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BACKGROUND TO THE SERVICE

In 2007, BoysTown received funding support from Housing NSW to help establish social enterprises in Blacktown. The enterprise now operates on a fee-for-service basis.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in social housing with:

- Paid employment in a real-life work environment over a 13 week timeframe for the experiential learning of vocational skills
- Individual case management addressing personal barriers to employment and social inclusion.

At any one time, the program consists of a team of three young people who develop and sustain a work ethic and routine as well as gain vocational skills under the guidance of a Youth Trainer. In addition, the work environment is seen as a good opportunity to develop and improve self-esteem, teamwork and leadership skills among participants. Personal development is also aided by a Youth Worker providing ongoing case management and group workshops.

The on-the-job experiential learning and personal case management focuses on getting disadvantaged young people ready for open employment. This approach is based on BoysTown's social inclusion model and Mission, "To enable young people, especially those who are marginalised and without voice, to improve their quality of life".

THE ISSUE OF UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

Blacktown is part of the Northern Western Sydney region, where youth unemployment rates (24%) are high. In keeping with BoysTown's mission, we were selected due to their serious and ongoing issues which affected their ability to obtain and maintain work.

METHOD

A mixed methods approach was used in this study to assess changes in the participants as they attempted to complete the program. The mixed methods involved implementing quantitative surveys and conducting semi-structured interviews with participants. Online surveys were completed by stakeholders from the Local and State Governments and the community.

Surveys and interviews were conducted with 12 young people who had participated in the program. Due to the mobile nature of socially excluded young people, not all participants could be contacted for the research. Hence, nine young people were surveyed on entry and seven young people were surveyed midway through or upon exiting the program. The other group of interest were stakeholders from the Government and community sectors. Four stakeholders responded to an email survey about the enterprise.





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As a requirement of the funding contract, all xi z|ǫqxi v|{ 'q' |pmOzi ní |qZnu w-i t'W |nxxzq m€ nzm social housing residents of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. The one female and 11 male participants in the evaluation ranged in age from 16 to 20 years (average=17.5 years). To describe the situation of the trainees further:

- μ 58.3% were living in a single-parent home
- μ 78% - tmǫ { kpvwtj mrvzmi vǫ pǫo'ami z'98
- μ 41.7% had never held part-time or full-time employment
- μ 41.7% grew up in a household where at least one parent/guardian did not work, and
- μ 20% had been in juvenile detention before coming to BoysTown.

RESEARCH FINDINGS ON SOCIAL OUTCOMES

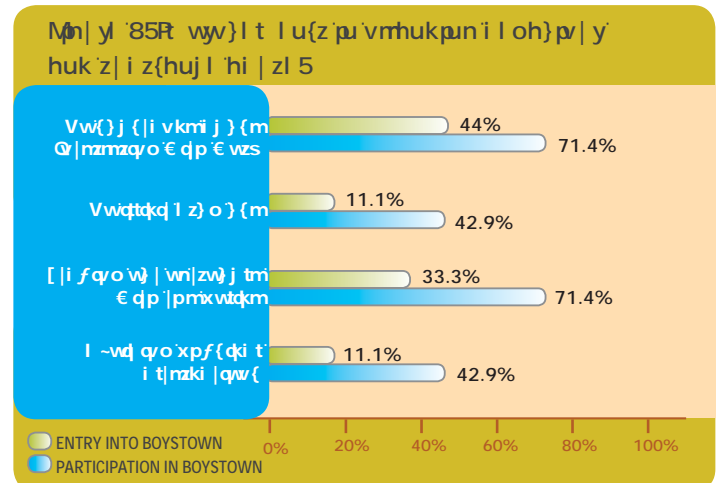
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Government and community stakeholders indicated |pi |'pmǫ' € nzm-nzf' {i |ǫí nǫ '€ dp' |pmj nvni |{ 'nvz' |pmkvw u } vǫf' rzvw |pm€ vs 'wn|pmOzi ní |qZnu w-i t' W |nxxzq m|ni u 6[|i smpvǫl nǫ{ 'i nǫkzǫ nǫ 'j nvni |{ ' for the community as:

- μ Improvement in the aesthetic appearance
... 'wn|pm{ } j } zj { '€ pnmiozi ní |qznu w-i t'€i { } vǫ nǫ |i snv
- μ Ozi ní |ǫ |{ 'u w-qo' nǫ{ n€ pnmǫ { |'pnmǫ' |i o{ '€ nzm no longer visible
- μ Change in the community's perception that young people in social housing were unemployable and unwilling to learn new skills
- μ Increased perception of safety among residents
... 'q' |pmǫ m{ } j } zj { 'l' m|w|pmixznǫ nv kniwn|pmiozi ní |q' removal team everyday, and
- μ Znǫq nv |{ '€ nzm |i sqo' u vzmixzq mǫq |'pnmǫ' neighbourhood.

Wmvi qo'J npi -qǫ' zǫ vǫ |{ } j { |i vkmǫ j } { m

Offending behaviour and substance abuse were concerns for many young people commencing |pmOzi ní |qZnu w-i t'W |nxxzq mǫ pnmǫ mǫ{ } mǫ 'q' xzw-nǫ ' for young people partway through or on exiting the enterprise. After participating in the enterprise, young people were four times more likely to avoid illicit drugs and physical altercations (see Figure 1). In addition, the proportion of young people staying out of trouble with the police doubled after participating in the enterprise.

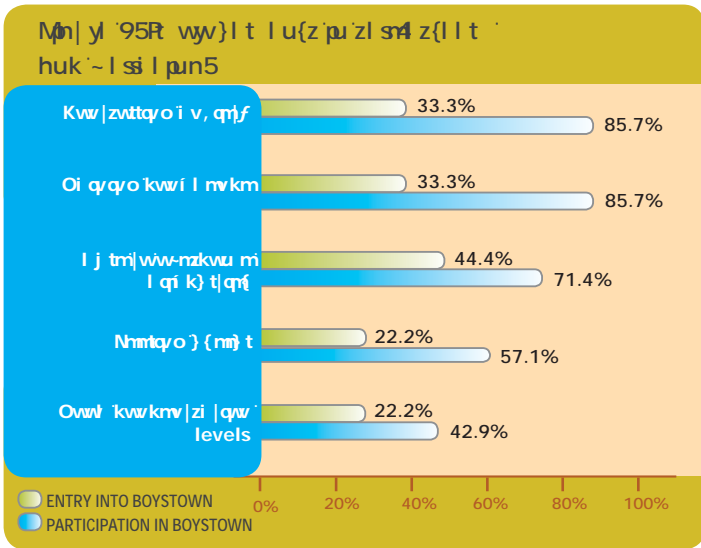
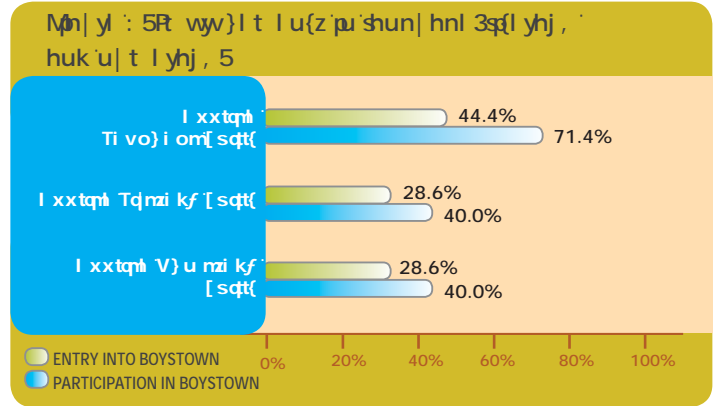




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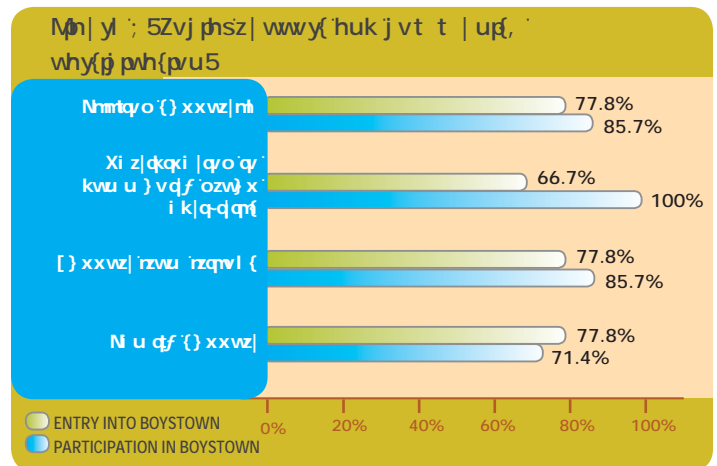
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The enterprise provides opportunities for young people to build their self-esteem through the initial achievement of small tasks. Self-esteem improves with the achievement of larger tasks that require more { sǫt{ 4€ pǫp |pnf 'tni zv 'q' |pmnv |nxxzq n6\pmi o} zni below shows the proportion of young people € pwiǫ nxxzq n6\pmi 'tni { i v, qrf 4oi q'ni { ntrBkwí l nvkmi and felt like they were playing a useful part in life was twice as much compared with young people commencing the enterprise.



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W-nz' | pznm'ƒy } i z | nz { 'wif w} vo' x'nxw' trǫq' | pmi Ozi ní | q Zmu w-i t'W | nxxzq miznxvz | m' pi -q'o' l m-n'w'x'ni { | zw'o' social networks. Young people who participated in the enterprise reported feeling less isolated and participated more in organised community group activities (see Figure 4). The slight decline in family support was due to some young people wanting to lead more positive lifestyles.



Ti vo} i om{ Tq'ni kf i vl V} u nzi kf

Many young people in the enterprise struggled at school because of poor language (talking and listening), literary (reading and writing) and numeracy { sǫt{ 6N} z | p'nz u vzm' | pnf | pi l ' l qí k} t | q'rf 'm'vo i oq'o' € q'p' a classroom style of teaching. Young people in the enterprise reported they were more likely to learn these skills through experiential learning on the worksite (see Figure 3). This could be done through communicating direction to colleagues, reading instructions and measuring materials.

