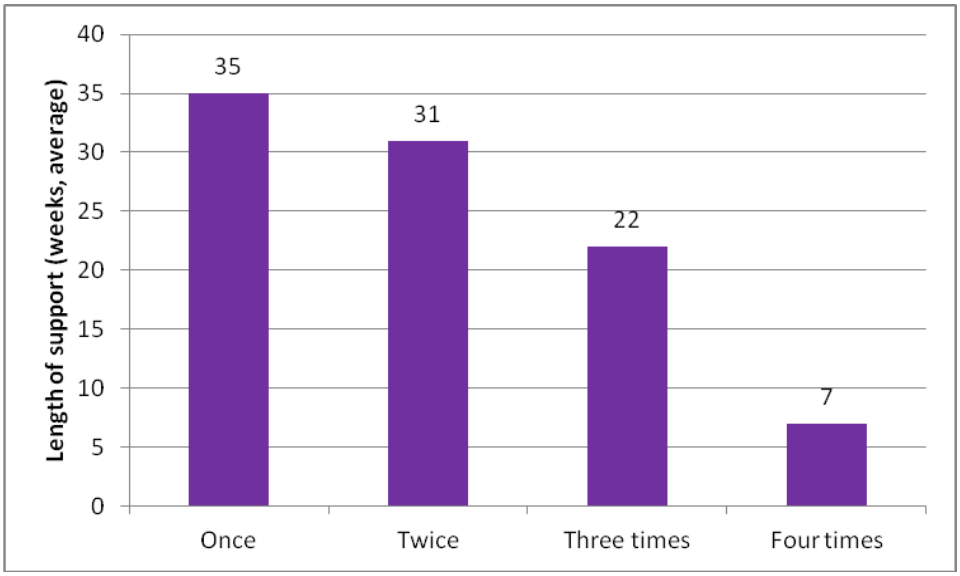


Figure 24: **Average length of support by number of entries into YJCSS (closed cases)**



On average, clients in metropolitan regions received support for longer than clients in most rural regions (Figure 25), though this may be impacted by a range of external factors. For example clients in THM-YJHPI housing will be listed as continuing to be involved in YJCSS even if they are not receiving intensive support, and this will increase the average length of involvement. Also of note is that some regions may have a larger number of very complex clients who may require longer periods of support than clients with less complex or more acute needs (for example, the variations in VONIY ratings shown above). The average length of support was longest in Hume Region (47 weeks) and shortest in Loddon Region (19 weeks).

Figure 25: **Length of support by region (closed cases)**

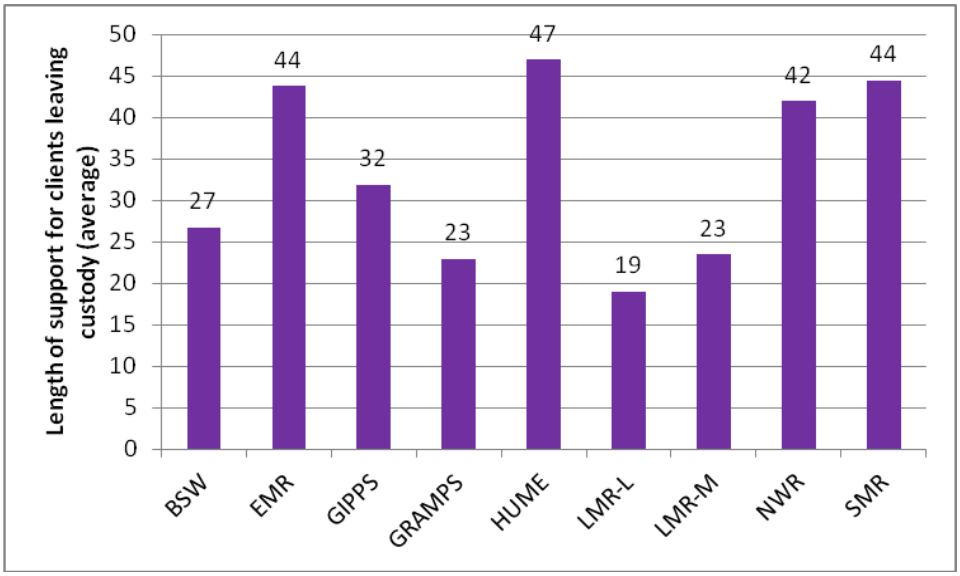


Figure 26 shows the average length of support by VONIY rating. Clients with a VONIY rating of 'high' received slightly longer periods (average 39 weeks) of support than clients rated as 'intensive' (average 37 weeks), while clients rated 'moderate' or 'low' received substantially shorter periods of support on average (26 weeks and 24 weeks respectively).

Figure 26: **Length of support by VONIY rating (closed cases)**

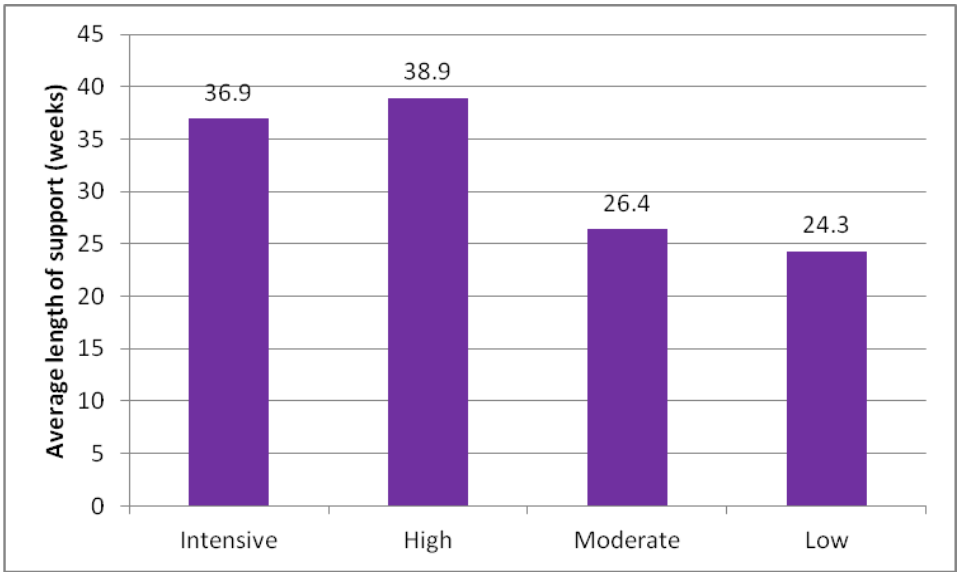
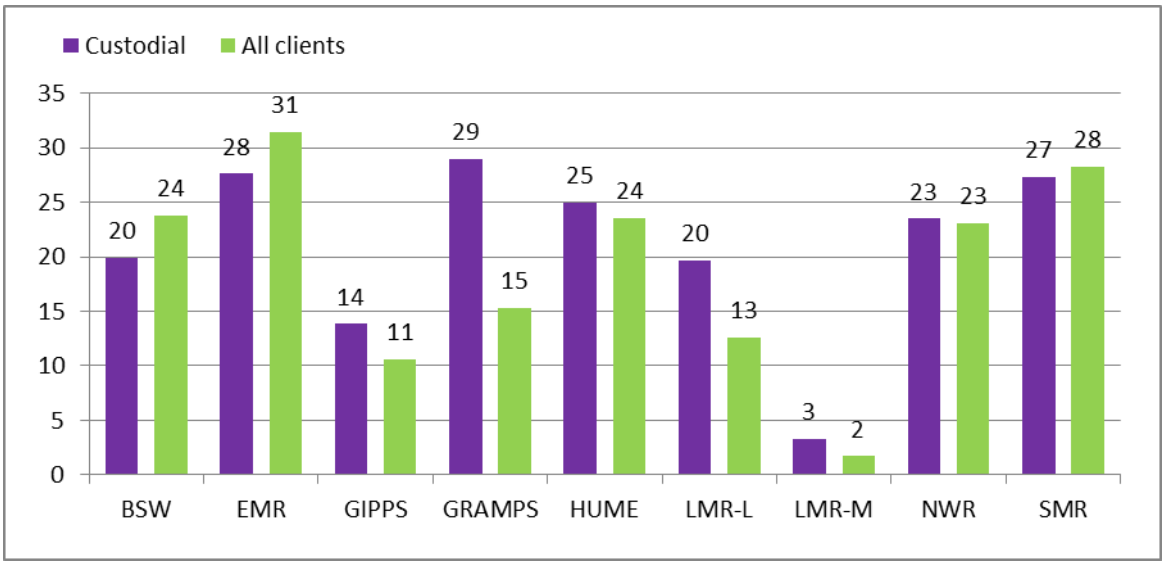


Figure 27 shows the average number of recorded work hours by region, and includes a comparison of clients exiting custody compared to the average within the region. In considering this data it should be noted that the numbers below only capture hours of work recorded by staff in the database, and hence differences in regions may reflect variation in data entry practices rather than variation in service delivery. This is particularly likely to be the case in Mallee Region. Operating from the assumption that data entry is

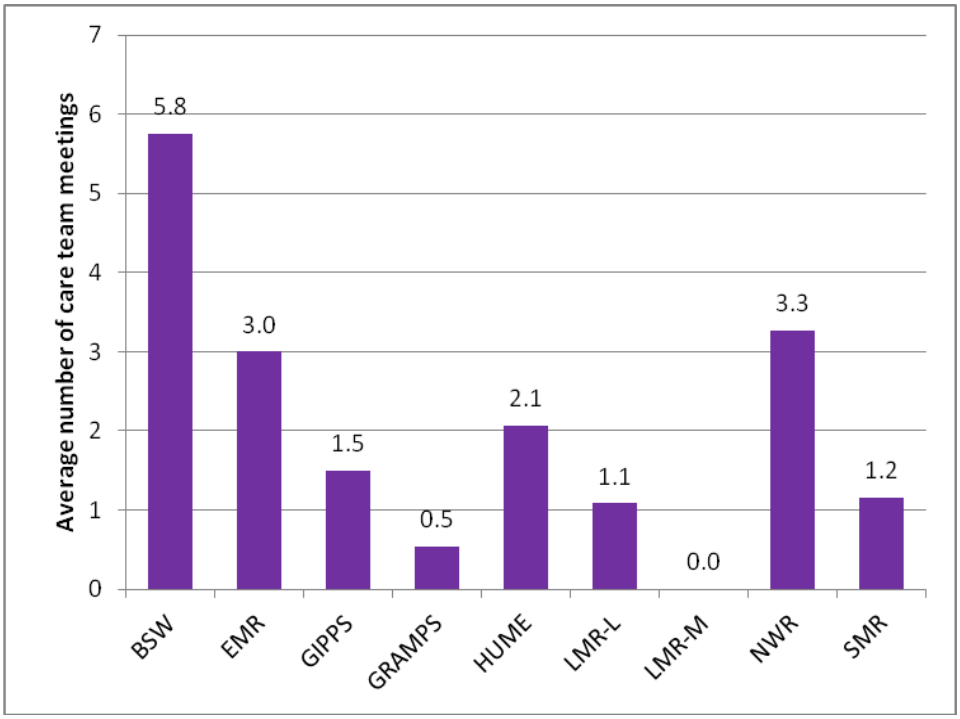
approximately consistent for custodial and non-custodial clients, Figure 27 shows that clients exiting custody receive more support than pre-sentence clients or those on community orders.

Figure 27: **Total work hours per client (closed)**



Data relating to care team meetings was again dependent on data entry and hence differences between regions may be due to variation in data entry rather than service provision. Figure 28 shows the average recorded number of care team meetings per client, with Barwon South West recording the largest number of care team meetings (average 5.8 meetings per client), and Grampians region recording the smallest number (average 0.5 meetings per client), excluding Mallee Region where data was not entered.

Figure 28: **Average number of care team meetings by region**



Types of support

Support for YJCSS clients was recorded under twenty types of support, which have been grouped into nine categories of support. The types of support below (Table 5) are those listed from the data, while the categories were developed by Synergistiq based on the information provided.

Table 5: **Categories of support**

Practical	Basic support, Financial support/advocacy, General support/advocacy
Complex need	Drug and alcohol, Specialist services
Education, Employment and Training	Education, Employment, Training
Family	Family mediation, Family counselling/therapy, Family support
Legal	Legal and justice system support
Counselling	Individual counselling/therapy
Housing	THM-YJHPI Housing, Other accommodation
Administration	Case management, Intake, Organisational work, Case closure
Referrals	Referrals

The data in this section should be interpreted with caution for two reasons. Firstly, data entry was not consistent across regions and is likely to have also been inconsistent between individual staff members. It is likely that some or many occasions of support were not captured, and the available data does not allow for analysis of how data entry might vary by region or client group.

Secondly, by matching CRISSP Client IDs in the program data with the case notes used for the practice review, it was possible to compare the support type recorded in the database with the support discussed in the client's file. These comparisons showed a significant mismatch in two regards: the total support recorded in the database, and the way in which the support was categorised. More specifically, the data entered often did not capture the full breadth of support provided. For example, the client's file may include discussion of the YJCSS worker assisting with gaining employment, entry to TAFE and housing while the database only shows 'Basic support' or 'General support/advocacy'.

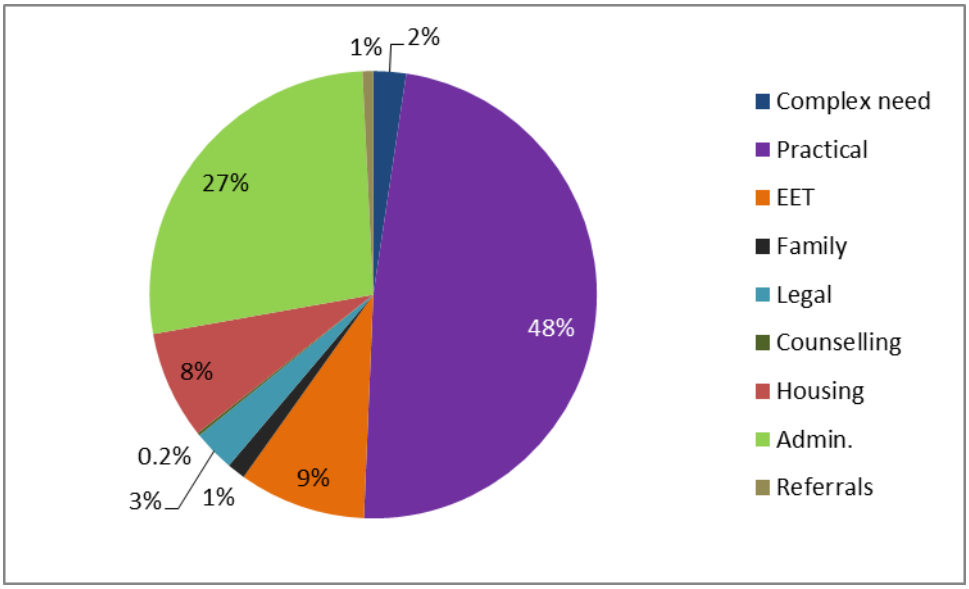
These two considerations should be kept in mind in regards to the following data, and note that pie charts have been used to represent much of the data because it presents the data as proportion, which are less affected by inconsistencies in data entry, rather than absolute values such as number of hours, which are impacted to a greater extent.

Given that data entry varied across regions, a breakdown of service provision types by region is not presented. Instead the focus is on comparisons data can be pooled across regions, for example in comparing different client groups.

More accurate data entry would allow for reporting on time spent providing various types of support, and making comparisons in regards to, for example, service provision in metropolitan versus rural regions, different consortia, or for different client groups.

As shown in Figure 29, the most common type of support provided was overwhelmingly practical support, accounting for 48 per cent of all support provided. The next most common support type was administrative (27 per cent), which included care team meetings. Clients received an average of three types of support.

Figure 29: **Types of support provided (proportion of occasions of support)**



Support type was compared for clients in the three groups relating to order type at referral (Figures 30, 31, 32). In each of the three categories, practical support was recorded as the most commonly provided support type, followed by administrative work. As may be expected, clients exiting custody were provided with more housing support than clients in the pre-sentence or community order groups. Clients on community orders were provided with more support to access education, employment and training than clients in the custody or pre-sentence groups, and had less need for legal support. Provision of counselling, family support and referrals was reported as low across three groups, but may have been categorised as 'Basic support' or 'General support/advocacy' by staff.

Figure 30: **Types of support for clients exiting custody**

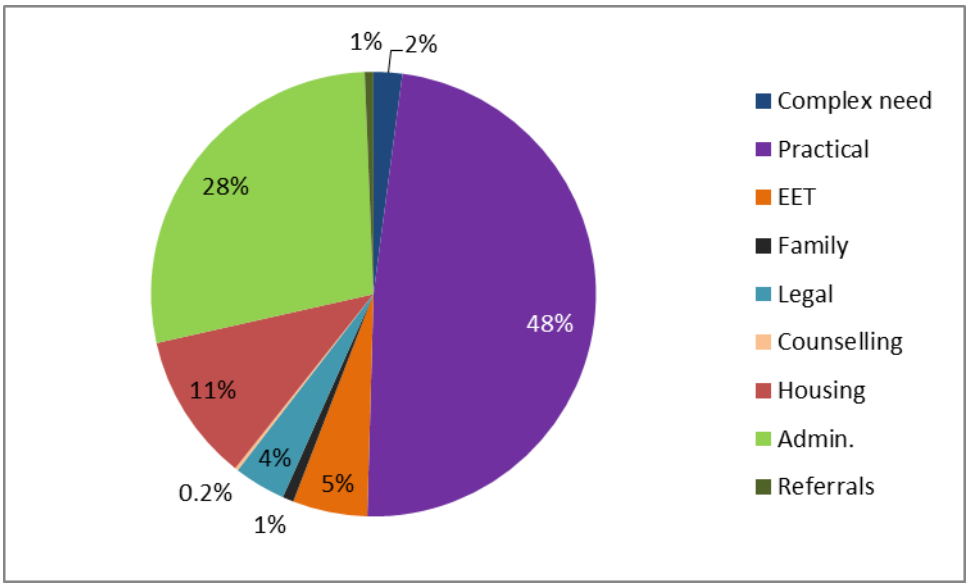


Figure 31: **Types of support for clients on a community order**

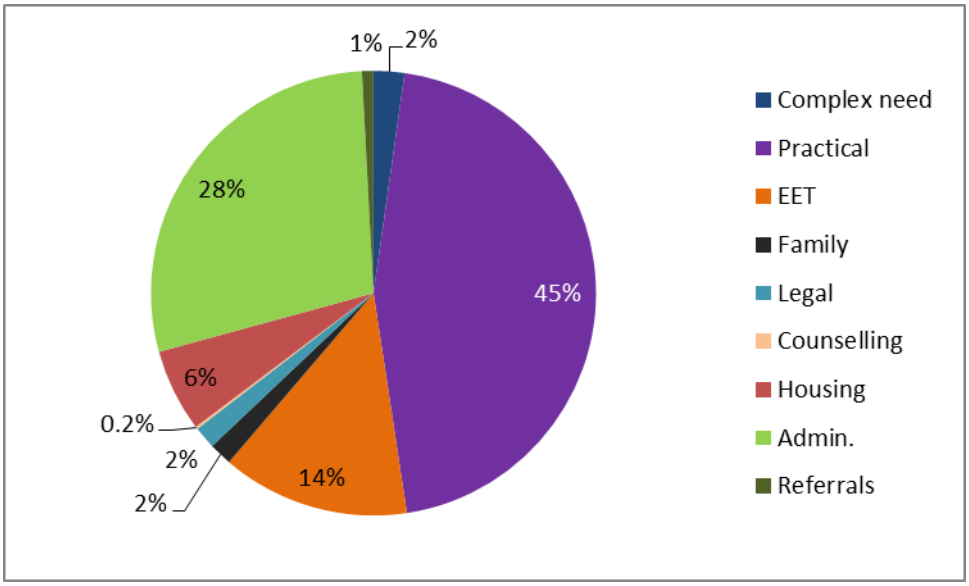
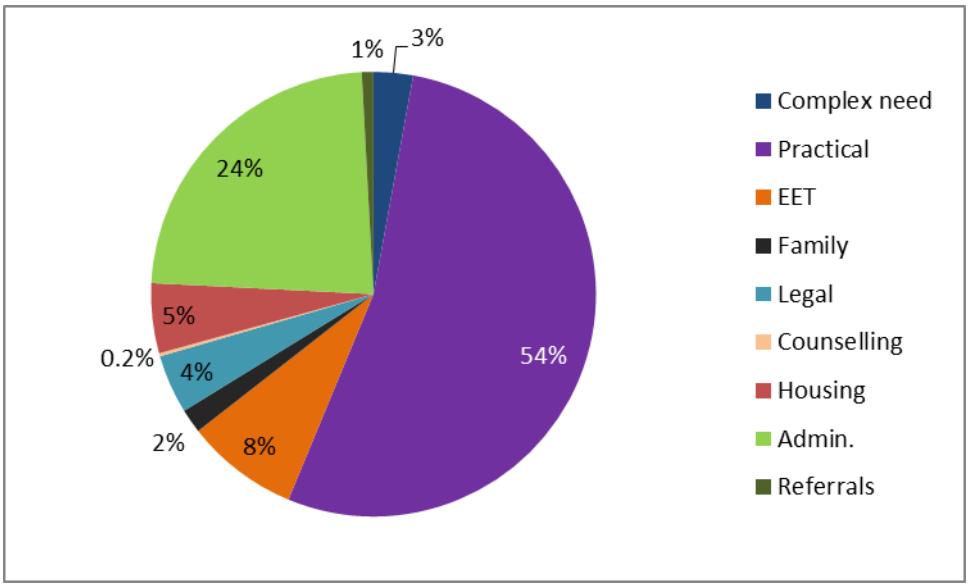


Figure 32: **Types of support for pre-sentence clients**



There were also some slight differences in the number of types of support provided (Figure 33). Clients on community orders received an average of 2.9 types of support, compared to pre-sentence clients who received 3.0 types of support and custodial clients who received 3.1 types. Length of support also varied (Figure 34), with clients on custodial orders receiving support for an average of 30 weeks, compared to an average of 37 weeks for custodial clients and 39 weeks for pre-sentence clients.

Figure 33: **Number of types of support by order type**

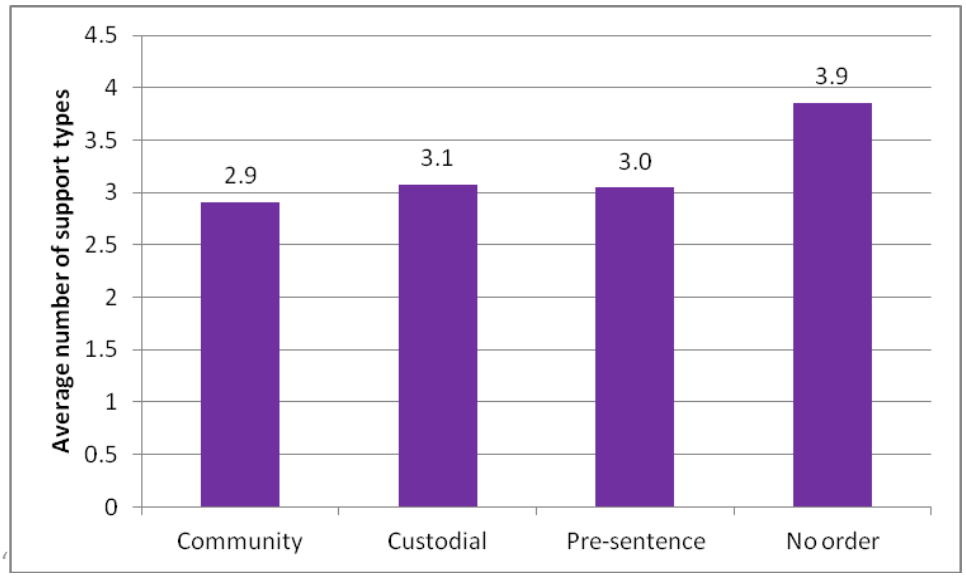
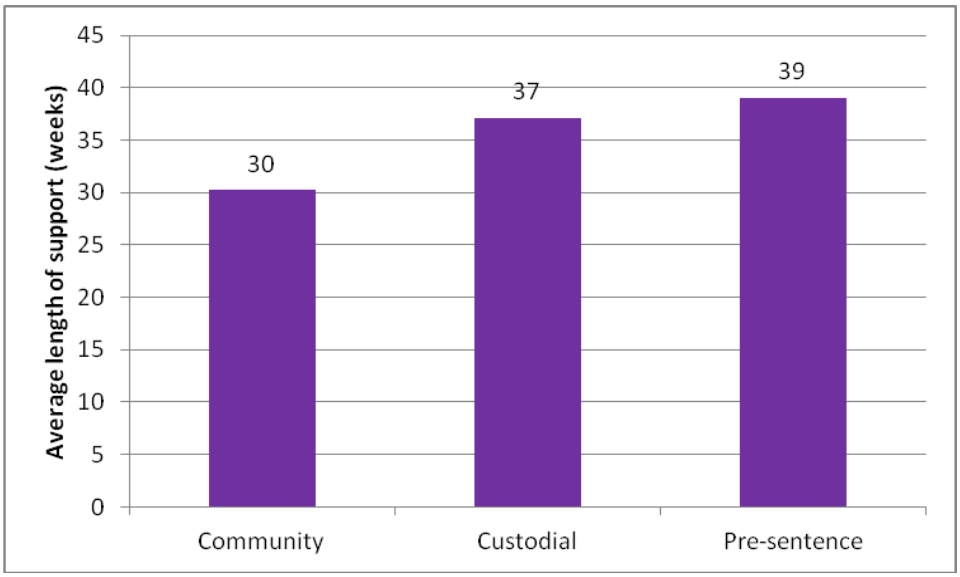


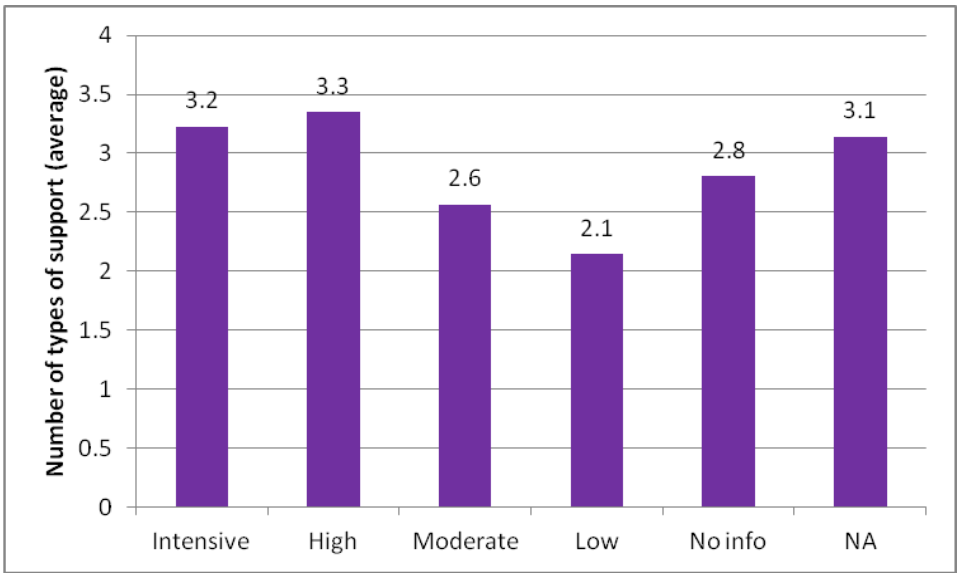
Figure 34: **Length of support by order type**



In comparing service provision to male and female clients, female clients received an average of 21 hours of service while male clients received an average of 17 hours of service. There was little difference in the types of support provided to male and female clients, both in regards to breadth and the number of types of support received.

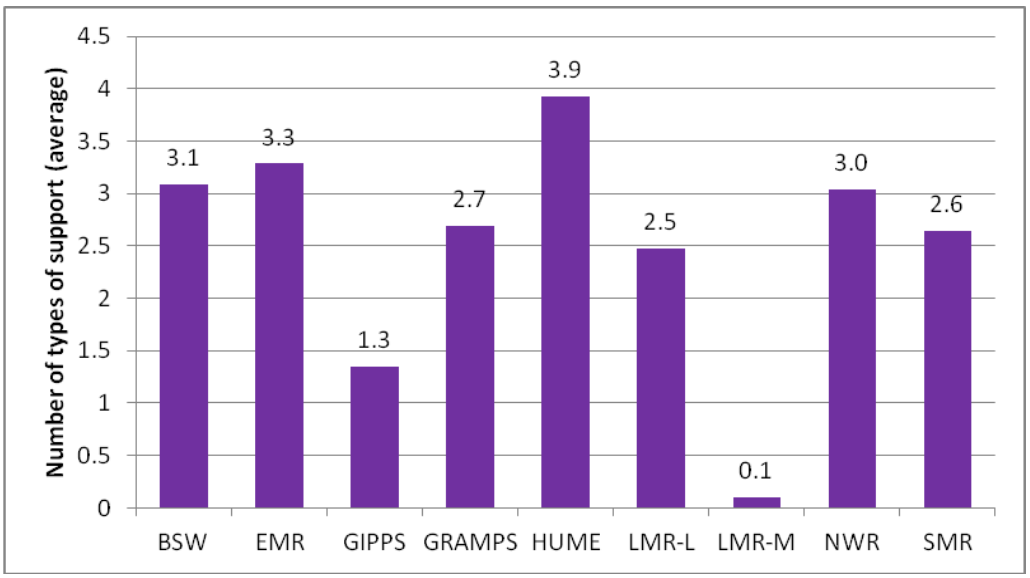
Clients in rural areas received a reported average of 2.7 types of support, compared to clients in metropolitan areas who received an average of 3.3 types of support. There was also variation in regards to the number of types of support for clients with different VONIY ratings (Figure 35). Clients with a VONIY rating of 'high' received the largest range of supports, closely followed by clients with a VONIY rating of 'intensive'. Clients with VONIY ratings of 'moderate' or 'low' received a narrower range of services on average.

Figure 35: **Number of types of support**



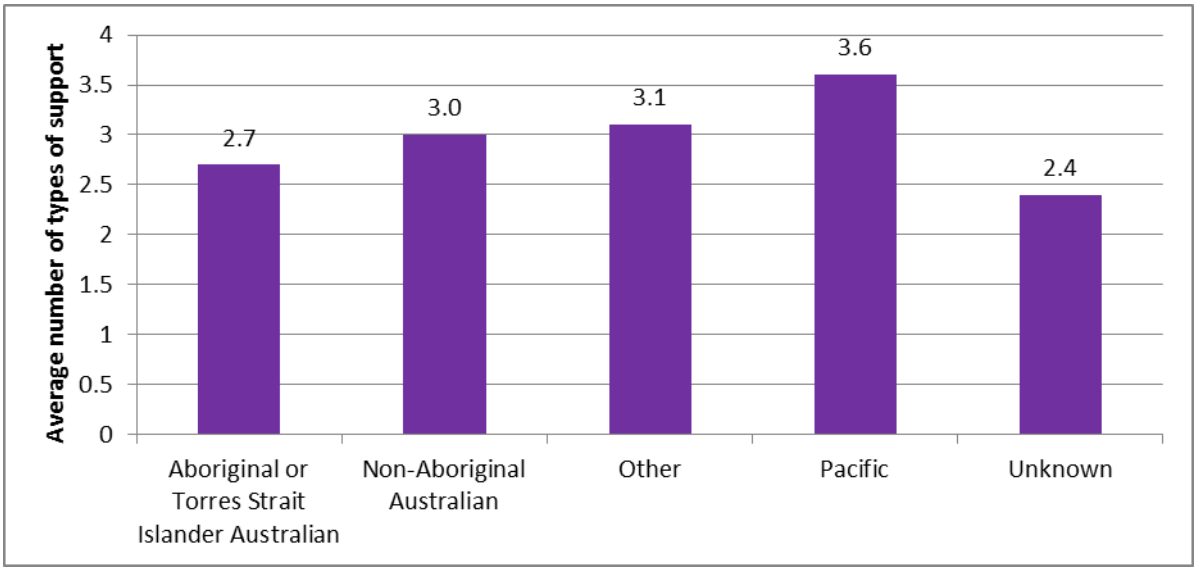
The reported number of support types varied by region (Figure 36), though as discussed above this is likely to be at least partially due to variations in data entry rather than service provision. Another relevant variable is the differences in support types available within each consortium, as compared to supports provided through referral. Hume Region reported the highest number of support types per client (average 3.9 types), followed by Eastern Metropolitan Region (average 3.3 types), while Mallee Region reported the lowest number (average 0.1 types), followed by Gippsland Region (average 1.3 types).

Figure 36: **Number of support types by region**



The average number of support types also varied by cultural identity, with clients identifying as Australian receiving a slightly narrower range of supports than clients not identifying as Australian (Figure 37). Aboriginal Australians were reported as receiving fewer support types (average 2.7 types) than non-Aboriginal Australians (average 3.0 types). The most common types of service provision were similar between cultural groups.

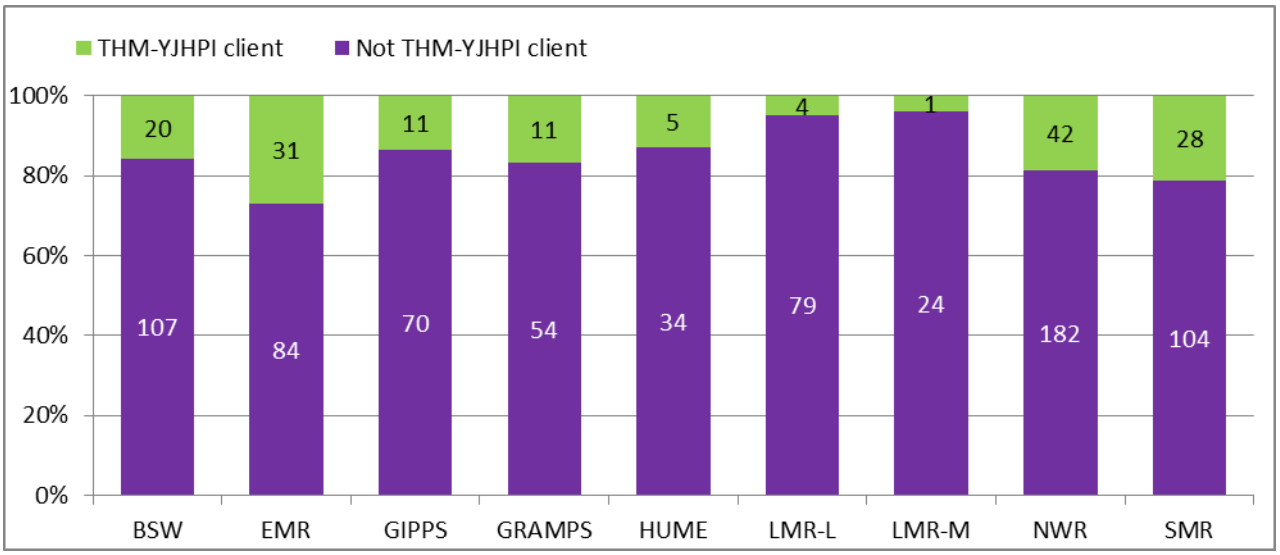
Figure 37: **Average number of types of support by cultural identity**



THM-YJHPI clients

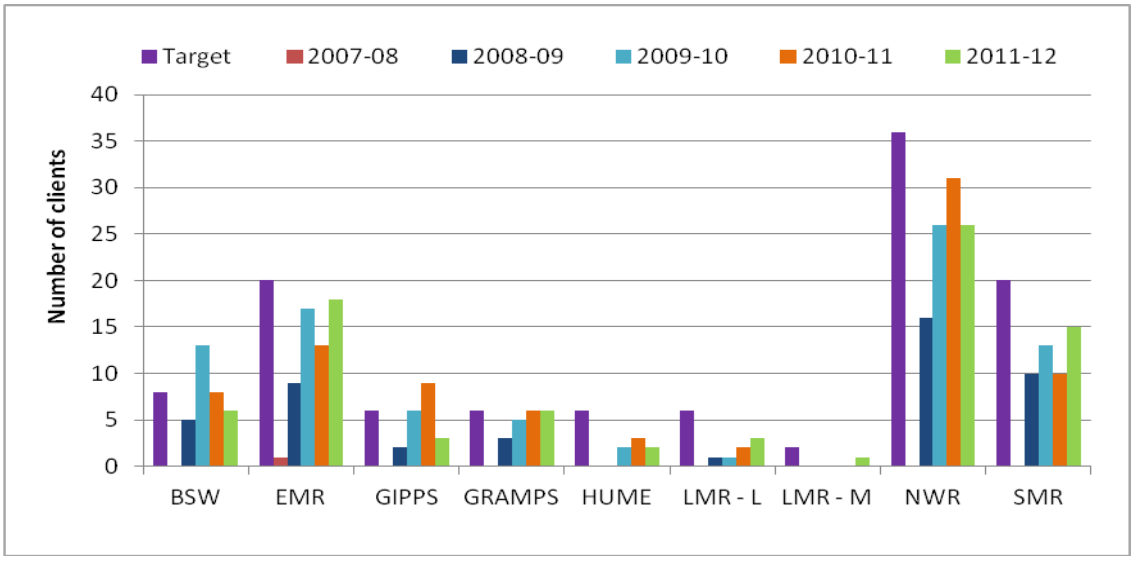
As THM-YJHPI clients are a specific sub-group of YJCSS clients, records for these clients were compared to YJCSS clients who are not THM clients. THM clients comprised approximately 17 per cent of YJCSS clients. The lowest proportion was four per cent (one client) in Mallee Region (Figure 38) and the highest was 22 per cent in Eastern Metropolitan Region[12].

Figure 38: **Proportion of THM-YJHPI clients**



The caseload of THM-YJHPI clients in each financial year was less than the annual targets for each region (Figure 39, Table 6).

Figure 39: **Caseload of THM-YJHPI clients by region and year**



[12] This may be a recording issue in CRISSP as clients receiving THM support are required to have a second service provision entered in CRISSP for THM-YJHPI support.

Table 6: **Caseload of THM-YJHPI clients by region and year (values for Figure 39)**

Financial year	Target	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
BSW	8	0	5	13	8	6
EMR	20	1	9	17	13	18
GIPPS	6	0	2	6	9	3
GRAMPS	6	0	3	5	6	6
HUME	6	0	0	2	3	2
LMR - L	6	0	1	1	2	3
LMR - M	2	0	0	0	0	1
NWR	36	0	16	26	31	26
SMR	20	0	10	13	10	15
TOTAL	**110**	**1**	**46**	**83**	**82**	**80**

As would be expected, THM-YJHPI clients were more likely to be exiting custody than other YJCSS clients (Figure 40). More than 50 per cent of THM-YJHPI clients were clients exiting custody.

Figure 40: **Order types of THM-YJHPI clients**

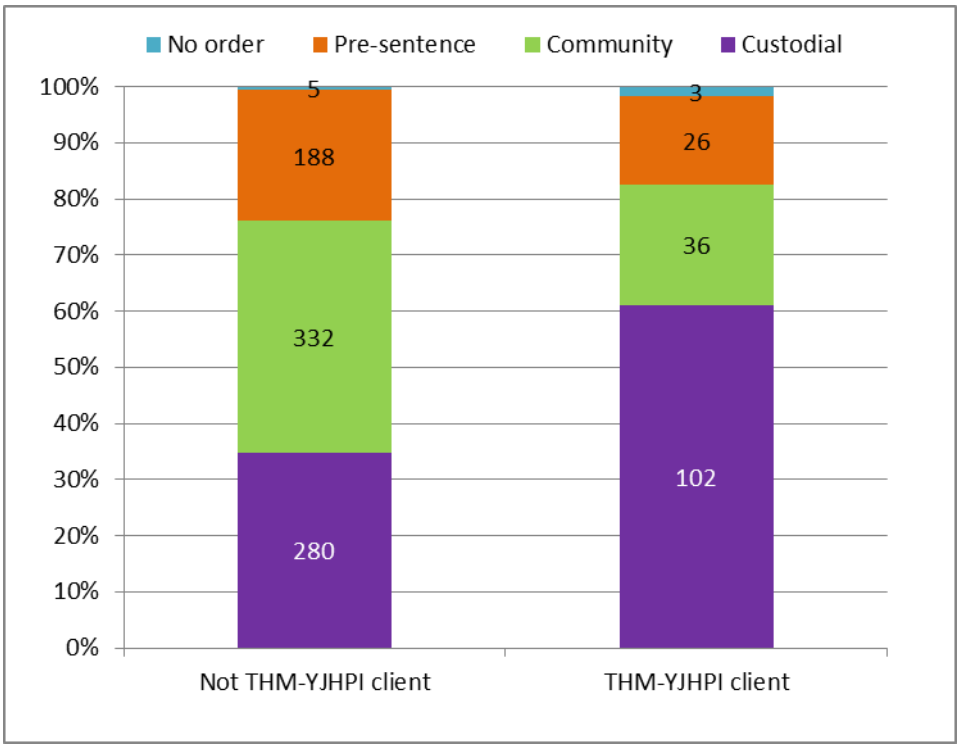
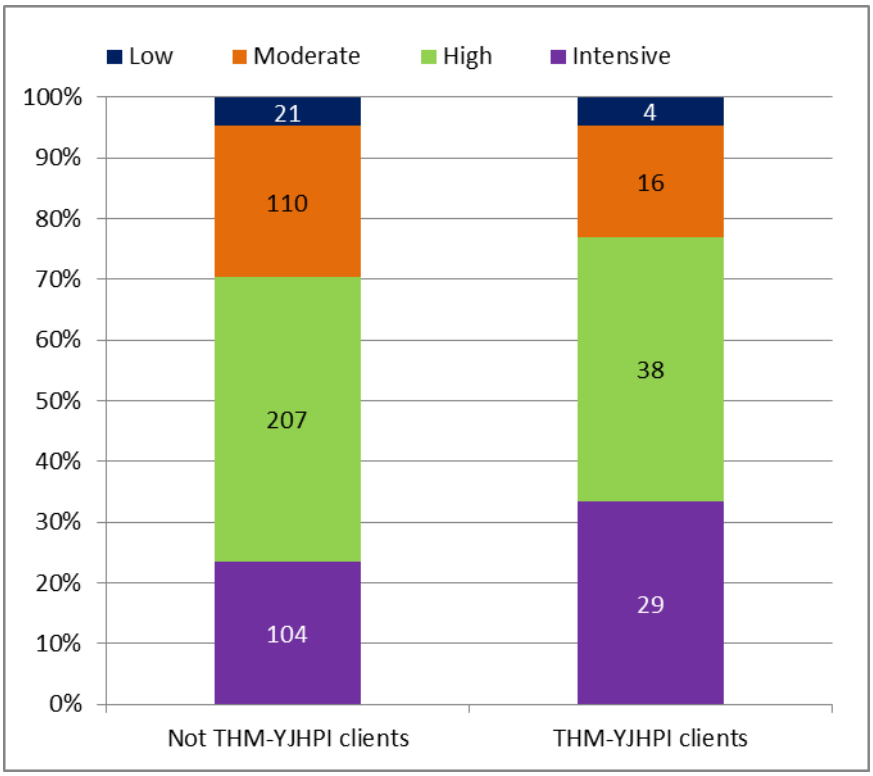


Figure 41 compares the VONIY levels of clients who have accessed and have not accessed THM-YJHPI housing. This figure shows that clients in THM-YJHPI housing are slightly more likely to have a VONIY level of 'intensive' and less likely to have a rating of 'moderate'. This supports the intuitive view that clients requiring THM-YJHPI support are more complex.

Figure 41: **VONIY ratings of THM-YJHPI clients**



In most but not all regions, THM-YJHPI clients received more hours of support than YJCSS clients not in THM-YJHPI housing (Figure 42). As was expected, THM-YJHPI clients received much more housing support than other YJCSS clients – an average of eight hours per client as compared to one hour for other YJCSS clients (Figure 42).

THM-YJHPI clients also received support for a longer period of time (average 45 weeks, with the longest period at 165 weeks) compared to clients not in THM-YJHPI housing (average 33 weeks, longest period 146 weeks). Note that length of support does not necessarily correlate to support intensity.

Figure 42: **Total work hours for THM-YJHPI clients (average) by region**

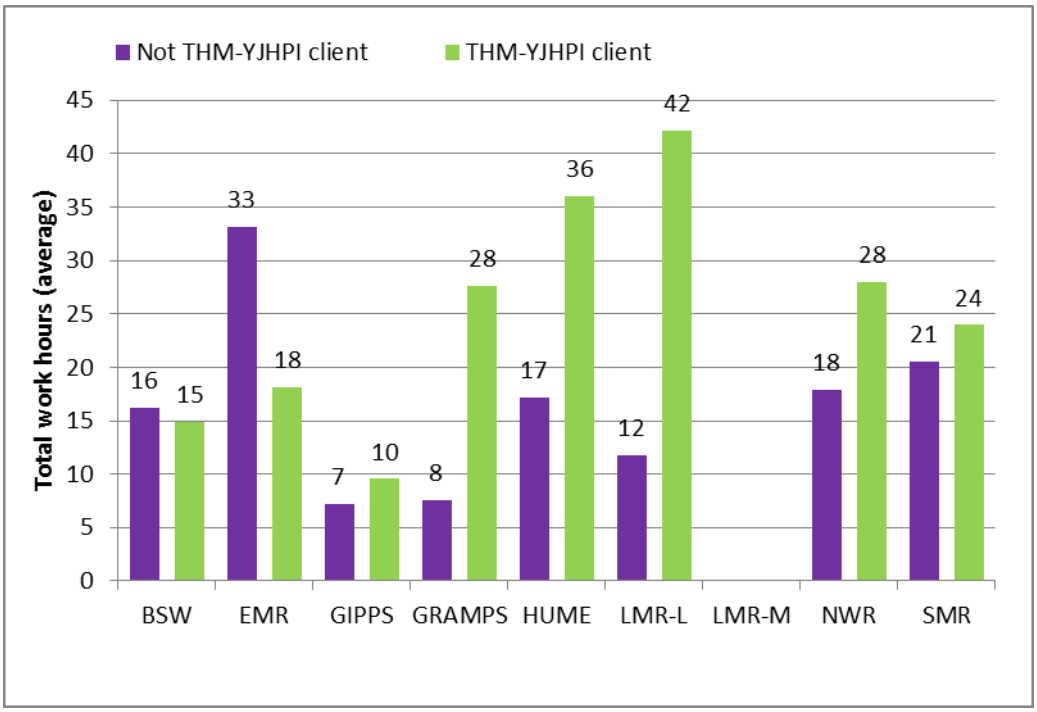
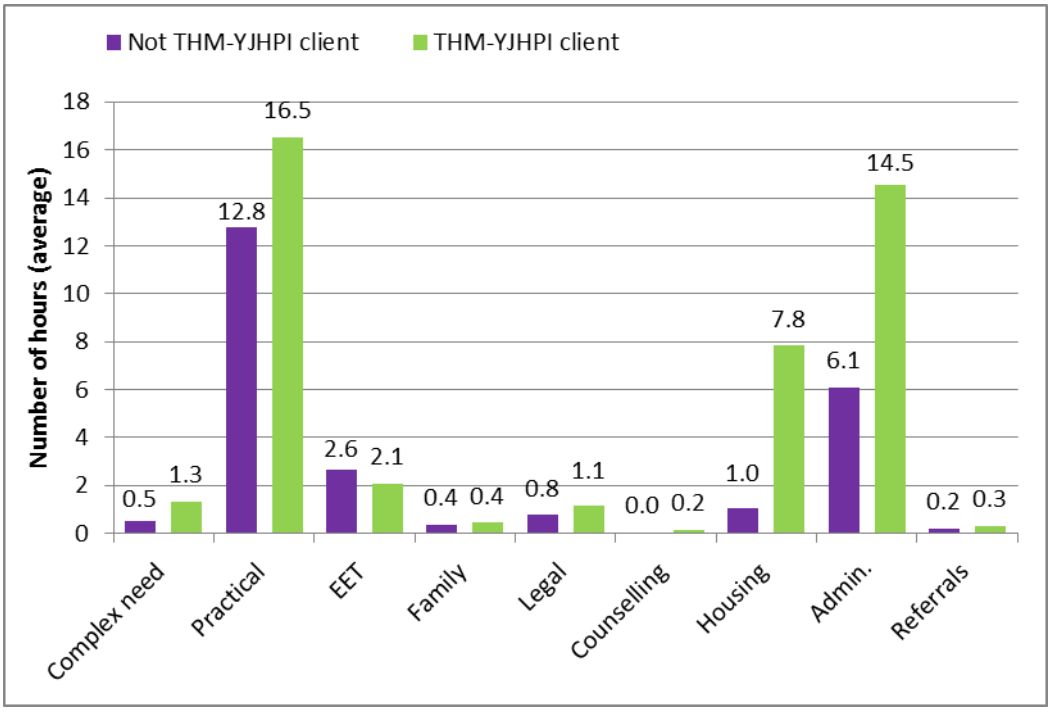


Figure 43: **Support for THM-YJHPI clients (average) by support type**



Comparisons relating to differences in cultural identity, dual client status, age and gender of THM-YJHPI clients as compared to other YJCSS clients could not be conclusively made due to the small number of clients, but the two client groups appeared roughly similar in regards to these variables.

Appendix 4. Regional consortia summaries

Barwon South West

Lead agency	Barwon Youth
Partner agencies	Brophy
Type of agencies represented on consortia	Youth, family, homelessness, EET, AOD, health
Number of operational YJCSS staff	4
Number of active cases 2011/12	66
THM clients	17

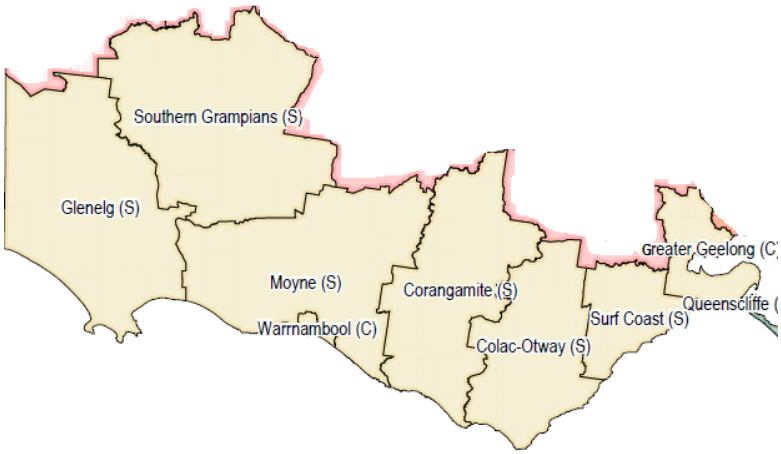


Figure 1: **Number of YJCSS active cases, 2007-12**

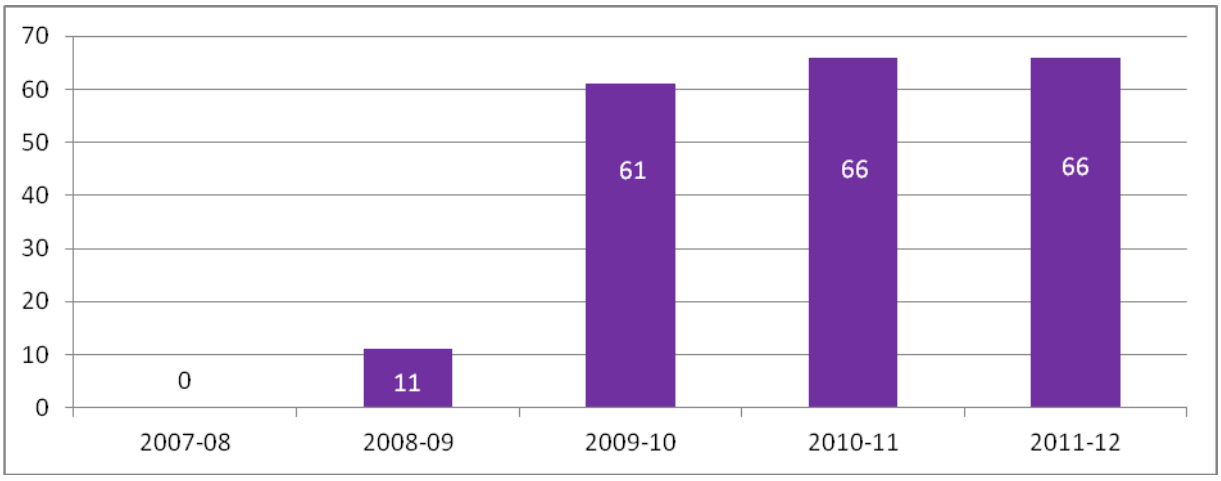


Figure 2: **Number of YJCSS referrals, 2008-12**

Figure 3: **Number and proportion of dual clients**

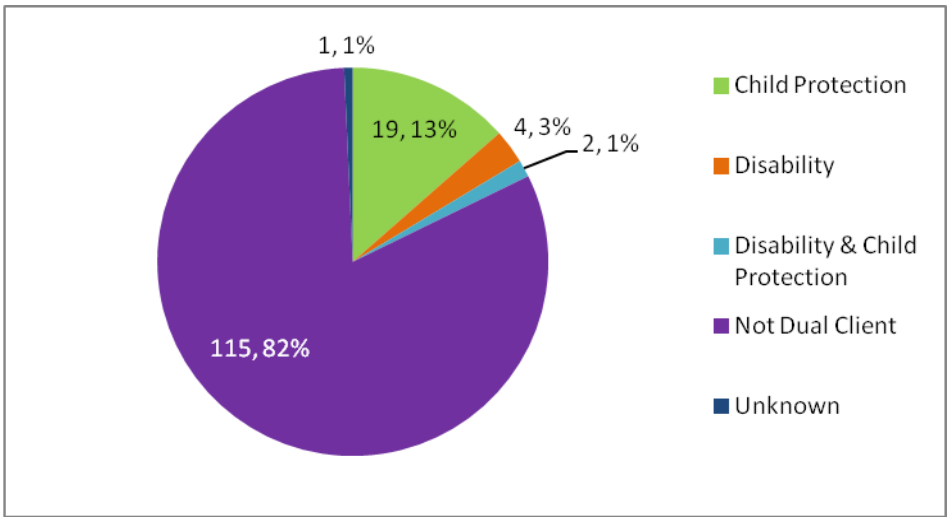


Figure 4: **VONIY ratings of clients**

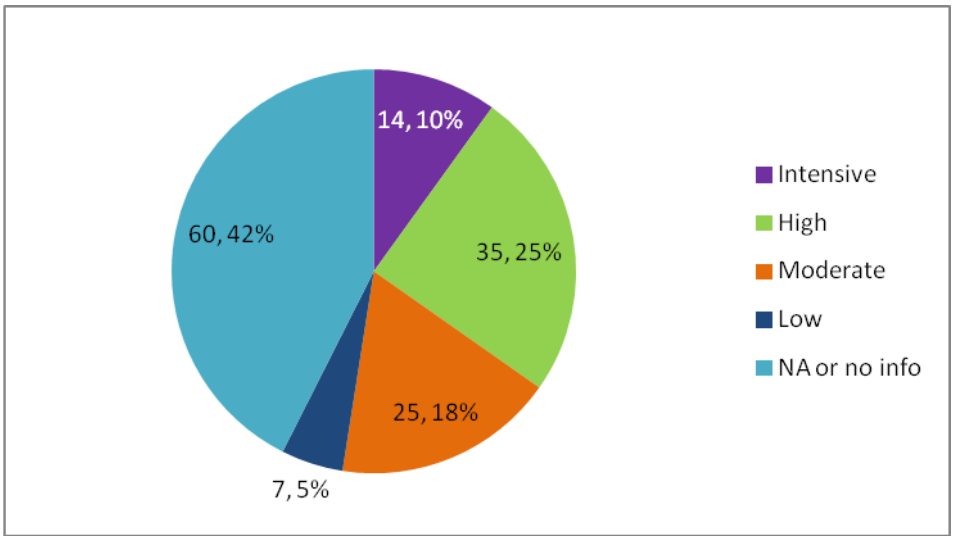
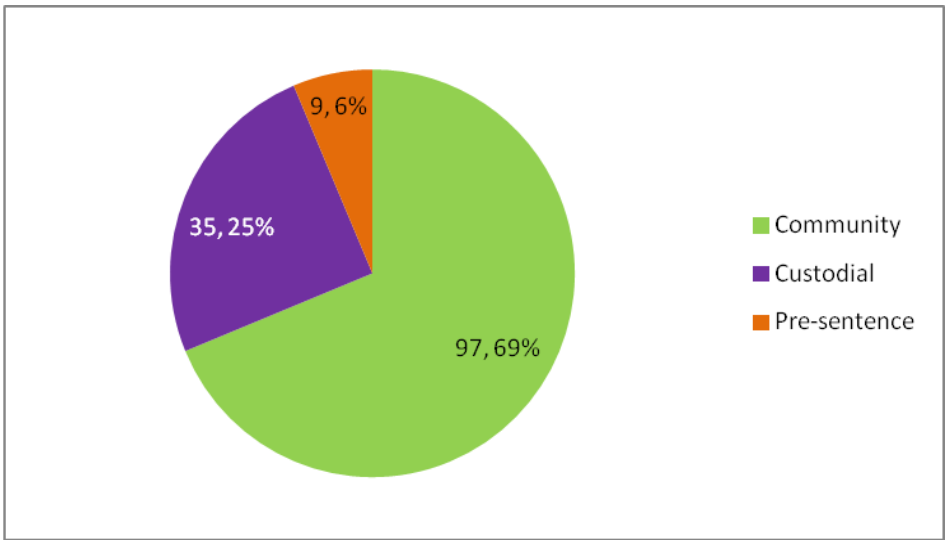


Figure 5: **Order type**



Eastern Metro

Lead agency	**Jesuit Social Services**
Partner agencies	EastCare, YSAS
Type of agencies represented on consortia	Justice, CALD, mental health, EET, youth, AOD, homelessness and housing,
Number of operational YJCSS staff	12
Number of active cases 2011/12	67
THM clients 2011/12	34

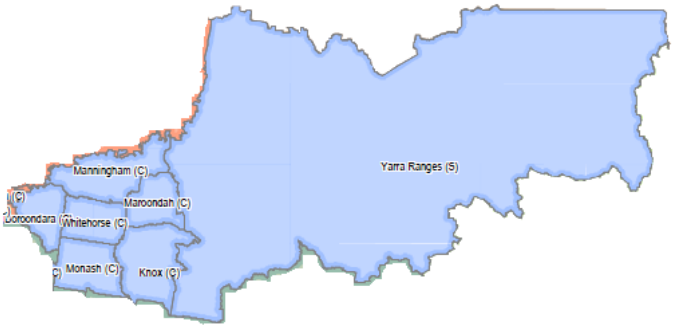


Figure 1: **Number of YJCSS active cases, 2007-12**

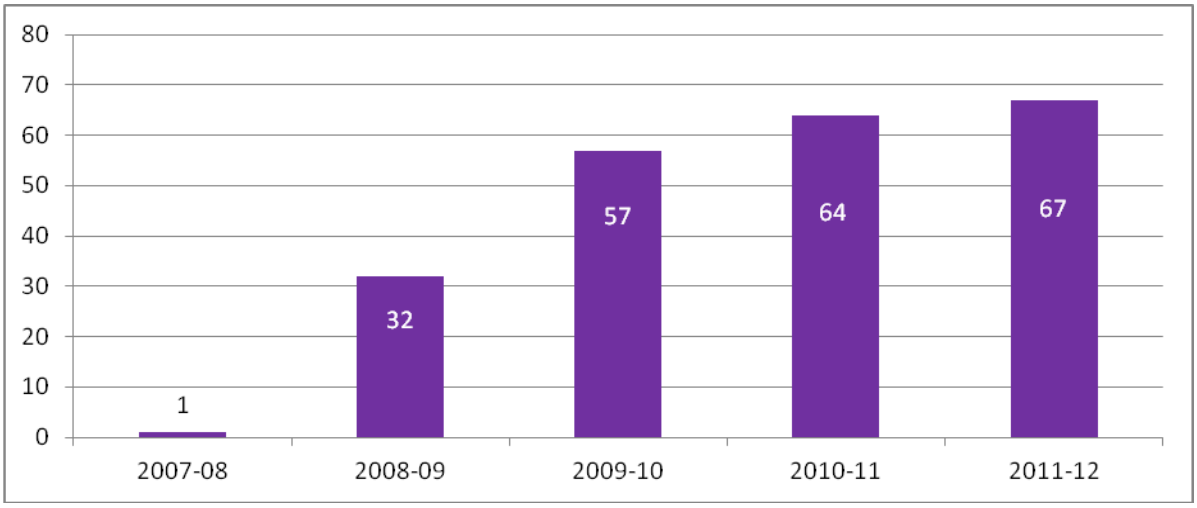


Figure 2: **Number of YJCSS referrals, 2008-12**

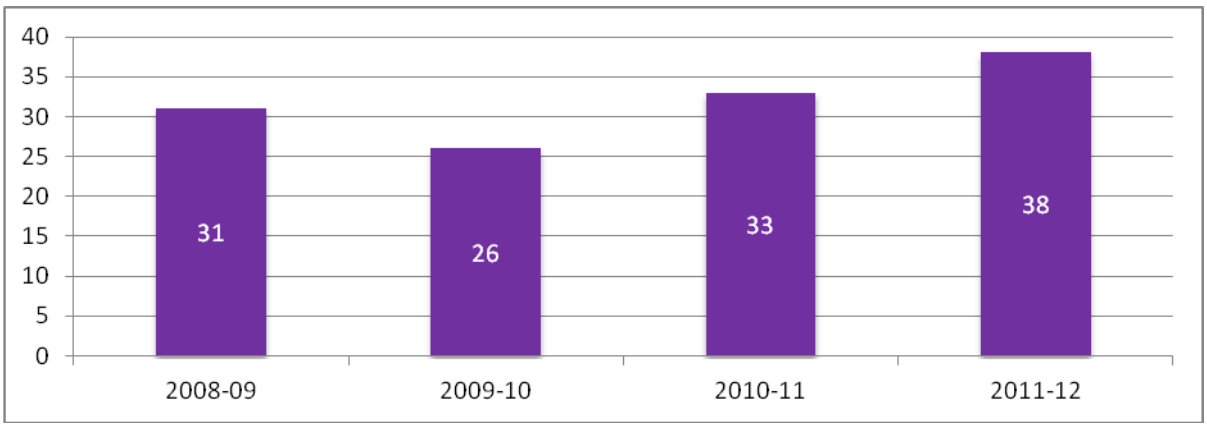


Figure 3: **Number and proportion of dual clients**

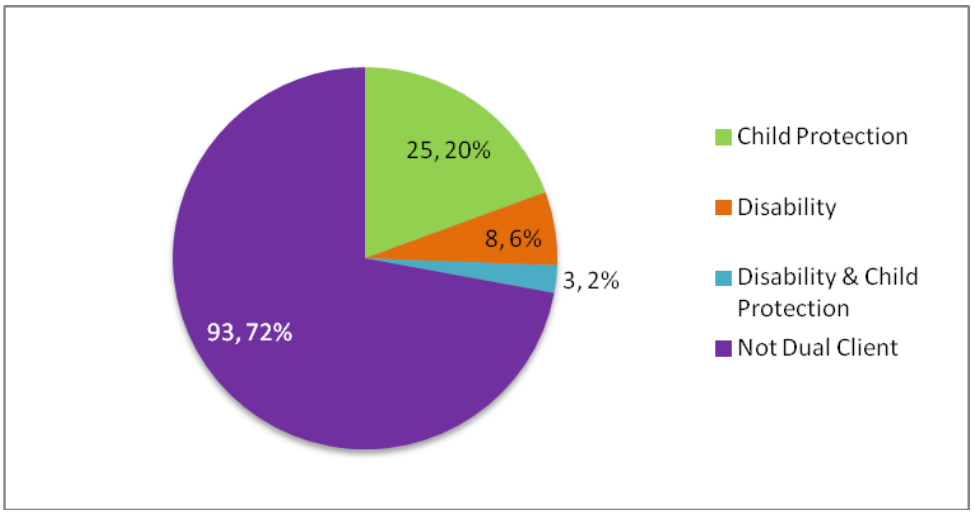


Figure 4: **VONIY ratings of clients**

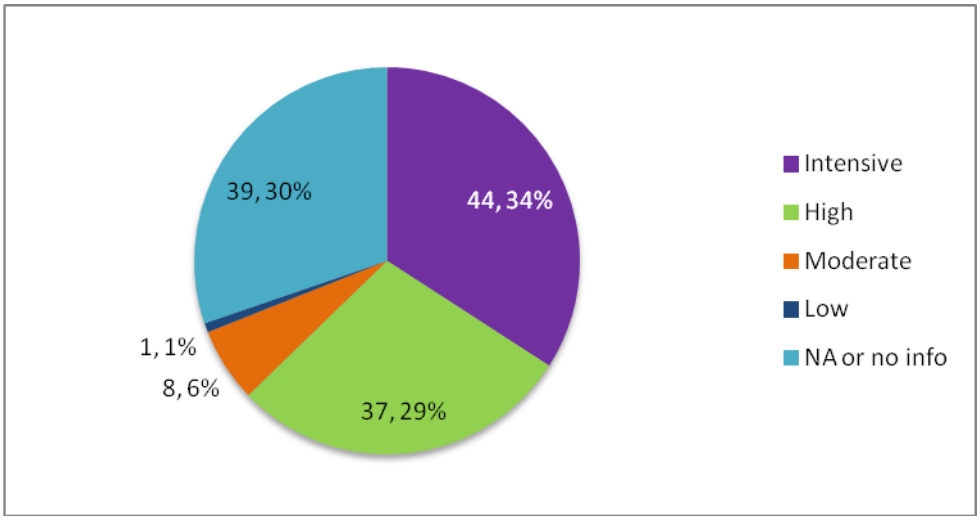
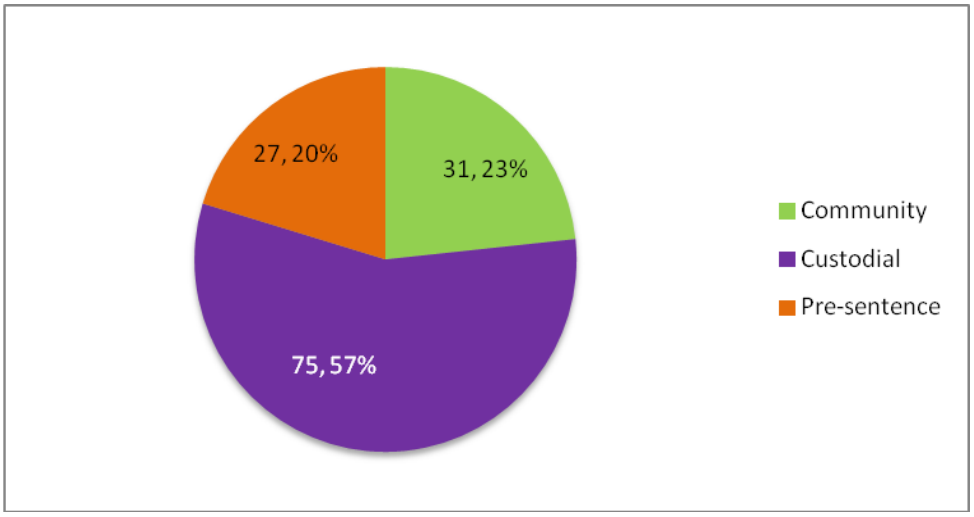


Figure 5: **Order type**



Gippsland

Lead agency	Quantum Support Services
Partner agencies	GippsCare, Uniting Care, Gippsland Lakes Community Health
Type of agencies represented on consortia	Housing and homelessness, child, youth family, disability, counseling financial, Aboriginal health, health and medical
Number of operational YJCSS staff	4
Number of active cases 2011/12	49
THM clients 2011/12	12

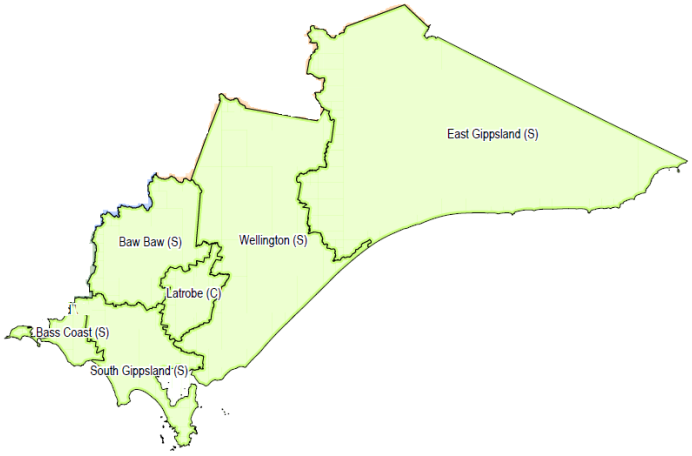


Figure 1: **Number of YJCSS active cases, 2007-12**

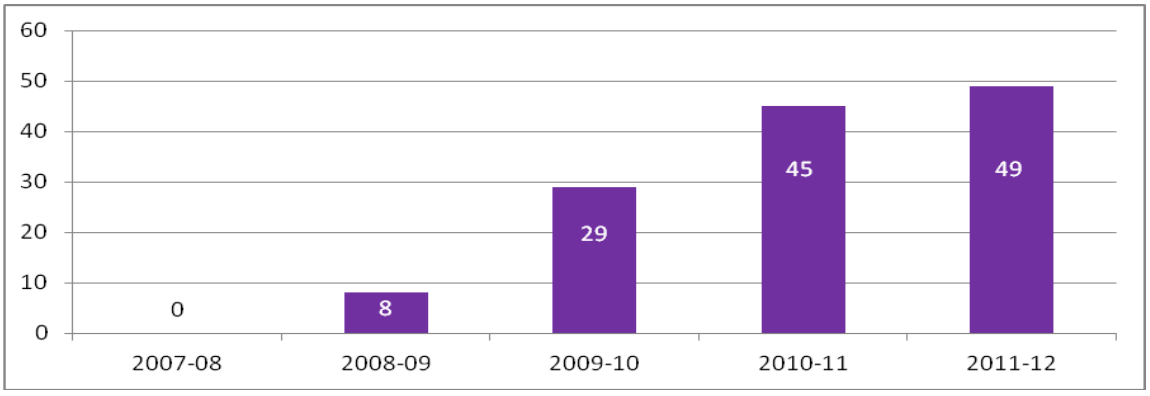


Figure 2: **Number of YJCSS referrals, 2008-12**

Figure 3: **Number and proportion of dual clients**

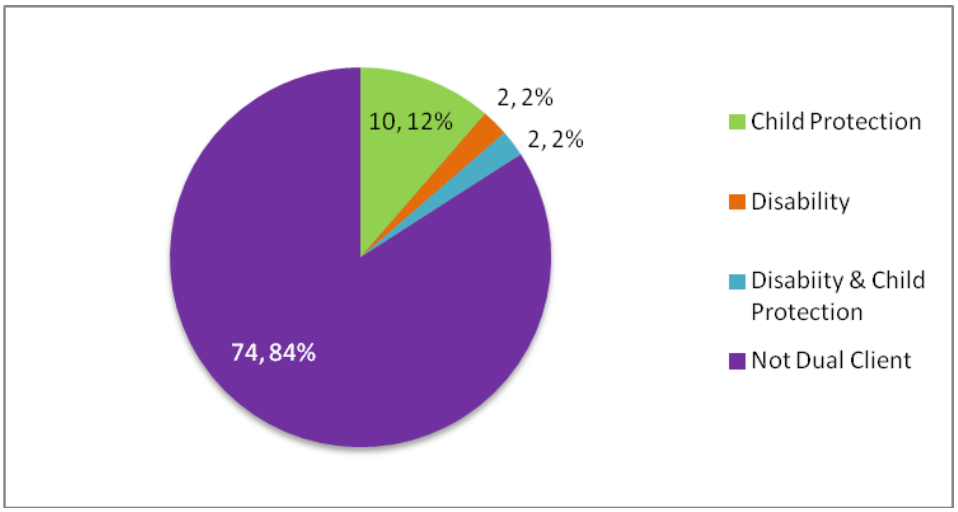


Figure 4: **VONIY ratings of clients**

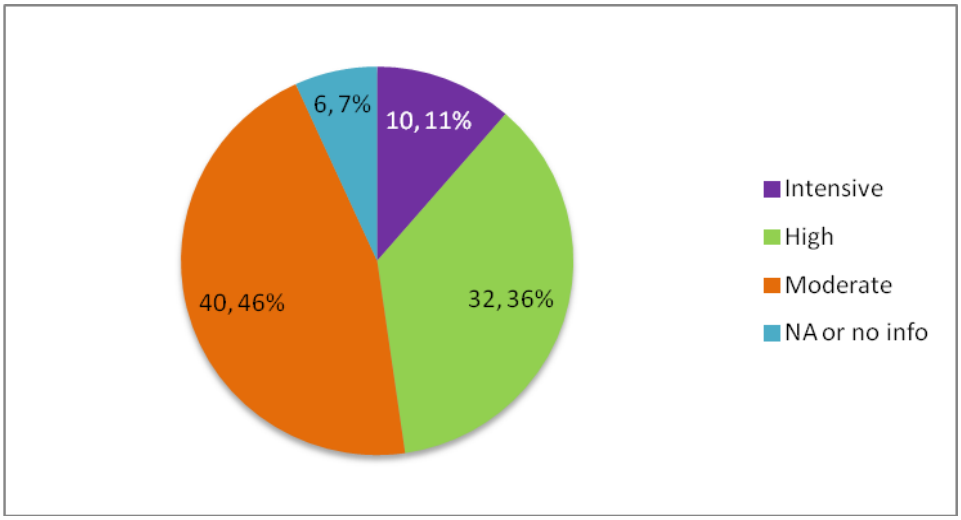
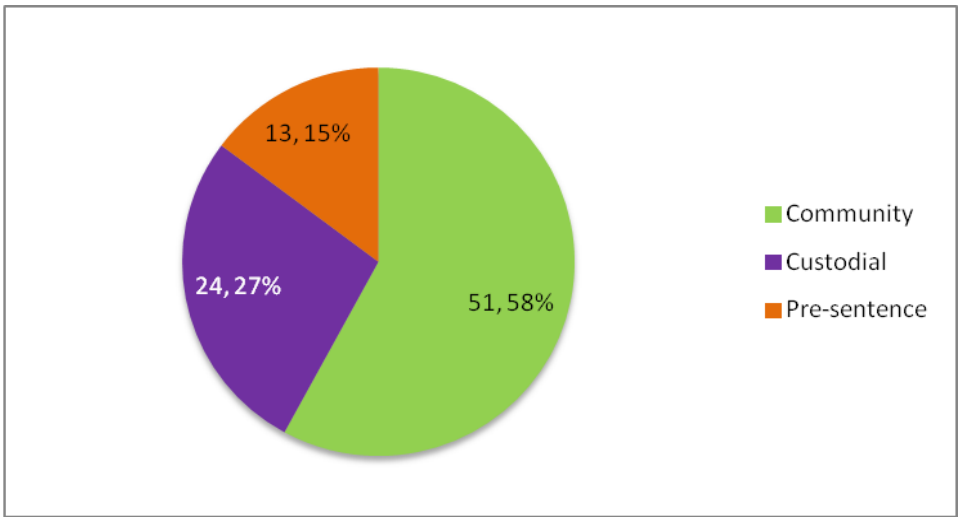


Figure 5: **Order type**



Grampians

Lead agency	Centacare
Partner agencies	0
Type of agencies represented on consortia	Youth, family, disability, domestic violence, homelessness, EET, health and wellbeing
Number of operational YJCSS staff	4 (1.8 EFT)
Number of active cases 2011/12	28
THM clients 2011/12	6

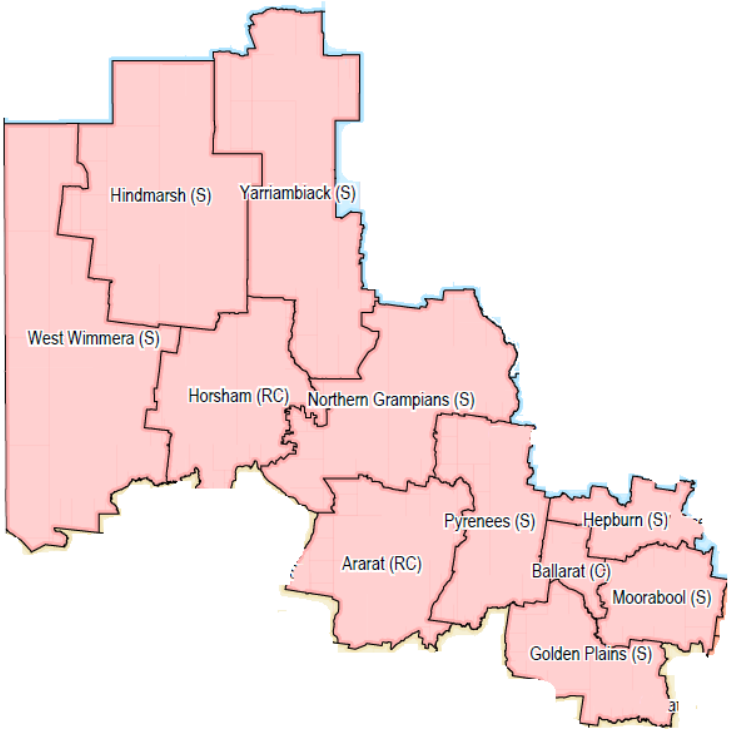


Figure 1: **Number of YJCSS active cases, 2007-12**

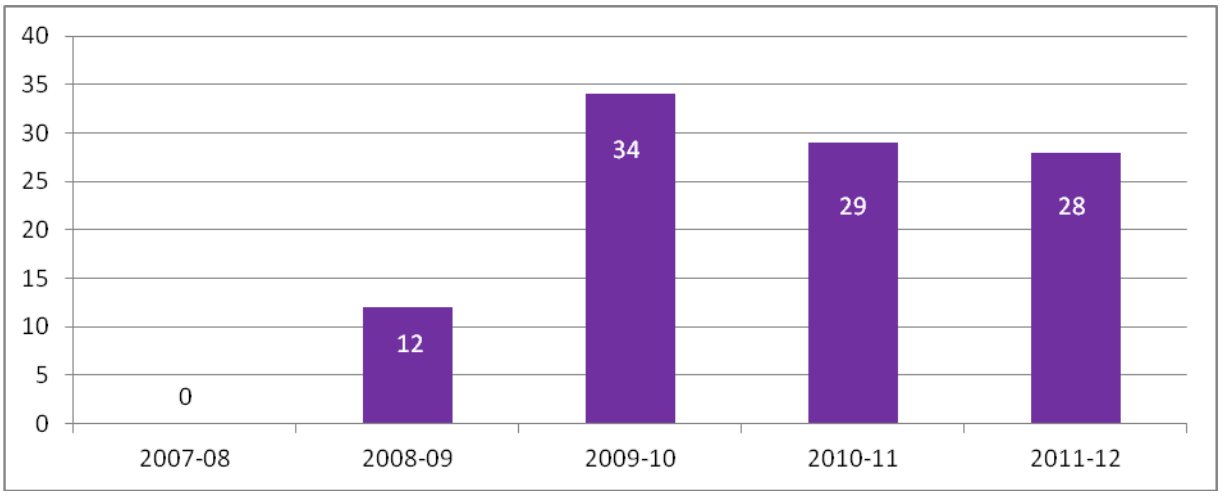


Figure 2: **Number of YJCSS referrals, 2008-12**

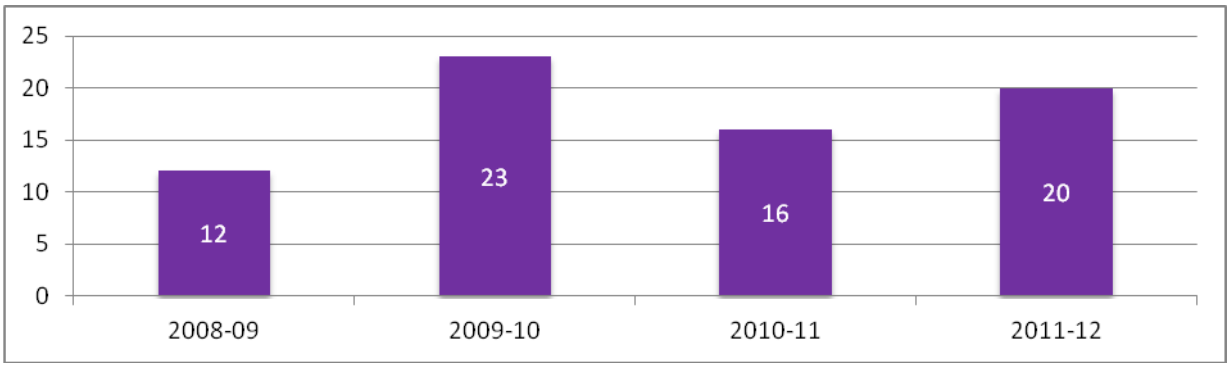


Figure 3: **Number and proportion of dual clients**

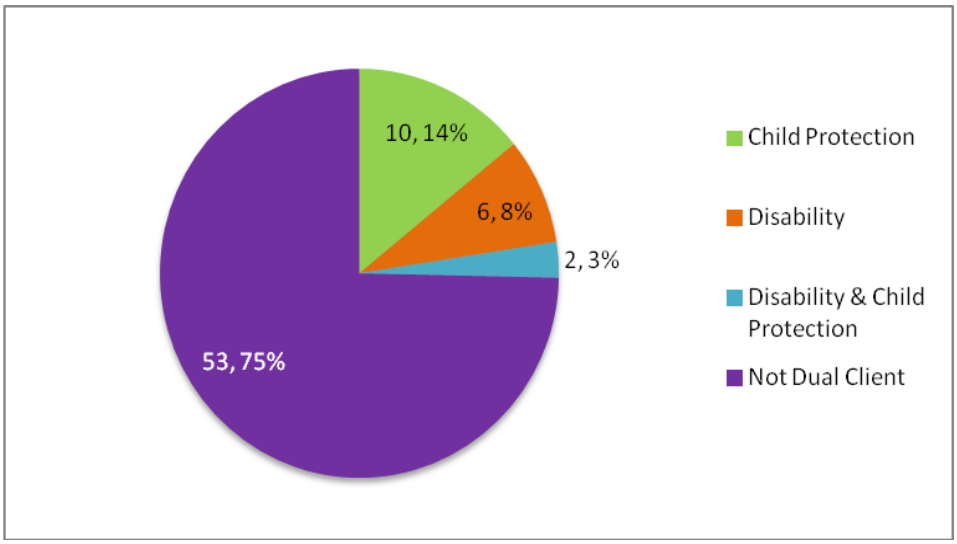


Figure 4: **VONIY ratings of clients**

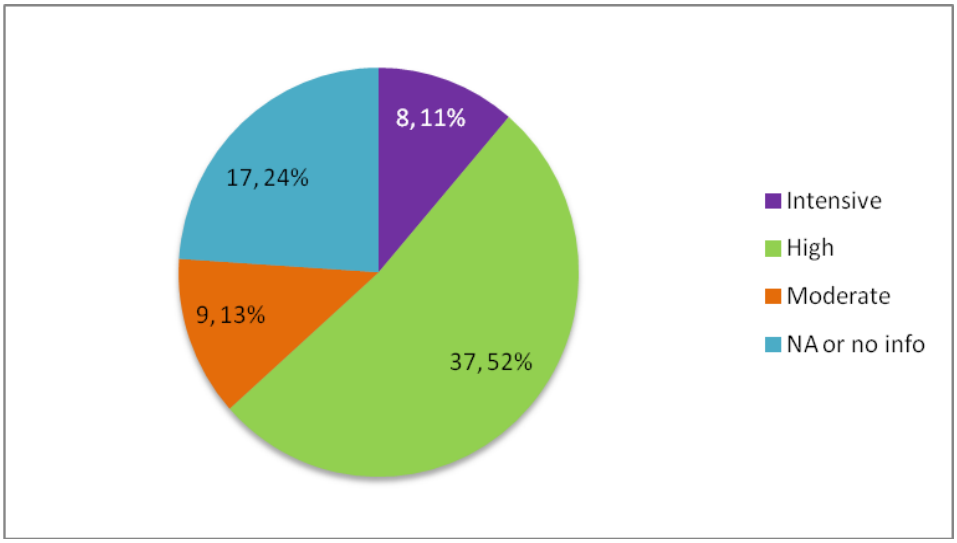
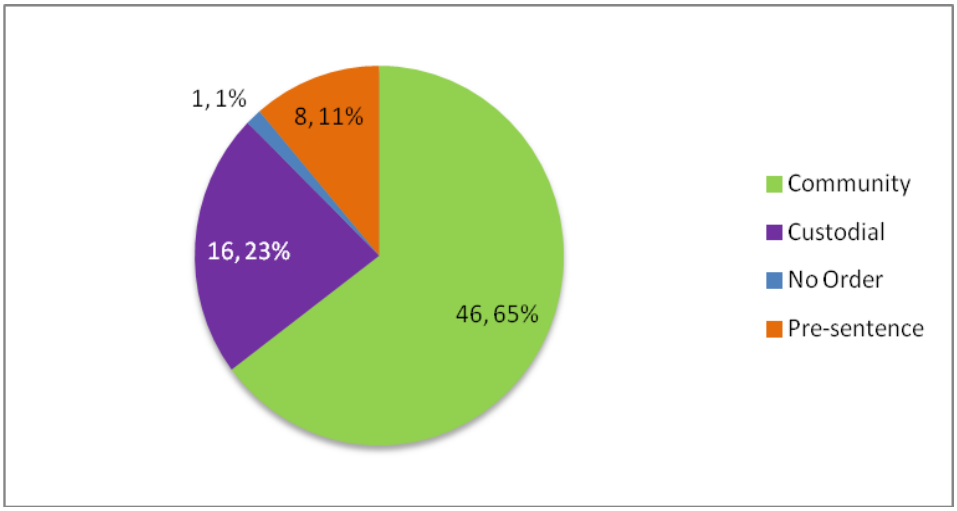


Figure 5: **Order type**



Hume

Lead agency	**Salvation Army, Brayton Youth and Family Services**
Partner agencies	Junction Support Services
Type of agencies represented on consortia	Housing and homelessness, child, youth, family
Number of operational YJCSS staff	2
Number of active cases 2011/12	23
THM clients 2011/12	5

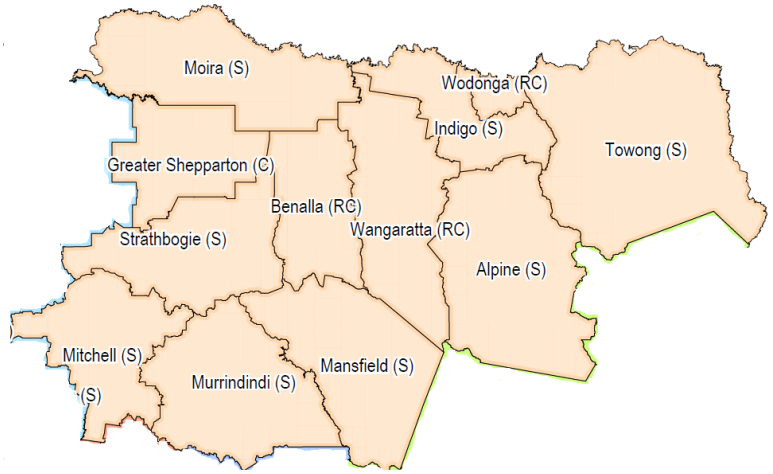


Figure 1: **Number of YJCSS active cases, 2007-12**

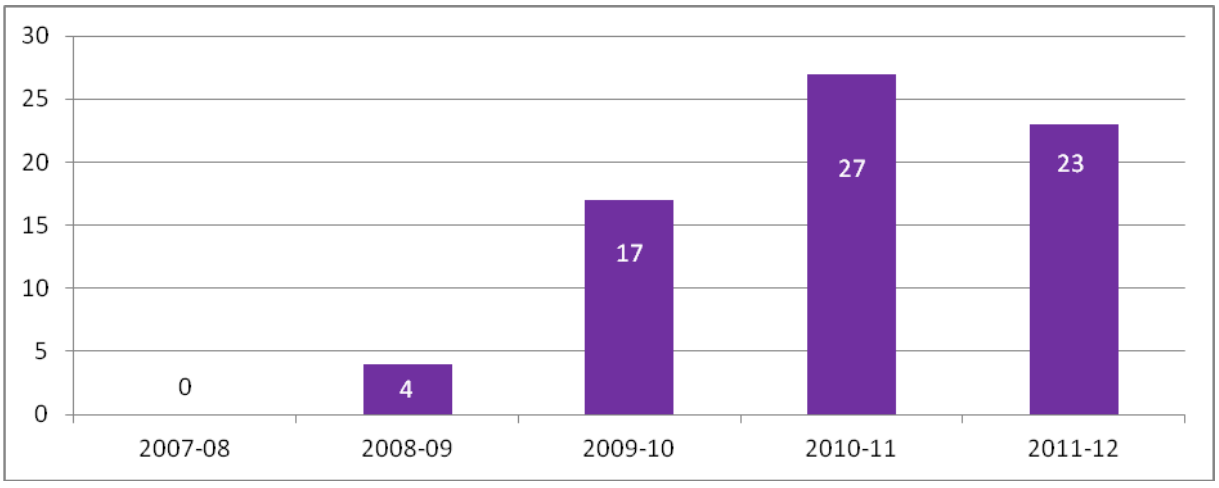


Figure 2: **Number of YJCSS referrals, 2008-12**

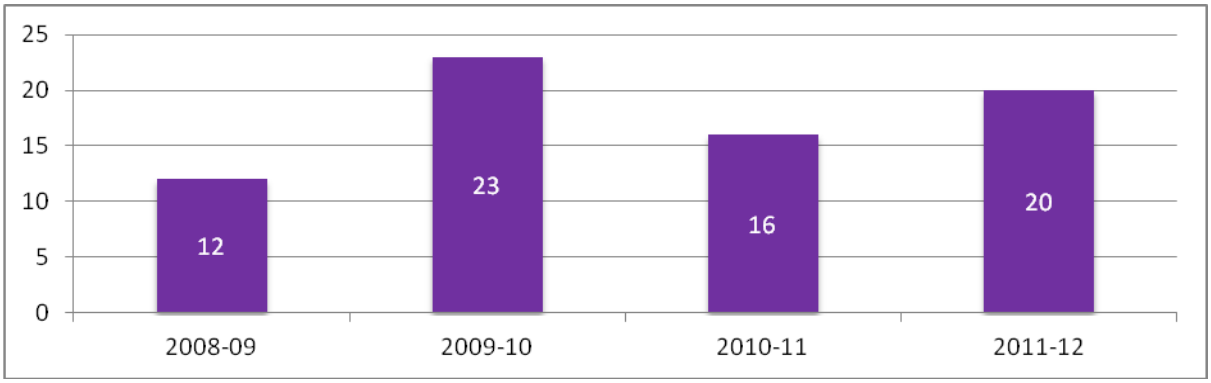


Figure 3: **Number and proportion of dual clients**

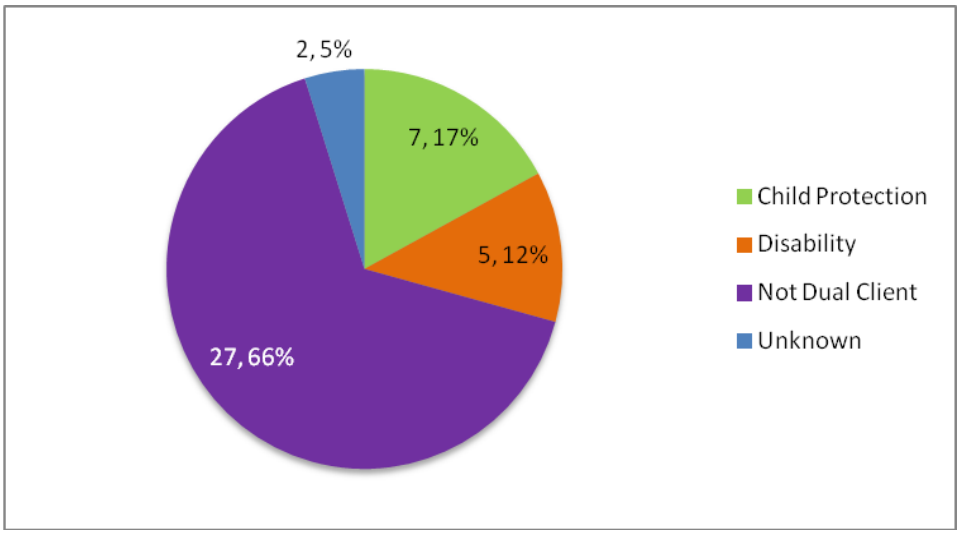


Figure 4: **VONIY ratings of clients**

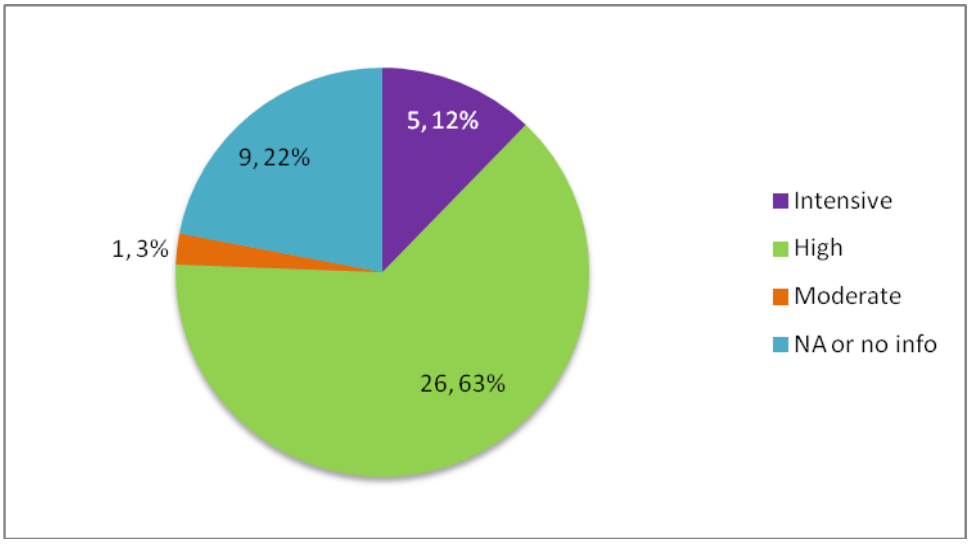
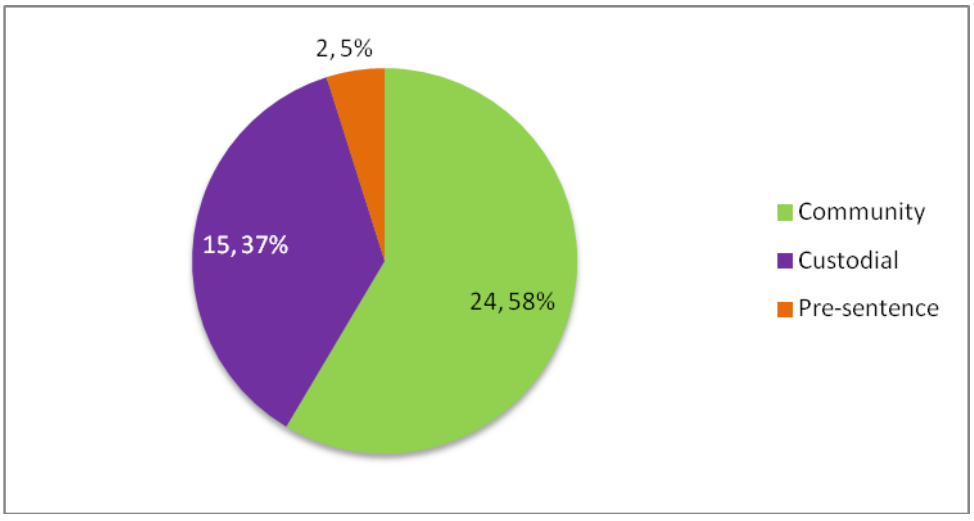


Figure 5: **Order type**



Loddon Mallee-Loddon

Lead agency	**St Luke's Anglicare**
Partner agencies	Whitelion
Type of agencies represented on consortia	Child, youth, family, disability, youth justice, employment, Aboriginal youth support, financial counseling, gambling support, housing, mental health, out of home care
Number of operational YJCSS staff	3
Number of active cases 2011/12	39
THM clients 2011/12	6

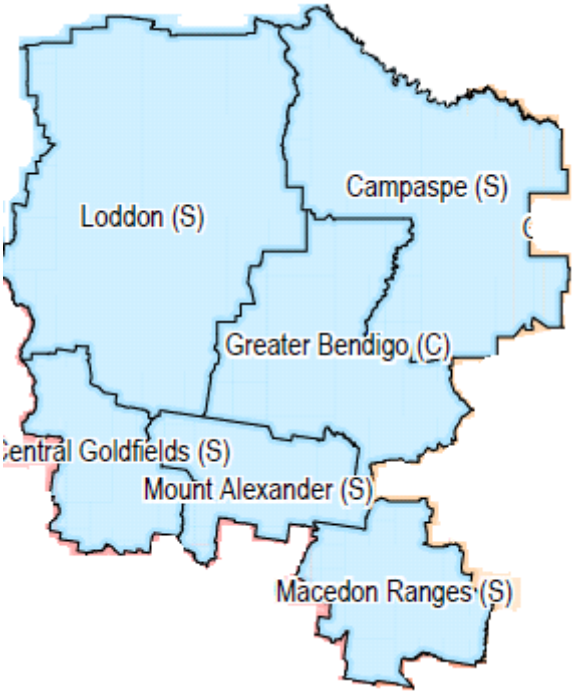


Figure 1: **Number of YJCSS active cases, 2007-12**

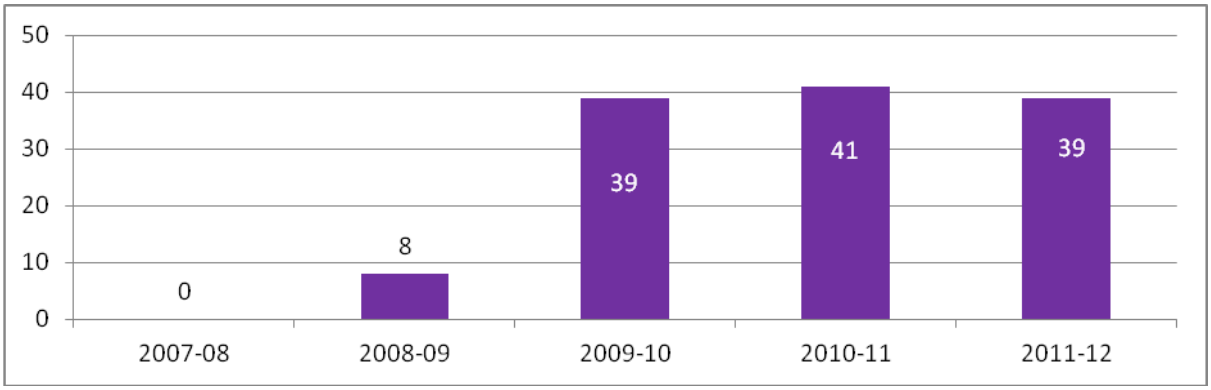


Figure 2: **Number of YJCSS referrals, 2008-12**

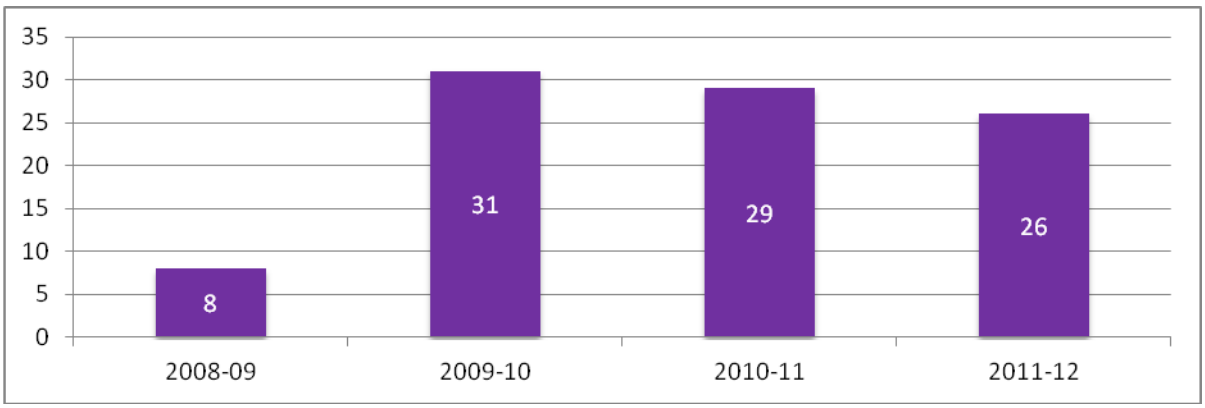


Figure 3: **Number and proportion of dual clients**

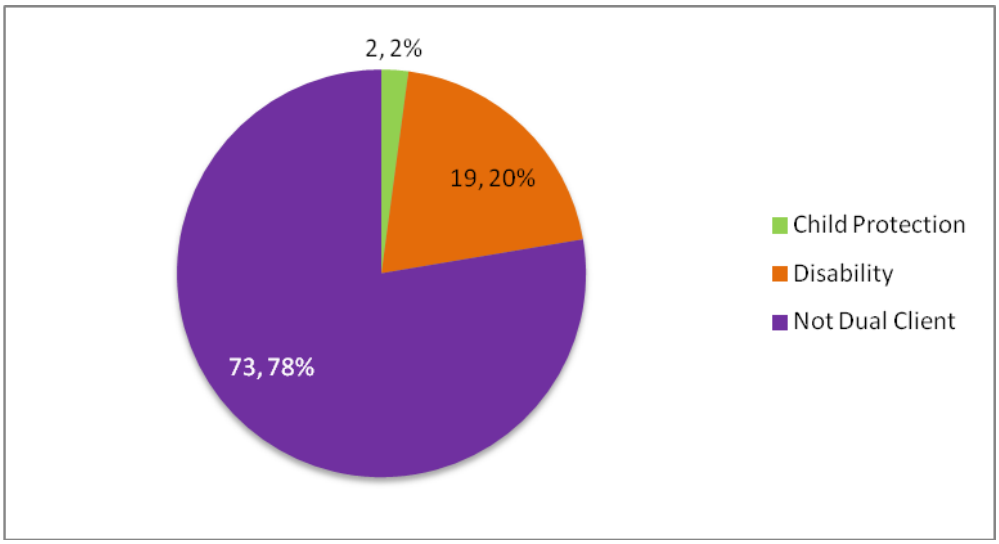


Figure 4: **VONIY ratings of clients**

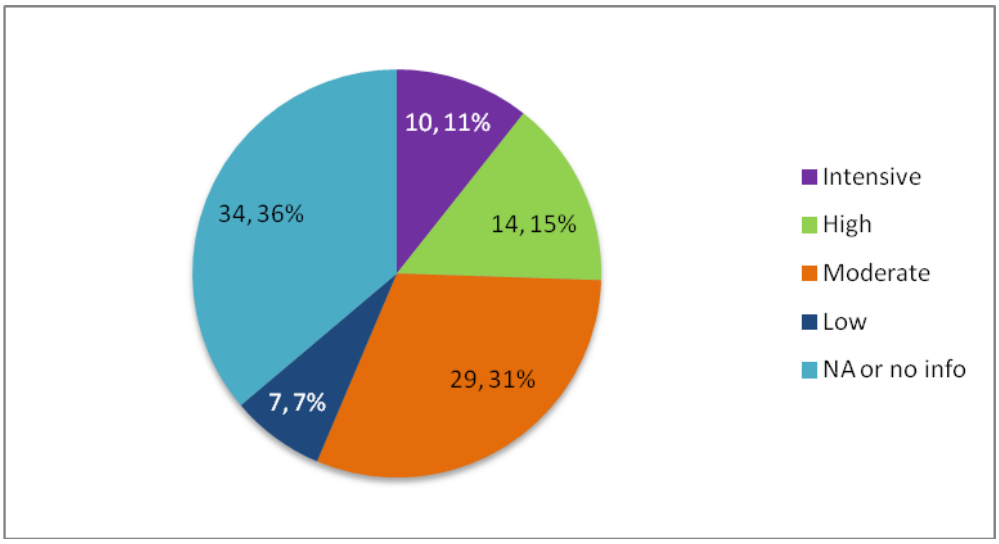
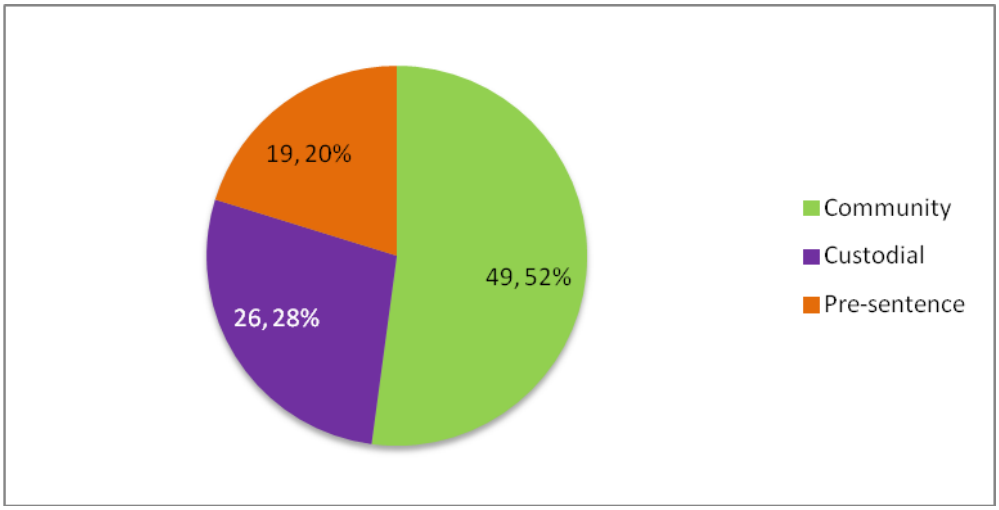


Figure 5: **Order type**



Loddon Mallee-Mallee

Lead agency	**Mallee Accommodation and Support**
Partner agencies	Mallee Family Care
Type of agencies represented on consortia	Disability, housing, child, youth, family, placement and support, mental health, housing and homelessness, legal and financial, education
Number of operational YJCSS staff	2
Number of active cases 2011/12	13
THM clients 2011/12	1

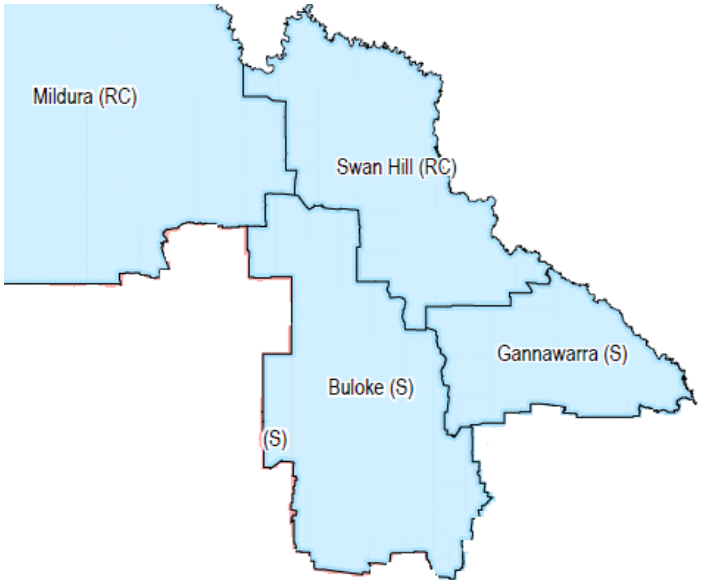


Figure 1: **Number of YJCSS active cases, 2007-12**

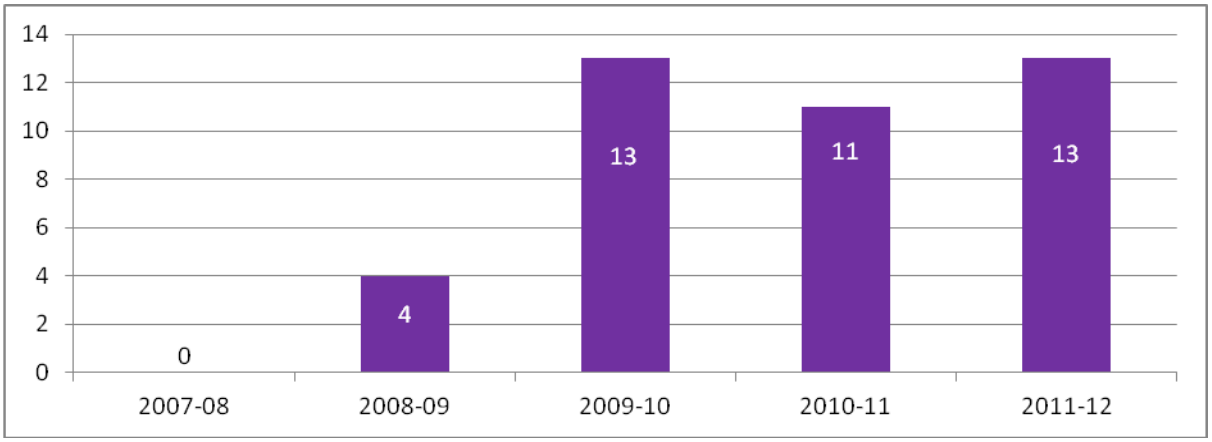


Figure 2: **Number of YJCSS referrals, 2008-12**

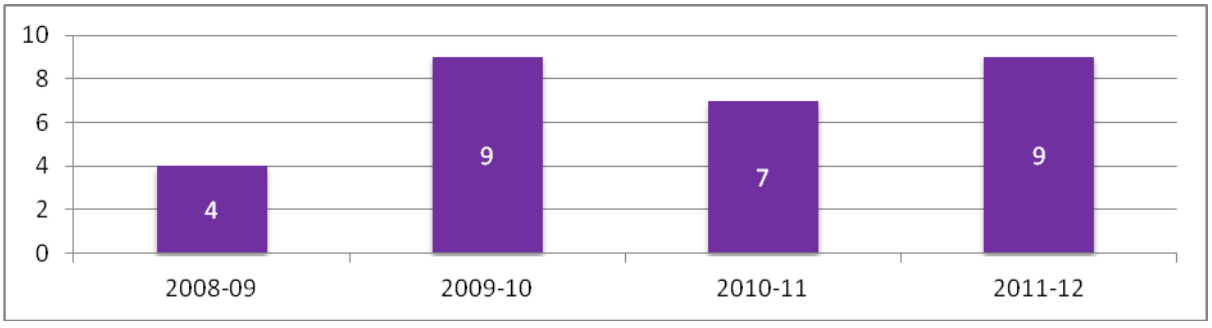


Figure 3: **Number and proportion of dual clients**

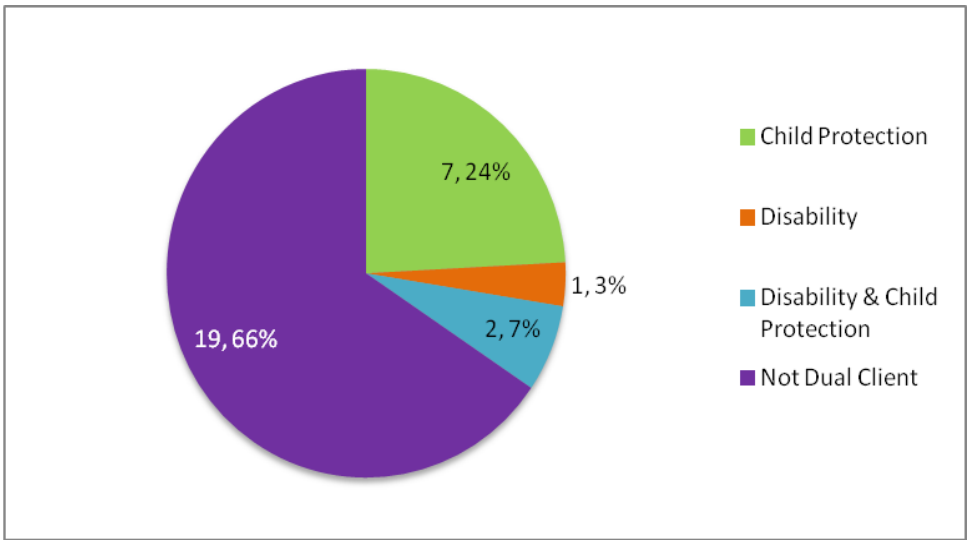


Figure 4: **VONIY ratings of clients**

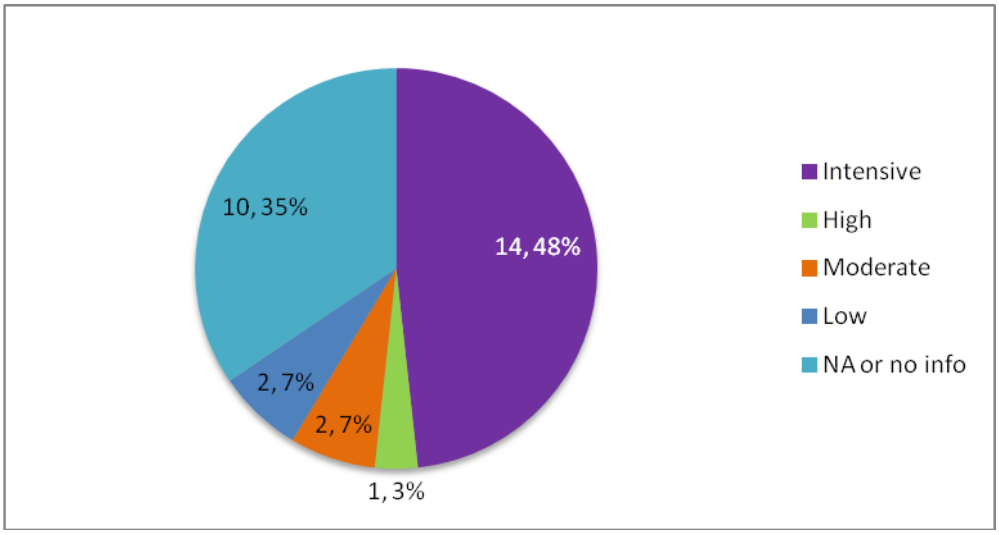
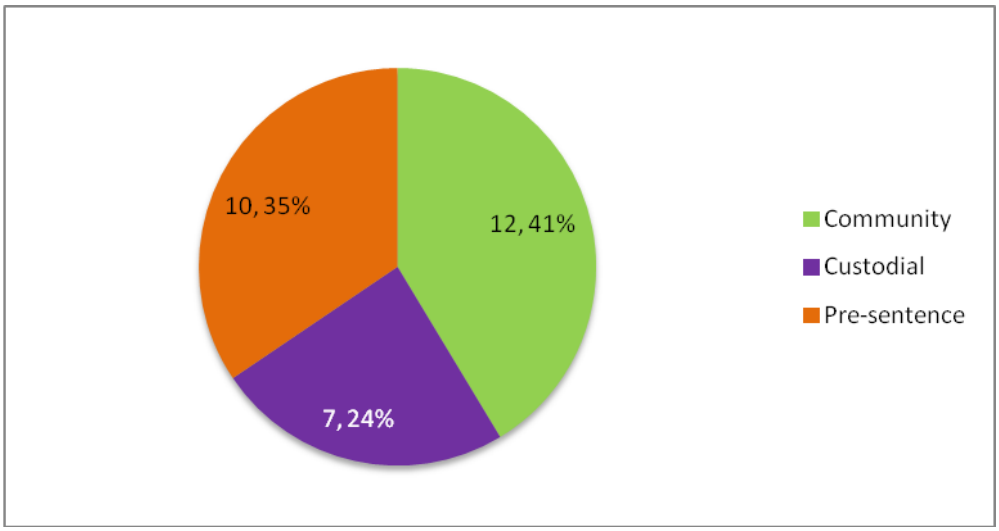


Figure 5: **Order type**



North West Metro

Lead agency	Jesuit Social Services
Partner agencies	Wombat, VICSEG, YSAS, SVDP
Type of agencies represented on consortia	Justice, CALD, mental health, EET, children, youth, families, housing and homelessness, AOD
Number of operational YJCSS staff	14
Number of active cases 2011/12	127
THM clients 2011/12	34

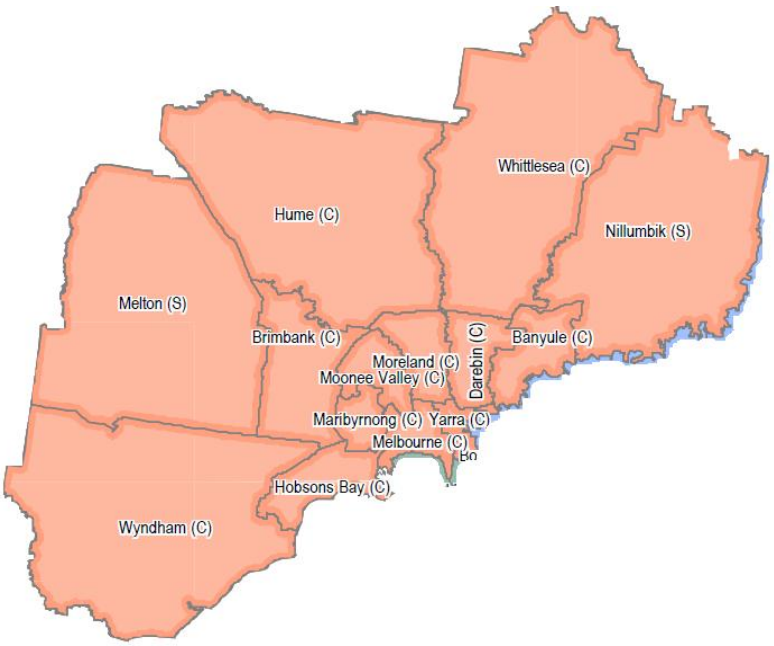


Figure 1: **Number of YJCSS active cases, 2007-12**

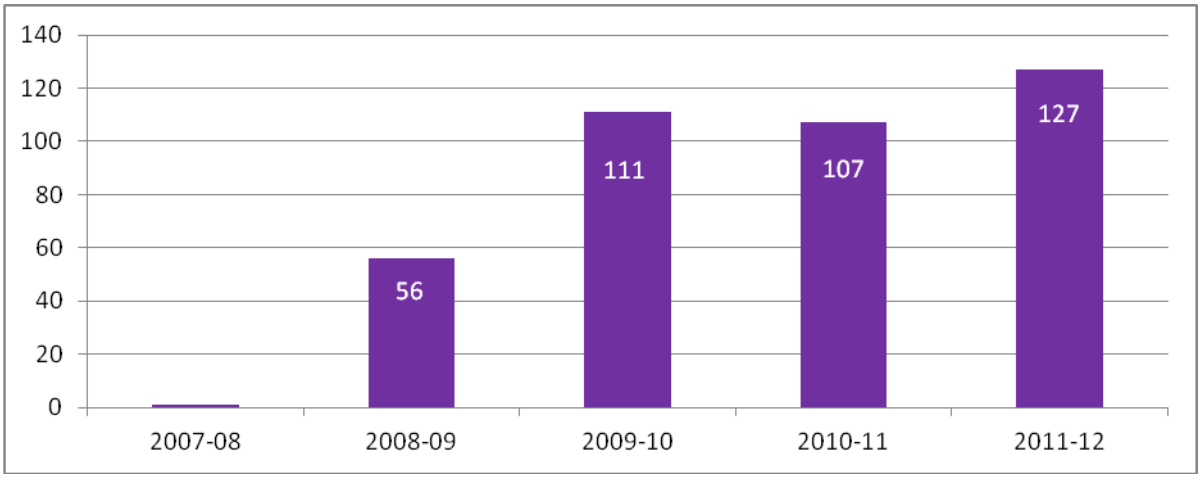


Figure 2: **Number of YJCSS referrals, 2008-12**

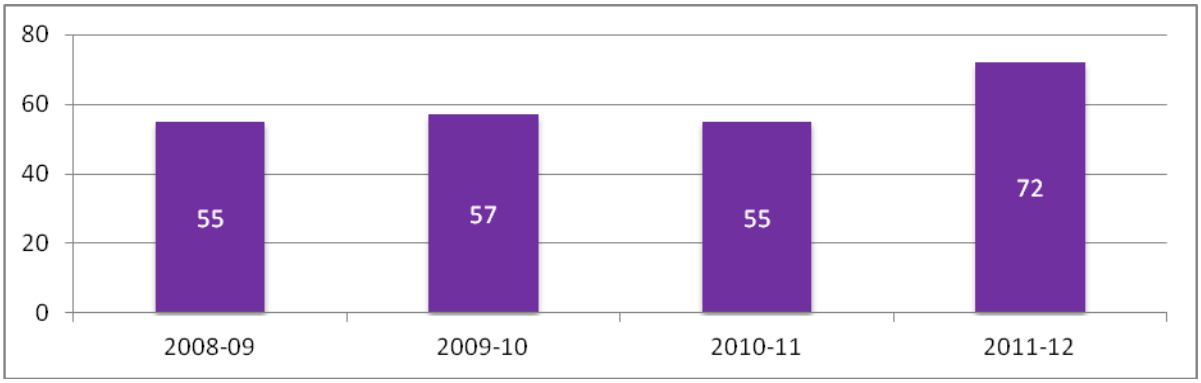


Figure 3: **Number and proportion of dual clients**

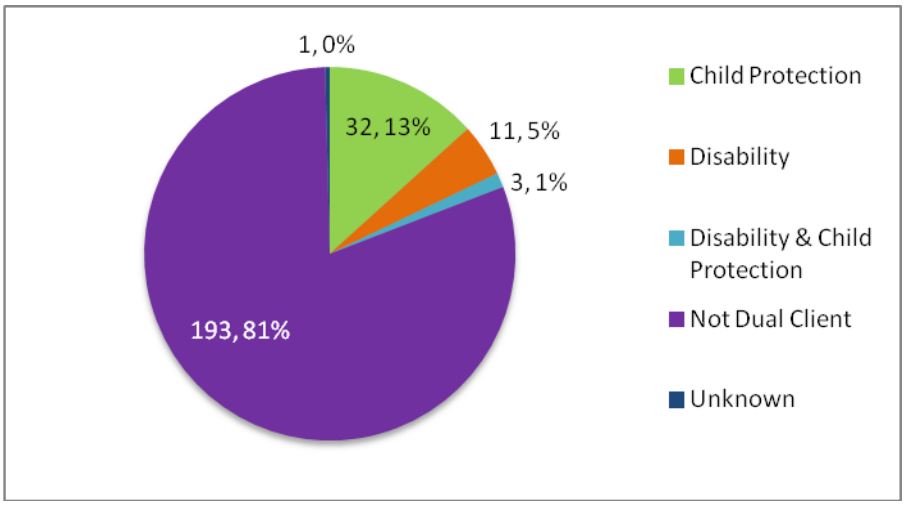


Figure 4: **VONIY ratings of clients**

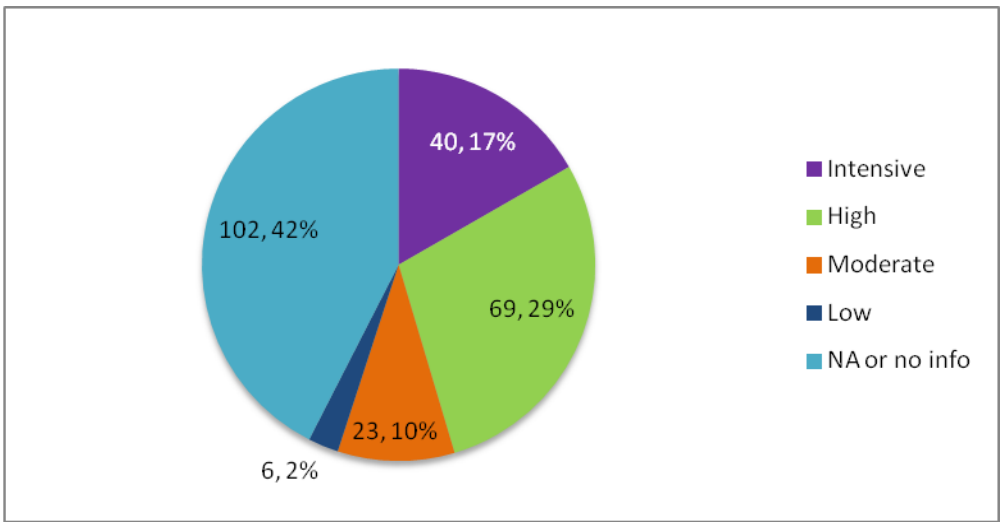
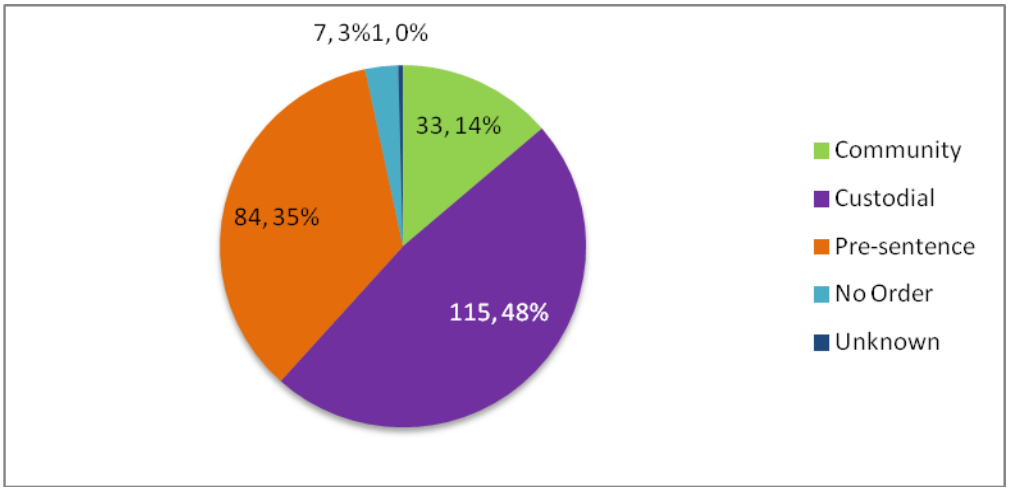


Figure 5: **Order type**



Southern Metro

Lead agency	Jesuit Social Services
Partner agencies	Moira, YSAS, Connections
Type of agencies represented on consortia	Justice, CALD, mental health, EET, child, youth, family, disability, AOD
Number of operational YJCSS staff	11
Number of active cases 2011/12	69
THM clients 2011/12	17

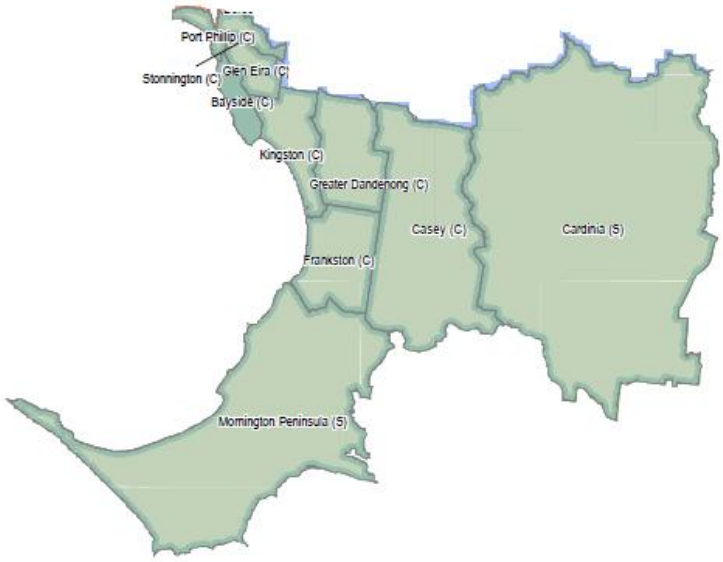


Figure 1: **Number of YJCSS active cases, 2007-12**

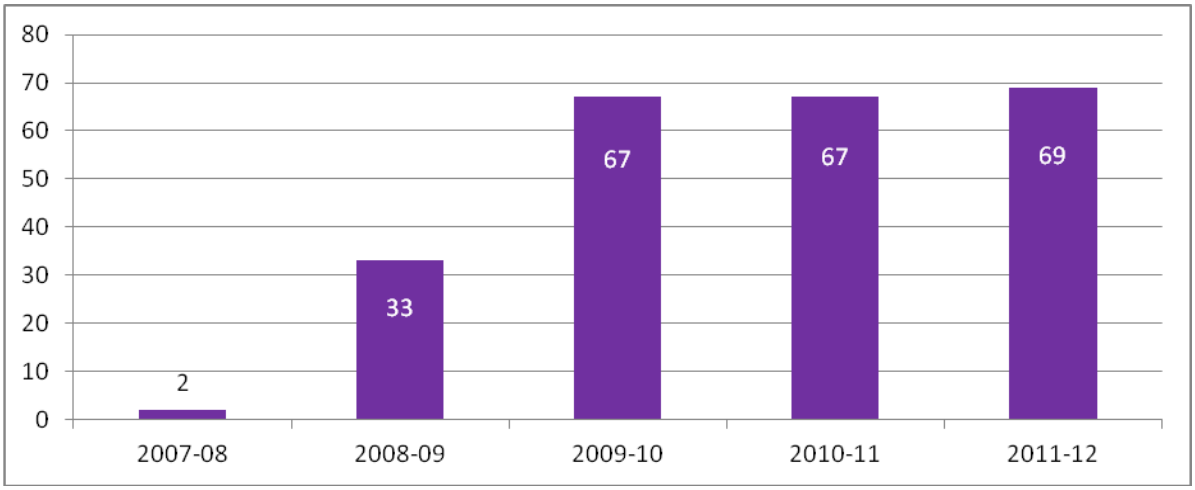


Figure 2: **Number of YJCSS referrals, 2008-09 – 2011-12**

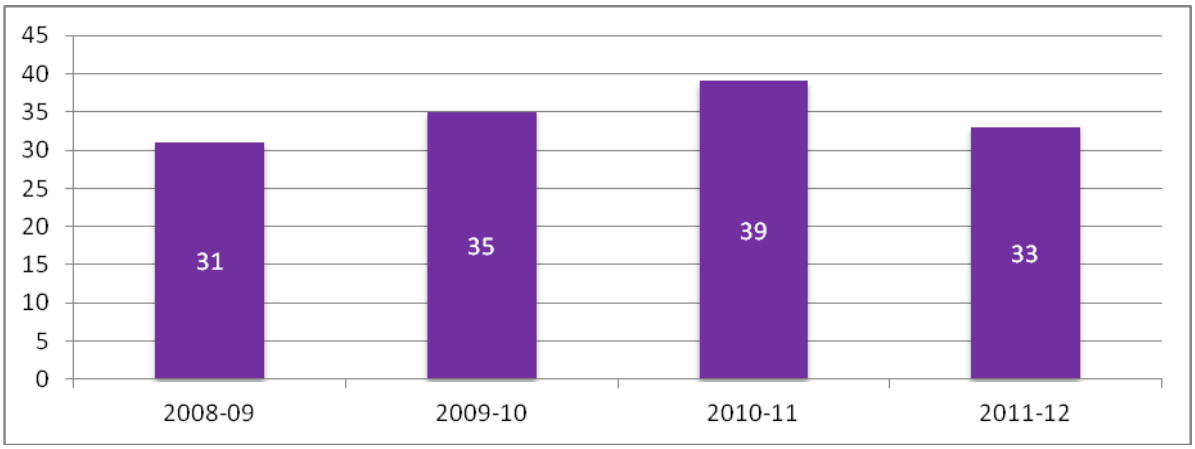


Figure 3: **Number and proportion of dual clients**

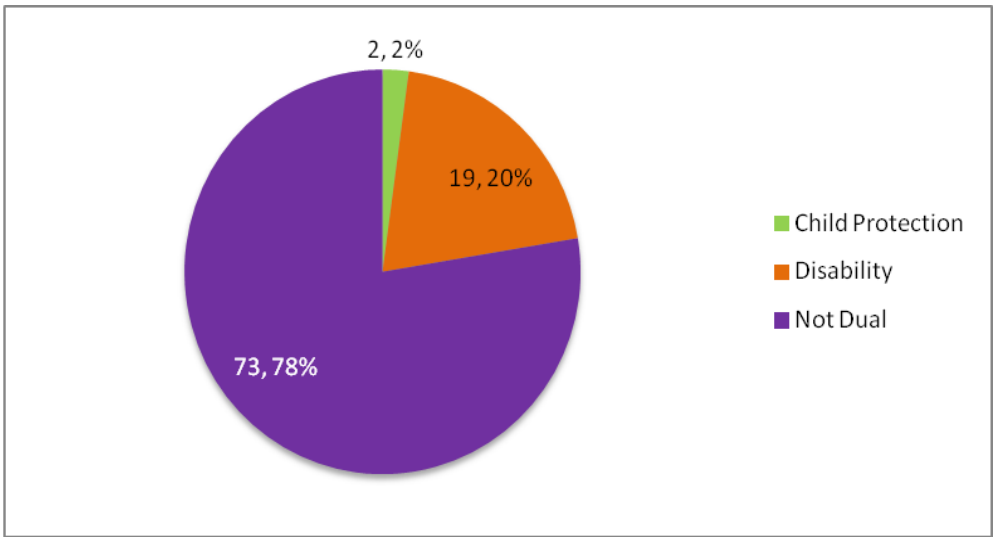


Figure 4: **VONIY ratings of clients**

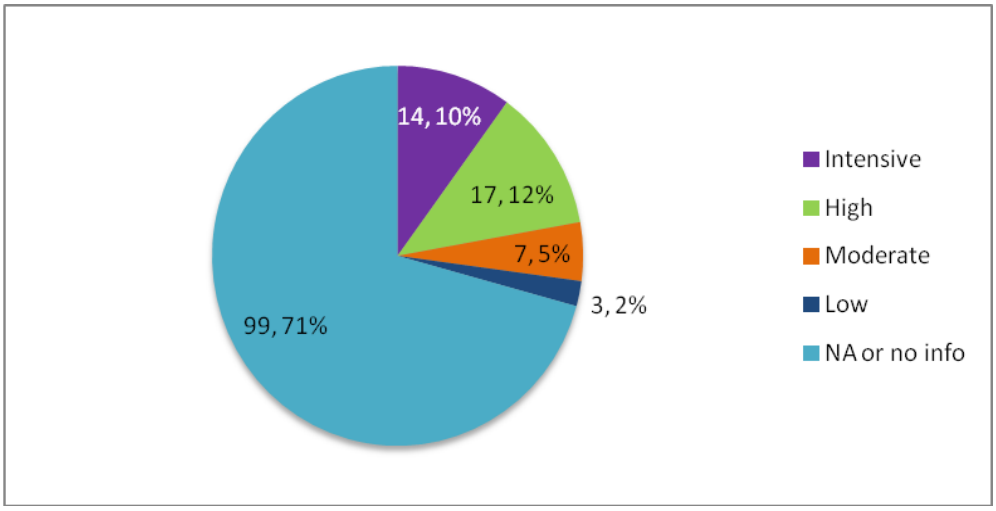
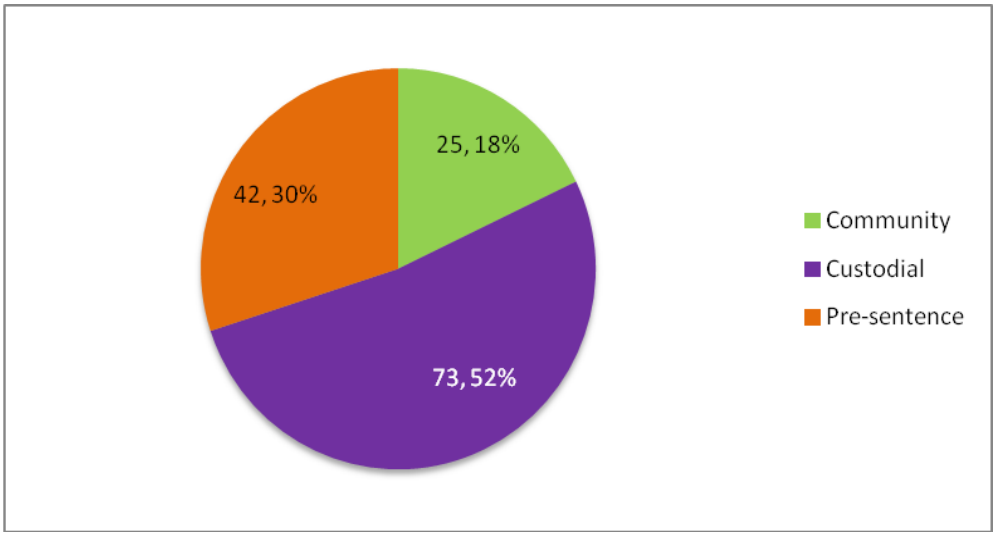


Figure 5: **Order type**



Appendix 5. Case studies

We compiled nineteen case studies for the evaluation, based on a case study template developed by the Department and completed by Youth Justice and YJCSS staff. Table 1 lists the case studies. In all cases, pseudonyms are used, and in some cases, key distinguishing features (such as country of birth or employment focus) have been changed.

Table 1: **Case study overview**

Name	Order on referral	Gender	Age	Background	Characteristics	VONIY	THM service
Amy	Probation Order	F	17	Aboriginal	• CP client • Disability client	High	Yes
Brady	Youth Justice Centre Order	M	21	Australian	• Past CP client • Disability client • Mental health issues	High	Yes
David	Youth Justice Centre Order	M	20	Maori	• Past CP client • Mental health issues	NR	Yes
Gideon	Youth Justice Centre Order	M	18	Australian	• Mental health issues	NR	No
James	Youth Justice Centre Order	M	17	Australian	• CP client • Mental health issues	Intensive	Yes
Jane	Youth Supervision Order	F	17	Australian	• CP client • Disability client • Mental health issues	Intensive	Yes
Jaydon	Youth Justice Centre Order	M	20	English	• Mental health issues	High	Eligible - not available
JD	Youth Justice Centre Order	M	18	Australian	• Past CP client	High	Yes
John	Youth Supervision Order	M	15	Australian	• Past CP client	High	No
Lance	Youth Justice Centre Order	M	19	Aboriginal	-	Intensive	No
Lisa	Probation Order	F	16	Aboriginal	• Past CP client	High	No
Nathan	Deferral of Sentence	M	15	NR	• Mental health issues • CP client	Intensive	No
Oliver	Probation Order	M	17	Australian	• Past CP client	NR	No
Raylan	Deferral of	M	21	New	• Mental health issues	NR	No

Name	Order on referral	Gender	Age	Background	Characteristics	VONIY	THM service
	Sentence			Zealander			
Sarah	Youth Justice Centre Order	F	17	Aboriginal	-	Intensive	No
Stephen	Probation Order	M	17	Greek-Australian	• CP client • Mental health issues	High	No
Tim	Youth Justice Centre Order	M	19	NR	• Past CP client • Disability client	Intensive	Yes
Tyrone	Youth Justice Centre Order	M	21	NR	• Mental health issues	Intensive	Yes
Wyoming	Youth Justice Centre Order	F	21	Overseas adoption	• Mental health issues	NR	Yes

NR = Not recorded

Amy

Amy was 17 at the time of her referral. She was on a Probation Order for multiple offences, most relating to theft, which she carried out to support her heroin habit. She was living intermittently in a residential unit, after she destroyed her lead tenant property while using drugs.

Child Protection was first notified about Amy when she was eight weeks old due to her parents' alcohol abuse. Her mother passed away when she was a baby and Amy remained in the custody of her father and grandmother. In 2003, Child Protection was again notified and since then she moved between foster care and family member placements. At the time of referral, Amy was in a secure welfare placement. She had moved through many schools and had no employment history though she had shown interest in volunteering in an Aboriginal retirement home or homeless shelter.

Other supports at the time of referral were Disability Client Services, Aboriginal Youth Services, Child Protection and the Youth Substance Abuse Service (YSAS). There were significant concerns about Amy's wellbeing and safety, in part due to her drug use, as well as her known involvement in sex work. Amy's risk-taking behaviours were compounded by her intellectual disability.

Youth Justice's priorities for support were drug and alcohol counselling, housing, structured activities such as employment or education, mentoring, legal issues/court support, and assistance to engage with a more positive peer group. The referral also stated that Amy required support for budgeting, healthy eating, collecting her Suboxone medication and to engage with Disability Client Services. Support was expected to cover about six months.

The Youth Justice worker discussed a referral to YJCSS with Amy as well as the Care team. YJCSS attended one of Amy's Youth Justice supervision appointments in order to meet Amy and start an assessment. As Amy was a transient person who did not own a mobile phone, it was difficult for the YJCSS worker to engage with her regularly. She missed appointments, and assessment and organising the THM property lease took significant time, which concerned the THM provider.

Amy did not engage with YJCSS, and the care team developed the initial support plan without her input. The support plan was completed within 20 days of the referral and was formally reviewed after three months. The main goals were to maintain her THM property and improve independent living skills, work towards a long term housing plan, engage with Disability Client Services, maintain pharmacotherapy and attend drug and alcohol appointments, and provide harm minimisation support for her drug use.

YJCSS provided an intensive level of support with daily attempts to contact Amy. The worker would visit the THM property and leave notes, would walk around areas that Amy frequented, and had a phone put into her home. Even though Amy remained disengaged, the YJCSS worker continued to seek contact and had regular contact with the other Care team members about Amy's situation.

The YJCSS worker provided intensive housing support for Amy. She had many problems in maintaining the property as she allowed other people to use it and the property was damaged. YJCSS liaised with the THM provider regularly.

A number of referrals were made to programs to support Amy with independent living skills, legal issues and housing, however, she did not engage with supports. Towards the end of the support period, YJCSS made a referral to the Lighthouse Foundation, however were advised that her prospects would be better if she had completed drug and alcohol rehabilitation. A referral was then made to a residential rehabilitation program but Amy did not attend. YJCSS also made a referral to a TAFE course and supported Amy to attend the initial appointment and interviews but Amy did not pursue this.

The Care team meetings were initially chaired by Child Protection. Youth Justice took over after Child Protection ended their support when Amy turned 18. Youth Justice, YJCSS and YSAS were the key Care team participants. Due to the timing of the referral (just before the Christmas/New Year break), there was no formal Care team meeting until seven weeks later. During that time, there were regular email updates between members. YJCSS and YSAS joined together for a number of outreach visits.

The Care team meetings were formally minuted, and the notes were emailed to the Care team members. Amy did not attend any of the meetings, though she was invited. No family members attended and YJCSS were unaware if they had been invited. Amy did not engage with the Care team meetings, and they focused on different strategies for engaging Amy and in providing flexible outreach for her.

Amy did not complete her order as she was sentenced to custody, and was exited from YJCSS after 33 weeks of support.

Client outcomes

Reducing risk of reoffending

Amy had a chaotic lifestyle due to drug use and her transient behaviour, and was difficult to engage in support. She was involved with a negative peer group, including a partner that encouraged her to steal in order to purchase heroin. She was easily influenced. Amy exited the YJCSS program after receiving a custodial sentence at an adult prison.

Preparing for adulthood and living independently

Amy had difficulties with independent living and accommodation and was reluctant to engage with support services. She struggled to manage finances, personal health and independent living. Amy developed an attachment to a number of workers. The move from the residential unit to independent THM accommodation was followed by Child Protection closing her case when she turned eighteen, which Amy found stressful and upsetting. YJCSS and Youth Justice workers reported being concerned about the suitability of THM accommodation for Amy, but were pressured to take an available property.

Engaging with school, employment or work

Although Amy was referred to an education program, she did not engage. Drug use contributed to the difficulties she faced in meeting attendance requirements and maintaining motivation.

Developing stronger relationships

Amy had difficult relationships with the family members, identifying many of them as drug users and negative supports. She spoke fondly of her grandmother in Gippsland and is believed to have returned to live with family members in Gippsland after her release from prison.

Strengths

- Care team meetings enabled a holistic approach to case management, collaboration between services, clear worker roles and development of a support plan.
- Good support between services, with YJCSS and YSAS working together on outreach visits.
- Referrals to other support services were sought to try different engagement approaches and to address a number of issues she faced.

Challenges

- Amy did not attend care team meetings, which meant that she did not participate in the development of the care plan or her goals.
- Amy was not seen as a suitable referral for the THM program with both YJCSS and Youth Justice having concerns about her suitability. They reported that the THM provider pressured them to fill the vacancy quickly.
- Exit planning from Child Protection appeared weak or poorly linked to YJCSS.
- Stronger planning may have mitigated the number of unsuccessful referrals, for example, formal TAFE attendance may have been staged as a later activity, once housing and drug use was stabilised.
- Amy's persistent drug use was a major impediment to progress.

Brady

Brady was 21 and on a Youth Justice Centre Order at the time of referral. He was in custody after extremely serious assaults and sex offences. Prior to his custodial sentence, Brady had lived in a THM property, and had lived transiently since he was fourteen, including periods in Child Protection residential units. His childhood was difficult, with family violence in the home, and his parents separated when he was young. He lived with his father and then his mother, when Child Protection became involved.

Brady had a complex mental health history. He was diagnosed as having a Borderline Personality Disorder and was a Disability Services client. He had a number of crisis police and hospital interventions, including a placement in Secure Welfare Services and admission to a psychiatric ward after a suicide attempt.

Brady's engagement with school declined as his housing became unstable. After he was placed in care, he stopped attending school and did not complete Year 9. He had completed a general education Certificate 2, and completed the equivalent of Year 10 through a Community House. His work experience was not clear; he reported completing a pre-apprenticeship and then starting a tiling apprenticeship, which was stopped due to his absences. He had used alcohol and drugs since his early teens, and was on an opiate replacement program.

At the time of referral, Brady had counselling support regarding his mental health, as well as his offending. The support focused on violence, triggers, sexual offending and how drug use affected his decision-making. Youth Justice included a range of support needs in the referral, such as drug and alcohol support, vocation/training, housing, mental health and primary health. The proposed length of support was six to twelve months and the priorities were seen as accommodation and employment.

Brady and his case manager discussed YJCSS while he was in custody. YJCSS visited him in custody and when he received parole. When he was first eligible for parole, a THM property was not available, and Brady spent longer in custody as a result. A THM property was then organised for his release, and YJCSS was involved in the exit planning.

Care team meetings were held monthly. Initially they were chaired by YJCSS and held at DHS but in time they moved to Brady's home and he chaired the meetings. Goal sheets were used to document each meeting. Priorities in the support plan included a pre-employment program, employment preparation, independent living and pharmacology assistance.

Over the course of YJCSS support, Brady had one main YJCSS worker who provided both intensive and THM support. Support included assertive outreach, support with employment opportunities and independent living and transportation. The care team meetings, and Brady's role in them, was seen as important, as Brady gained a sense of control in his life. The intensity of support was reviewed after three months, and reduced from about four occasions per week to two occasions.

In addition, care team members engaged their services to support his needs. Referrals were made to an employment program and a mental health activity program. Brady was able to maintain his THM property and YJCSS supported with an application for public housing and affordable housing.

While Brady appeared to be making progress, he re-offended, and returned to custody. His offences were related to theft, drug use and driving. He had received over twelve months of YJCSS support.

Client outcomes

Reducing risk of reoffending

During the majority of the support period, Brady appeared to be managing himself and lowering his risk of offending. He complied with his order and showed insight into his past offending. He was respectful to his workers, who reported that a key factor that may have contributed to his reoffending was a new association with a group of young men who had criminal backgrounds, and he resumed drug use, including amphetamines.

Preparing for adulthood and living independently

Brady showed that he was capable of living independently, and maintained his property until shortly before his incarceration. He completed his opiate replacement program, and reported that he had not resumed using heroin.

Engaging with school, employment or work

Brady was involved in an employment program through YJCSS with a furniture removalist. He regularly attended and agreed to extra paid work when asked. He began to disengage as he met the group of young men mentioned above and started using drugs again.

Developing stronger relationships

Brady struggled with relationships in part as a result of his personality disorder. Over the course of his YJCSS support, Brady did report an improved relationship with his mother.

Strengths

- The care team approach was strong with different workers sharing information and also using agency supports to assist Brady.
- The care team demonstrated their focus on client-centred planning by involving Brady and ultimately having him chair meetings about his life and decisions.
- While there was a care team, there was also a clear YJCSS worker who worked across both THM and intensive support.

Challenges

- It was not apparent that Brady accessed any Leaving Care supports or equivalent after his time in care.
- Limited THM property availability in the region delayed his release.
- The expectation was that mental health and forensic counselling as well as opiate replacement through his GP would address his drug use.
- This case shows the difficulty in measuring outcomes and impact – while Brady did reoffend, the offending was less serious than his earlier offending.

David

David was 20 and on a Youth Training Centre order when he was referred to YJCSS. He had experienced significant neglect. He moved to Australia with his father and siblings when he was ten. When he was twelve, Child Protection was notified about violence in David's home and his behaviour (in particular, running away from home). He was then placed in Adolescent Care. By thirteen, he was using alcohol and illicit drugs, and by fourteen had his first involvement with Youth Justice. He had been sentenced to numerous community orders, all of which he breached due to reoffending. During this time, his drug use proceeded to heroin and ice.

Prior to his order, he had served two concurrent YJC orders. He had previously undertaken pharmacotherapy for heroin use. Mental health assessments show that he had insecure attachment, with high levels of anxiety and depression.

David's Youth Justice worker discussed the referral with him before it was made, and a YJCSS Senior worker made contact within five days. A YJCSS support worker regularly visited David in custody and planned goals with him to ensure engagement. The only reported drawback from this period was that the YJCSS and Youth Justice workers had to request an exit meeting with the Custodial Centre; this was the only exit planning within the Centre that included the YJCSS worker.

Youth Justice priorities for David at the time of referral were assistance with accessing and maintaining housing and in seeking employment. He also required support to develop independent living skills, such as cooking classes, opening bank accounts, obtaining identification, monitoring and encouragement of progress made, as he had never lived independently before. Support was expected for six months.

A formal support plan was developed for David. It was completed within twenty days of the referral and reviewed within three months. David was involved in discussions with his YJCSS worker about the goals for his support period. The YJCSS worker wrote a case plan and involved David in the case plan review.

David's support plan goals were to maintain his THM property then move to private rental, find and maintain a job, go to the gym, complete pharmacotherapy, and complete parole. David was invited and encouraged to attend all care team meetings but did not want to attend. Workers discussed any issue he wanted raised at the meeting and gave feedback after the meeting.

Support was provided on a weekly basis, with the initial support given more frequently. After David was released from custody, YJCSS support was provided through outreach in the community, at his home and over the phone. The consistency of the support would vary depending on David's employment situation and how things were going for him (David was difficult to engage when things were going well).

Support was provided after the Youth Justice order was completed and YJCSS took over primary case management. The support offered to David changed very little except in the case of David's Youth Justice Housing Pathways support, which changed from THM support to Intensive Support only. Workers made the transition as smooth as possible, noting that David was entering into a phase without their support and supervision for the first time. David then managed to obtain and maintain a private rental property. In total, YJCSS provided support for 67 weeks.

Client outcomes

Reducing risk of reoffending

David accepted responsibility for his offences and shown insight into the negative impact of offending. He showed self-control when faced with situations where offending was tempting, motivated partly by his girlfriend's disapproval of his behaviour and partly by his positive progress. David only reoffended once (shoplifting) while under the influence of drugs. David distanced himself from all but one of his old peer group, acknowledging that they were a negative influence.

Preparing for adulthood and living independently

David lived between THM and his girlfriend's house for seven months, and was then able to obtain private rental, which he maintained for the last six months.

David was very independent; managing his health needs (medical appointments), finding employment and private rental without much assistance, cooking, cleaning and maintaining the property on his own, engaging in sporting activities in the community, and managing negative events in general while seeking supports and assistance when needed.

Due to ineligibility for government benefits and employment issues, David had financial difficulties since his release from custody. He was supported by short-term employment, his girlfriend and support workers. David decreased his drug use to near abstinence, with a few minor relapses that were quickly overcome. drug use (if any) did not seem to be affecting his housing, employment or relationships.

Engaging with school, employment or work

David found work but lost two jobs due to turning up late to work and missing work. David said he learnt from this and wanted to engage in training to have greater employment options.

Developing stronger relationships

David reconnected with his father and his family, and worked to rebuild the relationship. He did not want to have contact with his mother. He had no contact with his brothers, both of whom were in custody. David attempted to reconnect with his former carer, and had good working relationships with supports. He developed meaningful and supportive relationships with his girlfriend and a number of friends.

Strengths

- Referral was completed whilst David was in custody allowing for engagement prior to his release and the development of a positive working relationship.
- David had the same worker throughout his involvement with YJCSS.
- Care team members worked effectively together and shared information appropriately.
- Care team meetings allowed workers to coordinate tasks and ensure a consistent approach. The meetings meant workers gained support from other workers when crises arose.
- Non-judgemental approach of care team allowed for trust from David; this was a significant achievement considering David's lengthy departmental history with Child Protection and Youth Justice and his history of poor engagement.
- Given David was not eligible for benefits, YJCSS found alternative sources for financial assistance (Post Care Brokerage), and services that offer assistance without health care card.

Challenges

- Exit planning and joint care team meetings did not start while David was in custody.
- No accommodation was organised when David was released from Malmsbury Youth Training Centre.

Gideon

Gideon was 18 and on a Youth Justice Centre Order at the time of referral. He had previously been on a Probation Order and a Youth Attendance Order as well as another Youth Justice Centre order. His offences were largely related to assault and injury.

Gideon lived with both his parents and a younger brother who was also involved with Youth Justice and YJCSS. While his parents had a strained relationship at times, they were living in the same house. The criminal behaviours, poor school attendance and attitudes of the brothers made it difficult for the family's social connections as they lived in a small town. Gideon completed a number of courses while in custody, and had completed an introductory construction course prior to custody. He planned to complete his First Aid Certificate during his parole and was required to complete a Drink Drive Course.

He had a long history of alcohol abuse, and had been diagnosed with First Episode Psychosis. Prior to the referral, Gideon had been involved with a local drug and alcohol service, and had a local counsellor. He had previously completed nine months of support with YJCSS.

The Youth Justice worker discussed a referral to YJCSS with Gideon before making it. As Gideon had already used the service, he was aware of the program and the support it offered. The YJCSS worker met Gideon at the Youth Justice Centre a week before the referral was made. They had phone contact a number of times before his release. The referral was made four weeks before the planned release date but the YJCSS worker was not invited to the exit planning meetings with the Youth Justice Centre.

In the referral, the Youth Justice priorities were drug and alcohol and mental health support and education and employment. Youth Justice expected support might extend up to three months beyond the parole period. A formal support plan was developed from the referral, the parole plan and discussions with Gideon. This was used throughout the support period. Some of the goals in the support plan were not Gideon's preference but he recognised that to complete his parole, he had to complete the plan.

The main goals were to support Gideon to engage in education (including assistance with enrolment and transport), attend drug and alcohol counselling, engage with an Early Intervention Dual Diagnosis (EIDD) clinician and participate in community activities including sport with his family.

Support was provided about twice a week through outreach, home visits, phone calls and text messages. At time, support was intensified, although Gideon did not have many crises. These were primarily short periods related to family arguments, and he maintained contact with his YJCSS worker in these times.

Only one Care team meeting was held, around three weeks after Gideon's release. It was chaired by Youth Justice and included YJCSS, his drug and alcohol counsellor and the EIDD worker. When his order was completed, EIDD took over case management, as the clinician would be working with Gideon in the long term. There were no minutes kept nor was Gideon or any family members involved in the meeting. On reflection, workers agreed that more care team meetings would have been helpful.

In total, 36 weeks of support were provided, with nine weeks provided after Gideon completed his parole. YJCSS support assisted Gideon to re-establish connection with services he had used prior to custody. Gideon also enrolled a local TAFE to complete a General Education course. Gideon maintained involvement with his EIDD clinician but disengaged from drug and alcohol counselling. YJCSS supported Gideon to participate in education, through providing transport when public transport was not available. Once

Gideon completed his parole, it was harder to engage Gideon. He stopped meeting with his drug and alcohol counsellor, yet maintained engagement with the EIDD worker.

Client outcomes

Reducing risk of reoffending

Gideon was able to take responsibility for his offending behaviours and could identify how it affected both the victims and his family. He stated times when he had been able to shown self-restraint and walk away from situations that could lead to offending. He did, however, struggle to disengage with his previous peer group of co-offenders, and said it was hard to avoid them in the small town he lived in.

Preparing for adulthood and living independently

While Gideon had a relatively stable living arrangement at his family home, he wanted to move into private rental with a friend. He knew that to do this, he needed full time employment. Gideon was able to attend appointments, use public transport and knew which services to request for support.

Gideon managed to stay compliant with his medication and attend appointments with his EIDD clinician. However, his drug use was an ongoing problem. He continued to drink excessive amounts for days at a time. When a GP informed him that this rate of drinking would not let him live past 30, Gideon became hard to engage. Gideon did not want to change his alcohol consumption, and decided to drink only on weekends during his search for employment.

Engaging with school, employment or work

Gideon chose to volunteer at a local animal shelter. He enjoyed his time there and was still attending when YJCSS support ended. He completed the TAFE course and had gained the necessary qualifications to become a truck driver. At the time of YJCSS support finishing, he had sent out his resume to companies for employment in the field.

Developing stronger relationships

While Gideon was able to live with his family, he stated that he did not get on well with his parents. He showed polarised behaviours towards his brother. He maintained relationships with his existing friends but struggled to make new relationships. While he had limited social connectedness through his TAFE course, he enjoyed belonging to an indoor cricket team and a volleyball team, which he was on with his parents.

Strengths

- The Care team meeting was beneficial as it made all members aware of the parole plan and allowed for consistent support to be given.
- The YJCSS worker considered the visit to the Youth Justice Centre as important for relationship building.
- The same YJCSS worker was with Gideon throughout the support period.
- Informal collaboration was strong, including the negotiation of case management responsibilities, from Youth Justice to EIDD.

Challenges

- Given the length of support and some of the issues that were difficult to address, particularly Gideon's alcohol use, Care team meetings may have been helpful to focus on ongoing and unresolved issues.

James

James was 17 and on a Youth Justice Centre Order at the time of referral. He had a long history of offending, mostly drug related including robbery, theft and damage and had been involved with Youth Justice since 2009. He had received and breached a number of orders through reoffending and non-compliance. He remains involved with YJCSS.

James experienced family violence from an early age. He and his younger brother were removed from his mother's care when he was seven by Child Protection. It was unclear how many placements James had. He moved through a number of residential units due to absconding, conflict with workers and residents, violent behaviour and drug use. James completed Year 7, but was expelled in Year 8.

James used many illegal drugs. He had unsuccessfully tried suboxone and methadone programs. At the time of referral, James had restarted the methadone program. While previous reports did not note any acute mental health issues, his workers reported that he displayed attachment issues and emphasised his exposure to emotional neglect and domestic violence. At the time of referral, James was linked to Child Protection, Salvation Army, ICMS, AFHS, AOD support and Whitelion.

While James was in custody, his Youth Justice worker discussed a referral to YJCSS. A meeting was held with YJCSS and YJCSS was involved with exit planning. Although the YJCSS senior worker and the Youth Justice team leader had concerns about the suitability of a THM property for James, the Youth Justice manager insisted that he was to be housed in a THM property upon release. The support requests in the referral were education, vocation/training, employment and employment services, and housing.

A formal case plan was developed between YJCSS, Child Protection and Youth Justice, however it took several weeks to complete due to James' complex needs. James had minimal input in his plan. He identified goals but the crisis driven nature of the support made these difficult to pursue. The goals were to maintain his accommodation and work towards permanent housing, drug and alcohol and mental health support (although these were not seen as a priority to James), and to provide harm minimisation support to James to reduce the risk of overdose. Support was expected for six months.

YJCSS provided extensive outreach support to James since his release. It was on an almost daily basis, with some crisis periods requiring more intensive support (for example related to overdosing, hospitalisation, hallucinations and paranoia). Sometimes support was less frequent due to the difficulties of contact.

The Care team meetings were held fortnightly while James was under 18, with Child Protection chairing. Minutes were recorded at each meeting and emailed to members. Neither James nor any family members attended meetings. In 2011, James turned 18 and completed his parole, ending his support from Youth Justice and Child Protection. Case management was transferred to YJCSS. This change meant that James no longer had any statutory services supporting him. There was no three-month review as Youth Justice and Child Protection were no longer providing support, and no longer participated in Care team meetings.

Due to James' unwillingness to engage with support services, it was difficult for YJCSS to refer him to other agencies. YJCSS requested post-care support from Child Protection, which was not provided. A referral to the Multiple and Complex Needs Initiative (MACNI) resulted in six months of funding for a case coordinator, incidental brokerage funds and external supervision for the YJCSS worker. The funding was discontinued after initial six months due to James' reluctance to address his needs. YJCSS maintained monthly meetings with MACNI and used them as secondary consultations for case management; the YJCSS

worker continued to request official support. Referrals were made to Orygen Youth Health for mental health support and James would attend on occasion. After he experienced hallucinations and paranoia, he admitted himself to their inpatient unit. James had difficulties remaining on his antipsychotic medication after release, although he managed to keep to the Methadone program.

The YJCSS worker helped with housing support for James. He suffered trauma at his first THM property due to a neighbour committing suicide in front of him. He moved into a new property and reported feeling safer, but still chose not to stay there alone and only spent a few nights a week there. YJCSS assisted James with maintenance issues as well as bill payment, budgeting and shopping. YJCSS completed a public housing application for James, and planned to continue their support six months after he moved into public housing. YJCSS remained concerned about James' ability to maintain his accommodation without intensive support and tried to find an appropriate service to support James, but had not been successful. In total 74 weeks of YJCSS support were provided, including over a year of post-order support.

Client outcomes

Reducing risk of reoffending

James had continually been involved in high-risk offending behaviour and was currently on a Community Corrections Order as a result. He did not appear to show self-control or regard for others. His peer group were all offenders and drug users.

Preparing for adulthood and living independently

James maintained his THM house. He tended to spend his Centrelink payments on the day he received them and went without food as a result. James continued to have high levels of drug use. He was on a waiting list for public housing, although YJCSS had serious concerns about his ability to live independently of support services. They were unable to find appropriate supported accommodation.

Engaging with school, employment or work

James had extremely low levels of literacy and numeracy and had been unwilling to engage in any educational or employment support. He was approved for the Disability Support Pension in mid 2011.

Developing stronger relationships

James had volatile connections with his family. He engaged with a negative peer group and had limited social connections to the community.

Strengths

- James maintained THM housing for 18 months with the intense support of YJCSS.
- Care team meetings allowed for regular communication and discussions; they helped with information gathering for YJCSS and good support of James.

Challenges

- YJCSS was aware that James required intensive support however they were unaware of the extent of it.
- James was referred to YJCSS only 8 weeks prior to the end of Child Protection and Youth Justice supports. Earlier referral would have allowed for YJCSS to be able to work collaboratively with other services and James.
- Concerns for James when YJCSS close their support.

Jane

Jane was 17 and on a Youth Supervision Order at the time of referral. Her offending was related to injury and false imprisonment. She had a history of offending against the person, particularly in residential care settings. She was living in a secure welfare facility after a suicide attempt. Jane had been on a Child Protection order and living in residential care settings since she was twelve. Her family history was traumatic, with experiences of violence and sexual abuse.

Jane had major mental health issues, with diagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder, socialised conduct order and significant mood disturbance. She used alcohol and drugs such as cannabis. She had previously abused prescription medication. Jane had limited education, as she did not complete Year 8, and had little further engagement in education or training. She had no employment history.

Jane had limited social connections and with her mental health and behavioural issues, required considerable service support. Prior to YJCSS involvement, Jane was involved with Child Protection, Youth Justice, Disability Services, Intensive Case Management Services as well as a psychiatrist and paediatrician.

The primary issue requiring YJCSS involvement was the need for stable accommodation. Jane had been in a Child Protection residential unit at the start of her order, but was regularly absconding and engaging in high-risk behaviours. She was placed in secure welfare after a suicide attempt, and was then moved to short-term crisis accommodation in a motel. Youth Justice and other agencies wanted to establish secure housing, particularly as she would soon be turning eighteen. The referral form did not specify a time period for support, stating it should be flexible.

Youth Justice discussed YJCSS with Jane, and after referral, organised a meeting with Jane, her existing supports and YJCSS. Youth Justice held a pre-referral meeting with YJCSS to discuss Jane's situation and needs. The ICMS already had primary case management responsibility and this would continue; YJCSS was focused on establishing and maintaining Jane's THM tenancy.

YJCSS developed a specific support plan, with Jane's input and this focused on Jane's own goals and tasks. There was clear agreement that stable accommodation would support Jane to focus on other issues that were affecting her life.

Care team meetings were held regularly with Jane's support agencies, and Jane actively participated. It appears that YJCSS care team meetings were held as well as ICMS care team meetings. The YJCSS Care team meetings were chaired by DHS and while minutes were not distributed, a goal sheet summarising tasks was used to monitor progress. A key issue for the Care team was that Jane's support network was almost solely made up of services, and she had few friends or social connections.

YJCSS provided regular outreach support for about six months, including seven weeks of post-order support. Support included assertive outreach, support to address housing issues, such as completing documentation, transportation to appointments and support with income management. YJCSS worked closely with other agencies to provide support when Jane raised safety concerns about her property due to a neighbour. Another property was found and Jane moved willingly.

A key challenge related to the expected transition from THM to alternative accommodation. It was apparent that rooming houses or caravan parks would not be suitable, and Jane was placed on the public housing waiting list, but suitable public housing was not available. As Jane was eligible for Leaving

Care/Creating Connections support, the consortia worked with the department to reallocate the THM property to a Leaving Care property to provide Jane with housing stability.

Client outcomes

Reducing risk of reoffending

Jane did not re-offend during the support period. She had previously been physically aggressive towards workers. During the support period, she continued to be selective about which workers she engaged with, and showed limited self-control.

Preparing for adulthood and living independently

The housing stability provided through the THM property (and the transfer to Leaving Care) was important in providing Jane with security and a platform to address other issues. While her health, particularly mental health, fluctuated, workers perceived that there were fewer highs and lows.

Jane showed some reluctance to live independently and wanted ongoing service engagement in her life.

Engaging with school, employment or work

This had not been prioritised, other than discussions about future possibilities.

Developing stronger relationships

This was an area of significant challenge, as Jane had few positive social connections and maintained dependence on her workers.

Strengths

- The provision of housing, and the creative solution in lengthening Jane's tenancy in her property was key to providing stability.
- The role for YJCSS and expected relationships and roles for other agencies were clearly outlined and agencies collaborated well to support Jane.
- Case management responsibility was consistently allocated to ICMS.
- Jane was involved in support planning, and this assisted her sense of control and responsibility.

Challenges

- YJCSS was brought in for this case solely around housing issues, as there were insufficient options available for Jane through Child Protection, which had previously been responsible for her accommodation.
- The short time frames and crisis response related to Jane's housing meant that she was initially placed in a THM property, which was not ideal for her, and led to issues that were detrimental to her health.
- Significant agency creativity and liaison with the department was required to provide a more stable housing option for Jane.
- Given the complexity of Jane's needs, there were a number of agencies involved. Workers recognised the need to plan for social connection to build Jane's independence and reduce her reliance on professional supports.

Jaydon

Jaydon was 20 and was referred to YJCSS while he was in custody for theft, criminal damage and assault related offences. He had previously received a Community-based Corrections order that he breached. He was then sentenced to a Youth Justice Centre Order. Jaydon had chronic issues with alcohol and drugs, and much of his offending took place when he was affected by drugs.

Jaydon moved a lot as a child with his parents, until they separated when he was fifteen. He had used alcohol and cannabis regularly since he was 14. He had attempted detoxification twice and prior to his custodial sentence had begun to use Ice regularly. Jaydon had untreated Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Jaydon had unstable housing for many years, and was identified as having a high risk of homelessness on release from custody. He was eligible for THM support, and his Youth Justice worker discussed YJCSS with him while in custody. The referral was made four weeks before his release, but YJCSS did not have contact with Jaydon while he was in custody nor did YJCSS play a role in exit planning.

The primary issue for Jaydon's parole was accommodation, as a THM property was not available when he was eligible for parole. The initial accommodation that was found for Jaydon was short-term crisis accommodation. Other issues identified by Youth Justice included independent living, drug and alcohol support, education, employment and primary health. Priorities also included family re-engagement. Two conditions of Jaydon's parole were to attend anger management and AOD counselling. Youth Justice expected support to be provided over the parole period.

YJCSS developed a support plan with input from Youth Justice and Jaydon, and care team meetings were held with YJCSS, Youth Justice, Jaydon and his mother and in time, a psychologist and Jaydon's Youth Mental Health Residential worker. Notes were recorded and the support plan was updated when needed.

YJCSS provided support over the parole period, and the case is not closed so the length of post-order support is not clear. The primary issue was stable accommodation. After he was released from custody, his drug use patterns changed considerably with increased use of amphetamines. Jaydon did not comply with the conditions of the crisis accommodation. YJCSS were of the view that THM would be a suitable option for Jaydon but as his behaviour was unstable and a THM property was not available, he was referred to a Youth mental health residential facility. He did not engage with programs provided through the facility and his drug use continued. Jaydon was then referred to a youth detox centre before going onto a long-term drug rehabilitation program.

YJCSS continued with other referrals, and supported Jaydon with a TAFE course he was enrolled in on release from custody. Jaydon had struggled previously in education settings because of learning difficulties. This was exacerbated by his drug use and he became disengaged and stopped attending. While Jaydon was connected to an employment service, YJCSS recognised that his drug abuse habits would prevent ongoing employment and needed to be addressed first.

YJCSS and Youth Justice held joint meetings with Jaydon and initially contact was several times a week, but as he was linked into the residential facility, this declined. YJCSS also liaised with Jaydon's mother to support a positive relationship. Support is still ongoing.

Client outcomes

Reducing risk of reoffending

Jaydon continued to have significant drug abuse issues and to associate with peers who were known to have criminal connections. He had a level of self-control and could take some responsibility for his actions, but had limited victim empathy.

Preparing for adulthood and living independently

Given the extent and impact of Jaydon's drug abuse, the primary issue was to detox from drugs and alcohol and successfully complete rehabilitation. His time in the long-term rehabilitation program was expected to support him with skills to sustain his independence.

Engaging with school, employment or work

After initial support, it was agreed that until Jaydon reduced or ceased his drug abuse, engaging with school or employment was not a suitable priority.

Developing stronger relationships

Jaydon had a close but fraught relationship with his mother and his main social contacts were known to be involved in criminal activities, mostly related to drugs.

Strengths

- YJCSS and Youth Justice worked persistently to maintain positive contact with Jaydon and his mother.
- It was recognised that Jaydon's chronic drug abuse was the overwhelming factor limiting his life opportunities. The focus of effort shifted to support to reduce or cease his drug use.

Challenges

- Suitable accommodation was not available for Jaydon on release from custody. While he had limited independent living skills, with support a THM property may have provided a stable platform and allowed him to address other significant issues.
- YJCSS did not have early contact with Jaydon, nor was YJCSS involved in exit planning. Initial parole plan priorities such as education and employment took a lower priority as Jaydon's drug abuse reduced his capacity to engage with opportunities.
- While Jaydon did not commit further offenses against the person or property, he continued to use illicit drugs.
- The nature, extent or impact of Jaydon's learning difficulties did not appear to be explored.

JD

JD was 18 and in custody at the time of referral. He had committed a number of serious offences including rape, and had an extensive history of offending since he was 15, including sexual and violent offences. He had been subject to a long-term Child Protection Order. JD had a traumatic and chaotic childhood, with drug use in his home, exposure to abuse, violence and neglect and periods of homelessness. JD had a volatile relationship with his mother, and felt responsible for her, while she was reliant on him. It was clear that JD could not return to the family home on release from custody, however he had little capacity for independent living.

JD regularly used alcohol and cannabis, and occasionally used amphetamines and ecstasy. He had previously spent time in residential rehabilitation. He had a disrupted school due to the transience of his family and had not completed Year 9. He had no work experience. JD had no significant mental health concerns. He had physical health issues related to his drug use and an eye condition that could be remedied with glasses but he refused to wear them.

Youth Justice had indications that JD may have Aboriginal heritage however, he did not identify as Aboriginal and refused any referrals to Aboriginal specific services. A Youth Justice worker discussed referral to YJCSS with JD while he was in custody. Given the number of services involved with JD and a lack of clarity around his release date while accommodation was sourced, YJCSS did not make contact until prior to release. Because of the lead-time for accommodation and staffing issues, the referral was made seventeen weeks before JD's release. Initially JD would need 24 hour monitoring and support, with staff based in his THM property.

YJCSS attended an exit-planning meeting with Youth Justice and JD while he was in custody, and JD was involved in setting goals for his support plan. Youth Justice listed a range of needed supports in the referral, ranging from drug and alcohol support to housing and independent living skills. Accommodation was a priority, as was living skills, engaging in education or work and positive recreation. Ongoing involvement in drug and alcohol counselling and the Male Adolescent Program for Positive Sexuality (MAPPS) was a requirement of JD's parole. Support was expected for twelve months.

JD had a number of existing services and supports, including Multiple and Complex Needs Initiative (MACNI), Child Protection, MAPPS and Family Services. The services attended regular care team meetings, which were mostly chaired by the MACNI worker. JD attended some meetings, primarily towards the end of his support period. Care team meetings started before JD's release from custody given the complex planning and logistic issues that needed to be addressed for his release.

Support was provided for 138 weeks in total, with about three months of post-order support. Initially support was 24-hour support for the first few months, which then decreased to evening support and then occasional evening and weekend supports. YJCSS specific support was maintained at about eight hours a week, with staff accompanying JD to activities and appointments. Support was reviewed regularly throughout his parole period. JD received a Community-based Order through Corrections during his parole period and YJCSS provided court support.

JD was supported to complete a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program, and YJCSS assisted JD to start at TAFE and with housing applications. He maintained his THM property, which he shared for some time with his mother, and the unit was transferred to become an Office of Housing property to enable continuity. During the support period, he became a father and JD applied to be upgraded to a house to live with his

partner and baby. JD was linked to counselling to address the impact of family violence and trauma during his childhood.

Client outcomes

Reducing risk of reoffending

JD maintained some pro-criminal attitudes and continued to use cannabis. He did re-offend whilst under the influence of alcohol and received a twelve-month Community-based order with fifty hours community work, and he maintained engagement with YJCSS throughout this. He had no further offending, and was more accountable for his actions, particularly evident in his attitudes towards women. He had greater self-control and felt responsibility towards his partner and child.

Preparing for adulthood and living independently

JD successfully managed his THM property and moved to public housing with his growing family. Although he had limited income, he appeared to prioritise the needs of his family.

Engaging with school, employment or work

JD engaged with TAFE and understood the financial stability that employment would provide him, and his family.

Developing stronger relationships

JD had a healthier relationship with his mother and worked to have a positive relationship with his partner. He maintained connections with peers who were previously a negative influence but was not so easily influenced.

Strengths

- YJCSS was engaged early and there was sufficient time to organise the complex supports that JD needed for release.
- YJCSS was involved in exit planning and despite a large number of agencies and workers, clear roles and responsibilities were allocated and followed. Care team meetings were important to maintain this.
- Supports including counselling had practical and long-term impacts relating to his alcohol and drug use, and his attitudes towards violence and offending.
- The Care team recognised the risk of fostering reliance and maintained a degree of distance to support JD to take responsibility for his life.
- Recognition of the impact of previous trauma.

Challenges

- It is not apparent whether JD was supported to participate in work experience as was initially proposed by Youth Justice.
- JD required an extensive timeframe of support before he began to engage positively and take responsibility for his behaviour.
- JD turned 18 while in custody and his Child Protection supports were stopped. Clearer Child Protection exit planning was needed.

John

John was 15 and on a Youth Supervision Order at the time of referral. He had a significant criminal record with offences including burglary, theft, criminal damage, unlicensed driving and resisting arrest. He had previously been subject to a number of supervised orders.

John's parents separated two years ago and he lived with his mother and brother. Child Protection had been previously involved and John did not see his father. John did not discuss the reasons why. It was well recognised that John had experienced significant trauma in his life, and this continued to have an effect on him. John completed his primary education but had trouble maintaining engagement with high school. He was undertaking studies with the aim of working full time in the automotive industry. He reported some cannabis and alcohol use but did not believe it was a problem. He admitted that he had been physically aggressive to his siblings and his mother.

The referral to YJCSS was discussed with John in a Youth Justice supervision meeting before it was made. The two priorities Youth Justice noted in the referral were education and after hours support (particularly morning support to assist with school attendance). Youth Justice expected that support would be provided for three months.

Phone contact was made by YJCSS within five days. A formal support plan was developed within twenty days of referral and reviewed within three months. The plan included input from John. A copy of the plan was provided to the Youth Justice worker. The main goals of the plan were to encourage and assist John to engage in education programs and to provide transport to school.

Care team meetings between Youth Justice and YJCSS commenced within two weeks of the referral, although it was not clear how regularly they were held. Youth Justice chaired the meetings and John participated, but no formal minutes were kept. No family members were involved in the meetings although John's mother was a part of the support plan.

The YJCSS worker provided outreach support to John at his house twice a week to offer encouragement and transport to school and training, with two occasions of assertive outreach due to crises. In total support was provided over eighty weeks. A referral was made to U Turn, an automotive training course. YJCSS also helped John fill in forms, make phone calls and attend appointments. Over the course of the support, John completed his school requirements and started an automotive course.

Client outcomes

Reducing risk of reoffending

During the YJCSS support, John reduced his pro-criminal attitudes and was seen as taking responsibility for his actions when his behaviour became inappropriate. His involvement with full time study reduced his desire to associate with other offenders.

Preparing for adulthood and living independently

John lived in the family home during the support period, with occasional couch surfing. He was dependent on his family, including financial support, which was appropriate for his age. John worked towards financial independence through his studies.

Engaging with school, employment or work

John was initially hard to engage in schooling but with persistence, he did attend and complete his schooling. He engaged well with his training course and maintained a regular attendance rate.

Developing stronger relationships

John and his mother developed ways to solve problems when they arise. As a result, he was able to remain engaged with his family even after past conflicts.

He managed to build relationships through his training course, where he developed a sense of teamwork and social connectedness.

Strengths

- The consistent support provided by the YJCSS worker allowed for John to remain engaged, primarily with school.
- The transport assistance supported both John and his family.
- The Care team meetings allowed for a continuum of quality care and consistent service delivery.

Challenges

- Despite recognition of family violence, there appears minimal recognition through the Youth Justice referral. It was apparent that the YJCSS worker supported family relationships, however more robust family violence risk assessment would be beneficial.
- The Youth Justice referral appears cursory compared to the needs identified by YJCSS, which may explain the substantial difference between estimated and actual length of support (three months to eighty weeks).

Lance

Lance was 19 and was in custody at the time of referral for assault, burglary and causing injury. He had been subject to three prior probation orders with offences including against the person, theft and property damage. Lance had previously been involved with YJCSS. Prior to custody he had lived with his partner and young son, although the relationship was tenuous.

Lance had difficult family relationships and had been transient since a young teenager due to family conflict. Lance left school at sixteen with Year 7 not completed, and had held casual labouring positions only. He started using illicit drugs at thirteen and his offending was often after he had consumed alcohol. Lance had a history of self-harm, which he linked to frustration. At the time of referral, he was already linked to drug and alcohol counselling through a community health service.

Lance identified as Aboriginal, and worked with a Koori Youth Justice worker. Workers discussed YJCSS support with Lance while he was in custody and the referral was made five weeks before his release date. Despite considerable travel time to the Youth Justice Centre, a YJCSS worker and Lance's previous YJCSS worker travelled together with the Koori Youth Justice worker for early intake and assessment, as well as to make introductions given there was a change in YJCSS worker. YJCSS was not invited to participate in the exit planning process.

Youth Justice identified a number of issues in the referral, including housing, education and training, employment, drug and alcohol support, independent living skills and mentoring. The priority was accommodation, as it was recognised that stable housing would influence future offending risk. Youth Justice was concerned that if Lance returned to live with his partner and child, that this would be unstable and risky. Youth Justice expected that support would be provided throughout the parole period.

YJCSS provided support for 24 weeks, including four weeks of post-order support. A support plan was developed with Lance's input and a number of goals and tasks were included based on Lance's aspirations and responsibility. The main goals were around finding and maintaining stable accommodation. Lance identified goals such as finding work, providing a home for his family and making rap music with friends.

Care team meetings were held regularly during the support period and involved Lance, Youth Justice, YJCSS, the Koori Youth Justice worker and a psychologist. During the previous support period, his partner was also involved, and care team meetings provided an opportunity to support Lance and his partner's parenting skills, and keep a focus on the wellbeing of the child.

Support was primarily assertive outreach and included transport to appointments and advice and support such as viewing properties. Initially support included crisis responses, as his period of incarceration had a negative effect on his relationship with family and social supports. YJCSS worked closely with the Koori Youth Justice worker to identify and meet Lance's cultural needs. This was particularly critical in relation to goals around education, and links were built with an education provider regarding a culturally relevant course.

Because Lance was not assessed as eligible for Transitional Housing, housing support meant support to find alternative accommodation, and YJCSS assisted with applications for public, community and private housing. He was also supported with an independent living program, and support to connect with education and community.

Client outcomes

Reducing risk of reoffending

By the end of the support period, Lance had stable housing, was engaged with education and had a positive relationship with his partner. He had clear goals around a pro-social lifestyle but continued to struggle with alcohol use, which was previously an issue for his offending. It was not apparent whether Lance continued with the drug and alcohol counselling (which was a condition of his parole order).

Preparing for adulthood and living independently

Lance demonstrated that he could live independently and showed greater responsibility for his actions, largely in line with his sense of responsibility to his family. He was able to identify when he needed support, and over time, YJCSS supported Lance to pursue support independently, as a way to reduce the likelihood that Lance became reliant on supports.

Engaging with school, employment or work

Lance struggled with low literacy and numeracy, and was frustrated by this. YJCSS and Koori Youth Justice supported a culturally appropriate education pathway, with Lance enrolled in a Certificate 2 of General Education.

Developing stronger relationships

This was a focus during the support period, and Lance had an improved relationship with his partner. Overall, he had extended his community connections beyond his immediate family and friendship circle and had greater capacity to engage with services and supports. Lance was negatively affected by his community reputation, which was the result of his friendship group and their drinking and drug use.

Strengths

- YJCSS worked collaboratively with other supports, notably the Koori Youth Justice worker to establish relevant supports.
- YJCSS considered how best to engage with Lance, and used the experience of his past worker to identify helpful strategies to maintain Lance's engagement.
- Culturally relevant education (and education provider) was actively supported with the Koori Youth Justice worker.
- Workers took a holistic view of Lance and his family, and followed Best Interest Principles to monitor the wellbeing of Lance's child.

Challenges

- Initially there was role confusion regarding the provision of 'housing support' with some agencies of the view that this meant the provision of a property.
- Despite productive engagement with the custodial centre, YJCSS was not formally involved in exit planning.

Lisa

Lisa was 16 and lived with her mother, her mother's partner and her grandfather. She was on probation without conviction after an assault. She had received a prior bond in relation to another assault, and had a history of violent interactions with peers. She had a number of traumatic events in her life, with Child Protection involvement in the past, and housing instability. Her living arrangements were stable at the time of her offending, and her mother provided support.

She was attending highschool, but had started to disengage. She had a small group of friends, and these friends were often absent from school. Given her disengagement from school, Youth Justice worked with a local agency to identify training and employment pathways, matching with Lisa's interests. Youth Justice sought the involvement of YJCSS to support a work placement, and expected that the support would be related to employment and employment services. An initial meeting was held with Lisa and her existing supports to discuss YJCSS and they agreed YJCSS would assist with pre-employment support. Lisa identified as an Indigenous person but was not interested in cultural supports.

The referral did not specify a time period for support. A formal support plan was not developed as the YJCSS role was seen as limited, and progress was reviewed using specific YJCSS goal sheets. Care team meetings tended to be responsive rather than planned.

YJCSS provided outreach support to assist with the work placement. This included support with clothing for the placement, meetings with the employer, visits on site and considerable follow up regarding her attendance and participation.

YJCSS also found that additional supports were needed regarding family and peer relationships and education goals. Lisa was referred to TAFE and a local Community House to pursue her interest in horticulture. Youth Justice sought a mental health assessment, in recognition that past trauma was likely to have an ongoing impact on Lisa. At times, Lisa was difficult to engage but overall she was willing to participate and keen for work experience. Her case was still open at the time of this case study.

Client outcomes

Reducing risk of reoffending

Lisa maintained her networks but shifted her attitude towards violence. She actively avoided situations where there was the potential for violence, and reported that she didn't want to adversely affect her employer's reputation.

Preparing for adulthood and living independently

Lisa was living at home, which was stable and developing age-appropriate skills in preparation for adulthood. The Youth Justice referral for a mental health assessment recognised the likely ongoing impact of past trauma.

Engaging with school, employment or work

Lisa engaged with her work placement and showed pride and interest in her role, even though at times she was inconsistent in her attendance. She identified and pursued her interest in horticulture.

Developing stronger relationships

Lisa had existing positive relationships. A key issue was to support Lisa to find strategies when she met people in the community (or in the workplace) that she didn't like. Again, the mental health assessment was seen as important to identify how past trauma influences her behaviour.

Strengths

- YJCSS worked positively with a range of agencies to support Lisa's workplace and training engagement.
- The likely impact of prior trauma was recognised and steps were made to support Lisa to address this.

Challenges

- YJCSS was identified as a secondary support regarding work placement, however YJCSS identified a broader range of issues requiring support.
- Role definition for Youth Justice and YJCSS differ from other case studies, and this suggests differing departmental and consortia expectations.

Nathan

Nathan was 15 at the time of referral. He was on a Deferral of Sentence for offences such as burglary and criminal damages.

Nathan had an unstable family life, moving between care arrangements with his mother, father, siblings, half siblings, and stepsiblings. He had been living with his father and stepmother for a while, and had considerable housing instability over the course of his YJCSS engagement.

Nathan was enrolled in Year 9, in a modified program due to his behaviour issues and his lack of attendance. Nathan was involved with Community Health for cannabis abuse counselling. A psychologist had assessed Nathan as depressed, anxious and sometimes angry. He had poor dental hygiene.

On referral, Youth Justice requested support with education, vocation/training, family, social/behavioural issues, medical/primary health, recreation, mentoring and legal issues/court support. The Youth Justice worker discussed YJCSS with Nathan prior to referral. Contact was made three days later by the YJCSS worker. Both the Youth Justice and the YJCSS workers were present at the initial meetings, so that roles could be discussed and information could be provided. Youth Justice expected support to be provided for about twelve months, including post-order support.

There was no formal support plan developed as Youth Justice had previously developed a support plan, with input from YJCSS. A case plan was developed specifically around education engagement. Formal review of the plan was not possible, as the YJCSS worker at the time did not have access to CRISSP. YJCSS informed Youth Justice of the case plan though emails and conversations, as well as through the weekly Youth Justice meeting.

Nathan and family members were not invited to attend the meeting, as they were internal meetings. It was not apparent that other agencies were involved in discussing Nathan's situation, although there was regular contact with Child Protection regarding Nathan's living arrangements.

Nathan identified his own goals and worked with the YJCSS worker to make changes to or add new goals to the informal plan. The main goals were to assist Nathan with transport and reengaging with school, as well as to improve his dental hygiene. This meant that short-term goals needed to include opening a bank account, accessing Medicare, and finding his birth certificate.

The proposed length of support was for 12 months, however support was provided for only 32 weeks including seven weeks after Nathan's order finished. Nathan understood that YJCSS support was voluntary after the end of his Youth Justice order and he chose to continue his engagement. Support was largely outreach and included transportation to help Nathan attend appointments and administration. Support also included promoting independent living skills. Referrals were made to youth programs, drug and alcohol counselling and a Behavioural Intervention Program. A key focus was on reengaging in school and taking responsibility for his behaviour. YJCSS also assisted Nathan to address his dental health issues.

Housing instability was a key issue during this time for Nathan. He had a strained relationship with his father and moved out. This led to a voluntary placement through Child Protection, followed by a period living with friends. This did not work out and Youth Justice and YJCSS had different perceptions about the role of Child Protection in assessing safe housing options. Nathan chose to relocate to live with a brother in Tasmania and the YJCSS support ended.

Client outcomes

Reducing risk of reoffending

Nathan was able to develop victim empathy during the support period and showed no pro-criminal attitudes. Through the Behavioural Intervention Program, he was able to identify how his feelings affected his behaviours and was then able to have greater self-control in challenging situations. Nathan stopped associating with other offenders and was able to find a peer group that was supportive. His only apparent offending appeared to be the use of cannabis; no further property-related offending was identified.

Preparing for adulthood and living independently

Nathan had no income and was dependant on others for support, which was appropriate for his age. The focus of support was to reconnect Nathan to education and pro-social supports. He did not participate in structured community activities or organisations. He was attending drug and alcohol counselling to address his cannabis use. He also addressed his dental problems. Housing instability was a key limiting factor for Nathan.

Engaging with school, employment or work

Nathan was able to reengage with school though a modified timetable. He was able to maintain participation and showed improvements in his behaviours. He was aware of the importance of education for his future.

Developing stronger relationships

Nathan did not have a close relationship with his mother, had a strained relationship with his father, but was able to maintain a positive relationship with his stepmother. He was encouraged to keep his connection to family. He has since relocated to live with his brother.

He was able to make and maintain friendships and related well with people in social situations. However, Nathan was transient with peer groups and often matched his friends to his current needs.

Strengths

- Nathan was consulted when making his goals so that the plan was reflective of his particular needs and wants.
- Nathan understood the program's objectives and he engaged easily with YJCSS.
- Support addressed a number of key issues for Nathan, including dental health, engaging with school and sorting out banking and other administrative needs.

Challenges

- Housing stability was difficult to achieve, and a lack of ongoing and suitable housing meant that Nathan moved interstate, where he would need to establish new supports.
- There was no discussion of exit planning or the supports required when a young client moved interstate.
- The lack of formal processes focused on the client, such as accessible support plans and care team meetings, may prevent a deep focus on the needs of the client.
- There appeared to be mixed views about the roles for Child Protection and how different agencies could best work together in Nathan's best interests.

Oliver

Oliver was 17 and on 12 month Probation Order without Conviction when he was referred to YJCSS. He reoffended, primarily theft and property related offences and remained on community orders.

Oliver had struggled with anger since he was young. He argued with his family daily and while he loves them, he worried he may hurt them, as he did not control his anger. His father, whom his mother left while Oliver was a baby, was violent against his mother, as was a later partner. Oliver's mother took out an intervention order against Oliver due to violence, and he moved in with his uncle. This did not last as Oliver did not follow the house rules and he ended up staying with friends. At the time of referral, Oliver was living at home with his mother again. He had been diagnosed with disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Oliver dropped out of school in Year 9, after having attended five different schools. He started smoking cannabis when he was 14 and started working with YSAS for his drug use a year later.

Oliver had intermittent involvement with Child Protection since 1999, primarily regarding Oliver's behaviour and his family's perceived inability to manage his behaviour and protect him from harm. At one stage, Oliver and his mother started seeing a CAMHS specialist, but Child Protection took no other action. At the time of the YJCSS referral, he had a number of supports in place, including YSAS and AFHS.

The Youth Justice worker discussed the referral to YJCSS with Oliver prior to making it. When the YJCSS worker met with Oliver, it appeared that he believed that YJCSS was a recreational program. Once the YJCSS worker explained the program objectives, Oliver did not see the point of YJCSS and did not wish to make any goals. He said he wanted a one on one program that would alleviate his boredom.

In the referral, Youth Justice requested a range of supports including education, vocation/training, employment and employment services, family, trauma, domestic violence, recreation, mentoring, housing, financial, after hours, social/behavioural, medical/primary health, legal issues/court, and conflict resolution support. Priorities included mentoring, recreation, education, intensive support particularly around family issues, and possibly accommodation into the future. In contrast, Oliver did not identify any goals of his own, and only wanted to be on a recreational program. As a result, the support plan was basic with the main goal to be Oliver engaging with the YJCSS worker. Support was expected for the duration of his order.

While the support plan was completed within twenty days and formally reviewed after three months, Oliver was still not able to identify any real goals. The YJCSS worker focused the support around trying to help Oliver identify goals and to find an appropriate recreation program, as well as sporadic meetings, some court support and transportation. The YJCSS case manager supported referrals to camping and music programs, however Oliver did not follow program rules and threatened staff and other participants.

A further complication was in relation to family violence. Oliver was remanded for violence in the home, and his mother took an Intervention Order out against him. YJCSS attempted to find alternative accommodation, however Oliver's mother refused to have Oliver living in temporary accommodation such as a boarding house. She invited him to return home, but refused to drop the Intervention Order. YJCSS staff reported this made outreach difficult, as they did not want to support or condone Oliver breaching the conditions of the intervention order.

Care team meetings were irregular, although there was regular contact from members between the meetings. The focus of Care team meetings was crisis management. The meetings were chaired by Youth

Justice and attended by YJCSS, AFHS and YSAS, although YSAS stopped attending once they ended their support of Oliver in early 2012, due to his lack of engagement. While Oliver was invited to the Care team meetings, neither he nor his mother attended.

Support was provided for at least 42 weeks. After a series of unsuccessful attempts at engaging Oliver through recreational programs, the YJCSS case manager organised a secondary consultation with a Dual Diagnosis Counsellor. The conclusion was that Oliver was in need of intensive therapeutic work over a potentially long timeframe, and that he was not ready to participate in the YJCSS program. The expectation was that once he turns 18, he would be diagnosed with Anti-Social Personality Disorder.

Client outcomes

Reducing risk of reoffending

Oliver's offending behaviour did not decrease during support from YJCSS. He reoffended a number of times and would often brag about his offences, as well as his drug use. Oliver did not think of custody as a deterrent to offending. The staff involved reported concerns that Oliver perceived Youth Justice as being flexible and easily manipulated. They also reported concerns that he was kept on the same court order even though he continued to breach it, with the view that this did not address or reduce his offending.

Preparing for adulthood and living independently

Oliver showed no interest in independent living or learning how to budget, which was counter to Care team expectations that Oliver gain independence in order to help him mature, including getting himself to appointments and facing consequences if he misses any. He had no plans to reduce his drug use, and did not engage around harm minimisation.

Engaging with school, employment or work

Oliver described himself as 'not the working type' and given his persistent issues with authority and rules, it was apparent he was not ready or able to engage with YJCSS.

Developing stronger relationships

Oliver was referred to a recreational program to help with his social connectedness, however he did not connect with others, instead intimidating, threatening and bullying other participants. His mother did not wish to participate in any family work, although Oliver felt he would get into less trouble if he could spend more time with his family.

Strengths

- The Care team brought in a worker from one of the recreational programs after Oliver had problems on a camp. This was a good use of interagency collaboration.
- Further collaboration was seen in relation to the engagement of the dual diagnosis counsellor.

Challenges

- Oliver did not seem to be ready for, or want, the YJCSS program. Reasons for referrals and the program objectives need to be clearer to client.
- Care team meetings need to be regular and formally minuted.
- Care team members need to provide consistent support, particularly when a client has behavioural issues.

Raylan

Raylan was 21 and was on a Deferral of Sentence at the time of referral. Raylan moved to Australia from New Zealand to find his father. He was able to locate and stay with him briefly before leaving because of conflict. His mother passed away early in 2011, in New Zealand, and due to financial constraints, Raylan was not able to fly home for the funeral. At the time of referral Raylan attended HomeGround and was registered for housing assistance, however he was still homeless, often sleeping rough. He had a permanent part-time job at a cafe, yet lost it due to drug use and his homelessness. Raylan uses cannabis daily as well as ice and cocaine.

Other support services included YSAS, as well as a psychologist for dealing with trauma, both referred by Youth Justice. He was engaged with HomeGround, but struggled to attend appointments due to his work.

The Youth Justice worker informed Raylan of the referral to YJCSS prior to referral. YJCSS made contact within five days of the referral and arranged to meet initially through his regular Youth Justice appointment. Youth Justice requested a number of supports for Raylan at the time of referral, including drug and alcohol, housing, financial support, mental health, family, grief/loss, trauma, social/behavioural, medical/primary health, CALD services, recreation and legal issues/court support. Support was expected for three to six months.

Raylan was involved in the development of his support plan and described what he wanted to achieve with YJCSS. The plan was finalised within twenty days of the referral and was formally reviewed after three months. YJCSS reviewed Raylan's progress on a weekly basis to keep the focus on his goals: to meet with his Youth Justice worker for all supervision, decrease his cannabis and ice use, address his trauma, grief and loss issues, secure long-term housing (preferably private rental) and secure employment. Another goal was to enrol in a TAFE course, yet it was decided that Raylan was not ready to commit to education.

The support plan was shared at the Care team meetings and Raylan's progress was updated to the group regularly. The YJCSS worker often accompanied Raylan to his weekly supervision appointments with Youth Justice, allowing for regular discussion between the three of them regarding the support plan.

Support was provided to Raylan through outreach appointments twice a week and almost daily phone contact for the first six months. In 2011, he went to court and was issued a Good Behaviour Bond. Youth Justice support ended, and YJCSS support continued for the following 10 months. In late 2011, he had a bicycle accident and became friends with a person who appeared to be a negative influence; his drug use went up and he lost another job due to this. During this period, YJCSS support increased to daily contact and after some time, he became more stable. In mid 2012, support was again increased to daily contact so that the YJCSS worker could support Raylan with securing long-term private rental.

Raylan had a number of referrals made for him, including a YMCA Bridge Program for employment, YMCA property management training, Brosnan Youth Services for housing, L2P to assist with driving lessons, Brotherhood of St Lawrence for employment and training assistance, Vincent Care for funding to set up private rental, and Melbourne City Mission for funding for training courses. The YJCSS worker supported Raylan by providing transport to appointments as well as attending initial appointments so that Raylan could feel comfortable.

Care team meetings were chaired by Youth Justice, with YJCSS and YSAS in attendance. No formal minutes were taken, however the YJCSS worker recorded the outcomes of the meeting on CRISSP. After Raylan

completed his Youth Justice Order, YJCSS and YSAS maintained regular contact via phone, email and in person. Raylan attended one Care team meeting before his completion of the Youth Justice Order. This was to ensure that there was clear understanding of roles and support for him after Youth Justice exited. When Youth Justice supervision ended, YJCSS took over case management. The transition did not appear to impact upon Raylan or the support offered. In total, support was provided for a full year.

Client outcomes

Reducing risk of reoffending

Raylan completed his order and had no more outstanding legal matters. He was not involved in any further offending, and understood that criminal behaviours could reduce his career opportunities, negatively affect his life and lead to the adult justice system.

Preparing for adulthood and living independently

During YJCSS support, Raylan was able to maintain shared accommodation through the Brosnan Youth Services Supported Accommodation Program, which he shared with three other people. He then secured private rental in a shared house.

Since early 2012, he worked towards ceasing all drug use. Raylan identified triggers and minimised their impact. He continues to be supported by YSAS.

Raylan maintained employment, obtained his driver's licence, purchased a car and is now independent.

Engaging with school, employment or work

While Raylan already had an employment history at time of referral, his drug use and homelessness reduced his ability to maintain employment. In early 2012, Raylan decided that he wanted to be a Real Estate Agent. YJCSS supported him to in finding an education and training program through which Raylan completed two courses. YJCSS assisted Raylan in job hunting as well as helping with a resume.

Developing stronger relationships

Raylan found family a sensitive subject that he found hard to discuss with other people. He wanted to return to New Zealand for a visit once he is financially stable. Raylan developed positive relationships and no longer associates with his negative peer group.

Strengths

- Care team meetings allowed for all services involved to discuss Raylan's progress in relation to his case plan and raise concerns.
- Regular communication allowed all Care team members to work together towards the same goals as Raylan.
- YJCSS helped Raylan find stable housing.
- Raylan's eagerness to engage and participate in the YJCSS program allowed for ease of assessment, case planning and initial engagement.
- Much was done to ensure strong community connections were in place to minimise any negative impact of exit.

Challenges

- CALD services was requested as a key area of support in the referral, however no further information was provided in the referral and the religious and/or cultural needs section was marked N/A.
- There were no formal minutes taken from the Care team meetings. YJCSS recorded the meetings on CRISSP which could be difficult for other workers to access.
- Raylan attended only one Care team meeting. It was beneficial having him there. It may have been useful to have Raylan attend more Care team meetings.

Sarah

Sarah was seventeen at the time of referral and in custody on a Youth Justice Centre Order after a violent offence. She had previous Youth Justice involvement due to violence and affray and had previously received three Probation orders, and a Youth Attendance Order that she breached. Before custody, Sarah had been living with her mother, who was transient and did not use firm boundaries. Sarah had a positive relationship with her father and his partner, and would live with them when released.

Sarah had a troubled history in her community, with a number of violent incidents and difficult relationships. She had limited education and would not return to the local highschool. She was enrolled in a local alternative school where she received a short period of tutoring each week. She had completed work experience in childcare and was interested in future work in childcare or hospitality. Sarah had some drug abuse history and had offended while under the influence of drugs and alcohol but this was not seen as a major issue. Similarly, a mental health worker did not identify significant mental health issues.

Sarah was Aboriginal and linked with a Koori Justice Worker. She was involved with a youth program, a youth justice mental health worker and a psychologist.

Sarah's Youth Justice worker discussed YJCSS with her before referral, and a referral was made five days before her release. YJCSS made phone contact while she was still in custody and Sarah met her YJCSS worker on release, however she was slow to engage with, which was consistent with her contact with other services and supports.

Youth Justice identified a range of support types needed, from education and work through to grief and loss supports. Priorities included stable accommodation, supporting engagement with education and recreation. Youth Justice expected support to be provided over the parole period (about three months). A support plan was developed with input from Sarah and Youth Justice.

Formal meetings were held between Youth Justice and YJCSS. The Youth Justice team leader chaired the meetings. No minutes were distributed and Sarah was not involved. The meetings enabled YJCSS and Youth Justice to monitor progress but did not involve other relevant agencies or workers.

Support was provided throughout the parole period and YJCSS expected to close the case after one month of post-order support. YJCSS met with Sarah once or twice a week, primarily phone contact, outreach and transportation. YJCSS supported Sarah to maintain involvement with other supports. She was initially reluctant to engage with mental health supports but began to engage independently from YJCSS. YJCSS also assisted with applications such as gym membership, and a referral to a driving program. Sarah was linked to employment supports and YJCSS assisted her to find part-time work. Overall Sarah was independent and had a range of practical supports in place; she required little support from YJCSS. It is not clear how much Sarah maintained contact with the Koori Youth Justice worker, and she stated did not want to be involved with Aboriginal services or community groups.

Client outcomes

Reducing risk of reoffending

During the support period, Sarah appeared to become more aware of the consequences of her behaviour and understands the impacts of her offending on her family. She did not want to be in custody again. Sarah showed she was better able to manage her impulses, and demonstrated more respectful behaviour, for example in how she treated workers and family. Sarah continued to have a peer group which included other young people who offend but did not seem to be influenced adversely.

Preparing for adulthood and living independently

Sarah lived with her father and his partner, and managed her income (Youth Allowance). Sarah attended appointments and organised and attended appointments by herself.

Engaging with school, employment or work

Sarah had marginal education engagement, with weekly tutoring at a local alternative school. She completed a first aid course through the school. She showed an interest in part-time work, completed a resume and attended interviews.

Developing stronger relationships

Sarah had a close relationship with her family, despite times of conflict. Her period in custody showed her that she doesn't like to be away from her family.

She continued to have a close association with other young people who offend, and had a large social circle.

Strengths

- The support priorities were realistic and consistent with Sarah's own aspirations and capacity.
- YJCSS provided practical support, such as transportation, and affirmed Sarah's goals and strategy to meet them.
- YJCSS recognised that Sarah was independent and did not 'over service', instead respecting her independence and providing support where it was required.
- YJCSS had the ability to persist and adapt to see through Sarah's initial lack of engagement.
- YJCSS and Youth Justice collaborated on the support plan, which assisted in clarifying roles and expectations.

Challenges

- Care team meetings did not involve other relevant workers or agencies, such as the Koori Youth Justice worker.
- Care team meetings did not appear to have formal processes to document and monitor progress.
- Sarah was not involved in care team meetings and while she had input into the support plan, it does not appear that the case planning used her strengths to a great degree.

Stephen

Stephen was 17 and lived with his mother and siblings in public housing. He recently completed his probation order, which he received as a sentence for multiple theft and driving offences. He had prior involvement with Youth Justice, and an older and younger brother had been co-offenders during recent offences. His childhood was traumatic with severe family violence perpetrated by his father against his mother and the children. Stephen's father used alcohol and illicit drugs in the home, was involved in a range of criminal activity and was sentenced to prison before Stephen was ten. Stephen's mother faced a number of complicated health issues, compounded by stress and her experiences of family violence. Child Protection was notified in 2008 about her use of physical discipline and subsequently Family Services was involved to support her parenting skills, however, the family continues to be chaotic with few boundaries provided for the children.

Prior involvement with Youth Justice identified that key issues for Stephen were related to his school refusal and a diagnosis of conduct disorder. Stephen was enrolled in secondary school but rarely attended and his workers reported he had borderline intellectual functioning. His conduct disorder manifested strongly when discussing schooling options, when he became very oppositional. Stephen did not report any drug use, however Youth Justice workers had reports of drug use by other family members.

Many supports were requested in the Youth Justice referral ranging from education, training and employment to family violence, mental health and CALD services (Stephen was Greek-Australian). Priorities were to provide additional support to connect Stephen to school or alternative education, to provide family support and to assist in the implementation of a previous CAMHS report, noting the planned exit from the CAMHS service. Support was proposed for six months or more.

Youth Justice discussed a referral to YJCSS with Stephen during their regular meeting, and YJCSS met Stephen within five days of the referral. Stephen's Youth Justice worker attended this first meeting, and the YJCSS worker then also met with Stephen's mother, with Stephen's permission. Stephen had a number of existing supports, including CAMHS, Family services and Child Protection. There were referrals to an employment service, YSAS and personal support for Stephen's mother.

Stephen was initially difficult to engage with, and the support plan took some time to develop. This was due to Stephen's reluctance to engage, but also because of staff turnover (the first YJCSS worker resigned) and conflict between Youth Justice and YJCSS about priorities for the support plan. For example, the Youth Justice worker was keen for Stephen to participate in education, while Stephen was interested in casual employment. Another tension was that Youth Justice sought goals related to education or employment early in the engagement, while YJCSS wanted to focus on the relationship development with Stephen.

Support plan goals addressed engagement, employment and training pathways, compliance with the probation order and family participation. This included engaging Stephen's mother in YJCSS support. Care team meetings were held regularly, and increased in frequency around particular crises. Typically, care team meetings included Youth Justice and YJCSS agencies, as well as the relevant employment service and at times, a Victoria Police officer or a child protection worker regarding specific offence or inquiry related matters. Stephen and his mother were invited but did not participate in care team meetings.

YJCSS provided two years of support to Stephen, largely through outreach on a weekly or twice-weekly basis. Supports provided by YJCSS include regular outreach, transportation to appointments, creative-engagement (such as motor vehicle fixing), referrals to employment agencies and TAFE and supporting

family connection. YJCSS used a focus on strengths-based engagement, particularly around Stephen's dreams and his role in his own employment pathways.

With the completion of his probation order, YJCSS expected to play a greater role as it would be the only support service in Stephen's life. The need for exit planning was recognised.

Client outcomes

Reducing risk of reoffending

While involved with YJCSS, Stephen shifted his interest in motor vehicles from offending behaviour to more positive activities, including saving money for a car and then fixing it. His brothers and peers could still exert a negative influence, however Stephen maintained engagement with YJCSS, and successfully completed his probation order without reoffending.

Preparing for adulthood and living independently

Stephen showed increasing independence over the course of his involvement in YJCSS. He started to travel independently to his Youth Justice meetings, and independently found and applied for a job with an automotive service. Having his own income improved his self-esteem and financial management skills.

Engaging with school, employment or work

A key challenge for Stephen was his engagement with education and employment. He was resistant to discussion about returning to school and did not engage with any of the three referrals to employment agencies. He was engaged for a short period at a TAFE but did not complete the course. He independently found work but was made redundant within two months. While this was a setback, the brief period of employment did help Stephen to clarify his goals in relation to employment.

Developing stronger relationships

A critical positive outcome of Stephen's engagement with YJCSS was his improved relationship with his mother, and the additional support for her to articulate and maintain boundaries in the family home.

Strengths

- YJCSS maintained a strong focus on Stephen's interests and goals (particularly around cars)
- YJCSS invested time in relationship development with Stephen and his family
- Effective care team approach assisted to resolve worker conflict and keep focus on Stephen's needs, as well as identifying broader family issues and future risks, such as homelessness in the event of household conflict

Challenges

- There was a considerable gap between Youth Justice and YJCSS regarding suitable goals, as well as the expected timeframe for support
- It was a challenge to balance available and suitable employment pathways with Stephen's abilities and engagement
- Workers identified the need for an eighteen month review linked to clear exit planning
- CALD services and family violence issues were noted in the original referral, but no obvious support was given.

Tim

Tim was 19 and in custody on a Youth Justice Centre order for assault, theft and false imprisonment when he was referred to YJCSS. He had an extensive Youth Justice history and had breached all previous community based orders by reoffending. Tim was a current client of Disability Services, and had previous Child Protection involvement. He had a poor relationship with his mother, no relationship with his father and had a long history of homelessness.

Tim had limited independent living skills and incomplete education. He left school before he finished Year 8 and had minimal casual work experience. He had previously used drugs. Tim was also a parent.

A Youth Justice Manager discussed YJCSS with Tim while he was in custody and a referral was made three weeks before his release. A YJCSS worker made contact by phone while he was in custody and met in person when he returned to the region on parole.

Youth Justice identified many support types needed in the referral form, including employment, housing, mental health, family violence and independent living skills. Priorities were stable accommodation, drug and alcohol support, parenting support and employment. YJCSS expect support to span at least twelve months as Tim needed stability with workers and had never lived in independent housing before.

YJCSS provided some intensive support, primarily regarding accommodation and independent living. There was little crisis support needed, and YJCSS provided transport to appointments. Tim was referred to a community health service for drug and alcohol counselling. Overall, Tim had a moderate need for supports and these were relatively straightforward.

In total forty weeks of support were provided, typically on a twice-weekly basis, with a focus on independent living skills such as cooking and budget management.

Care team meetings were held, though it is unclear which agencies participated, and Tim did not play a role. A support plan was developed, however a number of service needs identified in the referral were not described, for example mental health and family violence.

Client outcomes

Reducing risk of reoffending

Tim complied with the conditions of his parole and maintained stable housing over the support period.

Preparing for adulthood and living independently

Tim was motivated to look for work and engaged positively with Disability Services and drug and alcohol counselling. During the support period, he moved out to live with a friend.

Engaging with school, employment or work

Tim started at an alternative education provider with classes in English, maths, cooking and a young parenting course.

Developing stronger relationships

It was not clear how Tim was supported in his relationship or with his child.

Strengths

- YJCSS worked with Youth Justice to support Tim to complete his parole period.

Challenges

- Material provided for this case study was limited. It appears that some of the issues raised by Youth Justice were not addressed through the support plan or services.
- Similarly, it was not apparent how Tim was supported in his role as a parent.
- Given Tim's capacity and education experience, a short-term support goal around employment may not have been feasible. More detailed education/training planning may have outlined a pathway from his initial course through to work experience or a work placement.

Tyrone

Tyrone was 21. He was in custody at Malmsbury Youth Justice Centre for driving-related offences when the referral to YJCSS was made. He was then released on parole.

Before custody, Tyrone had been living with his mother and stepfather. He had a close relationship with his mother, though a difficult relationship with his stepfather. He had previously been sent to live with his grandparents for a period due to his behaviour. He did not have a close relationship with his father. Tyrone completed Year 10 as well as a number of Certificate 2 qualifications primarily related to hospitality. He had previous work experience. Prior to incarceration, Tyrone had been engaged in counselling through Community Health for his cannabis use. He engaged again upon release but did not have a good relationship with the counsellor and stopped attending. Tyrone was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder as a child but did not take his medication.

Referral to YJCSS was discussed with Tyrone while he was applying for parole and referral was made within a week of his earliest release date. Tyrone was assessed as eligible for transitional housing and a suitable property was found. YJCSS did not make contact with Tyrone until he was released from custody and was in his transitional home. YJCSS was not invited to participate in exit planning from Malmsbury Youth Justice Centre. A parole plan was sent to YJCSS along with the referral that outlined YJCSS specific duties.

An informal support plan was developed from the information provided in the referral document and the parole plan as well as from discussion with Tyrone around his goals. There were ongoing reviews and adjustments made with Tyrone in order to keep the plan relevant and reflective of his needs. The changes were discussed with Youth Justice at their weekly team meetings.

The main goal was to support Tyrone to live independently. This included assistance with an Office of Housing application, private rental application, and assistance with independent living skills, budgeting and mentoring. Youth Justice expected that support would be provided until a long-term housing solution was found.

Support was provided through outreach on a weekly basis over 56 weeks. The support was reviewed on a regular basis and was lowered as Tyrone's independence grew. There was never a need for crisis intervention although some mediation was required with neighbours regarding issues such as music and car parking. No service referrals were made as it was seen the transition to independent living could be supported by YJCSS. The majority of client contact related to cooking and cleaning advice, and in time, assistance with property inspections. Tyrone had some mental health issues, and appeared to have independently sought support.

Once Tyrone was released on parole, he lived in a transitional unit for about 12 months. He was evicted due to not paying rent due to his Centrelink payments changing and his automatic Centrepay payments ceasing as a result. Tyrone was not aware of the situation at the time and was informed by his YJCSS worker. The worker encouraged him to pay off the arrears and pay rent again, but this did not happen and he was evicted. There was no formal exit plan made, however YJCSS and Youth Justice discussed the situation and the THM was consulted. Tyrone was assisted in applying for both public and private housing. He was not successful in these applications and he ended up moving back in with his mother.

Consistent with (then) regional practice, there were no formal Care team meetings. Youth Justice had their weekly team meetings in which Tyrone's goals could be discussed and the YJCSS worker was involved. The YJCSS worker documented the team meeting discussions and talked about them with Tyrone outside the meetings, as he was not invited. His family members did not have direct input into the case plan. In total, YJCSS support was provided for 56 weeks.

Client outcomes

Reducing risk of reoffending

Tyrone did not feel that his behaviour was acceptable and showed empathy and concern when discussing driving fatalities. Despite this, he continued to offend and subsequently lost his licence due to driving offences. He did not have a large peer group but one close contact was another young person on a Youth Justice Order.

Preparing for adulthood and living independently

Tyrone was able to live in a transitional home for almost one year. He developed independent living skills with YJCSS support, including cooking and cleaning skills. He did not manage to learn budgeting skills adequately, often borrowing money from family members.

Tyrone reduced his drug use and reported using cannabis once a week.

Engaging with school, employment or work

Tyrone gained full time employment at a pub, which led to an apprenticeship in hospitality. Due to issues with the management, Tyrone quit and was unemployed for about four months until he became a supervisor at a brewery.

Developing stronger relationships

Tyrone maintained a close relationship with his mother and started working on his relationship with his stepfather while in custody. He had a positive relationship with his grandparents as well, and had a small peer group.

Strengths

- Roles and goals of the YJCSS and Youth Justice were well defined and explained to Tyrone prior to his release.
- Accommodation was organised prior to release.

Challenges

- Neither Tyrone nor his family members were invited to meetings or had direct input into the case plans.
- No formal care meetings were held.
- It was not apparent whether and how YJCSS assisted Tyrone during his period of unemployment.
- The intention was to support Tyrone to live independently yet after a year, he returned to the family home, as he was unable to find alternative accommodation.
- Tyrone displayed some need for drug and alcohol and mental health support however, referrals and engagement were not pursued as part of his plan.

Wyoming

Wyoming was 21 and on parole when she was referred to YJCSS. Wyoming had a turbulent childhood. She was born in overseas and adopted at the age of three. After the death of her adoptive mother, her family situation became difficult and by thirteen, she was homeless, living with friends and on the street. Since then she used alcohol and marijuana daily, and prior to her offence, started using inhalants and amphetamines.

Wyoming had no previous involvement with the Youth Justice system. Her first offence was particularly violent and while on Supervised bail, Wyoming met with a forensic psychologist who diagnosed Separation Anxiety Disorder and emerging Borderline Personality Disorder. The psychologist recommended psychological and psychiatric support, which was provided during custody in the form of counselling, medication and group work.

On completion of her custodial sentence, Wyoming was granted parole and returned to her family in regional Victoria. Within weeks conflict emerged, and she moved back to Melbourne to live with a friend. It was at this time that Wyoming was referred to YJCSS to secure transitional housing. The Youth Justice priorities in the referral were housing, integration into the community, support attending appointments and attending a TAFE. Referrals were also required for alcohol and drug counselling and a psychologist.

YJCSS contacted Wyoming the day the referral was received from Youth Justice, and a support plan was created with her input. Wyoming stated that she would prefer a male YJCSS worker, and a male YJCSS worker was allocated. The key goals in the support plan included securing and maintaining a THM property, assistance with independent living and completing a furniture-making course at TAFE.

Youth Justice and YJCSS were jointly involved in planning support, and a monthly care team meeting was held with all relevant services. Wyoming attended some, but not all care team meetings. The care team meetings were difficult to organise at times, as the relevant Youth Justice case manager was often required to attend court. The meetings were seen as beneficial to monitor progress against the support plan goals, and ensure service accountability regarding the specific elements in the plan relevant to each service. Minutes were kept and distributed to all participants.

The early focus of support was on housing: initially crisis accommodation, and then a THM application was completed and YJCSS liaised with the housing provider regarding availability. Once a THM property was obtained, YJCSS assisted with her relocation. This included assistance with connecting utilities and shopping for groceries and household items. Further support was provided related to housing such as liaison with the property manager regarding maintenance, and regular liaison with the housing provider regarding housing exit options for Wyoming. Another THM property was found with a one-year lease, and Wyoming then moved to this property and applied for public housing.

Other supports provided by YJCSS included support for independent living and working with her on factors that influenced her offending. Specific supports provided included driving lessons, support to engage with specialist services such as transport to mental health and drug and alcohol counselling, referrals to education, training and therapeutic recreational activities, and budgeting advice. Support was provided for 54 weeks.

Client outcomes

Reducing risk of reoffending

Wyoming was close to completing her parole order, and engaged positively with YJCSS. She had not offended again, and expressed shame about her actions. She was better able to manage her feelings and address conflict, as shown through a mature response to the end of a relationship. She improved her skills in identifying and managing feelings of anger.

Preparing for adulthood and living independently

Wyoming was in stable housing, and did not reoffend. Her alcohol consumption and drug use significantly decreased. She wanted to save money to buy her own car and live independently in a private rental property. She engaged with specialist providers and completed driving lessons. One area that continued to be a challenge for Wyoming was budget management, with continued support needed for her household budgeting. Another challenge was her reliance on workers, with more work to be undertaken to assist her to find and engage with services as she needs them, to build her independence.

Engaging with school, employment or work

Wyoming started a cabinet-making apprenticeship during the year, but found the full-time position too much and ended the apprenticeship. She became more knowledgeable about expectations of employers and started to look for part-time employment. YJCSS will continue to support her here.

Developing stronger relationships

Wyoming continued to have mixed relationships with her family, though improved connections to her father and siblings. She had no information about her birth family. She had a close group of friends, and showed strong communication skills through the break-up of her relationship. She continued to struggle to communicate with people who hold views different to her own, and will receive further support here. Youth Justice effectively referred her to a peer support group regarding her sexuality.

Strengths

- Focus on securing and maintaining stable housing
- Active participation of Wyoming in planning and care team meetings
- Provision of male YJCSS worker, as requested by Wyoming
- Effective planning between YJ and YJCSS
- Practical support combined with outreach and skills development

Challenges

- Involvement of YJCSS post-release rather than during parole planning, and initial unsuitable housing given known family conflict
- Six month placement for initial THM property and pressure to identify housing exits
- Planning and staging participation in education, training or employment so that it is achievable – part-time options needed to 'step up' into participation
- Balancing provision of support without fostering dependence, and need for careful planning for Wyoming's exit from YJCSS

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Response to question on notice
Public hearing 6 September 2021
Received 17 September 2021

Department of Human Services

Review of the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program

Final Report

September 2010
This report contains 85 pages

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Department of Human Services

Review of the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program

September 2010

Inherent Limitations

This report has been prepared as outlined in the Scope Section. The services provided in connection with this engagement comprise an advisory engagement, which is not subject to assurance or other standards issued by the Australian Auditing and Assurance Standards Board and, consequently no opinions or conclusions intended to convey assurance have been expressed.

KPMG have indicated within this report the sources of the information provided. We have not sought to independently verify those sources unless otherwise noted within the report.

KPMG is under no obligation in any circumstance to update this report, in either oral or written form, for events occurring after the report has been issued in final form.

The findings in this report have been formed on the above basis.

Third Party Reliance

This report is solely for the purpose set out in the Scope Section and for the Department of Human Service's information, and is not to be used for any other purpose or distributed to any other party without KPMG's prior written consent.

This report has been prepared at the request of the Victorian Department of Human Services in accordance with the terms of KPMG's engagement letter/contract dated 9 September 2009. Other than our responsibility to Victorian Department of Human Services, neither KPMG nor any member or employee of KPMG undertakes responsibility arising in any way from reliance placed by a third party on this report. Any reliance placed is that party's sole responsibility.

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Contents

Executive summary 1

Acronyms 5

Glossary of terms 6

1 Introduction to the review 7
1.1 Review aim 7
1.2 Key review questions 8
1.3 Review methodology and analyses 9
1.4 Structure of this report 10

2 Context for Youth Justice Group Conferencing 11
2.1 Australian policy context 11
2.2 Victorian policy context 13
2.3 The Victorian Youth Justice system 14
2.4 Historical recidivism rates for Victorian Youth Justice clients 15
2.5 Restorative justice principles 16
2.6 The Victorian Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program 17
2.7 The 2006 Review of the Juvenile Justice Pilot Group Conferencing Program 19
2.8 Key Victorian Government evaluations and inquiries 21
2.9 International restorative justice practice 23
2.10 International evidence on restorative justice 24

3 Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program participants and comparison group 28
3.1 Age at Conference 28
3.2 Gender 29
3.3 Country of birth 29
3.4 Aboriginal participants 29
3.5 Summary 31

4 Service activity 32
4.1 Referring court 32
4.2 Uptake of referrals to Youth Justice Group Conferencing 32
4.3 Service provision 32
4.4 Victim participation 33
4.5 Other Conference participants 34

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5 Assessment against Program objectives 37
5.1 Impact on diverting participants from more intensive supervisory court outcomes 37
5.2 Appropriate linkages for young people into the community 38
5.3 Impact on reducing reoffending 39
5.4 Impact on the severity of subsequent offending 40
5.5 Impact on victim satisfaction with the criminal justice process 43
5.6 Convenor expertise 44

6 Stakeholder and participant feedback on the Group Conferencing Program 45
6.1 Police 45
6.2 Legal fraternity 46
6.3 Judiciary 47
6.4 Other issues raised by professional stakeholders 48
6.5 Young people 48
6.6 Family members 51
6.7 Victims 54

7 Impact on costs to the Youth Justice system 59
7.1 Cost benefit analysis methodology 59
7.2 Cost benefit analysis 59

8 Strengths and opportunities for improvement 64
8.1 Strengths of the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program 64
8.2 Opportunities for improvement 64
8.3 Recommendations for future development 65

Bibliography 68

A Referring courts 69

B Offence types 71

C Victorian Parliamentary Law Reform Committee – Recommendations in relation to restorative justice 76

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Index of Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Age of the Young People participating in Youth Justice Group Conferencing vs Comparison Group 29
Figure 2: Aboriginal status of young people participating in Group Conferencing by age 30
Figure 3: Total number of Conferences provided against targets 33
Figure 4: Rates of recidivism and severity of re-offence (based on NOI scores) 41
Figure 5: Overall, I was satisfied with my involvement with the whole Group Conferencing Process 57
Figure 6: Overall I was satisfied with the process and conduct of the Conference Source 58

Index of Tables

Table 1: Review questions 8
Table 2: Juvenile justice services and outcomes, states and territories, July 2009 12
Table 3: Reported victim participation in the Youth Justice Group Conference 34
Table 4: Other participants at the Conference 35
Table 5: Sentence type for initial offence for Youth Justice Group Conferencing participants . 37
Table 6: Recidivism for Youth Justice Group Conferencing participants 39
Table 7: Most common offences that led to a Youth Justice Group Conference 40
Table 8: Percentage of Group Conferences attended by various representatives 42

Table A - 1: List of Children's Courts that referred to Youth Justice Group Conferencing during between April 2007 and June 2009 (excluding Grampians Region) 69
Table B - 1: The most serious offences committed by young people that participated in Group Conferencing 71
Table B - 2: The top 6 most frequent offences mapped to National Offence Index (NOI) committed by young people participating in Group Conferencing 72
Table B - 3: Country of birth of Young People referred for Youth Justice Group Conferencing 73
Table B - 4: Comparison of initial offence and more serious re-offence by Group Conferencing participants who reoffended post-Conference 74

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Executive summary

The Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program is a diversionary program operating in Victoria's Youth Justice system. Group Conferencing is a restorative justice process that involves a young offender, their family or support networks, their legal representative, a police informant and a convenor, together with people who have been affected by their offending. At the actual Conference, everyone has a chance to discuss the event and how to make things better for everyone impacted by the crime.

The Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program is an intervention based on restorative justice principles that aims to provide a community rehabilitation intervention to the Children's Court at the pre-sentence stage, in order to divert the young person from more intensive supervisory outcomes, increase responsibility for their offending and encourage reparation to the victim and community.

The Program aims to address issues that contribute to the young person's offending behaviour and divert them from more intensive supervisory court outcomes. A secondary aim is to involve family members, significant others, community members, the police, and victims in the decision-making process, and thereby enhance their satisfaction with the justice process.

KPMG conducted a review of the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program between September 2009 and September 2010 to determine the effectiveness of the Program in meeting its stated aims since operations commenced in 2003, as well as to provide the Department of Human Services with recommendations to improve the Program's operations.

This review was based on a targeted literature review, key stakeholder consultations, telephone surveys with Group Conferencing participants (young offenders, their families and victims of crime), analyses of Program service activity and outcome data for a sample of young people who participated in the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program compared with a sample of young people who received Probation or Youth Supervisory Orders, and a benefit cost analysis.

Key findings from the review are that:

- Statewide demand has increased significantly for the Program over the past five years, with the Program outperforming targets in 2008/09 and 2009/10.

- In most cases during the review period, Conferences were attended by victims (or their representatives) as well as Police informants and legal representatives. However, inconsistent with the requirements of the legislation, Group Conferences did not always include participation by Police or a legal representative.

- Three quarters of the young people participating in Youth Justice Group Conferencing received non-supervisory orders and were diverted from further progression into the Youth Justice system.

- Young people who participated in Youth Justice Group Conferencing were much less likely to have reoffended within 12 or 24 months than young people who received initial sentences of Probation or Youth Supervision Order.

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- Due to small sample sizes the review can not definitively determine any impact of personal characteristics such as age, gender or Aboriginal status on recidivism.

- The most common offences committed that led to a Youth Justice Group Conference were burglary, recklessly cause injury, unlawful assault, criminal damage, intentionally cause injury, armed robbery, theft of a motor vehicle, theft, affray and recklessly cause serious injury.

- Approximately 5.5 per cent of young people in both groups committed more serious offences. Youth Justice Group Conferencing participants who subsequently committed more serious offences were four times more likely to have a DHS Youth Justice worker than young people who did not reoffend and were less likely to have immediate family members attending their Conference than other participants.

- Highly skilled and competent Convenors who are able to implement the Youth Justice Group Conferencing model are central to the Program.

- All of the victims and family members, and the majority of young offenders (91%) surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that "Overall, I was satisfied with my involvement with the whole Group Conferencing Process". All participants surveyed agreed that "I would recommend the Program to someone else if they were eligible".

- For every $1 invested by the Department of Human Services on Group Conferencing, at least $1.21 is saved in the immediate and short term. These savings are likely to underestimate the actual saving to Government for each young people over the course of their lifetime.

In conclusion, this Review found the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program to be broadly effective in meeting its stated objectives.

This review makes the following recommendations in order to strengthen the Program. These recommendations are also considered in light of the recent Victorian Parliamentary Law Reform Committee's (VPLRC) *Inquiry into alternative dispute resolution and restorative justice* and the Victorian Parliamentary Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee (VPDCPC) *Inquiry into Strategies to Prevent High Volume Offending by Young People*), as indicated below in italics[1].

It is recommended that the Department of Human Services:

1. based on the positive findings of this review, that the Program is effective, cost-efficient and well-supported by stakeholders and participants, continue to fund and support the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program.

2. review the level of resourcing of the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program in order to:
   2.1. meet existing demand and strengthen/expand the Program
   2.2. ensure that suitably trained and experienced Convenors are attracted to and retained in this field

[1] Further details on these recommendations are presented in Appendix C.

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2.3. accommodate post-Conference follow-up by the Convenor to monitor and/or assist the young person with the completion of their outcome plan.

This is consistent with the VPLRC recommendation in relation to:

- *61: "Monitoring Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program Conference outcome plans."*
- *62*: "*Support the offenders to complete YJGC Program outcome plans.*"

3. accommodate post-Conference follow-up by the Convenor or a designated agency regarding the victim's satisfaction and well being and, where appropriate, allow for further victim support.

   This is consistent with the VPLRC recommendation in relation to:

   - *58: "Follow-up with victims after a Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program Conference."*

4. promote the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program and evidence regarding its effectiveness by:

   4.1. communicating the strong and positive findings from this review to key stakeholders including: Children's Courts, Victoria Police, Victoria Legal Aid, Victim Support Agencies and key youth focussed community based services.

   4.2. providing ongoing education and information about the Program to key stakeholders centrally and in regions.

   This is consistent with the VPLRC recommendations in relation to:

   - *51: "Educating Children's Court magistrates about the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program*
   - *52: "Educating lawyers about the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program"*
   - *59.1: "Information and training on the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program for police."*

5. support an accreditation process for Youth Justice Group Conferencing Convenors in order to ensure that they have a consistent and assessable skill set.

   This is consistent with the VPLRC recommendation in relation to:

   - *66: "Restorative justice practitioner training."*

6. continue to provide professional development activities and forums for all Group Conference Convenors to maintain and build on the level of expertise and the high standard of Group Conferences.

   This is consistent with the VPLRC recommendation in relation to:

   - *65: "Training for restorative justice practitioners."*
   - *57: "Training YJGC providers about victims' rights and needs."*

7. give consideration to expanding the use of restorative justice approaches to other groups of young offenders and at other points in the sentencing process. The Program appears to be well placed for the target group. To reduce the risk of 'net-widening', it is recommended that restorative justice approaches target young people who are, at minimum, eligible for a sentence of Probation in the Victorian sentencing hierarchy.

8. ask the existing 'State-wide Group Conferencing Advisory Group', or representatives thereof, to consider the recommendations in this report.

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9. seek advice from the 'State-wide Group Conferencing Advisory Group', or representatives thereof, with regard to:
   9.1. the 'development of a practice model' for post-Conference follow up with the young person and the victim where appropriate
   9.2. an effective process for information sharing with, and educating of, key stakeholders and the broader community about the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program
   9.3. commissioning a cohort study to identify the characteristics and risk profile of young people for whom the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program is most effective
   9.4. considering whether specific strategies need to be identified and implemented in order to promote more involvement of young people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, and/or young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program.
   This is consistent with the VPLRC recommendations in relation to:
   - *53:"Participation of Indigenous offenders and victims in the restorative justice processes."*
   - *54:"Participation of CALD offenders and victims in the restorative justice processes."*

10. consider the role of Victoria Police in relation to:
    10.1. potential mechanisms for operational police officers to provide input into referral processes
    10.2. the police role of making initial contact with the victim and how this process could support an increased presence of victims at Group Conferences.

11. consider incorporating outcome and participant satisfaction measures into routine data collection for evaluation, monitoring and reporting purposes.
    This is consistent with the VPLRC recommendation in relation to:
    - *47: Collecting and reporting data about restorative justice*

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Acronyms

ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
BCR	Benefit cost ratio
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CBA	Cost benefit analyses
CYFA	Children's Youth and Families Act 2005
DHS	Department of Human Services
MCV	Magistrate's Court of Victoria
NOI	Australian Standard Offence Classification National Offence Index
NZ	New Zealand
RJ	Restorative Justice
VACP	Victims Assistance and Counselling Program
VPDCPC	Victorian Parliamentary Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee
VPLRC	Victorian Parliamentary Law Reform Committee
YJ	Youth Justice
YJGC	Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program (the Program)

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Glossary of terms

Cautioning and Diversion Program	Under this Program, a formal caution is administered to the young offender by a senior police officer in the presence of a parent or guardian of the offender. After a caution, no further action is taken by the police in respect of the offence.
Deferral of sentence	A Magistrate may defer the sentencing of a young person in order to gauge their suitability for a Community Based Order, or to allow them to participate in a Group Conference, or to monitor the effect of a particular life event that may influence the Magistrate's final sentencing decision. Youth Justice may be required to support/supervise and prepare a pre sentence court report during the deferral period. If the deferral is to allow for a Group Conference, following the Conference, the Convenor provides a report to the court that contains the outcome plan for the Magistrate's consideration prior to sentencing.
Good Behaviour Bond	The **Court** may adjourn (postpone) proceedings for a period of up to one year, and order that the young person provide a bond of a nominal amount and comply with the conditions set. Conditions can include being of good behaviour and appearing before the court when asked. If a young person complies with the conditions set for the year, then the charge is dismissed.
Parole	This is the community-based component of a custodial sentence imposed by a court. Unlike other Community Based Orders, parole can only be granted by either the Youth Residential Board (for 10-14 year olds) or the Youth Parole Board (for 15-20 year olds).
Probation	This is the lowest tariff community-based Youth Justice order. Probation orders can only be given in the Children's Court and require that the young person be supervised by and report to Youth Justice for the duration of their order. The maximum period of a Probation Order is 12 months and the order cannot extend beyond the young person's 21st birthday.
Youth Attendance Order	This is an alternative to a custodial sentence. It is a sentencing option that gives consequences for offending behaviour through intensive supervision and community work activities up to 10 hours per week, without removing the young person from their home, school or work commitments. The maximum period of a Youth Attendance Order is 12 months and the order cannot extend beyond the young person's 21st birthday. To receive a YAO the young person must be at least 15 years of age.
Youth Justice Centre	Victoria has two Youth Justice centres, which are custodial facilities for young people sentenced by either the children's or adult courts to a Youth Justice Centre Order.
Youth Justice Centre Order	A Youth Justice Centre Order sentences a young person to a period of time in custody at a Youth Justice centre. It cannot be longer than three years.
Youth Supervision Order	This provides more intensive supervision and a greater range of Program components than a Probation order. The maximum period of a Youth Supervision Order is generally 12 months and the order cannot extend beyond the young person's 21st birthday, although may be up to 18 months if the offence is punishable by imprisonment for a term of more than 10 years.

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1 Introduction to the review

1.1 Review aim

The aim of the review is to determine the effectiveness of the Youth Justice Group Conferencing (YJGC) Program in meeting its stated aims since operations commenced in 2003, as well as to provide recommendations to the Department of Human Services (DHS) to improve the operations of the Program.

The stated aims of the YJGC Program are to achieve the following outcomes:

- to provide effective diversion for young people from more intensive supervisory court outcomes
- effective reintegration of young people into the community following the Conference process
- reduced frequency and seriousness of re-offending of young people referred to the Program
- increased victim satisfaction with the criminal justice process
- reduced costs to the Youth Justice system.

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1.2 Key review questions

Table 1: Review questions

Review Question	Question Sub-themes
1. To what extent has the YJGC Program achieved its objectives?	Provided effective diversion for young people from more intensive supervisory court outcomes.
	Provided appropriate linkages for young people into the community.
	Reduced the frequency and seriousness of re-offending.
	Increased victim satisfaction with the criminal justice process.
	Reduced costs to the Youth Justice system.
2. To what extent are the outcomes achieved by Group Conferencing related to:	The nature of offences committed
	The characteristics of the offender
	The participation of victims
	The participation of young people's family members
	The involvement of co-offenders in the Conference process
	The experience of the Convenor facilitating the Group Conference
	Other relevant variables
3. What is the level of satisfaction of stakeholders including young people, their families, victims, police, the legal fraternity and judiciary with the Group Conferencing Program?	
4. What are the unit costs of the Group Conferencing Program compared with Youth Justice custodial and Community Based Orders?	
5. What specific improvements can be made to the Group Conferencing Program?	The model (including comparison to other successful conferencing Program models operating in other jurisdictions)
	Integration with related services.

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1.3 Review methodology and analyses

This review considered information obtained through five activities.

- A targeted literature review focusing on reviews of group conferencing and/or related restorative justice projects and relevant reports such as the Parliamentary Committee reports.

- Stakeholder consultations conducted with Group Conferencing service providers and Convenors, Youth Justice Unit managers, Victoria Police, the Children's Court of Victoria, the legal fraternity, victim representatives and other relevant key stakeholders. Interview schedules are available on request from the Department of Human Services.

- Telephone surveys with Group Conferencing participants, that is, young people, their families and victims of crime, who participated in a Conference between November 2009 and July 2010.

- Analyses of Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program service activity data.

- Analyses of outcome data for a sample of young people who participated in Youth Justice Group Conferences in Victoria[2] between April 2007 and June 2009 (n=372) and outcome data for a comparison group of young people who received a Probation or Youth Supervision Order in the same time period (n=129).

- Unit cost analysis.

This review used both quantitative and qualitative information. The analytical processes for both are described below.

Quantitative data for the review drew on service activity data and outcome data for a sample of young people who participated in the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program and a comparison group of young people who received a Probation or Youth Supervision Order in the same time period. Quantitative information was also collected from closed and scaled questions in telephone surveys conducted with a sample of Conference participants. These data have been subject to descriptive and factor analyses.

Qualitative information was collected through semi-structured interviews and survey questions to explore elements and impacts of the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program. These data were thematically analysed and deidentified quotes are presented to illustrate pertinent points. A variety of information was volunteered to assist the review process. This report describes the level of coherence between stakeholder views (e.g. all, many, some reported) but does not enumerate qualitative data.

[2] Data from the Grampians was not available for inclusion in this review.

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1.4 Structure of this report

This report is structured to address each of the review questions in turn, and concludes with a summary of identified Program strengths, areas for improvement and recommendations for the future.

- **Chapter One** outlines the project aims, objectives, review questions and methodology and presents the structure of the report.

- **Chapter Two** reports on findings from a targeted review of literature, evidence and related reports in relation to the Australian policy context, the Victorian Youth Justice system, the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program and restorative justice evidence.

- **Chapter Three** presents information about Youth Justice Group Conferencing participants and a comparison group of similar young people who received Probation or a Youth Supervision Order in the same time period.

- **Chapter Four** presents information about service activity during the review period.

- **Chapter Five** assesses the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program against its objectives.

- **Chapter Six** reports on the level of stakeholder and participant satisfaction with the Program.

- **Chapter Seven** provides a cost benefit analysis on the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program.

- **Chapter Eight** concludes with strengths, opportunities for improvement and recommendations for the future.

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2 Context for Youth Justice Group Conferencing

This chapter contains the outcomes of a literature review examining the history and practice of restorative justice and outlines restorative justice principles and outcomes.

The Australian policy context is examined, particularly in relation to the Youth Justice interventions adopted in each jurisdiction. The chapter then explores the Victorian policy context, with a focus on the outcomes of the 2006 review of the Group Conferencing Program and the recommendations made by the Victorian Parliamentary Law Reform Committee's reports into High Volume Offending and Alternative Dispute Resolution and Restorative Justice.

2.1 Australian policy context

The number of young people in detention is increasing across Australia, and governments are looking for ways to minimise the contact that young people have with the criminal justice system.

The number of young people in detention on an average day in Australia (excluding NSW) increased 17 per cent between 2004-05 and 2007-08.[3] In 2007-08, Victoria had the lowest rate of young people under supervision on an average day with 1.7 per 1,000.[4] This compares with a rate of 4.0 per 1,000 in the Northern Territory. The average daily rate was lowest in Victoria for both males (2.4 per 1,000) and females (0.4 per 1,000).[5]

Victoria also had the lowest rate of young people in detention during 2007-08, with 0.1 per 1,000, while the Northern Territory had the highest rates with 1.3 per 1,000.[6]

Although only approximately 5 per cent of young Australians are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, 40 per cent of those under community or custodial supervision on an average day in 2007-08 identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Their over-representation was particularly prominent in detention, where over half of those in detention on an average day, and 60 per cent of those who were un-sentenced in detention, were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young people.[7] An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young person aged 10–17 years in Western Australia was four times as likely to be in detention on an average day as in Victoria.[8]

The over-representation of Aboriginal young people under supervision is increasing across all jurisdictions. Over the eight years from 2000–01 to 2007-08, the proportion of Aboriginal young people under supervision on an average day (all ages) steadily increased from 32 per cent to 39 per cent.[9]

[3] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Juvenile Justice in Australia 2007-08* (2009), p. vii.
[4] Ibid p 26.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid p. 60.
[7] Ibid p. vii.
[8] Ibid p. 60.
[9] Ibid p. 31.

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2.1.1 Youth justice interventions

Youth justice is a state and territory responsibility and involves a number of agencies, including police, courts and specific Youth Justice agencies. Each of these agencies has a different focus with regard to young people involved in crime and is responsible for interventions at different points.

The range of services and interventions offered by these agencies varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has broken these interventions down into three groups: those requiring the young person to be supervised in the community or detained, those that do not require the young person to be supervised (such as fines), and those that divert the young person from further involvement with the juvenile justice system (such as cautions and conferencing).[10]

The following table provides a snapshot of the Youth Justice interventions available in each state and territory as at July 2009 and shows that a range of options are available in each jurisdiction to respond to offending behaviour.

Table 2: Juvenile justice services and outcomes, states and territories, July 2009[11]

Juvenile justice services and outcomes	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
Diversionary outcomes								
Informal caution/warning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Formal caution	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Conferencing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Does not require supervision								
Discharge	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fine	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Obligation without supervision	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Requires supervision								
Unsentenced								
Supervised bail or similar	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	✓
Remand/unsentenced detention	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sentenced								
Good behaviour bond	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓
Probation or similar	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community service	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Suspended detention	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	✓
Home detention	—	—	—	—	✓	—	—	✓
Detention	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Supervised release from detention (parole)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	✓[12]

[10] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2009) *Juvenile Justice in Australia 2007-08*, p. 7
[11] Ibid.
[12] In the Northern Territory, supervised release from detention includes Probation and parole.

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2.1.2 Group conferencing programs

Victim-offender conferencing is used in all Australian jurisdictions in order to reduce reoffending. These conferences typically involve both the victim and the young person, with participants from relevant government agencies and non-government organisations.[13]

Group Conferences aim to develop a negotiated response to the crime, which involves the needs of both the victim and young person being listened to and met, with the young person taking responsibility for the offence.[14]

Across Australian jurisdictions, Conferences are held at different stages of the Youth Justice process and are administered variously by the police, courts or juvenile justice agencies.[15]

2.2 Victorian policy context

The Victorian Youth Justice system has a focus on diversion, graduated sanctions for young people and community-based rehabilitation. There is a growing focus in Victoria's justice system aiming to meet some of the needs of victims.

As outlined above, Victoria's Youth Justice system is relatively successful in keeping young people out of custody. The Victorian system is underpinned by the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*, which provides the legal framework for application of the criminal law to children. The primary focus of the Youth Justice aspect of this legislation is diversion: this approach is supported by a number of other policy documents from a range of government areas, which are outlined below.

The Victorian system is described in *A Balanced Approach to Juvenile Justice [2000]* as a continuum of prevention, early intervention and graduated sanctions that aim to develop the life skills of young people, support their rehabilitation and link them with their communities.[16] Community-based rehabilitation of offenders is the primary focus of the Victorian system, with detention being the last resort.[17]

Victoria maintains a 'dual track' sentencing option for young adult offenders. This enables young people aged 18 at the time of offending, but less than 21 at the time of sentencing, to serve their sentence in a Youth Justice Centre rather than an adult prison[18] This can occur if it is considered that *"there are …reasonable prospects for the rehabilitation of the young offender"* or *"the young offender is particularly impressionable, immature or likely to be subjected to undesirable influences in an adult prison"*.[19]

[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid p. 14
[16] Department of Justice, *A Balanced Approach to Juvenile Justice* (2000), Ministerial Foreword.
[17] Ibid p. 1.
[18] Ibid p. 2.
[19] *Sentencing Act (1991)* Vic, s32(1).

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It is recognised that a number of factors influence offending, including socio-economic disadvantage, abuse and neglect, sexual abuse and violence, poor economic attainment and a lack of family supports.[20]

Policy statements released by the Victorian Government also indicate a growing emphasis on the interactions that victims have with the criminal justice system. *A Balanced Approach to Juvenile Justice* notes that victim issues are to be a focus in the rehabilitative programs for young people. Group Conferencing is referenced as a mechanism for recognising victims' needs.[21]

Reducing recidivism and increasing effective diversionary processes are two of the focus areas outlined in Victoria Police's *Youth Strategy 2009 to 2012*. Under the focus area of reducing recidivism, Victoria Police has committed to developing and implementing a range of initiatives focused on intervening early to prevent long-term harm for children and young people.[22]

This is consistent with the approach outlined in the Victoria Police Strategic Plan, *The Way Ahead 2008-2013.* In this document, Victoria Police commits to working with young people at risk of becoming offenders or victims of crime. This will be supported by the ongoing use of diversion, cautioning and educational programs.[23]

The *Attorney-General's Justice Statement 2* notes that, in general, restorative justice programs can have a positive influence on both offenders and victims by engaging the offender in a dialogue with the victim to highlight the impact of their actions.[24] The Statement also cites statistics that show that 70 per cent victims who have participated in Group Conferencing were satisfied with the way their case was dealt with compared with 42 per cent of those whose cases were dealt with conventionally in court.[25]

2.3 The Victorian Youth Justice system

Victoria has a sound policy and legislative basis for the ongoing development and implementation of diversionary programs for young offenders.

In Victoria, Youth Justice sits within the Department of Human Services (DHS) and works with individuals aged between 10 and 20 years.[26] In accordance with the legislative framework, the Youth Justice system in Victoria takes primarily a strong diversionary approach to managing young people who come into contact with the criminal justice system.[27] The primary focus is one of prevention, diversion and rehabilitation: preventing low risk young people from entering the Youth Justice system; rehabilitating more serious young offenders; and supporting young offenders after release from custodial care to establish a non-offending lifestyle.[28]

[20] Department of Justice op cit p.2.
[21] Ibid p. 11.
[22] Victoria Police, *Youth Strategy 2009 to 2013*, p 9.
[23] Victoria Police, *The Way Ahead 2008-2013*, p 14.
[24] Attorney-General's *Justice Statement 2*, (2008) p. 29.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Department of Human Services, http://www.cyf.vic.gov.au/youth-justice/home accessed January 2010.
[27] Op cit
[28] Minister for Community Services, *A Balanced approach to Juvenile Justice in Victoria*, 2000, http://cyf.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/244737/abalancedapproach.pdf, accessed 22 March 2009.

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This is reflected in the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* and in the processes in place for dealing with children and young people from their initial point of contact with the police through to completion of any order imposed by the court.[29]

This Act distinguishes the sentencing needs of children and young people as separate from adults' needs. The following considerations must be taken into account in determining a sentence:[30]

- The need to strengthen and preserve the relationship between the young person and their family
- The desirability of allowing the young person to live at home
- The desirability of allowing the young person's education or employment to continue without interruption or disturbance
- The need to minimise the stigma of receiving a court order
- The suitability of the sentence to the young person
- The need to ensure that young people are aware and accountable for their behaviour for any unlawful action, and
- The need to protect the community or any person from the violent or other wrongful act of the young person.

2.4 Historical recidivism rates for Victorian Youth Justice clients

The *Recidivism Rates Among Victorian Juvenile Justice Clients 1997-2001* study reports on the recidivism rates for all young offenders who were clients of the then Victorian Juvenile Justice Program over a one-year period between 1 July 1997 and 30 June 1998.[31] Following the conclusion of the first juvenile order received by a client during the 1997-98 period, subsequent orders received either through the children's or adult courts during the next two years were examined. Adult orders were included because some clients became too old to remain in the juvenile jurisdiction over the follow-up period. The most serious order received in the two years was recorded as an indicator of severity of offending and penetration into the criminal justice system [32]

The total number of young people placed on initial orders between 1 July 1997 and 30 June 1998 was 1,527.[33] Of these, 955 (62.5 percent) were first-time clients of the Juvenile Justice Program and 572 (37.5 percent) were previous clients. Clients who did re-offend were three to

[29] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2009) *Juvenile Justice in Australia 2007-08*
[30] Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 Section 362(1)
[31] Victorian Department of Human Services, *Recidivism Rates Among Victorian Juvenile Justice Clients 1997-2001* (2001) p.1.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid p.11.

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four times more likely to re-offend within the first year than the second.[34] Overall, 48.6 per cent of the total sample re-offended.[35]

Based on the number of young offenders per 100,000 of the population aged 10-17 years, males were 6.5 times more likely than females to offend and re-offend. However, in contrast to recidivism risk for males in the general population, recidivism risk was not markedly different for males and females in the Juvenile Justice population.[36] Whilst males comprised 86.8 per cent of the total population, males and females re-offended at similar rates (49.3 and 44.1 percent, respectively).[37]

A lower recidivism rate of 41.4 per cent was found among first-time clients, compared with a rate of 60.7 per cent among previous clients, whose recidivism had been established through their placement on further supervised orders.[38] Earlier age of onset of offending was also shown to be associated with higher recidivism risk, with very young offenders aged 11-13 years demonstrating the highest recidivism rates among age groups.[39]

This report noted that higher recidivism rates associated with certain groups (previous clients, those on custodial orders, very young offenders and Aboriginal clients) provided empirical support for directing greater resources and attention to these client groups on the basis of their high risk of re-offending.[40] It was also noted that because the statistical data indicated that the highest risk recidivism period is the first year following completion of orders, there is a need to link young people to community supports to increase their reintegration potential post-order.[41]

2.5 Restorative justice principles

Restorative justice can enhance and support the traditional criminal justice system. It provides an alternative approach to responding to crime, focusing on healing and repairing harm rather than an adversarial, punishment-based approach. The restorative justice movement emerged as a modern form of conflict resolution as a result of a growing victims' rights movement, concern about the social and economic costs of incarceration and awareness that the traditional justice system did not address the underlying causes of crime and re-offending.[42]

The principles of restorative justice are based on the idea that crimes can be prevented if the system allows for processes that encourage offenders to develop sympathy for their victims.[43] This is achieved by placing the victim with the offender at the centre of the criminal justice

[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid p.12.
[36] Ibid p.11.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid p.26.
[39] Ibid p.41.
[40] Ibid p.42.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Parliament of Victoria Law Reform Committee, *Inquiry into alternative dispute resolution and restorative justice* (2009), p. 188
[43] The Smith Institute, *Restorative justice: the evidence* (2007) p. 12.

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process[44] through active involvement of the parties affected by a crime or conflict in a safe dialogue.[45]

In its submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Law Reform Committee *Inquiry into alternative dispute resolution and restorative justice*, the Victorian Association for Restorative Justice proposed that restorative justice be defined as *"a process that seeks to heal the impact of offending and make this right for victims, offenders and their respective communities"*.[46]

Restorative justice is not necessarily in opposition to the traditional criminal justice process. The Victorian Parliamentary Law Reform Committee noted that restorative justice can provide either an alternative to, or extension of, the traditional criminal justice system.[47]

2.6 The Victorian Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program

In Victoria, young people, their family members and victims can participate in a restorative justice model, the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program. The principles of restorative justice have informed the design and implementation of this Program. Youth Justice Group Conferencing is based on a restorative justice process that involves a young offender, their legal representative, a police informant and a Convenor with people who have been affected by their offending.

At the actual Conference everyone has a chance to discuss the event and how to make things better for everyone impacted by the crime. The Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program is underpinned by the need to develop and maintain natural support networks in order to reduce the likelihood of reoffending. This involves engaging parents, family members and other supports in the pre-Conference and Conference process, and encouraging these people to support the young person to complete their outcome plan.

Victoria's Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program commenced as a small pilot in 1995. In July 2001, the responsibility for the pilot Program was transferred to DHS. From 2002-2003, DHS provided additional funding to expand the Program to cover all metropolitan Children's Courts and two rural Programs in the Gippsland and Hume regions.

In accordance with the legislative basis provided by the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*, the Program expanded state-wide from October 2006. This Act outlines that the purpose of the Program is to facilitate a meeting between the child and other persons (including, if they wish to participate, the victim or their representative and members of the child's family and other persons of significance to the child) in order to:

- Increase the child's understanding of the effect of their offending on the victim and the community

- Reduce the likelihood of the child re-offending

[44] Victorian Association for Restorative Justice, http://www.varj.asn.au/rp/rj/rjdefinition htm accessed January 2010.
[45] Department of Justice, http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/DOJ+Internet/Home/The+Justice+System/Neighbourhood+Justice/JUSTICE+-+Restorative+Justice accessed January 2010.
[46] Parliament of Victoria Law Reform Committee op cit p 191
[47] Ibid.

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- Negotiate an outcome plan that is agreed to by the child.[48]

The Program operates in the Criminal Division of the Children's Court and is a pre-sentence diversionary intervention that young people must voluntarily undertake. The Program is available for young people aged between 10 and 18 years at the time of the offence.[49]

The stated aims of the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program are to ensure:

- Effective reintegration of young people into the community following the Conference process
- Reduced frequency and seriousness of re-offending of young people referred to the Program as compared to young people on supervisory orders
- Increased victim satisfaction with the criminal justice process
- Reduced costs to the Youth Justice system as compared to statutory court orders including custody.[50]

Although the Act does not specify which offences are able to be dealt with by Group Conference, DHS guidelines exclude homicide, manslaughter and sex offences.[51] To be referred to the Program, the offender must have been found guilty or have pleaded guilty, the court must be considering imposing a sentence of Probation or a Youth Supervision Order, and the offender must agree to participate. Although the Group Conference must be attended by the young person, their legal practitioner, the informant or other member of the police force, and the Convenor, the participation of other relevant parties, such as the young person's family and support networks, as well as the victim, is encouraged.

The Group Conferencing process is designed to address issues that contribute to the young person's offending behaviour and to divert the young person from more intensive supervisory court outcomes. It also seeks to involve family members, significant others, community members, the police, and victims in the decision-making process, and thereby enhance their satisfaction with the justice process.

In order to ensure that the Conference process is effective, the DHS guidelines set out a number of activities the Convenor is expected to undertake prior to the Conference. These include preparing participants, outlining the Conference rules, ensuring that the Conference space is appropriate and well set up, and that there is a balance of participants.[52]

The Group Conference Convenor has an important role in terms of negotiating the outcome plan. The guidelines provide that Convenors should focus on ensuring that all parties to the Conference are heard and have a fair say on the plan.[53] Although all participants have a role in

[48] Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 s 415(4).
[49] Parliament of Victoria Law Reform Committee.
[50] DHS, Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program Guidelines, p. 3.
[51] Ibid p. 6.
[52] Ibid p. 11.
[53] Ibid p. 19.

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the development of the outcome plan, it is ultimately the victim and the young person who must agree to its content.[54]

The outcome plan must, as far as practical, strengthen the young person's family relationships, not interrupt their education, training or employment or home living arrangements, minimise any stigma to the young person, and not impose unrelated additional conditions.[55]

2.7 The 2006 Review of the Juvenile Justice Pilot Group Conferencing Program

In 2006, DHS commissioned a Review of the then Juvenile Justice Group Conferencing Program. That review focused on:

- the impact of the Group Conferencing Program on diverting young people away from supervisory court orders and from further penetrating the criminal justice system
- the impact of the Group Conferencing Program on reducing the frequency and seriousness of re-offending
- whether service providers had been able to meet the established key performance indicators, and
- the potential ways to improve the Group Conferencing Program, including, but not restricted to consideration of (a) the target criteria for young people eligible for a Group Conference, (b) the key performance indicators, (c) the Program design.

The primary focus of that review of the Group Conferencing Program was on the analysis of Juvenile Justice data to examine outcomes and recidivism of three comparison groups of young people. Qualitative feedback was sought from service providers and other key stakeholders with regards to the Program and potential improvements.

The key findings from that review are outlined on the following page.

[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid p. 21.

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- **Diversionary Outcomes:** Eighty-six per cent of those in the Participants' Group received a Good Behaviour Bond following their Group Conference. This demonstrated a diversion from further penetrating the Juvenile Justice system for the vast majority of young people who had participated in a Group Conference and was a significant finding of that review.

- **Recidivism:** Within six months after a Group Conference, referral to a Group Conference or receiving a Probationary Order, only seven per cent of those in the Participants' Group had re-offended compared with 15 per cent of those in the Probationers' Group. Within twelve months, 16 per cent of those in the Participants' Group had re-offended while 40 per cent of those in the Probationers' Group re-offended in that time.

- **Frequency and Seriousness of Re-offending Behaviour:** Of the Group Conference Participants who had re-offended within 12 months, 55 per cent demonstrated a decrease in the frequency at which they re-offended over the twelve month period, compared to 41 per cent of those in the Probationers' Group. Of those Group Conferencing Participants who had re-offended within twelve months of their Group Conference, all (100 per cent) demonstrated a reduction in the seriousness of their re-offending behaviour. In comparison, 53 per cent of those in the Probationers' Group demonstrated a decrease in the seriousness of their re-offending behaviour.

- **Restorative Justice Outcomes:** Qualitative feedback from the service providers, Youth Justice Unit Managers and DHS Court Advice workers was strongly supportive of the Group Conferencing Program and its capacity to achieve restorative justice objectives.

- **Demographic Findings:** The majority of young people presenting in the Participants' and Probationers' Groups were male, consistent with the population of young offenders overall. The majority of young people presenting in both Groups were aged between 15 and 17 years old at the time of their court appearance. More than one in ten young people were from an Aboriginal Australian background (13 per cent of Participants). All of these young Participants were from the Gippsland and Hume regions. None were from metropolitan Melbourne. The proportion of the Group Conferencing cohort from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background was smaller than the proportion of CALD young people in the community. The greater number of young people who participated in a Group Conference lived in Gippsland and the North and West metropolitan region.

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2.8 Key Victorian Government evaluations and inquiries

This section examines the key Victorian Government reports relating to Youth Justice since the 2006 review of the pilot Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program.

2.8.1 Services to young offenders – Victorian Auditor-General's report June 2008

The Victorian Auditor-General conducted an investigation into the extent to which diversionary and rehabilitation services provided by the DHS and the Magistrates' Court of Victoria (MCV) maximised diversion of young offenders from the criminal justice system, reduced the risk of re-offending and improved rehabilitation and reintegration into the community.[56]

The Auditor-General made a number of findings in relation to service planning, service coordination, needs identification, case management and service delivery, efficiency and effectiveness, and service improvement, but the report did not contain any specific recommendations about restorative justice or group conferencing.

2.8.2 Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into alternative dispute resolution and restorative justice, May 2009

The Victorian Parliamentary Law Reform Committee's (VPLRC) *Inquiry into alternative dispute resolution and restorative justice* considered the reach and use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms, including restorative justice.

The Inquiry identified that, although ADR and restorative justice have developed distinctly, there are parallels in their origin, philosophy and development. Areas of overlap include collaboration, procedural flexibility, interest accommodation, contextualisation, active participation and relationship preservation.[57]

The VPLRC made a number of recommendations related to restorative justice and group conferencing. These are outlined in full at Appendix C. The Victorian Government accepted recommendations relating to the operation of the YJGC Program that covered the following areas:

- Evaluation of restorative justice programs
- Review of the YJGC Program's demand
- Research on restorative justice responses to family violence
- Increasing community awareness and understanding of restorative justice.

The Victorian Government also accepted in principle recommendations in the following areas:

[56] Victorian Auditor-General, Services to Young Offenders (2008), p. 2.
[57] Melissa Lewis and Les McCrimmon, ALRC quoted in VPLRC

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- Research on the outcomes of restorative justice processes
- Educating Children's Court Magistrates about the YJGC Program
- Educating lawyers about the YJGC Program
- Participation of Aboriginal offenders and victims in restorative justice processes
- Participation of CALD offenders and victims in restorative justice processes
- Informing victims about the YJGC Program
- Training YJGC Program providers about victims' rights and needs
- Follow-up with victims after a YJGC Program Conference
- Information and training on the YJGC Program for police
- Monitoring YJGC Program Conference outcome plans
- Support for offenders to complete YJGC Program Conference outcome plans
- Identification of core skills and attributes of restorative justice practitioners
- Training for restorative justice practitioners
- Complaints about restorative justice services
- YJGC Program serious offences pilot
- Effect of participation in restorative justice on offender's sentence management, and
- Increasing community awareness and understanding of restorative justice.

The Victorian Government did not accept the VPLRC's recommendation relating to incorporating the YJGC Program Conference outcome plan into the offender's sentence.

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2.8.3 Victorian Parliamentary Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee *Inquiry into Strategies to Prevent High Volume Offending by Young People*

The VPDCPC's *Inquiry into Strategies to Prevent High Volume Offending by Young People*[58] explains the evolution and underpinnings of the Victorian YJGC Program and contains evidence from a range of sources regarding the effectiveness of the Program.

This report also outlined a number of criticisms of the YJGC Program, including: the potential for the Program to operate in a discriminatory way towards young people from CALD and Aboriginal backgrounds, the possible intimidation of female victims and the relative cost of the Program.[59] This report also noted that further evaluation was required in order to determine the extent to which YJGC impacts on recidivism as this point had been widely debated by a range of commentators.[60]

In its final report, the VPDCPC recommended that the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program should be expanded to all areas of the State.

In summary, the recommendations made by the VPLRC and VPDCPC highlight the importance of having equitable access to Group Conferencing Programs, as well as providing information to participants in the process (victims, police, lawyers, offenders) and ensuring that Convenors are adequately trained and qualified.

2.9 International restorative justice practice

Canada and New Zealand, two countries with similar legal systems to Australia, also use restorative justice to supplement the adversarial criminal law process.

2.9.1 Canada

Restorative justice has been practised in Canada for approximately 25 years and although Programs vary from place to place, they share certain characteristics: they invite active participation of victims, offenders and community members in discussing what happened during the offence, what harm resulted, and what needs to be done to address that harm.[61]

The Canadian Department of Justice has outlined that restorative justice should only take place when:

- An offender admits guilt, accepts responsibility for his or her actions and agrees to participate in the Program

[58] Victorian Parliamentary Drug and Crime Prevention Committee, *Inquiry into Strategies to Prevent High Volume Offending by Young People* (2009).
[59] Ibid p. 194.
[60] Ibid, p 197.
[61] Restorative Justice Online, Consultation Continues on Formation of a National Canadian Restorative Justice Organization, http://www restorativejustice.org/editions/2009/january-2009-edition/canadaconsortium accessed January 2010.

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- The victim of the crime freely agrees to participate in the Program, without feeling pressured to do so,

- Trained facilitators are available in the community and a restorative justice Program is in place.[62]

2.9.2 New Zealand

Restorative justice was introduced in New Zealand in 1989 through the introduction of the *Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989* (NZ), which made major changes to the way juvenile justice and family welfare were addressed. This Act created a specialist Youth Court and introduced Family Group Conferences to involve the young offender, the victim and the offender's family in the decisions about how to respond to an offence.[63]

Over the 1990s, similar principles and practices began to be applied on an ad hoc basis to cases involving adult offenders. However, it was not until the passage of the Sentencing Act 2002, Parole Act 2002, and the Victims' Rights Act 2002 that there was any statutory recognition of restorative justice processes in the formal criminal justice system.[64]

Although restorative justice processes can operate at different stages in the criminal justice system, pre-sentencing conferencing in the District Court appears to be the most common restorative justice process operating in New Zealand.[65]

2.10 International evidence on restorative justice

This section provides an overview of international evidence on restorative justice, drawing on research conducted for the Smith Institute in London. The research included a review of literature and evidence on restorative justice trials in a number of jurisdictions, including the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States.

2.10.1 Purpose of the research and sources drawn upon

This research aimed to provide a non-governmental assessment of the evidence in relation to restorative justice, including identifying good-quality restorative justice practice, and to reach conclusions on its effectiveness, with particular reference to re-offending.

Most of the evidence was based on one variety of restorative justice: face-to-face conferences involving offenders, victims and their supporters. A search of online databases, library catalogues, existing literature, bibliographies, publications and referrals by subject matter

[62] Canada Department of Justice, Policy Centre for Victim Issues , http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/pi/pcvi-cpcv/res-rep html accessed January 2010.
[63] Parliament of Victoria Law Reform Committee, Inquiry into alternative dispute resolution and restorative justice (2009) p. 188.
[64] New Zealand Ministry of Justice, http://www.justice.govt.nz/publications/global-publications/r/restorative-justice-in-new-zealand-best-practice accessed January 2010.
[65] Ibid.

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experts was used to identify evaluations of the effectiveness of restorative justice at helping victims and reducing re-offending[66].

2.10.2 Impact on recidivism

In relation to violent crime, the research found that restorative justice reduced recidivism after adult or youth violence. This was based on the findings of rigorous field tests.

- Randomised controlled trials conducted with youth under 30 in Canberra found that the frequency of arrest for non-Aboriginal offenders who were assigned to restorative justice dropped by 84 per 100 offenders more than the control group. This result was not found amongst Aboriginal offenders, but it was considered that the sample size was too small to produce reliable results.[67]

- Females under 18 in Northumbria randomly assigned to a Conference rather than a standard 'talking-to' by police had twice as great a reduction in arrests per 100 offenders (118 fewer compared with 47 fewer in the criminal justice group). When the same trial was conducted on young men in Northumbria, it was found that restorative justice did not impact on recidivism.

- In a group of predominantly male youths under 14 in Indianapolis, the restorative justice group was found to have a 28 per cent prevalence of rearrest at six months compared with 34 per cent for the control group.

- Reasonable comparisons also showed effects for adult males in West Yorkshire and West Midlands, as well as for violent families in Canada.

The research also found reductions in recidivism after property crime offences based on the evidence of five trials. Four of these were randomised controlled trials conducted with youth in Northumbria, Georgia, Washington and Indianapolis. This contrasted with a sample of a small number of Aboriginal offenders in Canberra, where diversion resulted in increased arrest rates.

2.10.3 Impact on victims

The research found that the effect of restorative justice on victims *who agreed to participate* was fairly consistent. Evaluation results almost always indicated a high level of satisfaction with the process, despite variable rigour in these tests. The evidence in relation to victims who *completed* restorative justice being more satisfied than victims who refused to participate was less compelling.[68]

[66] A systematic search of the following databases from 1986 to 2005 using the search terms "restorative and justice or conference/e/ing with re-offending, recidivism and evaluation" was conducted in order to identify relevant information: C2-SPECTR, National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS), Criminal Justice Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, Criminal Justice Periodical Abstracts, Dissertation Abstracts and Social Science Abstracts.

[67] Ibid p. 68.
[68] Ibid p. 62.

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Differing levels of satisfaction were identified across a number of trials:

- The Canberra trial found that 70 per cent of victims who experienced a restorative justice conference were satisfied as compared with 42 per cent whose cases were dealt with in court.

- The results of the Bethlehem Restorative Justice Policing Experiment (Pennsylvania) showed that amongst restorative justice participants, there was 96 per cent victim satisfaction in cases randomly assigned to restorative justice, 79 per cent for cases assigned to court and 73 per cent for victims whose cases were referred to court after restorative justice was declined.

- The Indianapolis Juvenile Restorative Justice Experiment found that 97 per cent of victims felt involved with the way their cases were dealt with, compared with 39 per cent in the control group.

- The Justice Research Consortium's eight trials of restorative justice in London, Northumbria and Thames Valley found that 85 per cent of victims were satisfied with their experience.

The research also noted that promising victims restorative justice and not following through on this results in the worst outcomes in terms of victim satisfaction.[69]

2.10.4 Impact on offences brought to justice

Randomised controlled tests examining diversion from court to restorative justice were examined during this research: one trial in Brooklyn, New York and four in Canberra.

The Brooklyn experiment found that almost three quarters of cases randomly assigned to prosecution were never brought to justice, mainly as a result of dismissal or absconding. In contrast 56 per cent of the offences in the restorative justice group completed the process.[70] Similar results were found in the four Canberra trials, particularly in relation to property crime either with a personal victim or in the form of theft from a department store.[71]

2.10.5 Best practice elements identified by the Smith Institute

The research identified three elements of 'best practice' that could assist in guiding investment in restorative justice:

- Restorative justice appeared to work best when it was focused on the kind of offences that had a personal victim who could, in principle, be invited to meet with the offender.

- Restorative justice seemed to work best when it was focused on violent crime, rather than property crime. The exceptions to this were reduced post-traumatic stress for victims of

[69] Ibid p. 63.
[70] Ibid p. 82.
[71] Ibid.

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burglary and property offenders committing less (or at least not more) crimes in the future if they received restorative justice rather than prison.

- Restorative justice might be best able to reduce court and imprisonment costs, as well as crime and its medical and financial impact on victims, if it was used as a form of diversion from criminal justice.[72]

2.10.6 Smith Institute recommendations relevant to Victoria

The Smith Institute made a number of recommendations to inform evidence-based policy in relation to restorative justice in the United Kingdom, some of which are relevant to the Victorian context, namely:

- Restorative justice could be rolled out in the UK with a high probability of substantial benefits to victims and crime reductions

- The approach could be used for many kinds of offenders

- Diversionary restorative justice programs could provide the basis for more general use of restorative justice

- There was the possibility of substantial crime reductions, less victim post-traumatic stress, and more offences brought to justice

- Restorative justice can have substantial crime reduction effects for young offenders given a formal verbal warning by police after they admit their guilt for a first or second offence, particularly in relation to girls charged with assault and boys with property crimes.

The Smith Institute also recommended establishment of a 'Restorative Justice Board' (RJB) or similar institution to provide guidance, set standards, monitor programs, and provide research and development for continuously improving best practice. It was contended that an RJB could develop restorative justice in an evidence-based way, on a continue-to-learn-as-you-go basis.[73]

In summary, there is evidence to indicate that restorative justice is effective in terms of diversion, victim satisfaction and cost to government.

[72] Ibid p. 24.
[73] Ibid p. 88.

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3 Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program participants and comparison group

This chapter provides an overview of key demographics (age, gender, country of birth) of young people who participated in the Victorian Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program.

Young people are eligible to be referred for the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program if the Magistrate considers them to be candidates for Probation or Youth Supervision Orders (YSO). Therefore, a sample of young people who received these orders was used as a comparison group.

Information for both groups is for participants in Victoria between April 2007 and June 2009, as described below:

- **Group Conferencing participants:** data was provided for a sample of 375 young people referred for a Group Conference during this period[74]. The data described below includes information for 372 (99 per cent) participants as three records were omitted from the analysis due to errors in the data.

- **Comparison group**: a sample of 129 young people, broadly matched on age, gender, indigenous status and DHS region, who received a Probation or Youth Supervision Order was provided by DHS to KPMG as a comparison group for the Youth Justice Group Conferencing participants.

3.1 Age at Conference

Nearly three-quarters (72 per cent) of Group Conference participants were aged 16-18 years, with 18 year olds the age group most often participating. The age group most often receiving a Probation or YSO were young people aged 17 years (see comparison group). Whilst 15 per cent of young people receiving a Probation order were aged 14 years, only five per cent of Group Conference participants were in that age group.

[74] This includes all Youth Justice Group Conferencing participants in this time period except for those young people in the DHS Grampians Region for whom data was not available at time of analyses.

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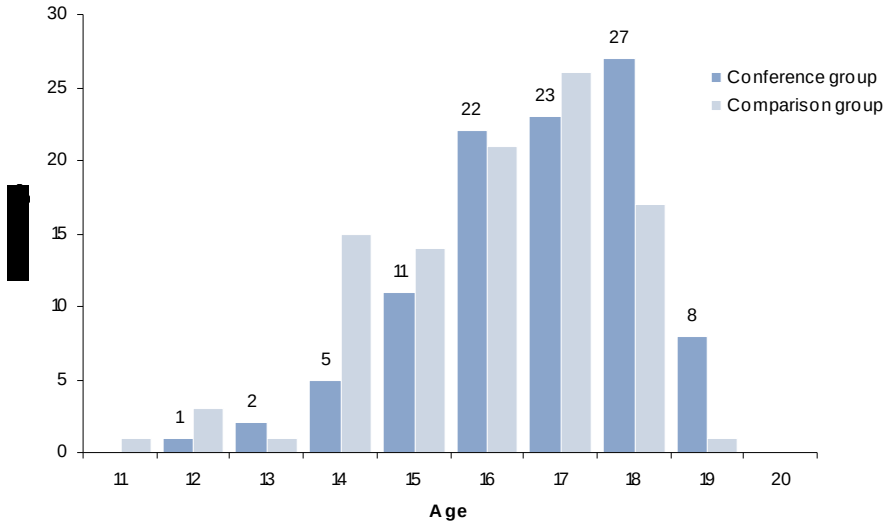
Figure 1: Age of the Young People participating in Youth Justice Group Conferencing vs Comparison Group



Source: DHS Youth Services and Youth Justice Branch, KPMG analyses

3.2 Gender

In both the Youth Justice Group Conferencing and comparison groups, most participants were young men. Of the young people referred to a Group Conference, 87 per cent of participants were young men and 13 per cent were young women. In the comparison group, 81.5 per cent were young men and 18.5 per cent were young women.

3.3 Country of birth

The majority of participants in both groups who had their country of birth recorded were born in Australia; Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program[75] (89 per cent) and comparison group (83 per cent)[76].

3.4 Aboriginal participants

As shown in Figure 2, 10 per cent (31 young people) of the Youth Justice Group Conference Program participants were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young people. The representation of Aboriginal young people appeared to increase with age. There were no Aboriginal participants aged under 15 years and the highest numbers were in the 18 years age group. The

[75] For 147 cases (39%) information on country of birth was missing or not declared.
[76] For 52 cases (36%) information on country of birth was missing or not declared.

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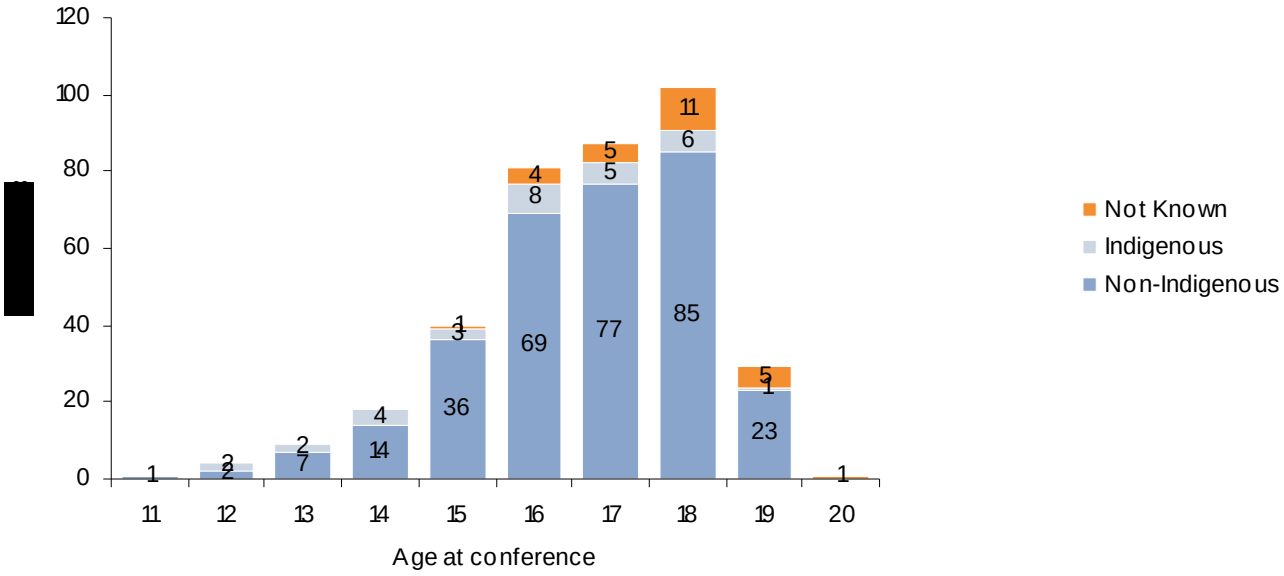
comparison group had a similar proportion of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young people (nine per cent; 13 young people).

Figure 2: Aboriginal status of young people participating in Group Conferencing by age



Source: DHS Youth Services and Youth Justice Branch, KPMG analyses

To note, the referral and participation of Aboriginal young people in the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program may have been influenced by the option of participating in a Koori Children's Court in metropolitan Melbourne. The Koori Children's Court is a process specifically designed for Aboriginal children and has similar principles and focus to the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program.

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3.5 Summary

In summary, the current review followed 372 young people who participated in the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program between April 2007 and June 2009. Compared with the comparison sample of young people who received Probation or Youth Supervision Orders, Youth Justice Group Conferencing participants were broadly the same age, slightly more likely to be male with similar levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants.

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4 Service activity

This chapter provides an overview of the Program model in operation during the review period. This includes the Courts that young people were referred from, uptake of these referrals, the volume of Conferences conducted (by agency and against targets) and level of participation by victims and other participants.

4.1 Referring court

There were a total of 35 Children's Courts that referred young people in this sample to participate in a Youth Justice Group Conference during the review period. The two courts with the highest rate of referral were the Melbourne Children's Court (9.7 per cent) and the Morwell Children's Court (9.1 per cent). The 11 courts that most frequently referred to Group Conferencing accounted for 65 per cent of all referrals (see Appendix A). Please note, as data from the Grampians region is not included, the involvement of Courts in this area is under reported.

4.2 Uptake of referrals to Youth Justice Group Conferencing

There was very high participation in Group Conferencing by the young people referred to the Program. More than 95 per cent of young people who were referred to a Group Conference during the review period participated in a Conference. Only three of the 372 young people in the sample that were referred to Group Conferencing were recorded as failing to reach the Group Conference.

4.3 Service provision

Six service providers provide the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program.

- Jesuit Social Services,: three DHS Metropolitan regions (Southern Metropolitan Region, Eastern Metropolitan Region and North-Western Metropolitan Region)
- Centacare Bendigo (Loddon Mallee Region)
- Centacare Ballarat (Grampians Region)
- Brayton Family and Youth (Hume Region)
- Barwon Youth (Barwon South West Region)
- Anglicare (Gippsland Region).

Figure 3 shows the total number of Conferences completed by service providers for a three-year period against the total target Programs. Please note that three of the services (Barwon Youth, (Barwon Region), Centacare (Grampians Region) and Centacare (Loddon-Mallee Region))

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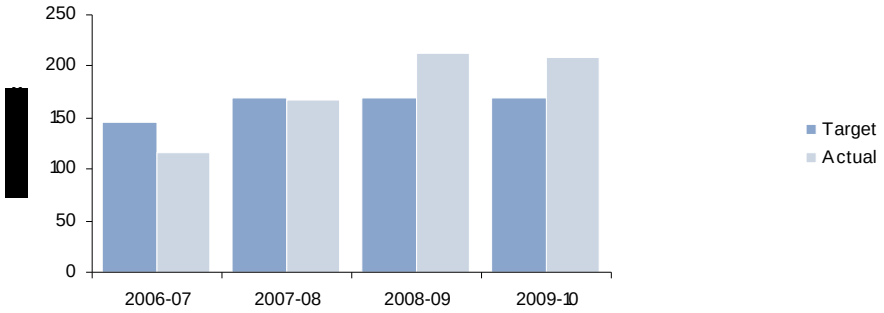
commenced in late 2006, three years after the other services commenced as pilot Programs, and did not have a full year to meet their targets.

DHS provided some additional one-off contributions to individual providers to meet their increased demand in 2008-09 and 2009-10.

Figure 3: Total number of Conferences provided against targets



Source: DHS Youth Services and Youth Justice Branch, KPMG analyses

Key finding 1: Statewide demand has increased significantly for the Program over the past five years, with the Program outperforming targets in 2008/09 and 2009/10.

4.4 Victim participation

Victims or their representatives participated in most of the Conferences during the review period. Of all the Group Conferences conducted, approximately 90 per cent included some form of victim participation. In 50 per cent (189) of Conferences, the victim attended the Conference in person. Victim representatives, such as Victims Assistance and Counselling Program (VACP) workers, the police and other representatives attended 119 (32 per cent) of Conferences on behalf of victims.

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Table 3: Reported victim participation in the Youth Justice Group Conference

Victim form of participation in the Group Conference	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Victim participation			
In Person	189	50.8%	52.21%
Victim Representative	105	28.2%	29.01%
Victims Assistance and Counselling Program worker	8	2.2%	2.21%
Letter	5	1.3%	1.38%
Victim awareness	4	1.1%	1.10%
Police [on behalf of victim]	1	0.3%	0.28%
Participation subtotal	***312***	***83.9%***	***86.2%***
No victim participation			
No Victim involvement	40	10.8%	11.1%
No victim participation subtotal	***40***	***10.8%***	***11.1%***
Other/missing data			
Other	10	2.7%	2.76%
Missing data	10	2.7%	-
Other/missing data subtotal	***20***	***5.4%***	***2.7%***
Grand Total	**372**	**100**	**100**

Source: DHS Youth Services and Youth Justice Branch, KPMG analyses

4.5 Other Conference participants

Section 415(6) and s415(7) of the *Children Youth and Families Act 2005* stipulate who must and may attend a Group Conference. As stated in this legislation:

- Individuals who **must** attend the Conference include the child, the child's legal practitioner, the informant or other member of the police force and the Convenor.

- Others who **may** attend include members of the child's family and persons of significance to the child, the victim of the offence or the victim's representative and any other person permitted to attend by the Convenor[77].

Police informants and legal representatives were recorded in the majority of cases. Although these parties are required to attend the Group Conference, the consultation process revealed that

[77] Youth Justice Group Conferencing factsheet, DHS

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these participants are sometimes unable to attend as a result of conflicting commitments. Despite police and/or legal representatives not being noted as attending about 15 per cent of the conferences in this review, group conferences took place in their absence. In these cases the convenor makes a decision whether to proceed, taking into consideration the availability and commitment of key participants.

Family members were recorded at more than half of the Conferences (with approximately one in ten only having extended family attend). The 'Other' category included other participants such as Youth Justice Worker, Drug and Alcohol worker, Koori Liaison Worker, Disability Support Workers, Job Placement Employment and Training worker and Outreach Support Services. For many of the Conferences, there were participants from a variety of categories.

Table 4: Other participants at the Conference

Other participants	Number of Conferences in which the participants were reported to be present	Percentage of the total (372)	Valid per cent (364)
Required participants			
Police informant or delegate	314	84.4%	86.2%
Legal Representatives	307	82.5%	84.3%
Other participants			
Young Persons Family (immediate)	165	44.4%	45.3%
Other	125	33.6%	34.3%
Victim Support Agency Representative	63	16.9%	17.3%
Co-offenders	49	13.2%	13.5%
Young Persons Family (extended)	32	8.6%	8.8%
DHS Youth Justice Member	32	8.6%	8.8%
Victim representative or support	23	6.2%	7.1%
Interpreter	6	1.6%	1.6%
Not reported/data missing			
Not reported/data missing	8	2.1%	

Source: DHS Youth Services and Youth Justice Branch, KPMG analyses

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Key finding 2: In most cases during the review period, Conferences were attended by victims (or their representatives) as well as Police informants and legal representatives. However, inconsistent with the requirements of the legislation, Group Conferences did not always include participation by Police or a legal representative.

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5 Assessment against Program objectives

This chapter considers the extent to which the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program achieved its objectives during the review period, including:

- providing effective diversion for young people from more intensive supervisory court outcomes
- providing appropriate linkages for young people into the community
- reducing the frequency and seriousness of re-offending, including factors that impact on the achievement of these objectives
- increasing victim satisfaction with the criminal justice system

This chapter also addresses the second question of this review. That is, to what extent are the outcomes achieved by Group Conferencing related to the nature of offences committed, the characteristics of the offender, the participation of victims, family members and co-offenders in the Conference process and the experience of the Convenor facilitating the Group Conference.

5.1 Impact on diverting participants from more intensive supervisory court outcomes

5.1.1 Sentencing outcomes for Youth Justice Group Conferencing participants

Table 5: Sentence type for initial offence for Youth Justice Group Conferencing participants

Sentence imposed	n	%
Non-supervisory orders		
Good Behaviour Bond	261	70%
Accountable undertaking	13	3.5%
Fine/Discharge	2	1%
Did not proceed	2	1%
Deferred Sentence	1	0%
Total % non-supervisory orders		***75.5%***
Supervisory orders		
Probation	83	22%
Youth Supervision Order	9	2.5%
Total % Supervisory Orders		***24.5%***
Grand Total	**372**	**100%**

Source: DHS Youth Services and Youth Justice Branch, KPMG analyses

As shown in Table 5, three quarters (75.5%) of young people who participated in Youth Justice Group Conferencing received a non-supervisory order on their return to court for sentencing and were diverted from further progression into the Youth Justice system.

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To note, during consultations, some stakeholders reported a perception that some Magistrates still applied some type of supervised order to ensure that the young person had access to the services required to support their rehabilitation, for example, drug and alcohol services, and to guarantee some form of ongoing supervision.

Key finding 3: Three quarters of Youth Justice Group Conferencing participants received non-supervisory orders on their return to court for sentencing and were diverted from further progression into the Youth Justice system.

5.2 Providing appropriate linkages for young people into the community

In order to ensure that young people are supported with the completion of their outcome plan, a "key support person" is identified during the pre Conference preparation period to carry out the task of supporting the young person to complete their outcome plan. This person might be a relative, friend, community member or a worker. To note, under the current model, Convenors are not required or resourced to support a young person complete their outcome plan.

Stakeholders highlighted that linkages created between the young person and the community were a positive outcome of the Group Conferencing process. The Convenor group noted that the Conferencing process helped to create investment in the young person because it often drew attention to their background and upbringing. Community linkages could also be useful to identify mentors for the young person, as well as employment opportunities or to facilitate reconnection with the education system.

Although the creation of linkages was viewed as an important part of the Group Conferencing process, the majority (70%) of young people surveyed about their involvement in the Program reported that no-one had helped them complete the activities in their outcome plan. It was not possible to assess whether this was a real or perceived lack of assistance (e.g. young people may have perceived they had completed a task without support, without recognising parental involvement such as driving them to/from activities).

In order to ensure that young people are supported to complete their outcome plans, further provision should be made for follow up and support. This may involve resourcing Convenors to follow up with young people in relation to their outcome plans.

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5.3 Reducing the frequency and seriousness of re-offending

5.3.1 Impact on overall recidivism

Recidivism rates were calculated for young people who had attended a Conference one and two years after a Conference. The definition of recidivism used in this review is that provided by the Youth Justice Study: *Recidivism Among Victorian Juvenile Justice clients 1997-2001*, that is, conviction of the first offence that occurs after a Group Conference. The date used to calculate recidivism is the date of the offence.

As shown in Table 6, young people who participated in Youth Justice Group Conferencing were much less likely to have reoffended within 12 or 24 months than young people who received initial sentences of Probation or Youth Supervision Order:

- Within 12 months of completing a Group Conference, 18.6 per cent of participants had reoffended, compared to 27.6 per cent of young people who had been placed on Probation or on a Youth Supervision Order.

- Within 24 months of completing a Group Conference, 19.2 per cent of participants had reoffended, compared to 42.9 per cent of young people who had been placed on Probation or on a Youth Supervision Order.

Table 6: Recidivism for Youth Justice Group Conferencing participants

	Reoffended	Did not reoffend	Total	Proportion
Youth Justice Group Conferencing				
Reoffending within 12 months	52	228	280	18.6%
Reoffending within 24 months	20	84	104	19.2%
Comparison group				
Reoffending within 12 months	27	71	98	27.6%
Reoffending within 24 months	18	24	42	42.9%

Source: DHS Youth Services and Youth Justice Branch, KPMG analyses

The impact of Group Conferencing on recidivism rates was widely discussed throughout the consultation process. The potential to reduce recidivism was attributed to the young person being required to deal with the consequences of their offending behaviour for not only themselves, but also their victim, family and the rest of the community. All groups interviewed noted that recidivism rates are likely to have increased since the last evaluation as a result of the legislative framework and the increasing complexity of cases being referred to Group Conferencing.

Key finding 4: Young people who participated in Youth Justice Group Conferencing were much less likely to have reoffended within 12 or 24 months than young people who received initial sentences of Probation or Youth Supervision Order.

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5.3.2 Impact on recidivism by other characteristics

Analyses were also conducted to assess whether any impact on recidivism by gender, age, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage could be determined. However, due to very small sample sizes, it was not possible to identify any definitive trends.

The Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program appears to have an impact on the likelihood of reoffending. Although the sample size is small for young women and young Aboriginal people, all groups showed a reduction in reoffending.

Key finding 5: Due to small sample sizes the review can not definitively determine any impact of personal characteristics such as age, gender or Aboriginal status on recidivism.

5.3.3 Impact on the severity of subsequent offending

The severity of offence is recorded for the most serious offence that leads to participation in the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program and the first offence committed after a Group Conference. These data, provided to KPMG by DHS, show there were 44 different offence types recorded for the young people that were referred to Group Conferences[78]. The following offence types led to a Group Conference for three quarters of participants.

Table 7: Most common offences that led to a Youth Justice Group Conference

Offence type	Number of young people	Percentage of the total
Burglary	104	28.0%
Recklessly Cause Injury	32	8.6%
Unlawful Assault	30	8.1%
Criminal damage	24	6.5%
Intentionally cause injury	22	5.9%
Armed robbery	20	5.4%
Theft of a Motor Vehicle	20	5.4%
Theft	11	3.0%
Affray	9	2.4%
Recklessly Cause Serious Injury	8	2.2%

Source: DHS Youth Services and Youth Justice Branch, KPMG analyses

Key finding 6: The most common offences committed that led to a Youth Justice Group Conference were burglary, recklessly cause injury, unlawful assault, criminal damage, intentionally cause injury, armed robbery, theft of a motor vehicle, theft, affray and recklessly cause serious injury.

[78] Refer Appendix DN for the complete list.

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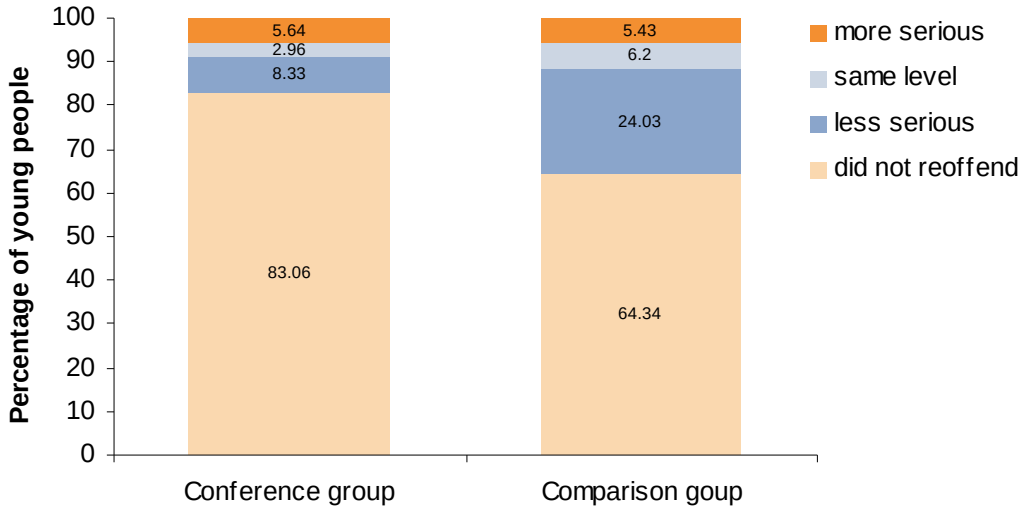
5.3.3.1 The impact of severity on recidivism

As previously discussed, young people who participated in Youth Justice Group Conferencing reoffended much less often than young people in the comparison group. However, when the most serious offence leading to participation in the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program was compared to the most serious offence after the Conference[79], there were approximately 5.5 per cent of young people in both groups who committed more serious offences. To note, this differs from the previous evaluation findings where all young people who reoffended committed less severe offences, albeit this was in a shorter time period. This is consistent with feedback from consultations that young people participating in the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program have more complex presentations.

Figure 4: Rates of recidivism and severity of re-offence (based on NOI scores)



Source: DHS Youth Services and Youth Justice Branch, KPMG analyses

5.3.3.2 Participants who commit more serious offences

Whilst the number of Youth Justice Group Conferencing participants who reoffended and committed a more serious crime was relatively small (21 young people, of whom 19 were young men and 2 were young women), analyses were conducted to investigate any potential trends for future investigation. In relation to offences committed that led to a Conference and a subsequent more serious offence, there were no clear trends in the initial and subsequent offence for the 21 young people (presented in Appendix B, Table 4).

The review also examined who attended a Group Conference to identify if there were any differences for young people in the following three categories: those who committed more

[79] Severity of the most serious offences as recorded using the National Offence Index and provided to KPMG by DHS.

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serious subsequent offences, those who committed offences of the same or lesser severity, and those who did not reoffend.

As shown in Table 8, the group of young people who reoffended and committed a more serious offence may already have been at higher risk of recidivism as they:

- were much more likely to have a DHS Youth Justice worker in attendance (four times as likely as non-reoffenders), which suggests more involvement in the Youth Justice system prior to their participation in the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program
- were less likely to have immediate family in attendance (33%) compared with nearly half (45%) of non-reoffenders, which may suggest they had fewer family supports
- were more likely to have a co-offender present (23.8%) compared with 12.6% of non-reoffenders.

Young people who did not reoffend were more likely to have immediate family present but not a Youth Justice worker.

Table 8: Percentage of Group Conferences attended by various representatives

Group Conference representatives	Group Conferences for more serious re-offenders (%)	Group Conferences for less or same serious re-offenders %)	Group Conferences for non re-offenders (%)
Police informant	85.7%	88.9%	83.5%
Legal representative	81.0%	84.1%	82.2%
Other	42.9%	36.5%	33.0%
Family – immediate	33.3%	38.1%	45.6%
Youth Justice worker	28.6%	17.5%	6.8%
Co-offender	23.8%	15.9%	12.6%
Victim	9.5%	6.4%	8.1%
Victim Support Agency	9.5%	11.1%	18.1%
Family - extended	9.5%	11.1%	8.1%
Victim support	9.5%	9.5%	5.5%
Interpreter	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%
Not reported	4.8%	1.6%	2.3%

Source: DHS Youth Services and Youth Justice Branch, KPMG analyses

Key finding 7: Approximately 5.5 per cent of young people in both groups committed more serious offences. Youth Justice Group Conferencing participants who subsequently committed more serious offences were four times more likely to have a DHS Youth Justice worker than young people who did not reoffend and were less likely to have immediate family members attending their Conference than other participants.

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Stakeholders consulted had varying opinions on the offences best suited to Group Conferencing. Although there was consensus that Group Conferencing could achieve positive outcomes in relation to both property and offences against the person, opinion was divided on the severity of the offences which could be dealt with effectively through the Conference process. Whilst some stakeholders believed that the model would not work with more serious offences, others felt that it could be used with more serious offences, if there was additional training and support provided. None of the stakeholders indicated that the model should be extended to include sex offences.

5.4 Impact on victim satisfaction with the criminal justice process

Victim participation in the Conference was observed by stakeholders to increase victim satisfaction by helping victims to resolve unanswered questions, including why they were targeted by the offender. Having the young person apologise directly to the victim for their behaviour was seen as one of the most important parts of the Conferencing process for victims. Allowing victims to have a say in the young person's outcome plan was also viewed by most people interviewed as improving the victim's satisfaction with the process, as it enabled the victim to take some ownership of the resolution.

Convenors interviewed highlighted strongly that attending a Group Conference could have a positive impact on the victim. This is often the *"first time they feel like they are being heard"*. The Group Conferencing process was seen as having *"huge advantages"* for victims over the traditional police/court processes where they may provide a victim impact statement and may not hear of the outcome from police or receive any restitution. Victims may also benefit from developing insight into the young person's history and circumstances.

These benefits can occur where a victim does not attend in person as the Convenor or informant can tell them the outcome. Although Conferences can work without the victim being present, the consensus was that it is usually more powerful if they attend. The use of a victims' advocate was viewed by most stakeholders as a good alternative if the victim did not attend.

These benefits are dependent on the Conference running smoothly and the young person accepting responsibility for their actions. In the small number of situations where the young person either does not show up or does not properly participate, those interviewed reported that victims often did not have the same experience or sense of 'closure'.

Information gathered through surveys suggests that victims who participated in the Group Conferencing Process were generally satisfied with their experience. Of particular note, all victims surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that "Overall, I was satisfied with my involvement with the whole Group Conferencing Process". The findings of these surveys are outlined in further detail in Chapter 6.

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5.5 Convenor expertise

As previously stated, the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program is based on restorative justice philosophy and practices.

The central role/importance of the Convenor in applying this philosophy and practices to the Conferencing process was recognised across all groups interviewed. The strength of the Program was largely attributed to the dedication and skill-level of the Convenors, including their flexibility and ability to communicate and facilitate effectively.

A sound understanding of child and adolescent behaviour and development, an understanding of risk and protective factors for offending and contemporary knowledge of youth offending were seen as important. Many of those interviewed considered that a skills and competencies framework was necessary to ensure that all Convenors achieve a standard skill-level.

The training of Convenors was viewed as a particularly important factor. There is a specific skill set required for Convenors and in-depth training and ongoing development are required. DHS provides regular training and development activities by a recognised restorative justice specialist to achieve this. Particular areas of training include effective facilitation, Conference preparation and knowing how to read the reactions of participants.

The relationship between Program success and the expertise of the Convenor makes it important to ensure that increasing turnover does not get too high and that new Convenors are adequately supported and trained. Perceptions of high turnover was linked to Convenors being relatively poorly paid for the level of responsibility associated with their role, out of hours work and the potential for burnout as a result of the limited resources available for the Program to meet increasing demand.

Key finding 8: Highly skilled and competent Convenors who are able to implement the Youth Justice Group Conferencing model are central to the Program.

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6 Stakeholder and participant feedback on the Group Conferencing Program

This chapter provides an outline of the feedback provided by key stakeholders on the Group Conferencing Program.

The first group of stakeholders covered includes Victoria Police, the judiciary and the legal fraternity. The role of each of these stakeholder groups is outlined, followed by a summary of the feedback received from that group in relation to the Group Conferencing Program.

This chapter then outlines the feedback provided by offenders, victims and family members who had attended a Group Conference. This feedback is divided into the participant's assessment of the pre-Conference preparation, the Group Conference, and what happened following the Conference.

6.1 Police

6.1.1 The role of Victoria Police in the Group Conferencing process

The role of police within the Conferencing process was an issue raised at all consultations. Whilst there is commitment to the Program at a policy level, feedback consistently indicated that the requirement for police to make first contact with the victims can impact on their participation in the process.

Victoria Police noted that many officers are not familiar with the Program, but are expected to be quickly involved and initiate contact with the victim. In order to encourage involvement in the Program and willingness to seek victim involvement, Senior Victoria Police officers recommended the provision of further training and information.

Under the current model, the Victoria Police Prosecutor is able to suggest or comment on a young person's suitability to be referred to a Group Conference. During consultations, Victoria Police indicated that some operational officers would like to be better engaged in the referral process. It was suggested that Victoria Police (Youth Resource Officer and/or the arresting officer) be asked to provide input into the suitability of candidates for the Program.

6.1.2 Feedback from Victoria Police on the Group Conferencing process

Senior Victoria Police Officers made the following comments on the Group Conferencing Program:

- It is a mechanism for making the offender accountable in front of their family members and the victim. The officers considered that this had a greater impact than what would be experienced in a courtroom because the young person has to face and speak in front of others about their offending.

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- The Program could have a positive impact on victims where they were able to personalise the offender and feel less threatened or concerned about being a victim of crime in the future. However, it was also noted that in some cases, including where the victim was young or the offender did not show remorse, the Conference could further traumatise the victim.

- The presence of family members and, where appropriate, Aboriginal elders, assists the process as it helps the offender to see that the consequences of their actions go beyond the actual victim and the Conference.

6.2 Legal fraternity

6.2.1 The role of lawyers in the Group Conferencing process

The role of lawyers in the Group Conferencing process also attracted considerable comment during consultations, particularly from Youth Justice Managers and Convenors. Lawyers are often relied upon to fill the role of support person for young people who do not have any family or friends who are willing or able to attend the Conference.

The inclusion of a legal representative was reported as critical to ensure that nothing occurred during the Group Conference that would have negative legal impact on the young person outside of the scope or intention of the Conference. For example, it is important for a legal representative to be present to ensure that the Conference outcome plan is not more onerous than would have been expected under a community based supervisory order, or that a line of questioning that might lead a young person to incriminate themselves about another offence is not followed.

The Conferencing process was also viewed as being difficult for lawyers due to concerns their clients may be put through a level of emotional pressure that does not occur in the courtroom. Despite this, many participants noted that lawyers who had participated in Conferences tended to develop a level of support for the process and the Program as a result of the outcomes it achieved.

Legal Aid lawyers receive time in lieu for their attendance at a Group Conference but funding is not available to remunerate them for the additional time spent at Conferences. This was suggested by some stakeholders as potentially impacting on their support for the Program.

6.2.2 Feedback from Victorian Legal Aid on the Group Conferencing process

When consulted about the Group Conferencing Program, Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) made the following observations:

- Delays in the process mean that Group Conferences often takes place a long time after the offence has been committed. This was seen to lessen the impact of the Conference and have a negative impact on offenders.

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- Group Conference outcomes are not always better for the young person. VLA noted that participation in a Group Conference and receipt of a Probationary order for the same offence may be a poor outcome for a young offender.

- Variability in the skills and capability of Convenors has resulted in VLA being reluctant to refer young people to a Conference unless the Convenor is known and trusted.

6.3 Judiciary

6.3.1 The role of the judiciary in the Group Conferencing process

The judiciary plays an important role in the Group Conferencing process as they provide referrals to the Program as a pre-sentence intervention.

The variation in rates of referrals from different courts was discussed in consultations with Convenors, Youth Justice Managers and a member of the legal fraternity. It was reported that some Magistrates may be sceptical about new Programs and wait until they are well established before they use them. It was noted that the Magistrate's awareness and use of the Program was influenced by the capacity of Convenors and other Youth Justice staff to provide information and promote the Program to Magistrates.

It was also noted by the Children's Court of Victoria that the volume of referrals was also influenced by the delay between a referral being made and the Group Conference, and the variable quality of outcomes plans.

6.3.2 Feedback on the Group Conferencing process

When interviewed, the Children's Court of Victoria commented on the following aspects of the Group Conferencing Program:

- The model has a strong rehabilitative and diversionary focus.

- The Program is well placed in the sentencing process. Its current position allows it to be applied only to cases where there is potential for improvement and flexibility regarding sentencing outcomes are available. The placement also ensures that the Program is offered only to appropriate cases according to severity, type and the characteristics of the young person.

- Group Conferencing is very intensive and confronting for all and should only be used for relatively serious offences.

- Although the Program is well supported, support has been impacted by the fact that resourcing issues have led to long delays in accessing the Program. In order to enhance buy-in from the judiciary, the Children's Court of Victoria recommended that there needs to be a reduction in the amount of time from when an offender is referred to when the Group Conference takes place.

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6.4 Other issues raised by professional stakeholders

Stakeholders also discussed Conferences with two or more offenders and outcome plans.

Co-offender participation in Group Conferences was widely discussed throughout the consultation process. It was broadly agreed that co-offender participation was positive, primarily because it creates an incentive for the young people involved to tell the truth as there is less scope for blame-shifting. It was also viewed as being better for victims or witnesses as it removes the potential for them to be asked to go through the same process multiple times.

Each offender participating in a Group Conference has the opportunity to have "private time" where they meet in private with their support people, (family, significant others, lawyer), to develop an outcome plan that addresses their own support needs. However, the presence of a co-offender was raised as an issue for some young people. Some stakeholders were concerned that the process did not adequately address the individual needs of offenders, particularly in relation to their offending histories and different levels of support.

Large Group Conferences involving multiple offenders were also considered to raise particular issues. The difficulties in getting large groups of offenders to listen and take the Group Conference seriously were raised. Convenors noted that with careful and detailed planning with all potential participants, large Conferences could work effectively and achieve positive outcomes for participants.

Quality of outcome plans. Benefits were reported by some stakeholders to be closely linked to the extent to which the outcome plans are *"comprehensive, robust and able to address drivers and causal factors for the offending behaviour"*.

6.5 Young people

6.5.1 The role of young people in the Group Conferencing process

The Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program is perceived as an opportunity for young offenders to develop empathy for the victim and empower the young person to *"make it right"* and feel as though they have influenced the resolution of the issue.

6.5.2 Survey responses

Telephone surveys were conducted with 11 young offenders (eight young men, three young women) who had participated in a Group Conference. All of the young people surveyed were born in Australia. One young person was Aboriginal. The majority of young offenders surveyed had their Conference in a regional location (7) rather than a metropolitan area (3)[80]. More than half of the young offenders surveyed had waited between 6 and 12 months between the offence and the Group Conference.

[80] Missing data for one survey

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The offences leading to a Group Conference for the young people surveyed included theft (4), robbery (3), assault (3), property damage (1), criminal damage (1) and recklessly endangering life (1). All offenders agreed or strongly agreed that: 'I understood the importance of the Group Conference'.

Most of the young people (7) had attended their Conference between one and three months before the interview, with a few attending less than a month before the interview (3) or more than three months ago (1).

6.5.2.1 Before the Conference

When asked about the lead up to the Group Conference:

- All offenders agreed or strongly agreed that "Before attending the Group Conference I felt well informed about the whole Conference process".
- The majority (90%) agreed or strongly agreed that "Before attending the Group Conference I felt well prepared about the whole Conference process".
- The majority (90%) agreed or strongly agreed that "I knew who would attend the Group Conference".
- All offenders agreed or strongly agreed that "I understood why I was participating in the Group Conference".

6.5.2.2 During the Conference

In terms of assessing their Group Conference experience, young people surveyed provided the following responses:

- All offenders agreed or strongly agreed that "I think that the Conference Convenor managed the Conference fairly".
- All offenders agreed or strongly agreed that "I felt supported during the Group Conference".
- All offenders agreed or strongly agreed that "I felt able to contribute in the Group Conference".
- All offenders agreed or strongly agreed that "I felt safe at all times, including arriving and leaving the venue".
- All offenders agreed or strongly agreed that "Overall, I was satisfied with the process and conduct of the Conference".

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- Just over half the offenders (55%) agreed or strongly agreed that "Talking to the victim helped me make the Conference Agreement"[81].

- The majority (90%) agreed or strongly agreed "I understood how to achieve the goals in the Agreement".

- Nearly two thirds (63%) agreed or strongly agreed that "Support from family and friends helped me make the Conference Agreement".

- The majority (81%) agreed or strongly agreed that "The Conference Convenor helped me make the Conference Agreement".

- The majority (90%) agreed or strongly agreed that "The Agreement or outcome plan set realistic goals for me".

- The majority (90%) agreed or strongly agreed that "The Agreement made in the Group Conference gave me something to aim for".

6.5.2.3 After the Conference

In relation to the outcome plan, all young people surveyed said the outcome plan was fair and most of the young people reported that 'I have commenced my outcome plan and intend to complete it'. One young person had already completed the plan when surveyed.

The young people were also questioned about how the Conference had influenced their understanding of the impact of their crime and their outlook in terms of reoffending:

- In relation to the outcome plan, most of the young people reported that "I have commenced my outcome plan and intend to complete it' (70%) or 'I have already completed all the goals in the Agreement" (10%).[82]

- The majority of young people said that no-one had helped them complete the activities in their Agreement (70%).

- More than half (60%) agreed or strongly agreed that "The Conference helped me understand the effect of my offending on my friends". [83]

- The majority (90%) agreed or strongly agreed that "The Conference helped me understand the effect of my offending on the victim".

[81] Two young people did not provide a response to this question. The percentage is therefore based on valid percentages, not overall percentages.
[82] One young person did not provide a response to this question. The percentage is therefore based on valid percentages, not overall percentages.
[83] One young person did not provide a response to this question. The percentage is therefore based on valid percentages, not overall percentages.

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- The majority (90%) agreed or strongly agreed that "The Conference helped me to understand the effect of my offending on my family".

- The majority (72%) agreed or strongly agreed that "The Conference helped me see how I could get back on track after this".

- The majority (81%) agreed or strongly agreed that "The Group Conferencing process has made it easier for me not to reoffend"

- All young people said that they would recommend the Program to someone else. [84]

Nearly all offenders, in response to the question 'If you could change anything about the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program, what would it be', said that they would not change anything. One young person said she would have liked more input into the Conference format before it commenced.

6.6 Family members

6.6.1 The role of family members in the Group Conferencing process

The importance of family participation in Group Conferencing was acknowledged by Convenors. If family members could not attend, they considered that other networks should be identified to ensure that the young person has someone in attendance to provide support. Having people there to support the young person was seen as important, not only to aid their participation in the Conference, but also to help them to follow through on their plans. Participation of family and friends in the process can also help to show the young person that they are supported and that their actions have an impact on the people around them. One of the stakeholders noted that there can be cultural differences in who is best placed to attend, observing that "*for white Anglo kids, mum or dad are best but with Indigenous kids, it could also be an aunty or uncle"*.

Benefits for the family were also reported. This is often the first time the family has heard the entire story of the offence and obtains insights about their child. One stakeholder noted that "*when run well, this can be empowering for the parents and enable them to find supports and services to help themselves and their child…it makes an impact on their coping strategies"*.

6.6.2 Survey results

Telephone surveys were conducted with family members (n=19) of participants who were almost exclusively male (18). Family members were typically mothers of the participants (12). The majority of family members surveyed were Australian-born (16/19). Family members surveyed attended Conferences in metropolitan areas (10) or regional areas (9).

[84] One young person did not provide a response to this question. The percentage is therefore based on valid percentages, not overall percentages.

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Offences that had led to the Group Conference included theft (5), assault (3), property damage (3), robbery (2), group armed robbery (1), affray (1), domestic violence towards parents (1) and a drink driving incident which injured a pedestrian (1).

6.6.2.1 Before the Conference

Family members provided positive feedback regarding the information and preparation they received prior to the Group Conference:

- All family members strongly agreed or agreed that "Before attending the Group Conference I felt well informed about the whole Conference process".
- 78% strongly agreed or agreed that "Before attending the Group Conference I felt well prepared about the whole Conference process".
- All family members strongly agreed or agreed that "I knew who would attend the Conference".
- All family members strongly agreed or agreed that "I understood the importance of the Group Conference".
- All family members strongly agreed or agreed that "I understood why I was participating in the Group Conference".
- 95% of family members agreed or strongly agreed that "I was able to speak openly with the Conference Convenor (prior to the Group Conference) about my feelings about the Group Conference".

6.6.2.2 During the Conference

The family members surveyed provided an overwhelmingly positive response about their attendance at a Group Conference:

- 95% of family members agreed or strongly agreed that "I think that the Conference Convenor managed the Conference fairly".
- 89% of family members agreed or strongly agreed that "I felt supported during the Group Conference".
- 95% of family members agreed or strongly agreed that "I felt able to contribute in the Group Conference".
- 89% of family members agreed or strongly agreed that "The Conference gave me an opportunity to participate in the young person's decision making and planning processes".

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- 63% of family members agreed or strongly agreed that "The Group Conference has helped me build a stronger relationship with the young person".

- 84% of family members agreed or strongly agreed that "I felt safe at all times, including arriving and leaving the venue".

- 95% of family members agreed or strongly agreed that "Overall I was satisfied with the process and conduct of the Conference".

- 95% of family members agreed or strongly agreed that "The Conference helped me to understand the role I can play in helping the young person avoid re-offending".

- 95% of family members agreed or strongly agreed that "The Conference helped the young person see how they could get back on track after this".

6.6.2.3 After the Conference

The family members surveyed also provided positive responses in relation to the impact of the Conference on the young person:

- Family members were positive about the young person completing their outcome plan, with most saying "they have completed the goals in the Agreement" (37%) or "they have started, and I think will complete it" (32%). Only one family member indicated that "They haven't started and I don't think they intend on completing it".

- 89% of family members indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed when asked "Do you think the Group Conferencing Program has improved the person's behaviour?"

- 84% of family members agreed or strongly agreed that "I think the Group Conferencing Program has reduced their offending".

- 95% of family members agreed or strongly agreed that "The Conference helped me to understand the role I can play in helping the young person avoid re-offending".

More than half of the family members surveyed, in response to the question 'If you could change anything about the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program, what would it be', reported that they would not change anything. Some family members recommended improvements to the Program. These related to:

- Reducing the time between offence to Conference

- Increase availability of the Program

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- Providing follow-up after the Conference

- Focusing more on the repercussions of the offence in order to reduce the likelihood of reoffending[85].

6.7 Victims

6.7.1 The role of victims in the Group Conference process

The consultation process also identified the importance of having individuals directly impacted by the offence present at the Conference, in addition to the victim and the offender's family. This can include witnesses, the victim's family and community leaders if specific communities are affected. It was noted by Convenors and DHS Program staff that if the right people are present, these individuals will share their positive experiences with the rest of the community, which will strengthen the overall impact of the Conference.

All groups considered that victim participation contributed to a better Conferencing outcome. In terms of the offender, the victim's presence was seen to help the young people empathise and understand the consequences of their actions.

For victims, participation could help them to recover from the offence and get closure. Whilst in person was seen to be the most effective option, for victims who were unable to attend, the process was still seen as useful if they were told about the Conference and outcome.

The consultation process identified that, although there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that victim satisfaction with the Group Conference process is high, there is no formal mechanism built into the Group Conferencing Program to systematically gather this feedback.

The Victim Support Agency (VSA) identified that the following factors impact on victim satisfaction with the Group Conference process:

- Increased engagement of the young person: The VSA noted that the greater the level of engagement from the young person, the greater the satisfaction of victims.

- Police attitudes: The VSA highlighted that where Victoria Police are engaged and appear to support the process, victims are more likely to participate and find the process positive.

- Prior preparation: VSA noted that victims tend to feel more comfortable with the Conference process when they are properly informed.

- Presence of a DHS Youth Justice worker: The VSA also indicated that having a Youth Justice worker present at the Conference was key to engaging young people and enhancing the experience of victims.

[85] To note, at the start of each Conference, the Youth Justice Group Conferencing model provides everyone with the opportunity to discuss the impact the offence had on them.

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6.7.2 Survey results

Ten victims were surveyed (5 men, 5 women), of whom the majority (9) spoke English at home. There were no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims. The majority of victims had attended a rural Conference (9) and had not had any involvement with a victims' support agency (8).

Those surveyed were victims of theft (4), assault (3), property damage (3), burglary/break and enter (2), dangerous acts endangering others (1) and robbery (1). The majority were participating as primary victims (6), two as secondary victims and two to support family members.

6.7.2.1 Before the Conference

When asked about the process prior to the Conference:

- All victims surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I felt safe at all times, including arriving and leaving the venue".

- Two-thirds of victims (66%) agreed or strongly agreed "My expectations of what I would get out of the Group Conference were met". One victim was 'not sure' and two disagreed with the statement.

- All victims surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I was able to speak openly with the Conference Convenor (prior to the Group Conference) about my feelings about the Group Conference".

- The majority (80%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I think that the Conference Convenor managed the Conference fairly".

- All victims surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I felt supported during the Group Conference".

- The majority (90%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I felt able to contribute in the Group Conference".

- All victims surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that "I was able to speak about the impact the offence had on me".

- The majority (80%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I understood the importance for my participation in the Group Conference for myself".

- All victims surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I understood the importance for my participation in the Group Conference for the young offender".

- The majority (80%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Before attending the Group Conference I felt well informed about the whole Conference process".

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- The majority (90%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I knew who would attend the Conference".

6.7.2.2 During the Conference

When surveyed about the Conference process:

- The majority (80%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I felt heard during the Conference".

- The majority (90%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I think the young person took responsibility for their offence".

- The majority (80%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I was able to provide suggestions about how the offender could resolve any damage".

- The majority (80%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I was satisfied with the agreed outcome plan".

- The majority (80%) agreed that "I felt the apology provided was sincere". Two victims were 'not sure'[86].

- The majority (90%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "Overall, I thought the Conference was fair".

- All victims surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that "Overall, I was satisfied with my involvement with the whole Group Conferencing Process".

6.7.2.3 After the Conference

When surveyed regarding the impact of the Conference:

- Half of the victims agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "The Group Conference helped repair the damage caused by the offence" However, four victims disagreed or strongly disagreed (40%). One victim indicated they were not sure.

- The majority (90%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Overall, I was satisfied with the process and conduct of the Group Conference".

- More than half (60%) indicated they thought the offender would complete the outcome plan.

- The majority (90%) agreed or strongly agreed that the offender would improve their behaviour in the short term.

[86] Two victims did not provide a response to this question. The percentage is therefore based on valid percentages, not overall percentages.

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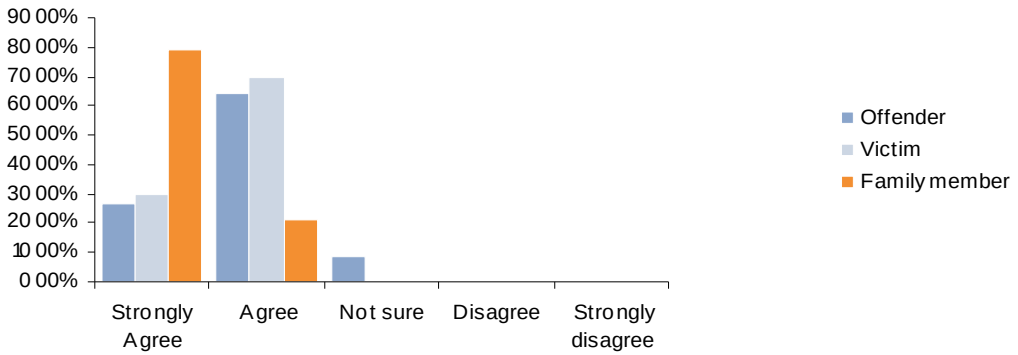
- The majority (80%) indicated that they believed the offender would be less likely to reoffend in the future as a result of attending this Conference.

6.7.3 Summary of survey information from offenders, family members and victims who had participated in a Group Conference

Figure 5 below shows that all of the victims and family members (100%) surveyed strongly agreed or agreed with the statement 'Overall, I was satisfied with my involvement with the whole Group Conferencing Process'.

The majority of young offenders (91%) surveyed strongly agreed or agreed with the statement 'Overall, I was satisfied with my involvement with the whole Group Conferencing Process' (the remainder said they were 'not sure').

Figure 5: Overall, I was satisfied with my involvement with the whole Group Conferencing Process



Source: DHS Youth Services and Youth Justice Branch, KPMG analyses

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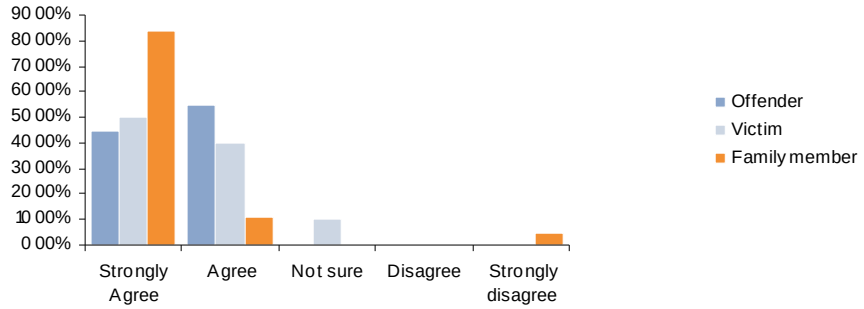
All surveyed offenders reported that they 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that they were satisfied with the process and conduct of the Conference. Most family members and victims also indicated that they 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed'.

Figure 6: Overall I was satisfied with the process and conduct of the Conference Source



Source: DHS Youth Services and Youth Justice Branch, KPMG analyses

Finally, all of the young people, family members and victims surveyed agreed that "I would recommend the Program to someone else if they were eligible".

Key finding 9: All of the victims and family members, and the majority of young offenders (91%) surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that "Overall, I was satisfied with my involvement with the whole Group Conferencing Process". All participants surveyed agreed that "I would recommend the Program to someone else if they were eligible".

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7 Impact on costs to the Youth Justice system

This chapter presents the findings of a high-level cost benefit analysis of the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program. The costs considered were the financial costs to DHS of the Program offset by savings in costs to other programs, and the benefits related to financial savings resulting from sending offenders to Group Conferences rather than issuing them with Community Based Orders.

The data used in constructing the cost benefit analysis includes the total number of participants in the Program, the average cost of a Group Conference per individual, and the average cost of a 6 month supervisory order per individual.

Finally, potential lifetime savings are also described but are not quantified for the purposes of these analyses.

7.1 Cost benefit analysis methodology

The output of the model is a benefit cost ratio which presents the economic benefits of a Program as a ratio of the costs, i.e. the savings achieved for every dollar spent on the Program.

In determining the savings arising from the Program, both immediate and short-term savings were considered; if the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program were not available, these young people would instead be placed on Community Based Order, such as Probation or a Therefore, in determining the immediate benefits of the Program, it was necessary to examine the cost savings arising from sending young people to Group Conferences rather than issuing them with Community Based Orders. In the short term (over a twelve month period), benefits arise from the reduction in recidivism that occurs as a result of participants attending Group Conferences – the reduction in reoffending leads to future reductions in policing and court administration costs for example.

The cost benefit analysis was therefore constructed by considering both the immediate and the short-term benefits arising from the YJGC Program, and quantifying these benefits in a one year 'snapshot' in order to compare them with the costs of administering the Program.

7.2 Cost benefit analysis

7.2.1 Assumptions

In conducting the cost benefit analysis, the following assumptions are made[87]:

- Total expenditure on the Program by DHS in 2008/9 of $979,320.
- 195 young offenders participating in Youth Justice Group Conferencing in the 2008/9 financial year, resulting in a cost per Conference (per individual) of $5,022.

[87] Source: Data supplied to KPMG by DHS

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- Average cost of a Community Based Order in 2008/09 of $9,495 per individual.
- Average cost of a three month period in custody per individual of $48,221.
- 75.5% diversion rate for YJGC.
- 42.9% recidivism rate for individuals who receive a CBO.
- 19.2% recidivism rate for individuals who participate in YJGC.
- Individuals who participate in YJGC and reoffend are given a CBO on return to court.

7.2.2 Financial costs

As outlined in the assumptions above, over the period of 2008-09, the total cost to DHS of delivering the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program was $979,320 (direct Program funding of $855,512 plus DHS corporate overhead costs of $123,808). During this period, there were 195 Conferences held. Actual expenditure per individual will vary according to the level of intervention required: however this represents an average expenditure per Conference of $5,022.

7.2.3 Immediate financial benefits

The immediate financial benefits arising from the YJGC Program take the form of the reduction in the cost of service provision through referring offenders to Group Conferencing rather than issuing Community Based Orders. The average cost of a Community Based Order per client is $9,495, while the average cost of a group Conference is $5,022. Therefore the average cost of a group Conference of $5,022 is 52% of the average cost of a community based service order per individual. The net benefit of the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program in terms of its lower costs is $4,473 per offender.[88]

In 2008/09, YJGC achieved a 75.5% diversion rate, i.e. 75.5% of the 195 participants (147 individuals) did not receive a supervisory order (for the purposes of this exercise, this is defined as a Community Based Order on return to court).

The immediate financial benefit in 2008/9 of YJCG in terms of its lower costs compared to Community Based Orders was 147 x $4,473 = $657,531 immediate savings.

7.2.4 Financial benefits arising within the short-term

In addition to the immediate financial benefits arising from the lower costs of the YJGC Program compared to Community Based Orders, the reduction in the recidivism rate brings with it additional benefits in the form of reductions in policing and court costs as a result in the lower number of participants reoffending.

[88] This modelling assumes young people who attend a Group Conference and subsequently re-offend will not have further Group Conferences.

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Using data from the 2010 Report on Government Services[89], it is possible to provide an indication of the size of the benefits that arise in terms of reductions in policing and court administration costs. The report provides the following average costs per individual:

- **Policing Costs**: $363 per person

- **Court Administration Costs**: $1,279 per person[90]

As outlined in table 6, the proportion of participants in the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program who reoffended after 24 months was 19.2% compared to 42.9% for the comparison group. This means that, of the 195 YJGC participants in 2008/9, 37 reoffended compared to 84 of the 195 who were placed on CBOs. That is, 47 fewer young people reoffended after participating in the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program, resulting in savings on the costs of policing, court administration and subsequently issuing them with CBOs.

Making the assumption that each of the YJGC participants who reoffended were given a CBO on their return to court, the additional financial benefits can be calculated as follows:

- $363 (police contact) + $1,279 (court costs) + $9,495 (CBO) = $11,137 x 47 individuals = **$523,439 additional savings within 2 years.**

The timing of these additional savings will inevitably lag behind the immediate savings arising as a result of the lower cost of YJGC compared to CBOs, since they result from the reduction in reoffending brought about by the Program. However, if the Program is run on a recurring basis, these additional savings will be accrued on a year-on year basis after the first year. That is, after the first year of the Program, there will be savings every year resulting from the reduction in recidivism brought about by the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program. Therefore, for the purposes of this analysis, the benefits arising from the reduction in recidivism are incorporated into the analysis against the 2008/09 costs and assumed to have been realised in the first year.

7.2.5 Longer term financial benefits

In addition to the benefits outlined above, there exist a range of wider savings that will arise from the Program as a result of the reduction in reoffending it brings about. The principal example of these benefits is the cost of custody. Of the group of young people who desist from offending following a Group Conference, it is possible that some would have 'progressed' beyond a CBO to a custodial sentence if they had not participated in the YJGC Program. Based on the average cost per individual of a three month custodial order, a saving of **$48,221** is made for each individual diverted from a custodial sentence in this way.

Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that crimes avoided by the reduction in recidivism brought about by the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program will bring about additional savings in the form of avoided costs to the victims of crime and wider society, for example the

[89] Source: http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/rogs/2010
[90] Court Expenditure per person of $1,279 is calculated as the $1.1 billion total court administration recurrent expenditure across Australia (as outlined in the 2010 report on Government Services) in 2008/09 divided by the 867,800 total cases that were lodged in 2008/09)

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cost of lost output, medical costs for victims and the costs of property stolen/damaged as a result of crime.

It has also been found that there are longer term financial benefits to Government associated with diverting young people away from the criminal justice system and other Government pathways. In 2006, a report, *Transitions from Care: Avoidable costs to governments of alternative pathways of young people exiting the formal child protection care system in Australia*[91], identified evidence to suggest that there would be significant economic and social benefits if more young people were better supported, post care, in ways which reduced the likelihood of their progression into prolonged use of high cost services.

That report aimed to establish the estimated costs and benefits to governments of the alternate pathways available to young people who leave the formal child protection care system across Australia. The report found that there was an evidentiary basis for the suggestion that policies directed at reducing the overall costs to government should be based on a two-pronged approach – reducing the numbers of young people on the most expensive pathways and reducing the length of time they spend on these pathways. As a result, it was found that moving young people into lower level usage pathways could represent significant savings to government, as well as increasing the life opportunities for young people.

Although this study did not focus on diversion from the Youth Justice system, it does provide some guidance as to the potential social and financial impact of helping young people to avoid expensive pathways. Given the high cost of further progression into the Youth Justice system, the findings of this report have some application.

In the case of the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program, the above benefits are not explicitly included in the cost benefits analysis, since it is not possible to quantify how many offenders would have received a custodial sentence had they not participated in YJGC, or the types of offences they would have committed. It is however important to bear in mind that considerable additional financial benefits arise from YJGC over and above those included in the analysis, and hence the cost benefit analysis calculations here present a 'conservative' view of the benefits arising from the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program.

7.2.6 Summary

Under the assumptions outlined above therefore, the total benefits arising from Youth Justice Group Conferencing in 2008/9 are the sum of the immediate savings arising from the lower cost of YJGC compared to CBOs ($657,531) and the savings arising from the reduction in recidivism brought about by YJGC ($523,439)**,** which total **$1,180,970.** Considering that the total expenditure by DHS on the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program in 2008/9 was $979,320, this means that for every $1 invested by DHS on the Program, at least **$1.21** is saved in the immediate and short term.

[91] Morgan Disney & Associates Pty Ltd and Applied Economics Pty Ltd for the Community Services Ministerial Advisory Council (CSMAC) Youth Working Group *Transitions from Care: Avoidable costs to governments of alternative pathways of young people exiting the formal child protection care system in Australia* (2006).

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The cost-benefit analysis therefore indicates that there is a net benefit to running Youth Justice Group Conferencing of **21 cents** per dollar spent.

In reality, this net benefit is likely to be even greater given the wider 'unquantifiable' benefits arising from the Program such as diversion away from custody and the wider benefits to society.

Key finding 10: For every $1 invested by DHS in the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program, at least $1.21 is saved in the immediate and short term. These savings are likely to underestimate the actual saving to Government for each young people over the course of their lifetime.

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8 Strengths and opportunities for improvement

This chapter provides an overview of the key strengths and opportunities for development. It also provides a set of recommendations for consideration and maps these against the recommendations of the Victorian Parliamentary Law Reform Committee and the Victorian Parliamentary Committee on Drug and Crime Prevention.

8.1 Strengths of the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program

The Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program:

- diverts young people from progressing into the criminal justice system
- reduces recidivism
- appears to be well targeted in the sentencing hierarchy
- is based on restorative justice philosophy and practices
- allows young people to develop empathy for their victim, take responsibility for their actions and link in with support services
- can have a positive impact on victims in terms of helping them deal with the harm caused by the offence
- can be positive for families of offenders as it helped them to deal with the impact of the young person's offence, understand what had occurred and can encourage families to play an active role in the young person's rehabilitation and achievement of their outcome plan

8.2 Opportunities for improvement

There are also some challenges for the model:

- The delay between the offence occurring and the Group Conference was raised by many of the interviewees. This is primarily due to the delay in offences coming to court, for a variety of reasons. It was considered that conferencing would achieve better outcomes if it occurred in a more timely fashion than is currently the case. The program guidelines state that the young person should have "been referred to the group conferencing program within twelve months of the offence/s or under exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the court". However, some interviewees noted that it can take up to two years between the offence and the Conference and that this is a considerable time in the context of a young person's life.
- Increased resources are needed to maintain and improve quality and expand the program. Managers and Convenors observed that workload was an issue and that, particularly in regional areas, there were not enough Convenors to effectively cover the geographical area.

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Interviewees also noted that the Program could be marketed more effectively in areas of low uptake if there were more Convenors.

- The mechanism for inviting victims to participate in the conferencing process could be re-examined as there may be a more effective model than the current process which is reliant on police making the initial contact with the victim.

- Including a formal follow up into the model would provide a mechanism to ensure that young people are on track with their plans and are continuing to access the recommended Programs and support networks.

- The increased severity of Youth Justice Group Conferencing cases may require further consideration.

- There is opportunity and broad support for the development of a skills and competencies framework for Convenors to ensure a consistent skill-set and to enable Convenors to be evaluated against set criteria, potentially through the introduction of an accreditation process for Convenors.

In conclusion, this Review found the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program to be broadly effective in meeting its stated objectives.

8.3 Recommendations for future development

This review makes the following recommendations in order to strengthen the Program.

These recommendations are also considered in light of the recent Victorian Parliamentary Law Reform Committee's (VPLRC) *Inquiry into alternative dispute resolution and restorative justice* and the Victorian Parliamentary Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee (VPDCPC) *Inquiry into Strategies to Prevent High Volume Offending by Young People*), as indicated below in italics. The relevant VPLRC and VPDCPC recommendations are provided at Appendix C.

It is recommended that the Department of Human Services:

1. based on the positive findings of this review, that the Program is effective, cost-efficient and well-supported by stakeholders and participants, continue to fund and support the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program.

2. review the level of resourcing of the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program in order to:
   2.1. meet existing demand and strengthen/expand the Program
   2.2. ensure that suitably trained and experienced Convenors are attracted to and retained in this field
   2.3. accommodate post-Conference follow-up by the Convenor to monitor and/or assist the young person with the completion of their outcome plan.

   This is consistent with the VPLRC recommendations in relation to:
   - *61: "Monitoring Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program Conference outcome plans."*

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- *62*: "*Support the offenders to complete YJGC Program outcome plans.*"

3. accommodate post-Conference follow-up by the Convenor or a designated agency regarding the victim's satisfaction and well being and, where appropriate, allow for further victim support.
   This is consistent with the VPLRC recommendation in relation to:
   - *58: "Follow-up with victims after a Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program Conference."*

4. promote the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program and evidence regarding its effectiveness by:
   4.1. communicating the strong and positive findings from this review to key stakeholders including: Children's Courts, Victoria Police, Victoria Legal Aid, Victim Support Agencies and key youth focussed community based services.
   4.2. providing ongoing education and information about the Program to key stakeholders centrally and in regions.

   Recommendations 4.1 and 4.2 are consistent with VPLRC recommendations in relation to:
   - *51: "Educating Children's Court magistrates about the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program*
   - *52: "Educating lawyers about the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program"*
   - *59.1: "Information and training on the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program for police."*

5. support an accreditation process for Youth Justice Group Conferencing Convenors in order to ensure that they have a consistent and assessable skill set.
   This recommendation is consistent with VPLRC recommendation in relation to:
   - *66: "Restorative justice practitioner training."*

6. continue to provide professional development activities and forums for all Group Conference Convenors to maintain and build on the level of expertise and the high standard of Group Conferences.

   This recommendation is consistent with the VPLRC recommendations in relation to:
   - *65: "Training for restorative justice practitioners."*
   - *57: "Training YJGC providers about victims' rights and needs."*

7. give consideration to expanding the use of restorative justice approaches to other groups of young offenders and at other points in the sentencing process. The Program appears to be well placed for the target group. To reduce the risk of 'net-widening', it is recommended that restorative justice approaches target young people who are, at minimum, eligible for a sentence of Probation in the Victorian sentencing hierarchy.

8. ask the existing 'State-wide Group Conferencing Advisory Group', or representatives thereof, to consider the recommendations in this report.

9. seek advice from the 'State-wide Group Conferencing Advisory Group', or representatives thereof, with regard to:

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9.1. the 'development of a practice model' for post-Conference follow up with the young person and the victim where appropriate
9.2. an effective process for information sharing with, and educating of, key stakeholders and the broader community about the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program
9.3. commissioning a cohort study to identify the characteristics and risk profile of young people for whom the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program is most effective
9.4. considering whether specific strategies need to be identified and implemented in order to promote more involvement of young people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, and/or young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program.

This is consistent with the VPLRC recommendations in relation to:

- *53:"Participation of Indigenous offenders and victims in the restorative justice processes."*
- *54:"Participation of CALD offenders and victims in the restorative justice processes."*

10. consider the role of Victoria Police in relation to:
    10.1. potential mechanisms for operational police officers to provide input into referral processes
    10.2. the police role of making initial contact with the victim and how this process could support an increased presence of victims at Group Conferences.

11. consider incorporating outcome and participant satisfaction measures into routine data collection for evaluation, monitoring and reporting purposes.

This is consistent with the VPLRC recommendation in relation to:

- *47: Collecting and reporting data about restorative justice*

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A Referring courts

Table A - 1: List of Children's Courts that referred to Youth Justice Group Conferencing during between April 2007 and June 2009 (excluding Grampians Region).

Court	Number of young people referred to Group Conferencing	Percentage
Bairnsdale Children's Court	3	0.8%
Benalla Children's Court	11	3.0%
Bendigo Children's Court	18	4.8%
Broadmeadows	22	5.9%
Cobram Children's Court	1	0.3%
Colac Children's Court	5	1.3%
Dandenong	26	7.0%
Echuca Children's Court	1	0.3%
Frankston	3	0.8%
Geelong Children's Court	19	5.1%
Hamilton Children's Court	4	1.1%
Heidelberg	22	5.9%
Korumburra	4	1.1%
Latrobe	9	2.4%
Mansfield Children's Court	6	1.6%
Maryborough Children's Court	4	1.1%
Melbourne	36	9.7%
Mildura Children's Court	4	1.1%
Moorabbin	2	0.5%
Morwell Children's Court	34	9.1%
Myrtleford Children's Court	1	0.3%
Neighbourhood JC	1	0.3%
Orbost Children's Court	3	0.8%
Portland Children's Court	8	2.2%
Ringwood	18	4.8%
Robinvale Children's Court	1	0.3%
Sale Children's Court	17	4.6%
Seymour Children's Court	17	4.6%

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Court	Number of young people referred to Group Conferencing	Percentage
Shepparton Children's Court	10	2.7%
Sunshine	15	4.0%
Swan Hill Children's Court	4	1.1%
Wangaratta Children's Court	6	1.6%
Warrnambool Children's Court	16	4.3%
Wodonga Children's Court	18	4.8%
Wonthaggi Children's Court	3	0.8%
Total	**372**	

Source: DHS Youth Services and Youth Justice Branch, KPMG analyses

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B Offence types

Table B - 1: The most serious offences committed by young people that participated in Group Conferencing

Offence type	Number of young people	Percentage of the total
Affray	9	2.4%
Aggravated Burglary	2	0.5%
Armed robbery	20	5.4%
Assault	5	1.3%
Assault by kicking	2	0.5%
Assault in Company	3	0.8%
Assault Police	6	1.6%
Assault with Weapon	3	0.8%
Attempted Burglary	2	0.5%
Attempted robbery	1	0.3%
Behave in riotous manner in pubic place	3	0.8%
Burglary	104	28.0%
Careless Driving	2	0.5%
Carry A Dangerous Article	1	0.3%
Criminal damage	24	6.5%
Criminal Damage (Intent Damage/Destroy)	2	0.5%
Criminal damage by fire (Arson)	7	1.9%
Deal Property Suspected Proceed Of Crime	1	0.3%
Drive In A Manner Dangerous	1	0.3%
Fraudulently alter/use identification	1	0.3%
Handle/Receive/Retention Stolen Goods	3	0.8%
Intentionally cause injury	22	5.9%
Intentionally Cause Serious Injury	6	1.6%
Negligently cause serious injury	1	0.3%
Obstruct/Resist Police (Crimes Act)	2	0.5%
Possess Cannabis	1	0.3%
Possess Controlled Weapon	7	1.9%
Possess Prescribed Weapon	5	1.3%

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Offence type	Number of young people	Percentage of the total
Reckless Conduct Endanger Life	3	0.8%
Reckless conduct endanger serious injury	1	0.3%
Recklessly Cause Injury	32	8.6%
Recklessly Cause Serious Injury	8	2.2%
Robbery	7	1.9%
Tamper With Motor Vehicle	1	0.3%
Theft	11	3.0%
Theft of a Motor Vehicle	20	5.4%
Unlawful Assault	30	8.1%
Unlawful Assembly	4	1.1%
Unlicensed Driving	3	0.8%
Use False documents	1	0.3%
Use Indecent Language In Public Place	1	0.3%
Wilful Damage	1	0.3%
Wilfully Give False Fire Alarm	1	0.3%
Wo Auth/Excuse Enter Private Place	2	0.5%
Grand Total	**372**	

Source: DHS Youth Services and Youth Justice Branch, KPMG analyses

Table B - 2: The top 6 most frequent offences mapped to National Offence Index (NOI) committed by young people participating in Group Conferencing

National Offence Index (NOI)	Australian Standard Offence Classification sub-category description	Number of Young People in this category	Percentage
23	Aggravated Robbery	27	7.3%
24	Aggravated Assault	73	19.6%
30	Non-Aggravated Assault	35	9.4%
59	Unlawful Entry with Intent/Burglary, Break and Enter	108	29.0%
75	Theft of a Motor Vehicle	20	5.4%
94	"Property Damage, nec"	28	7.5%

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National Offence Index (NOI)	Australian Standard Offence Classification sub-category description	Number of Young People in this category	Percentage
Total		**291**	**78.2%**

Source: DHS Youth Services and Youth Justice Branch, KPMG analyses

Table B - 3: Country of birth of Young People referred for Youth Justice Group Conferencing

Birth Country	Number	Percentage	Valid percentage
Australia	201	54.03%	89.3%
Vietnam	9	2.42%	4.0%
New Zealand	6	1.61%	2.7%
Australian Antarctic Territory	1	0.27%	0.4%
Cook Islands	1	0.27%	0.4%
Indian	1	0.27%	0.4%
Iraq	1	0.27%	0.4%
Kenya	1	0.27%	0.4%
Malaysia	1	0.27%	0.4%
Portugal	1	0.27%	0.4%
South Africa	1	0.27%	0.4%
Turkey	1	0.27%	0.4%
Missing data	145	38.98%	-
Not declared	2	0.54%	-
Total with relevant data	**225**		
Grand Total	**372**		

Source: DHS Youth Services and Youth Justice Branch, KPMG analyses

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Table B - 4: Comparison of initial offence and more serious re-offence by Group Conferencing participants who reoffended post-Conference

Participant	Initial offence	More serious second offence
1	Recklessly Cause Injury	Trafficking Ecstasy
2	Recklessly Cause Injury	Armed Robbery
3	Unlawful Assault	Sexual Penetration Of A Child Under 16 Years
4	Unlawful Assault	Recklessly Cause Serious Injury
5	Possess Prescribed Weapon	Trafficking Amphetamine
6	Burglary	Indecent Assault
7	Attempted Burglary	Recklessly Cause Injury
8	Burglary	Intentionally Cause Injury
9	Burglary	Recklessly Cause Injury
10	Burglary	Intentionally Cause Serious Injury
11	Burglary	Unlawful assault
12	Burglary	Criminal Damage By Fire (Arson)
13	Burglary	Possession of a Controlled Weapon Without Excuse
14	Theft of a Motor Vehicle	Unlawful Assault
15	Theft of a Motor Vehicle	Reckless conduct endanger serious injury
16	Theft of a Motor Vehicle	Criminal Damage by Fire (Arson)
17	Theft	Recklessly cause injury
18	Criminal Damage (Intent Damage/Destroy)	Intentionally cause injury
19	Tamper With Motor Vehicle	Burglary
20	Unlawful Assembly (Common Law)	Possession of a Prohibited Weapon without Exemption/Approval

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Participant	Initial offence	More serious second offence
21	Wilfully Give False Fire Alarm	Attempt Theft

Source: DHS Youth Services and Youth Justice Branch, KPMG analyses

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C Victorian Parliamentary Law Reform Committee – Recommendations in relation to restorative justice

Recommendations made by the VPLRC relevant to this review are presented below.

Recommendation 45: Research on the outcomes of restorative justice processes
The Victorian Government should commission research to identify and measure the outcomes of restorative justice processes. This should include research on:

- the comparative outcomes of different restorative justice processes and interventions at different stages of the criminal justice process the features of restorative justice processes that contribute to their success
- the features of restorative justice processes that impact on re-offending the elements of restorative justice processes that affect participant satisfaction levels
- the outcomes of restorative justice processes for disadvantaged individuals and groups and, in particular, the impact of gender and ethnicity on restorative justice processes and outcomes for both victims and offenders, including on satisfaction levels
- the cost-effectiveness of restorative justice interventions, compared to other interventions.

Recommendation 46: Consistent performance indicators and data collection methodologies for restorative justice program
The Victorian Government should develop consistent performance indicators and data collection methodologies to apply to all government-funded restorative justice programs in Victoria.

Recommendation 47: Collecting and reporting data about restorative justice
The Victorian Government should collect and report on an annual basis a wide range of data about restorative justice processes and outcomes in Victoria in relation to both adults and young people. This should include data on user demographics, participant satisfaction, recidivism rates and the reason for participation or nonparticipation in restorative justice programs.

Recommendation 48: National framework for collecting and reporting data on restorative justice
The Victorian Government should work with other Australian jurisdictions and NADRAC to develop a national framework for collecting and reporting data on restorative justice Programs.

Recommendation 49: Evaluation of restorative justice Programs
The Victorian Government should regularly evaluate all government-funded restorative justice Programs.

Recommendation 50: Restorative justice framework
The Victorian Government should develop a whole-of-government restorative justice framework that:

- sets out the overarching objectives and principles of restorative justice in Victoria
- provides a blueprint for the consistent practice of restorative justice in Victoria, including providing common approaches to data collection, evaluation and research; practitioner training and collaboration; required standards of practice; and engaging victims and offenders from particular groups (for example Indigenous and CALD)
- sets out a strategy for promoting restorative justice to key stakeholders and the general community

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- establishes a mechanism for sharing information and knowledge about restorative justice generally between those involved in administering and delivering restorative justice Programs.

Recommendation 51: Educating Children's Court magistrates about the YJGC Program
The Judicial College of Victoria should consider providing, in collaboration with the Department of Human Services, information and training for Children's Court magistrates about the YJGC Program, including its aims, underlying philosophy, the benefits of participation, the process and the suitability criteria.

Recommendation 52: Educating lawyers about the YJGC Program
The Victorian Government should work with professional bodies to provide regular training and information for lawyers about the YJGC Program, including its aims, its underlying philosophy, the benefits of participation, the process and the suitability criteria.

Recommendation 53: Participation of Indigenous offenders and victims in restorative justice processes
53.1 The Victorian Government should establish a mechanism for the participation of Indigenous elders and other community representatives in appropriate YJGC Program Conferences.
53.2 The Victorian Government should undertake research on the engagement of Indigenous victims and offenders in restorative justice processes. This research should be conducted in a manner that actively engages with Indigenous stakeholders to harness Indigenous culture and expertise.

Recommendation 54: Participation of CALD offenders and victims in restorative justice processes
54.1 The Department of Human Services should introduce a key performance indicator of the YJGC Program that relates to the participation of offenders from CALD backgrounds in the Program.
54.2 The Victorian Government should undertake research on the engagement of CALD victims and offenders in restorative justice processes. This research should be conducted in a manner that actively engages with CALD stakeholders to harness CALD culture and expertise.

Recommendation 55: Review of YJGC Program demand
The Victorian Government should undertake a review to identify the likely demand for the YJGC Program throughout Victoria over the next five years.

Recommendation 56: Informing victims about the YJGC Program
The Victorian Government should develop and implement a system which allows for Conference Convenors to contact victims directly to inform them about the opportunity to participate in a YJGC Program Conference.

Recommendation 57: Training YJGC Program providers about victims' rights and needs
The Victorian Government should, in consultation with victims' groups, develop and provide training for YJGC Program providers about victims' experiences, concerns, rights and needs.

Recommendation 58: Follow-up with victims after a YJGC Program Conference

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The Department of Human Services should amend the *Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program guidelines* to require service providers to:

- contact the victim following the Conference to identify and address any concerns or needs
- notify the victim of the completion or non-completion of an outcome plan
- notify the victim of the court outcome
- seek feedback from victims about their experiences participating in the Program, in particular in relation to their satisfaction with the process.

Recommendation 59: Information and training on the YJGC Program for police

59.1 The Victorian Government should provide training and information for police about the YJGC Program, including its aims, underlying philosophy, the benefits of participation, the process, the suitability criteria and the role of police in Conferences.

59.2 Victoria Police should amend the *Victoria police manual* to provide information about the YJGC Program and the role of police in group Conferences.

Recommendation 60: Incorporating the YJGC Program Conference outcome plan into the offender's sentence

The Victorian Government should amend the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic) to specify that the court may include all or any of the terms of the YJGC Program Conference outcome plan in or as part of the sentence order.

Recommendation 61: Monitoring YJGC Program Conference outcome plans.

The Department of Human Services should amend the *Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program guidelines* to:

- require service providers to monitor the completion of outcome plans
- set out a mechanism for a graded response to non-compliance with outcome plans
- require service providers to report to DHS and the Children's Court on the completion or non-completion of an outcome plan.

Recommendation 62: Support for offenders to complete YJGC Program Conference outcome plans

The Department of Human Services should amend the *Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program guidelines* to provide that service providers should provide support to young people where necessary to ensure that the young person completes their outcome plan. This may include reconvening a Conference and amending the plan if any aspect of the plan is unworkable.

Recommendation 63: Educating lawyers about dispute resolution Conferences

The Victorian Government should work with professional bodies to provide regular training and information for lawyers about dispute resolution Conferences in the Family Division of the Children's Court of Victoria. This should include information about the purpose of the Conferences and the role of the lawyer in the Conference, with a particular emphasis on the need to adopt a cooperative, non-adversarial approach.

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Recommendation 64: Identification of core skills and attributes of restorative justice practitioners
The Victorian Government, in consultation with practitioners and the Victorian Association for Restorative Justice, should develop a list of core skills and attributes required by restorative justice practitioners.

Recommendation 65: Training for restorative justice practitioners
The Victorian Government should provide a comprehensive training Program for all restorative justice practitioners employed by contracted service providers. This training Program should include initial training for all new practitioners, a period of mentoring and regular ongoing training.

Recommendation 66: Restorative justice practitioner accreditation
The Victorian Government should implement an accreditation system for restorative justice practitioners working for contracted service providers. This should include initial and periodic assessment of practitioners' practical skills and be linked to an ongoing training Program.

Recommendation 67: Restorative justice practice standards
The Victorian Government should implement practice standards which clearly articulate the key practice requirements for contracted restorative justice service providers and their staff, and require service providers and their staff to comply with these standards as a condition of their contract.

Recommendation 68: Complaints about restorative justice services
The Victorian Government should ensure that all restorative justice Programs implemented in Victoria have a clearly articulated complaints policy and complaints handling system.

Recommendation 69: Restorative justice for adult offenders
Subject to the findings of the evaluation of the YARJGC Program, the Victorian Government should implement a staged rollout of a group conferencing Program
based on the YARJGC Program model for all suitable adult offenders, initially at two Magistrates' Court locations. This Program should have a legislative basis.

Recommendation 70: YJGC Program serious offences pilot
The Victorian Government should implement a pilot for more serious offences within the YJGC Program. The pilot should include serious crimes of violence, but exclude family violence and sexual offences. The Victorian Government should develop clear eligibility guidelines for participation in the pilot and provide comprehensive specialist training for Conference Convenors. The pilot should be conducted for a sufficient period of time to allow it to be comprehensively evaluated.

Recommendation 71: Adult restorative justice serious offences pilot
The Victorian Government should conduct a pilot for more serious offences as part of the adult restorative justice Program recommended in recommendation 69. The pilot should include serious crimes of violence, but exclude family violence and sexual offences. The Victorian Government should develop clear eligibility guidelines for participation in the pilot and provide comprehensive specialist training for Conference Convenors. The pilot should be conducted for a sufficient period of time to allow it to be comprehensively evaluated.

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Recommendation 72: Restorative justice responses to sexual offences
The Victorian Government should undertake further research into whether, and if so, how, restorative justice processes might be effectively and appropriately applied to sexual offences in Victoria.

Recommendation 73: Restorative justice responses to family violence
The Victorian Government should undertake further research into whether, and if so, how, restorative justice processes might be effectively and appropriately applied to family violence offences in Victoria, including in relation to family violence in the Indigenous community.

Recommendation 74: Post-sentence restorative justice
Subject to the findings of the evaluation of the YARJGC Program, the Victorian Government should implement a trial group conferencing Program for adult and young offenders at the post-sentence stage, based on the YARJGC model. The trial should be conducted for a sufficient period of time to allow it to be comprehensively evaluated.

Recommendation 75: Effect of participation in restorative justice on offender's sentence management
The Victorian Government should specify in the Program guidelines for the post sentence restorative justice Program in recommendation 74 that participation in the Program may be taken into account in the offender's sentence management.

Recommendation 76: Restorative justice in problem-solving courts
The Victorian Government should consider whether there are suitable ways to allow for victims and for the offender's community of care to be more fully involved in proceedings in the Koori and Drug Courts.

Recommendation 77: Increasing community awareness and understanding of restorative justice
The Victorian Government should develop and implement a campaign to increase community awareness of restorative justice, including its underlying philosophy, the process and its outcomes. This should include using real examples and stories to promote restorative justice at a community level and widespread reporting of data and information about the outcomes of restorative justice Programs.

Recommendation 78: Increasing information sharing and collaboration
The Victorian Government should propose to the Standing Committee of Attorneys- General the establishment of a national network to share information about restorative justice in Australia.

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