



BoysTown

Fresh start.
New hope.

Youth Social Exclusion

A Global Concern

All Australians are entitled to the opportunity to participate fully in the society in which they live. However, many disadvantaged young people do not get this opportunity, but remain excluded or on the fringes of society.

The majority of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries currently share a concern that the rising tide of economic prosperity is not benefiting all segments of society. Over the last few years it has become clear that traditional labour market policies have limited capacity to address the continuing social exclusion of certain groups of people and geographical areas.

This is not just a social justice issue. Ultimately, socially excluded groups place significant cost burdens on society in relation to publicly-funded health services, social security and justice system costs and the downstream impact of decreased individual earning capacity, lost productivity and decreased tax revenue. For this reason, many countries are now investing substantial resources in developing the capacity of the not-for-profit sector to provide more holistic, community-based responses to social exclusion, particularly among young people.

Finding Solutions for Young Australians

BoysTown is a national youth welfare organisation and registered charity which specialises in helping disadvantaged young people who are at risk of social exclusion, to improve their quality of life.

As an organisation with over 47 years of experience, we recognise that there are multiple causes of social exclusion which require action across different dimensions of disadvantage. Common issues faced by socially excluded young people include: physical and mental health problems; single parenthood; a history of failure in mainstream education environments; low self-esteem; functional illiteracy; history of offending behaviour; substance abuse; underdeveloped life, personal and vocational skills and a lack of work experience.

Many of these young people also come from groups, who are already disadvantaged in the labour market, e.g. those with a family history of intergenerational unemployment and welfare dependency or from Indigenous or non-English speaking backgrounds. Their problems are often exacerbated by risk factors such as family dysfunction, abuse and neglect, lack of stable accommodation, and cultural displacement.

Taken together; these factors can significantly impair a young person's ability to engage with the community, learning and work, thus perpetuating social and economic problems.

Single issue programs cannot address the range of interrelated concerns that are both the cause and effect of social exclusion among young people. This is particularly the case in regional areas characterised by high levels of intergenerational unemployment, poverty, early school leaving, drug and alcohol abuse and high crime rates.

Intervention models need to be multi-dimensional and designed to provide young people with an integrated range of support over an extended period of time.

They must be based on a holistic approach which enables young people to: overcome personal barriers; identify and build on their strengths; improve their health and well-being; develop self esteem; improve their life and interpersonal skills; build confidence in their ability to learn, and make a successful transition to independent living, further education and training or work.

Youth agencies need to work in partnership with key stakeholders in regional communities to optimise support and opportunities for marginalised young people. These stakeholders include: government departments; community groups; medical and legal services; youth welfare agencies; education and training providers; employers and industry groups and employment services providers.

BoysTown's Response to Social Exclusion

BoysTown's mission is to enable young people, especially those who are marginalised and without voice, to improve their quality of life.

We believe that all young people in Australia should be able to lead hope-filled lives, and have the capacity to participate fully in the society in which they live.

Kids Helpline – Last financial year, BoysTown's national telephone and web-based counselling service



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responded to more than 308,000 contacts and provided ongoing counselling services for over 60,000 children and young people throughout Australia.

Youth programs - BoysTown provides regionally-based personal development, training and employment programs for marginalised young people who are at risk of social exclusion. Programs incorporate: individual assessment, counselling and support; personal development and mentoring; life skills training; accredited employability and vocational skills training; paid transitional employment and on-the-job training; placement assistance; and post placement support. This year, BoysTown will assist over 3,500 young people in communities which have been identified as among the most disadvantaged in Australia, including Logan City, Ipswich and Inala in Queensland, Blacktown and Campbelltown in New South Wales, The Parks and Playford/Salisbury in South Australia and the East Kimberleys in Western Australia.

Intermediate labour markets (ILMs) - BoysTown operates a number of social enterprises and transitional employment programs which provide around 400 young people per year with paid work and on-the-job training to enable them to make a successful transition to sustainable employment. BoysTown enterprises are currently involved in a range of community infrastructure development, urban renewal and asset maintenance projects in disadvantaged regional areas. Enterprise-based ILMs are currently acknowledged as a key component of successful regional labour market intervention strategies in the UK and Europe. They are highly effective in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour; regenerating disadvantaged regional communities and

helping socially excluded people to re-engage with the labour market.

Indigenous community development - In partnership with other key stakeholders, BoysTown is currently working on a major social inclusion project with four remote Indigenous communities in the East Kimberleys in Western Australia. The aim is to: help young people to re-engage in learning; increase community participation in formal education and training; improve access to sustainable mainstream employment opportunities; and create new training and work opportunities through community-based social business enterprises.

Family programs - BoysTown also provides family refuges and parenting programs for young people in need. Services provided in South East Queensland and Western Sydney include home-based support and training to enable transition to the wider world.

A key feature of all BoysTown service models is that while they are anchored in sound processes for working with socially excluded young people, they are focused on sustainable outcomes.

Significant corporate infrastructure supports effective performance management of program and service operations, including financial, human, property, IT, business systems and quality management. Line managers, trainers and youth workers are also supported by highly qualified human services professionals, including psychologists, social workers and therapists, who provide advice, counselling information and support services for clients and staff.

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