

A submission to the
House Standing Committee on Education and Employment

Inquiry into mental health and workforce participation

Prepared by BoysTown

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Overview

This submission responds to the three Terms of Reference set out by the House Standing Committee on Education and Employment. This Inquiry was commissioned by the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations, Senator Christopher Evans to investigate the links between mental health and workforce participation.

This submission is informed by the experience of workers engaged in BoysTown's Employment, Education and Training (EET) Services; the Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project between BoysTown and Griffith University; and the analysis of data from Kids Helpline, Australia's only national telephone and online counselling service for children and youth. BoysTown has made five key recommendations for the Committee's consideration which we believe will significantly improve responses to young people with mental health issues in relation to their participation in education, training and employment. The five recommendations are:

Recommendation 1:

That the Commonwealth Government increase the level of employment pathways funding for young people with assessed mental health issues to allow for the purchase of specialised medical care and counselling.

Recommendation 2:

That the Commonwealth Government review current assessment procedures for young people seeking registration with Job Services Australia with the objective of increasing the effectiveness of assessment particularly for young people with mental health issues.

Recommendation 3:

That the Commonwealth Government review the current interface between Job Services Australia providers and Disability Employment Services for the purpose of improving the coordination of responses to young people with severe mental health issues.

Recommendation 4:

That Job Services Australia contracts be amended to include incentives for providers to work with secondary schools to develop referral pathways, particularly for marginalised youth, to Job Services.

Recommendation 5:

That the Commonwealth Government enter into collaborative partnerships with Not-for-Profit organisations currently providing social enterprise programs, which could include the allocation of funding or the allocation of part of Government's procurement budget to purchase services from social enterprises, to increase the availability of these programs for long term marginalised youth with mental health issues.

Introduction

About BoysTown

BoysTown is a national youth service organisation and registered charity which specialises in helping disadvantaged young people who are at risk of social exclusion. Originally established in 1961, BoysTown's mission is to '*enable young people, especially those who are marginalised and without voice, to improve their quality of life*'. BoysTown believes 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.

In addition to operating Kids Helpline, Parentline, family refuges and parenting programs, BoysTown provides regionally-based personal development, training and employment assistance programs for marginalised young people. These programs include:

Job Services Australia

BoysTown is a specialist youth provider within the Job Services Australia (JSA) provider network.

BoysTown operates eight Job Service programs in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Australia. As part of its service delivery model, BoysTown deliberately targets young people who have a higher level of social exclusion. Based on the Employment Services System (ESS) data, BoysTown provided services to almost 8,000 young job seekers last financial year (BoysTown Annual Report, 2010).

Training, Education and Support Services

BoysTown's Training Education and Support (TES) services provide employment preparation and training to young people who have disengaged or are at-risk of disengaging from school. TES services consist of State and Commonwealth Government-funded programs which include:

- Skilling Queenslanders for Work (Job Preparation and Work Placement Programs), Participate in Prosperity and Enterprise Learning Programs which are all training transition to work programs sited in south-east Queensland;
- Get Set for Work which is a school to work transition program in south-east Queensland;
- Flipside which is a school to work transition program in South Australia;
- South Australia Works - Skills for the Future, Building Your Future and Growing Your Future programs which are training transition to work programs in South Australia); and
- Youth Connections which aims to reconnect disengaged youth with education and or work in south-east Queensland.

Transitional Employment

Transitional Employment provides paid work opportunities to disadvantaged young people through different BoysTown Social Enterprises. The program's objective is for young people to acquire vocational skills through paid work and on-the-job training in a supported environment to enable them to make a

successful transition to sustainable employment. Some of the current and most recent Transitional Employment programs include:

- Fencing, construction, landscaping, car washing, graffiti removal, and office furniture assembly in Queensland;
- Construction, cabinet-making and other related manufacturing activities in South Australia; and
- Horticulture and landscaping, tree-planting, graffiti removal and grounds maintenance in New South Wales.

The young participants receive training from qualified and experienced vocational trainers along with individualised and ongoing case management, specialised counselling and youth welfare support.

During the Financial Year 2009-2010, BoysTown, through its various social enterprises, was able to employ 415 young people from some of the most disadvantaged regions in Australia. These included: Logan City, Ipswich, Redlands and Inala in Queensland, Blacktown and Campbelltown in NSW, Elizabeth and Port Pirie in SA and the East Kimberley in remote WA. The recorded number of employed youth in these enterprises reflected an increase of more than 100% compared to the previous year.

Inquiry into Mental Health and Workforce Participation

Term of Reference 1

'Barriers to participation in education, training and employment of 'young people' with mental ill health'

Most young Australians dream of living a full life as an active member of society. One of the most important ways to achieve this aspiration is through employment and education. Through learning and participating in the labour market, young people are able to build self-esteem, independence and a sense of contribution and connection to the community. However, recent data shows that young people are amongst the most disadvantaged in the Australian labour market.

The current national unemployment rate is 4.9% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). However, 16.4% of teenagers and 24.1% of 20-24 year olds were not engaged in full-time employment or education (Foundation for Young Australians, 2011). The number of young people not in full-time education or work remains as high as it was in 2009, when unemployment spiked as a result of the global economic downturn. In addition, more Australians leave school at 16 years of age compared to most other member countries in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2009). Youth unemployment is compounded for young people with mental ill health, which can range from poor emotional wellbeing and low self esteem to clinically diagnosed conditions.

The prevalence of mental health issues amongst young people

Mental ill health is a prevalent issue amongst unemployed socially excluded people. This is particularly the case for young people who are more likely to report having a mental health disorder than older people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007). Specifically, 26% of young people aged 16 to 24 have a mental disorder compared to only 6% of people aged 75 to 85 years. Furthermore, 14% of young people aged 12 to 17 years and 27% of those aged 18 to 25 years experience a mental health problem every year. Younger people not only have higher rates of mental illness but also carry the greatest burden of mental illness of all age groups. More than three-quarters of all severe mental illnesses occur prior to the age of 25 years (Kessler, Berglund, Demler, Jin, Merikangas, & Walters, 2005; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007).

The need for education and employment

There is an acknowledgement and growing awareness of the role of work in promoting mental health. According to Harnois & Gabriel (2000), employment provides five categories of psychological experience that promote mental well-being:

- Time structure (time structuring aids in the development of organisational skills of a young person);
- Social contact (employment is an opportunity for people to build relationships and social skills)
- Collective effort and purpose (employment offers a social context outside the family);
- Social identity (employment is an important element in defining oneself); and
- Regular activity (organising one's daily life).

Meaningful education and employment are important factors in effectively managing and recovering from mental illness (Unger, Anthony, Ciarappa, & Rogers, 1991; Wolf & DiPietro, 1992; Bellamy & Mowbray, 1998; Hutchinson, Anthony, Massaro, & Rogers, 2007). A large proportion of people with mental illness have the desire to secure a job and consider work as an important part of their recovery (Let's Get to Work- MHCA, 2007). The Australian Government has recognised the value of work in the rehabilitation of people with mental health issues through the sponsorship of several social policy initiatives. For example, during 2006 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) approved a National Action Plan on Mental Health aimed at providing a strategic framework that facilitated effective collaboration between government, private and non-government providers, enabling people with mental illness to develop their workforce capacity and to participate meaningfully in the community. In 2007, it was complemented by 'Let's get to work', A National Mental Health Employment Strategy for Australia. The two initiatives emphasise how important labour participation is in improving the lives and wellbeing of people with mental illness, their families and communities.

Mental health and other barriers to education and employment

Studies show that amongst the different barriers to youth participation in education, training and employment, the barrier with the more lasting and greater impacts on a young person is mental ill health, which range from anxiety disorders and depression through to conduct disorder and psychoses. Mental health issues are also found to be the largest cause of disability – accounting for almost a third of people identified as having a disability (Boardman Perkins & Shepherd, 2003; Let's Get to Work- MHCA, 2007; National Advisory Council on Mental Health, 2009).

In 2003, the unemployment rate for Australians with disability (that is, disability and/or mental illness) averaged 8.6% compared to 5.0% for people without disability. Furthermore, 53.2% of people with disability participated in the labour force compared to 80.6% of people without disability. The labour force participation rate of people with disability continues to fall, while the rate for people without disability has risen since 1993 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003). Currently, Disability Support Pension Numbers indicate that approximately 130,000 people aged below 35 years are on this pension (Australian Government Budget 2011-12). It has been assessed that over half of these people are capable of working. However, those with a history of mental ill health face problems in the open employment market including stigma, a reluctance by employers to recruit and a perceived likelihood of work performance failure (Manning & White, 1995). There is a tendency for mental health professionals, employers and others to underestimate the capacities and skills of their clients and to over-estimate the risk to employers (Boardman Perkins & Shepherd, 2003).

As evidenced by research, young people living in the most socio-economically disadvantaged areas of Australia experience a higher prevalence of mental health and/or behavioural problems (Fryers, Melzer, Jenkins, & Brugha, 2005). It is also highly probable that these young people come from groups who are already disadvantaged in the labour market, for example, those with family backgrounds of intergenerational unemployment and welfare dependency or from Indigenous or culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Their problems are often exacerbated by risk factors such as family dysfunction, abuse and neglect, lack of safe and 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 exclusion.

Being socially excluded due to obstacles in obtaining everyday social opportunities and gaining access to goods and services can compound the impacts of mental ill health (Glover, Burns, Butler, & Patton, 1998; Twenge, 2000; Kawachi & Berkman, 2001). In some instances, this can lead to more severe issues. For example, young people with mental health problems report higher rates of self-harming, suicidal ideation and other risky behaviours (Meltzer, Harrington, Goodman, & Jenkins, 2001; Sinclair & Green, 2005).

BoysTown Kids Helpline Data on Mental Health

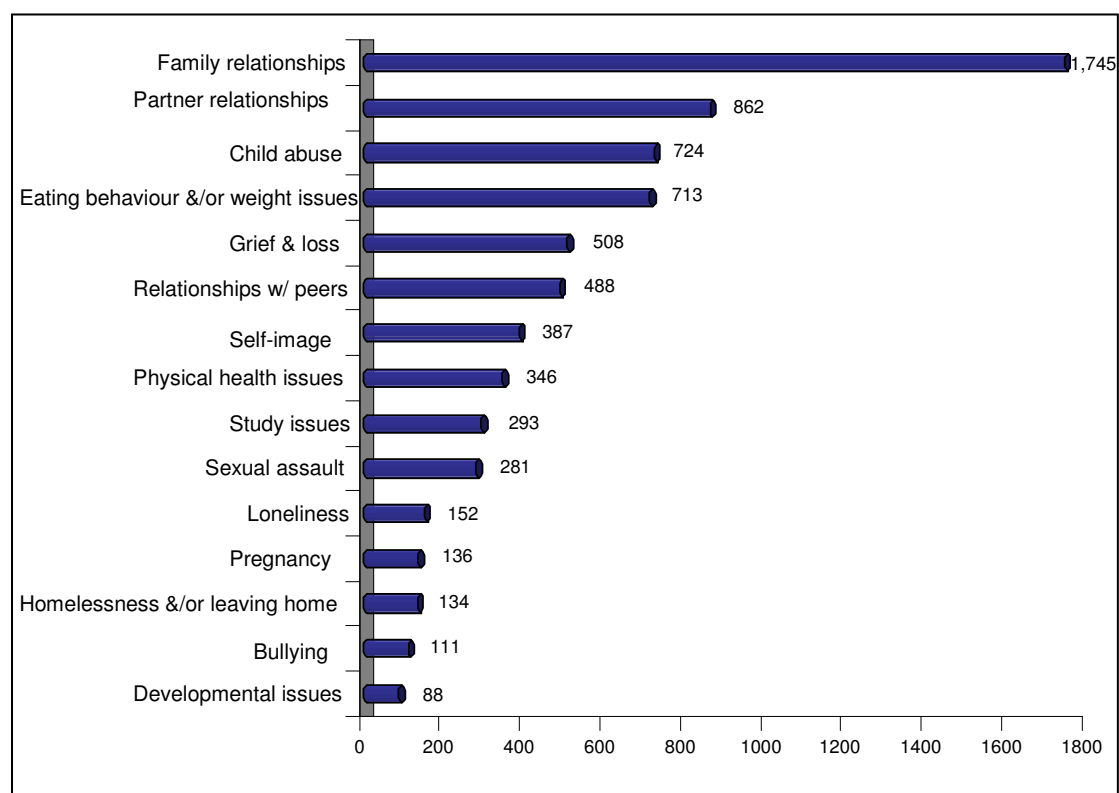
Kids Helpline has historically captured mental health problems across a number of different primary concerns or 'problem types': *mental health issues, managing emotional or behavioural responses, eating behaviours and weight issues, drug and alcohol use, suicidality and self injury*. During 2010 Kids Helpline provided 62,612 counselling sessions of which 39,759 were with young people aged 15 to 25 years. Of these contacts, 19,704 or 49.6% were in relation to mental health concerns. The table below shows the breakdown of these concerns where suicidality or self-injury, emotional and behavioural management problems and mental health were the more prominent issues.

Table 1. Number and proportion of broader mental health contacts (aged 15 to 25 years) responded to by Kids Helpline during 2010

Broader Mental Health Problem	Number	Proportion of All 39,759 Counselling Sessions
1. All contacts of suicidality or self-injury	11,171	28.1%
2. Emotional and/or Behavioural Management	4,666	11.7%
3. Mental Health Disorders	3,288	8.3%
4. Eating Behaviour – (continued disorder)	356	0.9%
5. Drug Use – (problematic use)	200	0.5%
6. Alcohol – (problematic use)	23	0.1%
Total Mental Health Issues	19,704	49.6%

Furthermore the most likely issues associated with mental health concerns included: family relationships; partner relationships; child abuse and grief & loss. Figure 1 shows the graphical representation of the secondary concerns as flagged by young people aged 15 to 25 years.

Figure 1. Secondary concerns of young people with broader mental health problems.



Note: Secondary concerns are issues presented by young people with Mental Health issues. They exclude all concerns included in the definition of Mental Health issues.

Consideration needs to be given to these secondary concerns in order to provide effective intervention strategies necessary in helping young people achieve positive education or employment outcomes.

Data from BoysTown's Employment, Education and Training services provides a more in-depth analysis of the barriers that young people with mental health concerns must overcome to achieve employment.

BoysTown Employment, Education & Training Data on Mental Health

Little research has been undertaken on the effectiveness of intervention models for young people experiencing mental health problems and other barriers to learning and labour participation, such as those that integrate community engagement strategies (employment, training and mentoring) with case management and counselling. In response to this, BoysTown has partnered with Griffith University Queensland in an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project (LP0776519) entitled 'Reconnecting Disaffected Youth Through Successful Transition to Work'. The aims of the research project are to:

- Identify the key variables that assist marginalised young people to achieve employment or educational outcomes;
- Assess the personal change and improvement in marginalised young people as they progress through social enterprises; and

- Disseminate these findings across Government and the Community sectors to increase the effectiveness of services in engaging with this demographic group

Young people participating in BoysTown's social enterprise programs that provide real work experiences in a supported environment have been monitored as part of this research project. A total of 542 young people have been surveyed during entry, midway through and/or upon exiting the programs across all of BoysTown's Employment, Education and Training sites in south-east Queensland, western Sydney in New South Wales, northern Adelaide and Port Pirie in South Australia, and Balgo in remote Western Australia. Three-quarters (75.2%) of the young people were male and 24.8% were female, with an average age of 18.9 years. In relation to ethnic background, 24.3% were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and 14.8% were from a culturally and linguistically diverse background. Moreover, 40 young people from this sample group participated in semi-structured interviews to provide more specific information behind these barriers.

This research has identified a range of interacting factors that combine to inhibit the participation of young people including those with mental health issues from engaging in work. These factors are identified in the following analysis.

Profile of Young People in BoysTown's Social Enterprise Programs

The employment history of young people coming to BoysTown shows that young people lack work skills and experience and were part of an intergenerational unemployment cycle. More than one-third (35.6%) never worked in their life while 71.9% in total had not experienced full-time employment. Furthermore, 45% of young people grew up in households where the caregiver did not have consistent work. Of those who had worked previously, many had come to BoysTown after being unemployed for an average of 43 weeks. Upon entering BoysTown, 35.6% were reliant on Centrelink benefits as their main source of income while 30% were not receiving any income. The highest level of education attained was Year 9 or below for 33.3% of young people while a further 36.9% left school after completing Year 10. Adding to these employment and education historical barriers, 13.6% of young people entering BoysTown had been in juvenile or adult detention.

Accommodation was also unstable for many of these young people. One in five (18.8%) young people were living in temporary accommodation. Furthermore, 36% were living in public housing accommodation. In addition, 37.3% were living with one parent while a further 14.6% were living with extended family or friends. The profile of young people entering BoysTown shows a poor employment background and sometimes unstable accommodation. In addition to these barriers, the ARC project findings also point to a number of personal development barriers to achieving employment or education outcomes.

Barriers for Young People to Employment and Education

The barriers faced by socially excluded people are complex and ongoing. Research has found links between poor literacy and numeracy, poor behaviour and social skills, low self esteem and wellbeing, school dropouts, lack of future aspirations and poor job prospects (Wridgely, Richer, Martinson, Kubo, & Strawn, 2003; Galbraith & Alexander, 2005; Clark & Dugdale, 2008). Consistent with the research, the findings of the ARC project show that the barriers faced by young people in BoysTown's programs are multi-faceted and long-term.

Low Language, Literacy and Numeracy Skills

Based on qualitative interview data from the ARC project, one of the factors linked with early-school leaving is poor *language, literacy and numeracy* skills. The Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) implemented the National Reporting System (NRS) as the recognised standard of reporting on language, literacy and numeracy and to provide an indication of these skill levels across sectors and institutions. The NRS lists reading, writing, oral communication (talking and listening) and numeracy as its competencies. Table 2 shows the proportion of young people who have low levels across these competencies. More than half (52.9%) of the young people commencing BoysTown's programs have poor numeracy skills while three-in-five young people have difficulty applying numeracy skills in their everyday life. The trend continued where a higher proportion (42.4%) of young people had difficulty applying their reading and writing skills than the 37.0% of young people who had poor literacy skills. Finally, only 17.4% rated their language skills as low but a higher proportion (30.5%) of young people found it challenging to use their communication skills in new environments.

Table 2. Language, literacy and numeracy barriers for socially excluded young people attempting to transition to employment

Language, Literacy and Numeracy Barriers	Proportion
Difficulty applying numeracy skills in life	60.0%
Poor numeracy skills	52.9%
Difficulty applying reading and writing skills in life	42.4%
Poor reading and writing skills	37.0%
Difficulty applying communication skills	30.5%
Poor communication skills	17.4%

Antisocial and Offending Behaviour

Interview data from the ARC project show that behavioural problems have also been associated with low language, literacy and numeracy for young people when they were still at school. After leaving school early, these behavioural issues have become more serious with young people participating in *antisocial and offending behaviours*, as shown in Table 3. For example, 55.6% of the young people had been involved in physical altercations in the past few weeks prior to being surveyed. Furthermore, 44.7% had been in trouble with the police in recent times and 42.4% acknowledged that they had anger management problems.

Table 3. Antisocial and offending behaviour barriers for socially excluded young people attempting to transition to employment

Antisocial and Offending Behaviour Barriers	Proportion
Physical altercations	55.6%
Trouble with the police	44.7%
Anger management issues	42.4%

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse can be another important issue for people with mental ill health which can then influence their attempts to transition to work (Rowe, Bellamy, Baranoski, Wieland, O'Connell, Benedict & Sells, 2007). Table 4 shows these barriers to workforce participation for socially excluded young people. Specifically, 43% of young people commencing BoysTown used illicit drugs on a regular basis. Furthermore, one-quarter of young people abused drugs or alcohol to the extent

that it interferes with their job or employment prospects. In order to address issues such as substance abuse, behavioural problems and literacy and numeracy issues, access to adequate support is required.

Table 4. Substance abuse barriers for socially excluded young people attempting to transition to employment

Substance Abuse Barriers	Proportion
Illicit drug use	43.0%
Substance use interfering with work	24.5%

Poor Social Support

Unemployed young people have been found to have more mental health problems than those who were working or studying and poor *social support* has been found to exacerbate these issues (Axelsson & Ejlertsson, 2002). Table 5 shows that one-in-five young people commencing BoysTown programs do not have supportive family relationships and one-in-four young people do not have reliable friendships that will keep them out of trouble. Furthermore, a higher proportion (33.2%) of young people still report feeling lonely despite having these social support networks. Feelings of isolation can also be associated with emotional wellbeing and mental health.

Table 5. Social support barriers for socially excluded young people attempting to transition to employment

Social Support Barriers	Proportion
Feelings of loneliness	33.2%
Lack of reliable friendships	24.8%
Lack of family support	20.0%

Low Emotional Wellbeing and Self Esteem

Emotional wellbeing and *self esteem* are important personal development factors for people who do not have employment (Song, Wanberg, Kinicki, 2005). The General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, Oldehinkel, & Ormel, 1998) and the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1985) are validated psychological tests that measure emotional wellbeing and self esteem respectively. The results of these tests show that 18.4% of young people beginning a BoysTown program have poor emotional wellbeing and 23.6% have low self esteem. Table 6 shows the proportions of young people with low scores on selected aspects of the emotional wellbeing and self esteem scales. One-in-two young people commencing BoysTown's programs reported feeling useless at times, wishing they could have more respect for themselves and had been unable to face up to their problems. A further 36.8% indicated that they do not have much to be proud of in their life.

Table 6. Emotional wellbeing and self esteem barriers for socially excluded young people attempting to transition to employment

Emotional Wellbeing and Self Esteem Barriers	Proportion
Feeling useless	51.4%
Low self respect	48.4%
Difficulty facing up to problems	47.7%
Lack of self pride	36.8%

Poor Decision-Making Skills

Decision-making is an important cognitive-motivational factor for young people particularly during times of transition and is assisted by supportive family and school environments and low risk-taking behaviour (Parker & Fischhoff, 2005). Good decision-making processes, otherwise known as decision-making competence, is comprised of abilities such as comprehension of data, organisation of data, assessment of the data in relation to personal values, management of emotions and rational integration of the data (Finucane, Slovic, Hibbard, Peters, Mertz, & Macgregor, 2002). The proportions of young people with low levels in the aforementioned decision-making abilities are shown in Table 7. More than half of the young people commencing BoysTown programs had difficulties understanding their situation in relation to decision-making and identifying possible resources to assist with their decision-making process. In addition, over one-third of young people starting at BoysTown struggled with the remaining decision-making abilities of organising situational data, controlling emotions and integrating situational data with personal values.

Table 7. Decision-making barriers for socially excluded young people attempting to transition to employment

Decision-Making Barriers	Proportion
Poor comprehension in decision-making	54.4%
Poor identification of resources in decision-making	52.4%
Poor organisation in decision-making	38.4%
Lack of control over personal decision-making	34.4%
Poor integration of situation with values in decision-making	34.4%

Low Personal Agency

Agency is another cognitive-motivational factor that is defined as the capacity of a person to act on their world with respect to decisions and goals that will impact on their life (Chen, 2006; Edwards, 2005). Specifically, *personal agency* occurs when an individual uses their own resources to achieve a personal goal (Smith, Kohn, Savage-Stevens, Finch, Ingate, & Lim, 2000). Table 8 shows the proportions of young people entering BoysTown who struggle with various aspects of personal agency. The majority (83.1%) of young people starting BoysTown programs relied on their own efforts when trying to reach their goals. However, more than half of the young people were not employing specific personal agency techniques such as careful planning (54.4%) and looking for different ways to achieve goals (54.8%). Moreover, 46.8% had difficulties managing their life and 35.2% did not learn new skills in an effort to reach their goals.

Table 8. Personal agency barriers for socially excluded young people attempting to transition to employment

Personal Agency Barriers	Proportion
Not looking for different ways to reach personal goals	54.8%
Lack of careful planning to reach personal goals	54.4%
Difficulties controlling and managing life	46.8%
Unwilling to learn new skills to reach personal goals	35.2%
Not relying on own efforts and ability to reach personal goals	16.9%

Low Interpersonal and Relational Agency

Other forms of agency include *interpersonal agency* and *relational agency*. Interpersonal agency occurs when an individual influences others to obtain a

personal goal, differing from personal agency where an individual uses their own resources to achieve a goal (Smith, Kohn, Savage-Stevens, Finch, Ingate, & Lim, 2000). Relational agency on the other hand involves identifying others as resources and to work together to achieve goals that are important to the individual or the relationship (Edwards & McKenzie, 2005). Table 9 shows various aspects of interpersonal agency and relational agency for young people attempting to transition to work. Almost half (49.6%) of young people commencing BoysTown programs displayed poor interpersonal agency because they found it challenging to maintain good relationships with others in an effort to achieve personal goals. Furthermore, 44.0% were unwilling to cooperate with other people to achieve their own personal goals. Relational agency was low among 46.0% of young people who had difficulty seeking the advice of other people and 45.6% who did not or rarely asked others for help to achieve goals. In addition, two-in-five young people found it hard to identify and utilise other resources to assist them to reach their goals.

Table 9. Interpersonal and relational agency barriers for socially excluded young people attempting to transition to employment

Interpersonal and Relational Agency Barriers	Proportion
Not getting along with others to reach personal goals	49.6%
Unwilling to seek the advice of others to reach goals	46.0%
Unwilling to ask others for help to achieve goals	45.6%
Unwilling to cooperate with others to reach personal goals	44.0%
Not utilising resources to help reach personal goals	41.9%

As seen above, young people commencing BoysTown’s programs relied on their own efforts and abilities but rarely utilised strategies involving other resources or people to achieve their goals. Importantly, almost half (48.4%) of young people starting a BoysTown program did not have defined goals for the future and one-third (32.4%) felt pessimistic about the future (see Table 10). Altogether, this makes it difficult to shift from a day-to-day view of survival to living and working towards a future.

Table 10. Future outlook barriers for socially excluded young people attempting to transition to employment

Future Outlook Barriers	Proportion
No defined goals for the future	48.4%
Feeling pessimistic about the future	32.4%

Summary

Education and employment have the potential to play a vital role in addressing mental health issues in today’s society. Contemporary research, BoysTown’s employment program data sources and Kids Helpline’s counselling data indicate that the primary factors negatively impacting and contributing to the mental ill health and wellbeing of Australian youth transitioning to employment and education include:

- Behavioural and anger management problems;
- Substance abuse;
- Lack of social support;
- Low self esteem; and
- Poor literacy and numeracy.

The findings from BoysTown and Griffith University's ARC project also show that cognitive-motivational factors such as personal agency (the ability to use one's own resources to work toward personal goals), interpersonal agency (the ability to influence other to assist in the achievement of personal goals), relational agency (the ability to work together with others to reach goals), decision-making and future outlook are emerging as key areas to address in assisting young people with mental ill health to transition to employment or education. In summary, the barriers to employment faced by young people with mental ill health are multifaceted and ongoing. Consequently there is a need to fund holistic intervention models that work across the various barriers to participation in mainstream employment. This could best be achieved by enhancing the level of Employment Pathways Funding for young people with assessed mental health issues to allow Job Service providers opportunity to purchase medical care, specialised counselling and youth work. In addition there is a need for a coordinated approach from various sectors and services to allow access for young people to address their barriers to employment.

Recommendation 1:

That the Commonwealth Government increase the level of employment pathways funding for young people with assessed mental health issues to allow for the purchase of specialised medical care and counselling.

Term of Reference 2

'Ways to enhance access to and participation in education, training and employment of people with mental ill health through improved collaboration between government, health, community, education, training, employment and other services'

It is our belief that responses to young people with mental health issues can be improved by:

1. Increasing the availability of specialised Assessment Services across the Australian Job Services Network

It is the experience of BoysTown's employment consultants that many young people have undiagnosed mental health issues. Many young people either do not want to seek assistance or fear that disclosure of their mental health problem may lead to stigmatisation and subsequently be a further impediment to securing employment. Consequently the initial assessment of young people prior to referral to a JSA provider may not identify that there is an underlying mental health issue. Furthermore the availability of assessment services are becoming more limited. DEEWR recently advised all service providers that Centrelink's Participation Solutions Team (PST) would start restricting the amount of enquiries that it would respond to from Job Services Providers. Without opportunity for re-assessment by a Job Capacity Assessor (JCA) the Job Service provider is limited in the level of support that can be made available to young people with mental health issues to prepare them for employment.

Recommendation 2:

That the Commonwealth Government review current assessment procedures for young people seeking registration with Job Services Australia with the objective of increasing the effectiveness of assessment particularly for young people with mental health issues.

2. Changes to the current Performance Payments to Disability Employment Service Providers.

The Disability Employment Services (DES) providers support young people assessed with partial work capacity of at least eight hours per week. Clients unable to work to this level are considered to be voluntary. Any work undertaken with this client group by DES providers is not significantly recognised in relation to performance payments. Subsequently there is reluctance by DES providers to accept referrals from Australian Job Service providers in relation to this group. This has an adverse impact on the recorded employment outcomes of JSA providers. Altogether this situation also limits the level of employment support offered to people with disability.

Recommendation 3:

That the Commonwealth Government review the current interface between Job Services Australia providers and Disability Employment Services for the purpose of improving the coordination of responses to young people with severe mental health issues.

3. Improving referral pathways between schools and JSA providers

BoysTown Employment Consultants believe that systemic linkages between schools and the Australian Job Services system are necessary. Current provision under the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) Employment Services program limits a young person from acquiring the service of an employment service provider until they finish Year 12 or its equivalent. Similarly, a provider cannot enrol a young person in an employment service program while the young person is still at school. It would be preferred if service providers were able to work more closely with educational institutions to inform and prepare young people to be referred to a JSA provider prior to leaving school. This would reduce the number of young people that delay their registration with JSA providers and also would more effectively facilitate employment outcomes as preparatory work such as the compilation of résumés could commence earlier.

Recommendation 4:

That Job Services Australia contracts be amended to include incentives for providers to work with secondary schools to develop referral pathways, particularly for marginalised youth, to Job Services.

Term of Reference 3

'Strategies to improve the capacity of individuals, families, community members, co-workers and employers to respond to the needs of people with mental ill health'

It is BoysTown's position that Intermediate Labour Market programs such as social enterprises are an effective intervention that both builds the resilience of young people and promotes their social inclusion, particularly their participation in mainstream employment. The following section details the evidence supporting this view derived both from contemporary research and the current research project being conducted by Griffith University with BoysTown.

Social enterprises and paid work programs have been found to assist at-risk young people transition from school to work (Cimera, 2010). Furthermore, research has focused on specific groups of young people transitioning from school to work via social enterprises. For example, young people with disabilities (Estrada-Hernandez, 2008; Carter, Trainor, Cakiroglu, Swedeen, & Owens, 2010) and emotional and behavioural disorders (Wagner, Cameto & Newman, 2003) and even young people coming out of incarceration (Bullis & Yovanoff, 2006; Wainthrop & Unrih, 2008) have benefited from the skills gained and support provided in social enterprises. However, there has been little research on the area of young people whose barriers are so severe that they experience long-term unemployment and struggle to successfully transition to work. As previously noted, BoysTown has partnered with Griffith University in an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project on Reconnecting Disaffected Youth Through Successful Transition to Work. Based on the findings of this research, a number of key strategies have been pinpointed to respond to the needs of young people with mental ill health when they attempt to transition to work. These strategies include providing and facilitating:

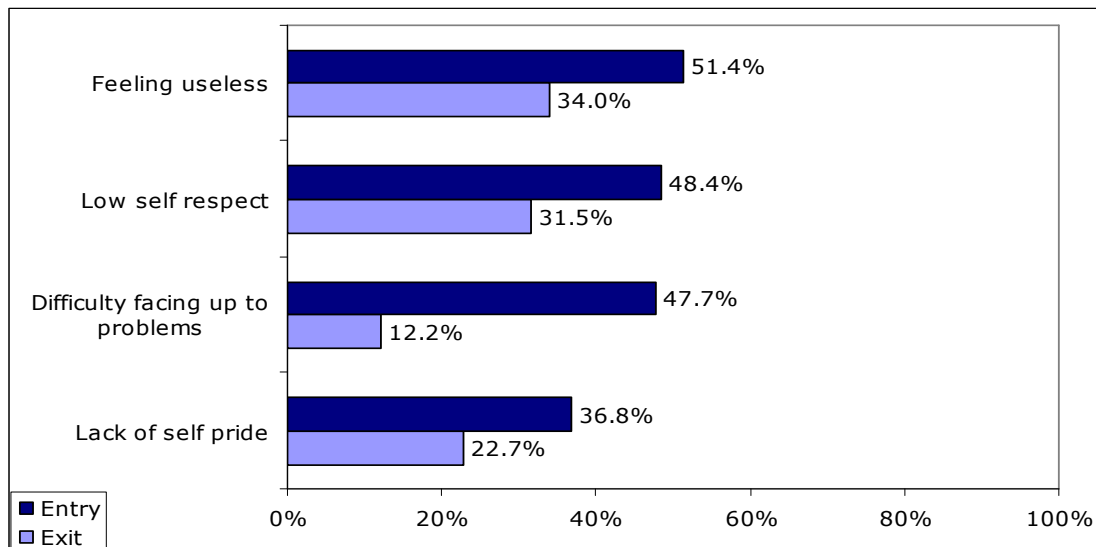
- Opportunities to improve emotional wellbeing and self esteem;
- Relevant work skills training;
- Mentoring and support relationships; and
- Case management to enhance personal development.

Opportunities to Improve Emotional Wellbeing and Self Esteem

Young people who experience social exclusion are assisted along pathways to employment and education by participating in social enterprises that provide a time structure, social contact, collective effort and purpose and social identity (Harnois & Gabriel, 2000) which bolster self esteem. These opportunities occur in social enterprises and pre-employment paid work programs such as Skilling Queenslanders for Work.

Data from the General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, Oldehinkel, & Ormel, 1998) and Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1985) indicates that the emotional wellbeing and self esteem of young people improve as they increase their participation in social enterprises and pre-employment work programs. Figure 2 shows the improvements of specific factors such as self respect and pride. The largest change was in the proportion of young people who were able to face their problems.

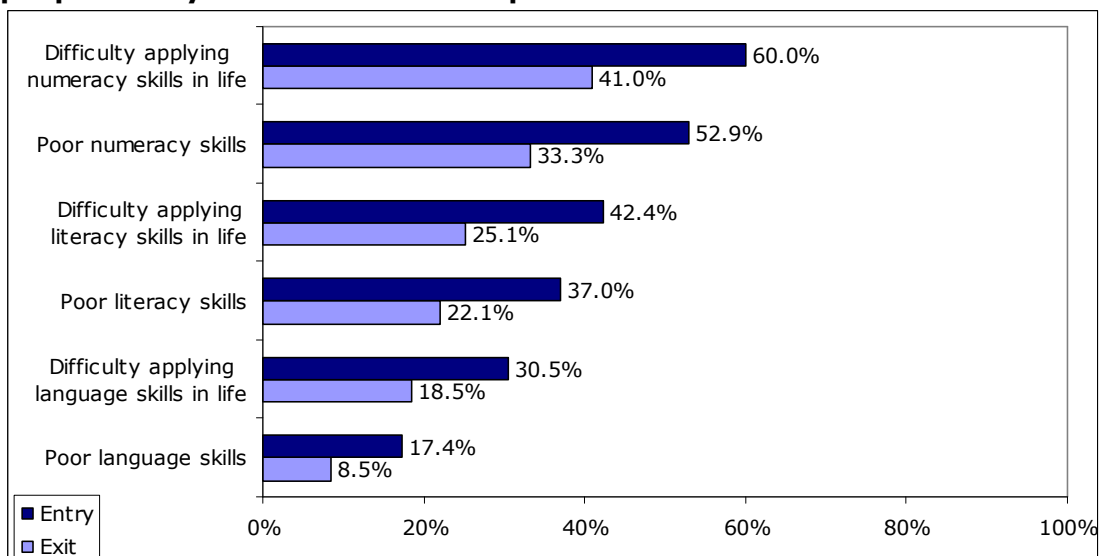
Figure 2. Improvements in the emotional wellbeing and self esteem of young people participating in BoysTown's social enterprises.



Relevant Work Skills Training

Low self esteem and behavioural problems in school can stem from poor literacy and numeracy (Wridgely, Richer, Martinson, Kubo, & Strawn, 2003; Galbraith & Alexander, 2005; Clark & Dugdale, 2008). Young people who do not respond well in school settings find the experiential learning in social enterprise environments beneficial and easier to apply in their daily lives. Figure 3 displays the improvements across communication, literacy and numeracy skills for young people as they progressed through social enterprises. Furthermore, the ability of young people to apply these skills in their everyday lives improved from the time they commenced in the enterprises. In particular, young people struggled most with their numeracy skills and applying these skills in their daily lives at the commencement of their time in the enterprises. By the time of exit, two-thirds of the young rated their numeracy skills at a competent level and 59% felt capable at applying these skills in their daily lives.

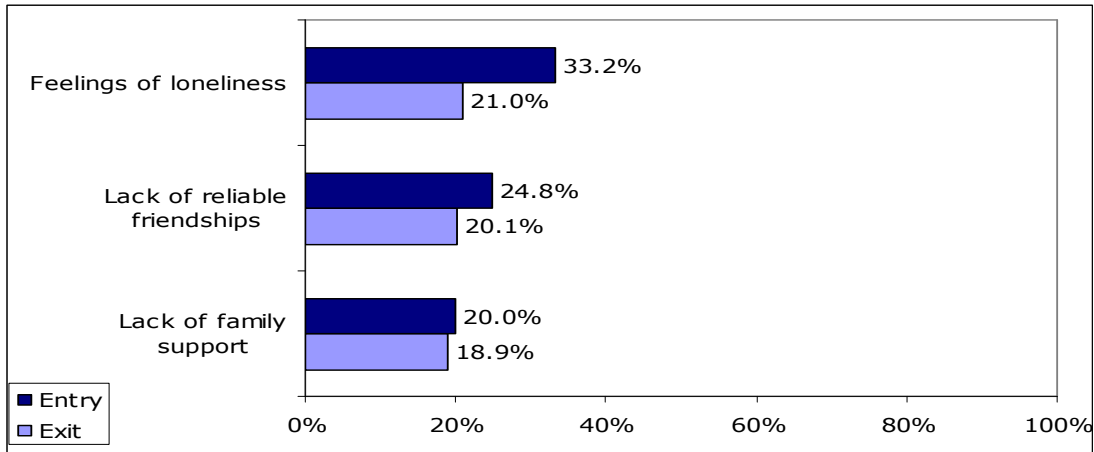
Figure 3. Improvements in language, literacy and numeracy of young people in BoysTown's social enterprises.



Mentoring and Support Relationships

The mentoring and support relationship between the young person and the Youth Trainer and Youth Worker is a key component in the rehabilitation process of social enterprises. The research highlights the importance for all staff in youth services to possess highly developed relationship-building skills with youth. These skills assist young people to feel like they have the support to move forward with their life. One-in-three young people indicated feeling lonely and isolated at the time they commenced the social enterprises which decreased to one-in-five young people by the time of exit (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Improvements in social support for young people in BoysTown's social enterprises.

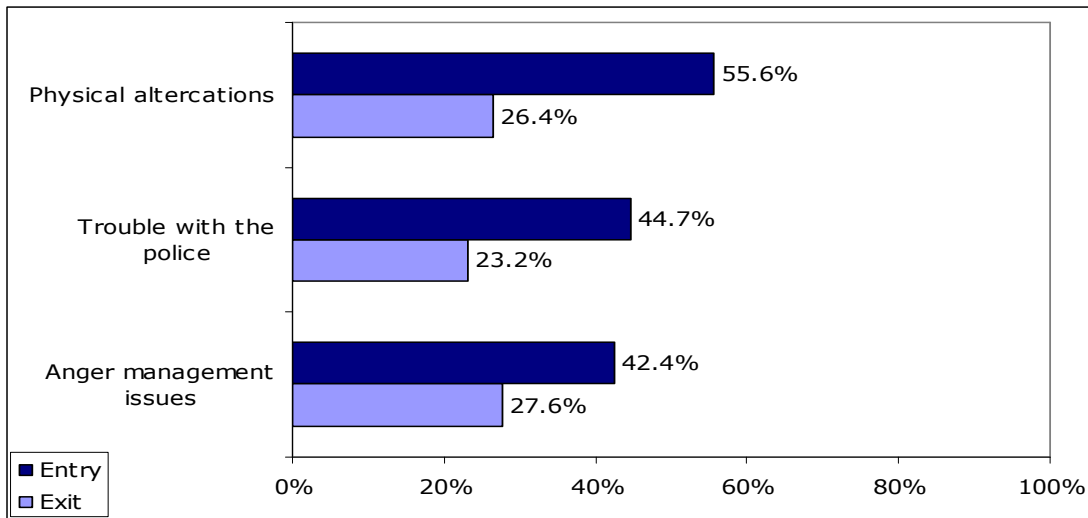


Case Management

Case management is an integral factor in assisting socially excluded young people to transition to open employment. The support provided to young people to overcome their personal and social barriers through individual and ongoing case management and group workshops can be an important mediating factor in achieving employment or education outcomes.

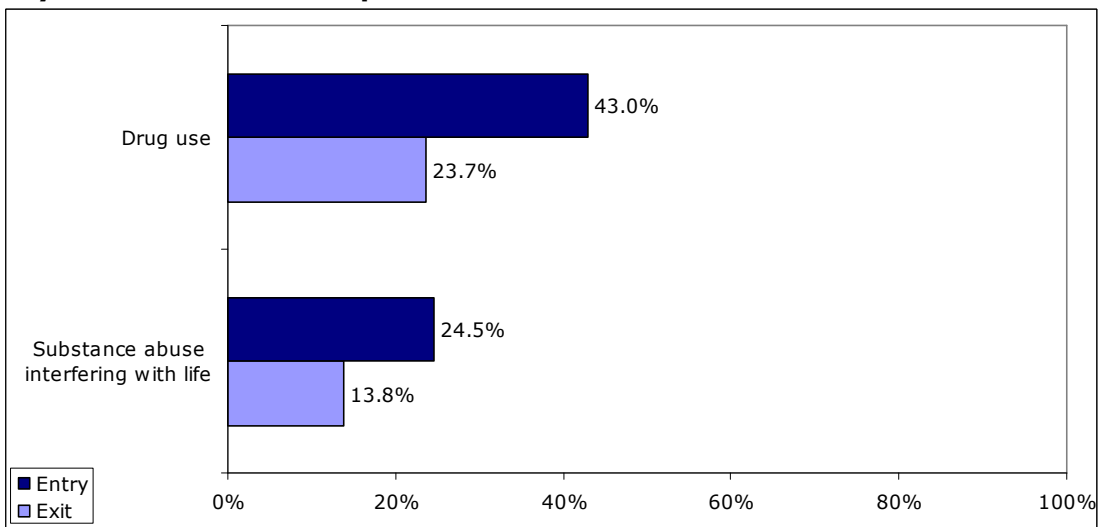
The results of the research show the various personal development areas of socially excluded young people as they progress through social enterprises that have been assisted by case management strategies. One such area is antisocial and offending behaviour, as shown in Figure 5. Upon entering BoysTown's social enterprises, 55.6% of young people were involved in regular physical altercations, 44.7% were repeatedly in trouble with the police, and 42.4% acknowledged they had anger management issues. By the time of exit, three-quarters of young people were able to reduce their anti-social behaviours. In addition, 96% of young people stayed out of detention after coming to and exiting from BoysTown community programs.

Figure 5. Improvements in antisocial and offending behaviour by young people in BoysTown's social enterprises.



Case management can also address substance use by young people coming into BoysTown's social enterprises. Figure 6 shows that illicit drug use was almost halved by the time young people completed their time in the social enterprise. Furthermore, one-quarter of young people commencing the social enterprises reported that their substance abuse was interfering with the ability to work. This decreased to 13.8% of young people exiting the enterprises.

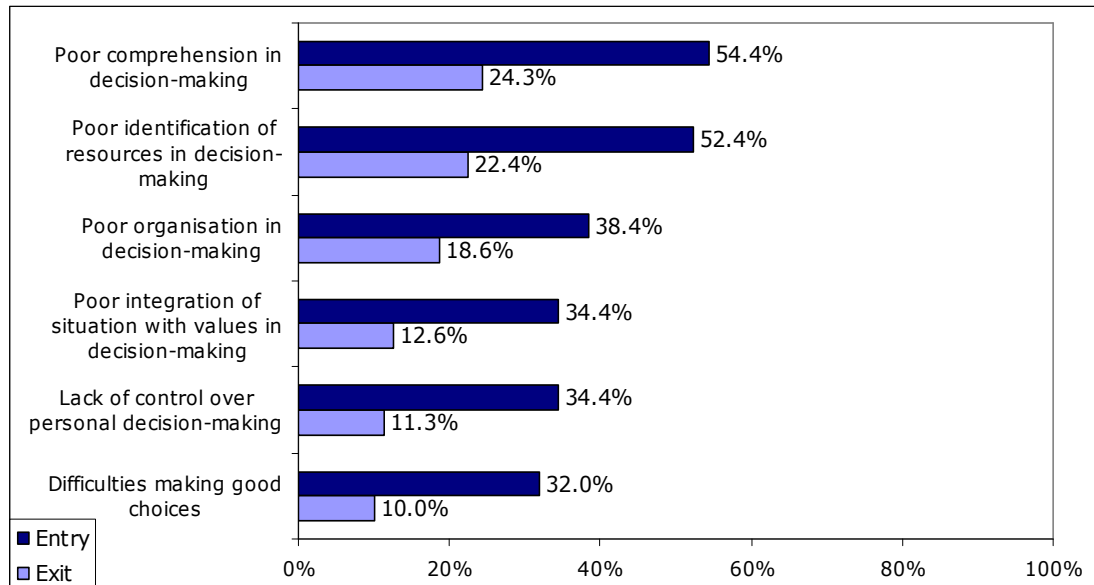
Figure 6. Improvements in substance abuse from young people in BoysTown's social enterprises.



Many of the barriers experienced by young people attempting to transition to employment came from poor decision-making habits. Case management, developing a good work ethic and assisting young people to identify specific positive life goals contributes towards improving their decision making capabilities. Figure 7 shows the improvements in various aspects of decision-making in young people as they progressed through BoysTown's social enterprises. The proportion of young people who had a better understanding of their situation and ability to find resources to assist them with their decisions doubled by the time they exited the program. In addition, young people completing the social enterprises were three times more likely to have control

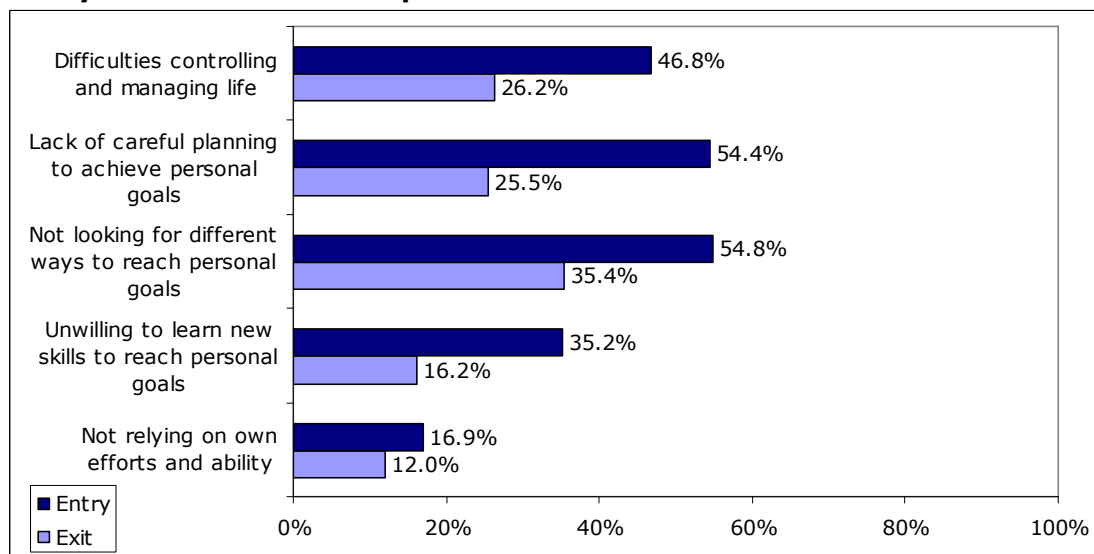
over their decisions, take into account their own values and make better decisions.

Figure 7. Improvements in decision-making from young people in BoysTown's social enterprises.



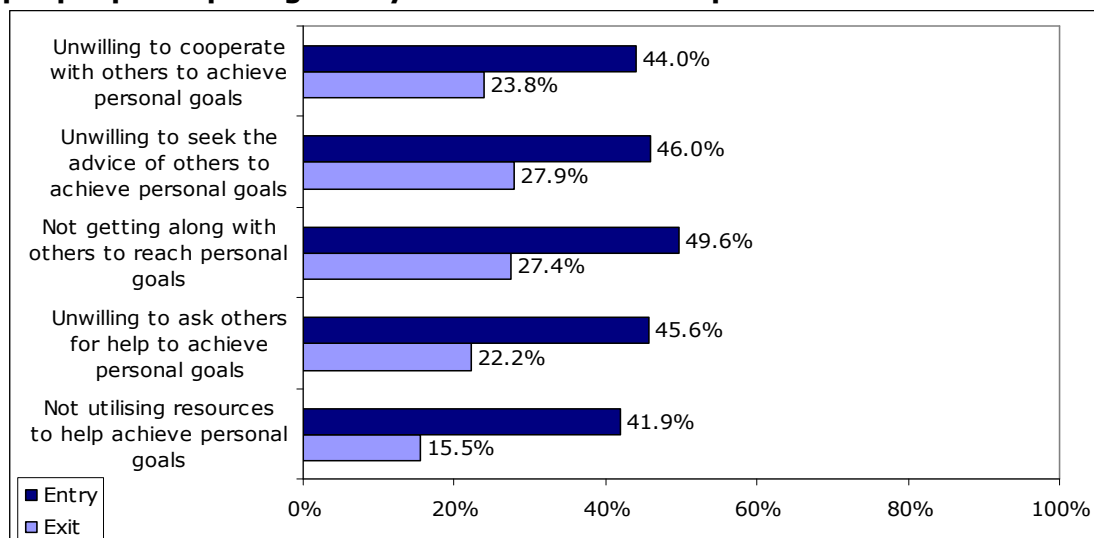
Another key feature of engaging socially excluded young people into work involves the development of a future outlook. Young people must believe in a future to commit to a program. As mentioned in the first Term of Reference, improved personal agency is an important process in developing a sense of future and optimism amongst young people. Personal agency is the capacity of an individual to use their own resources to achieve a goal (Smith, Kohn, Savage-Stevens, Finch, Ingate, & Lim, 2000). Figure 8 shows the improvements in various aspects of personal agency as young people progress through a social enterprise. Specifically, young people exiting the social enterprises were more likely to manage their life properly, plan carefully for the future, and look for different ways and learn new skills to achieve goals.

Figure 8. Improvements in personal agency in young people participating in BoysTown's social enterprises.



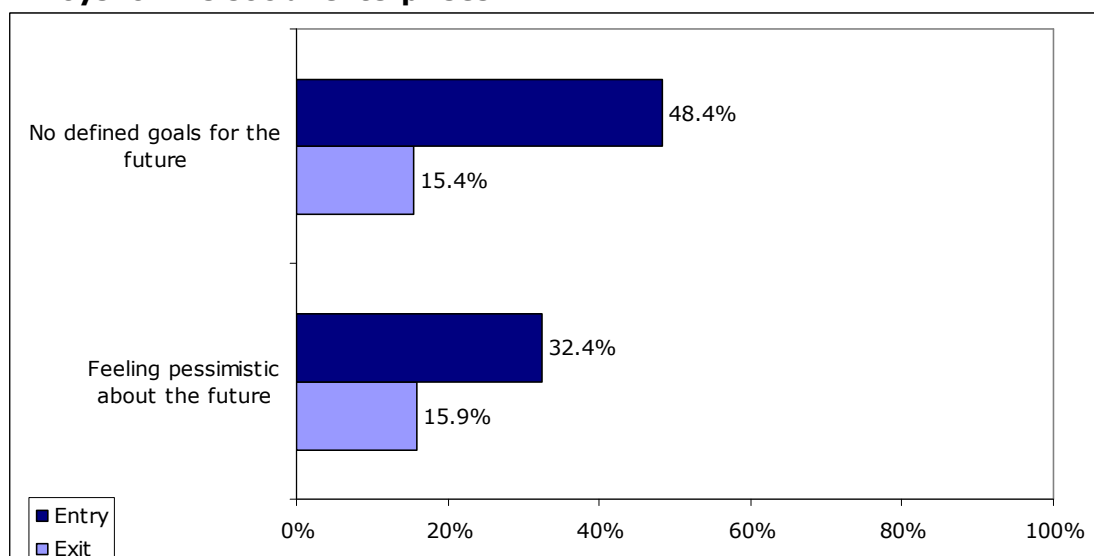
Interpersonal agency and relational agency also improved as young people progressed through BoysTown’s social enterprises (see Figure 9). Interpersonal agency occurs when an individual influences others to obtain a personal goal, differing from personal agency where an individual uses their own resources to achieve a goal (Smith, Kohn, Savage-Stevens, Finch, Ingate, & Lim, 2000). Relational agency on the other hand involves identifying others as resources and collaboratively together to achieve goals that are important to the individual or the relationship (Edwards & McKenzie, 2005). Young people exiting the social enterprise were more likely to demonstrate interpersonal agency techniques such as cooperating with other, asking advice from others and maintaining good relationships. In addition, the proportion of young people completing the social enterprises who displayed relation agency more than doubled.

Figure 9. Improvements in interpersonal and relational agency in young people participating in BoysTown's social enterprises.



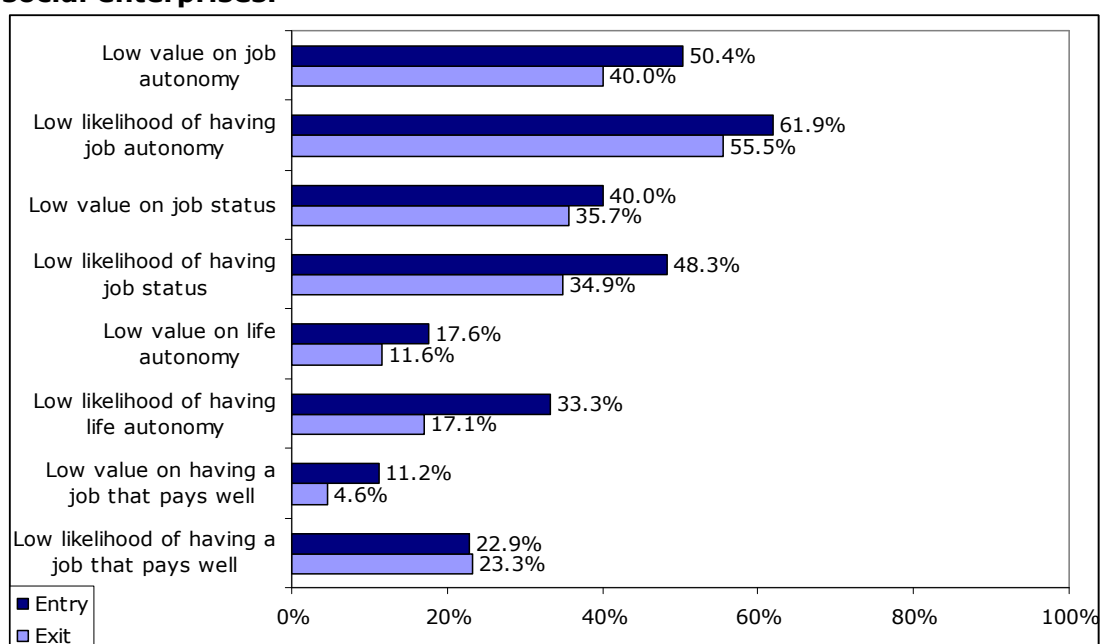
The majority of young people participating in or upon exiting BoysTown’s programs were optimistic about their future. In addition, many young people developed specific future goals as part of their engagement, as shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10. Improvements in optimism and goal setting for young people in BoysTown's social enterprises.



Aspiration is the motivation or desire to achieve a goal (Ambrose, 2005). Aspirations can be measured in terms of the value placed on a goal and the perceived likelihood of achieving that goal. Young people commencing BoysTown’s social enterprises placed varying importance in aspirations but most young people thought there was a lower likelihood of achieving each aspiration (see Figure 11). While the majority of young people placed high importance in obtaining a job with a good income and being in charge of their lives, there was less value placed on job status and job autonomy. However by the time young people exited the social enterprises, there was higher importance placed on job and life autonomy, job status and income. Moreover, young people thought there was a higher likelihood that they could achieve these aspirations. Aspirations are a key factor in engaging a socially excluded young person in a program and moving them towards an employment outcome.

Figure 11. Improvements in aspirations of young people in BoysTown's social enterprises.



Employment and Education Outcomes

From July 2006 to June 2010, 761 young people participated in BoysTown’s pre-employment and social enterprise programs. During this time there was an 81.2% retention rate among the young people in these programs. Of the 761 young people who commenced these BoysTown program, 54.5% continued on to employment, education or training. This employment and educational outcome from social enterprises for marginalised youth is far greater than that being achieved through Job Services Australia. Current figures collected by DEEWAR indicate that Job Services Australia only achieves 28% employment and educational outcomes with Stream three and four participants (DEEWAR 2010, Tables 2.3 & 2.4).

Recommendation 5:

That the Commonwealth Government enter into collaborative partnerships with Not-for-Profit organisations currently providing social enterprise programs, which could include the allocation of funding or the allocation of part of Government's procurement budget to purchase services from social enterprises, to increase the availability of these programs for long term marginalised youth with mental health issues.

Conclusion

Social enterprises have been shown to be successful in addressing the barriers faced by young people with mental ill health who face difficulties transitioning to the open workforce. Key strategies within BoysTown's social enterprises and pre-employment programs that assist young people with mental ill health to transition to work include the provision of relevant and mainstream work skills training to provide experiential learning and improve self esteem, individualised case management to assist in overcoming personal barriers to work, and mentoring and support to enhance reliable social networks. From these specific strategies, the findings from the ARC project with BoysTown and Griffith University focusing on young people in BoysTown's social enterprise programs show the following outcomes:

- Better emotional wellbeing and self esteem;
- Higher functional language, literacy and numeracy levels;
- More reliable social networks and activities;
- Less antisocial and offending behaviour;
- Reduced illicit substance use;
- Enhanced decision-making competence;
- Defined and higher aspirations; and
- Improved capacity to use their own as well as other resources to work towards goals.

BoysTown's social enterprises allow young people with mental ill health to access support that they would not receive in the open workforce. This in turn gives young people the opportunity to improve their social and employment outcomes. Therefore, the supported environment of the social enterprises gives young people with mental ill health a better chance of transitioning to employment.

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