YORET Hub – Youth Drop In Centre

21 November 2020 to 31 March 2021
YORET Hub – Youth Drop In Centre

Territory Families, Housing and Communities

Jeanette Kerr, DCEO Family and Regional Services

5 May 2021

n/a

<NA if not required>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Changes made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>30 April 2021</td>
<td>Gabrielle Brown</td>
<td>First version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3 May 2021</td>
<td>Gabrielle Brown</td>
<td>Incorporation of Southern Region feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>4 May 2021</td>
<td>Gabrielle Brown</td>
<td>Incorporation of Programs and Engagement feedback</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronyms</th>
<th>Full form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YORET</td>
<td>Youth Outreach Engagement Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOREO</td>
<td>Youth Outreach Engagement Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFHC</td>
<td>Territory Families, Housing and Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBD</td>
<td>Alice Springs Central Business District</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Contents

1. Preamble .................................................................................................................. 4
2. Alice Springs’ after hours youth services ........................................................................ 4
3. Alice Springs’ summer school holidays ......................................................................... 54
4. Teenagers .................................................................................................................. 5
5. Hub operations .......................................................................................................... 5
6. Cross agency collaboration .......................................................................................... 5
7. Youth Justice ............................................................................................................. 6
8. Safe sleeping ............................................................................................................... 6
9. Activity Program ......................................................................................................... 6
10. Support to the Hub .................................................................................................... 7
11. Staffing ..................................................................................................................... 7
12. Cost ........................................................................................................................... 7
13. Summary metrics ...................................................................................................... 8
14. Data snapshot ............................................................................................................ 8
15. Child protection ........................................................................................................ 9
16. Snapshot young person survey .................................................................................. 9
17. Attendance ................................................................................................................. 10
18. Transport home ......................................................................................................... 11
19. Talice security .......................................................................................................... 11
20. Education history ..................................................................................................... 11
21. Railway Terrence Residents ...................................................................................... 12
22. Impact on TFHC operations ...................................................................................... 12
23. Conclusions .............................................................................................................. 13
1. Preamble

In response to publicised incidents of youth crime in Alice Springs in October and early November 2020, Territory Families, Housing, and Communities (TFHC) developed additional initiatives to tackle anti-social behaviour and strengthen community safety.

The Youth Outreach and Re-Engagement Team (YORET) Hub (the Hub) was developed over a two-week period as a trial to provide a safe space for young people to access structured activities and meaningful programs with the aim to move young people away from the Central Business District (CBD).

The Hub commenced on 21 November 2020 and was open continuously from Friday 6:00 pm to Sunday 6:00 pm until 17 December 2020. At that time, it commenced operating 24 hours, seven days a week for the December/January school holiday period. In line with return to school for Term 1 2021, on 1 February 2021 the Hub reverted to opening Friday 6:00 pm to Sunday 6:00 pm and continued in this format until 31 March 2021.

This review focusses on the work completed by TFHC, recognising the considerable resources invested into the service by the agency and that the Hub was established as a prevention youth engagement service. As such, it would be a challenge to link the Hub's data with crime statistics of the same period as a measure of its success or otherwise.

2. Alice Springs’ after hours youth services

The Hub is an additional service to the existing night-time youth services in Alice Springs which are set out below:

- **Gap Youth Community Centre (Gap Youth) Drop In Centre:**
  - School term - seven days 3.30pm – 9.30pm
  - School holiday - seven days 3.30pm - 10.30pm

- **Tangentyere’s Brown Street (Brown Street) Drop In Centre:**
  - Sunday to Thursday 5:30pm - 9:30pm
  - Friday 5:30 pm - 12:00am
  - Saturday 7.00pm - 12:00am

- **Tangentyere’s Looking After the Kids Program, who engage with young people on the streets who are not engaging in anti-social behaviour, but may benefit from direction and advice regarding positive activities and the outreach services available:**
  - Thursday to Saturday to 3am

- **Tangentyere’s Night Youth Patrol, who provide transport for young people to organised activities or places of safety:**
  - seven days a week to 3am

- **TFHC’s Youth Engagement Night Officers, who engage with young people in the central business district connecting them to services, activities, and support and collaborate with NT Police and Talice Security regarding presentations of anti-social behaviour:**
  - seven days, to 3am.
3. Alice Springs' summer school holidays

The December/January school holidays has a well-recognised trend of more young people congregating in the CBD, increased reporting of anti-social behaviours and corresponding negative public perceptions. The school holiday periods have largely been responded to by increasing funding to services to provide more activities, bus transport, and extending the hours of services. This approach builds upon the existing services of the Brown Street and Gap Drop In Centres over the last few years and the confirmed increase in attendances over this period.

In the 2020-21 school holiday period, the YORET Hub presented an opportunity to gather valuable information to consider if the existing after hours service was insufficient for demand, or if the configuration and location of activities and programs required reconsideration.

4. Teenagers

The primary cohort of young people accessing the Hub was teenagers, all of whom were in some stage of adolescent development. Whilst vulnerable young people present with complexities, these are often amplifications of common, and generally accepted adolescent behaviours that many families struggle with.

Without presenting a comprehensive overview it is worth noting that adolescence is marked by:

- Emotional separation from parents to create independence and social autonomy that is often driven by environmental and social cultural influences and a desire to have control over their life and decisions.
- Strong peer identifications where social groups are preferred and have more influence than parents/family and where knowledge and guidance provided by adults is given a low comparative value and/or the young person believes that no one has an true understanding of how they feel.
- Risk taking behaviours including a sense of being "bullet proof" and challenging authority.
- Slow, gradual transition from concrete to abstract thinking that includes understanding consequences, morality and law that relies upon external input to progress.
- Changed sleeping patterns as hormones impact the wake and sleep times meaning it is likely young people become more nocturnal than in childhood or when compared to adults.

5. Hub operations

The Hub operated under a Standard Operating Procedure that outlined the prosocial engagement and priorities in keeping young people and staff safe.

The Hub had clear rules for behaviour that were explained by staff to young people in the Hub. By and large, these rules were respected inside the Hub with YORET staff actioning positive regard and active, interested engagement of young people to be able to de-escalate tense or distressing situations.

Team Leaders implemented banning young people from the Hub for behaviours that presented an unacceptable risk to themselves, other younger people, or staff. The ban would be for a time period of 24 hours or 48 hours and young people accepted this response.

Talice Security was engaged to support the Hub entry and exit and to patrol the local street.

NT Police were welcome in the Hub and Aboriginal Liaison Officers were frequent visitors.

In addition to operating the Hub, Youth Outreach and Re-Engagement Officers (YOREOs) continued their usual patrols in the CBD until 3am to engage with young people and encouraging utilisation of the Hub.

6. Cross agency collaboration

YORET leadership led the cross agency collaboration building upon existing meetings within Alice Springs including the Patrollers’ Meeting to ensure information sharing and joint planning.
The three Drop In centres actioned information sharing and cross promoting their activity programs with young people.

The Hub was visited by multiple agencies either to gain an understanding of the service or to actively support and participate in activities with young people.

7. Youth Justice

To ensure consistency in messaging to young people, those subject to Police issued Loitering Notices or to a sentenced order or bail conditions barring them from the CBD were not allowed at the Hub. YORET staff offered transport home to prevent young people breaching their conditions.

If a young person breached their conditions, YORET reported this to the NT Police and notes were recorded to this affect. This occurred at the Hub or when YORET patrolled the CBD.

Anecdotally, whilst a proportion of the 790 plus young people who visited the Hub were known to the YORET due to their youth justice involvement, the majority were not involved in the youth justice system. To ascertain the number of young people who were involved in offending at the same time as attending the Hub would require a time intensive, individual check of every young person against the electronic system that records apprehensions which is not managed by TFHC.

8. Safe sleeping

In response to a perception that young people in the CBD at night had no safe place to sleep, the Hub included an overnight safe sleeping arrangement.

Saltbush, as the contracted provider of supported bail accommodation in Alice Springs, agreed to a contract variation to provide safe sleeping arrangements at no additional contract cost. Saltbush had never been at maximum capacity since its commencement over two years ago therefore the safe sleeping arrangements assisted in gaining additional value from the contract.

NAAJA provided feedback that the use of Saltbush would jeopardise the effectiveness of the bail support service due to the disruptions to routine and the potential negative influence of young people who were safe sleeping on those working to adhere to their bail or sentence conditions. Through the contract variation these concerns were highlighted with Saltbush, establishing a process where they could manage the short stays alongside their longer-term residents.

ASYASS, as a homelessness service, was also approached to support safe sleeping however, their capacity was complicated by COVID-19 safe requirements, and the service was more likely to be at capacity than Saltbush. Regardless, ASYASS remained a crisis accommodation option but was never used by the Hub.

The Safe Sleeping component of the Hub was well socialised with agencies working with young people at night with a clear referral pathway articulated through the YORET Hub.

For the duration of the trial, the safe sleeping arrangement was not required as safe arrangements were located by Tangentyere and/or YORET for all young people.

9. Activity Program

Young people were consulted on the activity program, initially through informal conversations during initial establishment weekends. A group of young people became a more formal consultation group that was developed and fostered by key YORET staff. Suggestions made were appropriate and reflected that the young people relied on external support to both provide activities and to engage them. The suggestion included practicalities like transport through to emotional support and encouragement.

To capitalise on the existing youth school holiday program YORET provided encouragement to and transport for young people from the Hub to other scheduled activities across Alice Springs.
The Hub program included:

- CAAC Right Tracks program
- DASA Rhythm to Recovery program
- Balanced Choice program
- Professional music sessions for instruments and vocals
- Jam sessions
- Hairdressing, make up and nails
- Movie marathons
- Day bush trips
- Cultural activities
- Competitive PS4
- Painting sessions
- Arts and craft
- Table Tennis
- Boxing
- Bike mechanics.

10. Support to the Hub

The Hub was supported by multiple agencies through the YORET leadership proactively seeking support. This included:

- Ngurratjuta Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation donated two arcade machines valued at $10,000
- Centrecorp approved funding for two arcade machines valued at $2,000
- Donations of food and Christmas gifts
- Donations of new clothing
- Volunteer of time by community members using their skills, expertise and reputation to engage young people in activities.

11. Staffing

The Hub mostly operated on a 31-person roster staffed by TFHC employees on overtime, drawn from the YORET, Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre, the COVID-19 Welfare Group and the Child Protection teams. Additional shifts were added in January 2021 to manage the numbers of young people presenting at the Hub and increased transport demands to transfer young people between various activities.

To ensure shift coverage, the management of staff fatigue and to avoid additional costs, during the business week, the YOREOs reprioritised their work to operating the Hub full time.

Two Darwin staff members were temporarily transferred to Alice Springs to assist from mid-December to late January to reduce the impact on Southern Region's business as usual operations.

Over time, a small casual YOREO workforce has been recruited. However the Hub’s overall operations and staff management remains an additional workload for the Youth Justice program area.

12. Cost

As the Hub capitalised on existing infrastructure occupied by YORET, the total cost of the service is difficult to ascertain as a number of costs are folded into normal operational costs of the YORET office. While a cost code was created, the time and resources required to apportion costs from normal operations to the Hub is unwarranted.
The most significant cost was in staffing the Hub. This cost excludes the wages of YORET staff whose work was repriorised. Programs were largely run from existing grants and contracts, by services volunteering their program or by TFHC staff from multiple work units.

The YORET Hub cost centre (512248) total from 17 November 2020 to 31 March 2021 was $183,247 with an additional staffing cost of $123,626.25 to transfer to the cost code from the Welfare Group.

13. Summary metrics

From 20 November 2020 to 31 March 2021, there were 5,923 presentations to the Hub by 790 identified individuals.

14. Data snapshot

YORET staff gathered data from young people through a sign in processes to map those accessing the service and to meet COVID-19 safety requirements.

While there are vulnerabilities in the data due to the Hub’s at times fast moving numbers, it does demonstrate some clear patterns shown in one week of consolidated attendance data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MON</th>
<th>TUES</th>
<th>WED</th>
<th>THURS</th>
<th>FRI</th>
<th>SAT</th>
<th>SUN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6am</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7am</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8am</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9am</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10am</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11am</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pm</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2pm</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3pm</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4pm</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5pm</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6pm</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7pm</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8pm</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9pm</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10pm</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11pm</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1am</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2am</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3am</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4am</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5am</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Entry and exit data reflects a low use of the Hub after 2am through to midday, with the most prevalent use being between 5pm and midnight with the highest traffic occurring 6pm to 10pm.

Break down of the demographics of this one week shows trends mirrored across all other weeks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 years and under</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 13 years</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 to 16 years</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 + years</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consistently there were low numbers of 10 years and under children, however when they did present, it was usually in the company of older siblings or family members who were responsible for them. None of the sibling care arrangements drew YORET staff concern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Town Camp</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice Springs Township</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where young people identified they normally lived showed a higher number from Town Camps than the Alice Springs Township. From conversations with young people, it is believed the Town Camp cohort includes a proportion of remote young people staying with family. Travel in and out of Alice Springs is usual over the summer period as families access shopping, services and supports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Transport</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangentyere bus pick up</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family pick up</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walked from Hub</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YORET transport</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A disproportionate number of young people walked from YORET under their own arrangements and plans. YORET worked to keep young people engaged and to facilitate their transport home however, particularly before midnight, the social aspect of peer groups outside of formal activities and adult supervision was a continued draw. The transience of young people to and from the Hub was likely influenced by electronic communication and social media.

15. Child protection

The Hub made one notification to Child Protection regarding a sibling of a young person who attended the Hub. The referral did not include the young person and their younger sibling did not present to the Hub.

16. Snapshot young person survey

The Hub staff surveyed 61 random young people over November and December 2020 to provide insight into the group who were largely attending the Hub after being encouraged out of the CBD:

- 28 identified they were from a remote community, 15 of these resided in Alice Springs and 13 were visiting family in Alice Springs
- 17 identified they resided in a town camp and 10 resided in suburban Alice Springs
- 48 reported they were ‘out with friends,’ 10 young people stated they were out alone
- 34 reported they regularly attended school, two young people stated they do not attend school and 19 young people stated they sometimes attend school
- When asked if they get in trouble with Police, 14 young people reported yes, 36 said no and six stated sometimes
- When asked why they were in town, responses were mainly that they were bored and came with friends
- All young people stated they felt safe to return home and that their home was considered a safe space.
17. Attendance

Hub attendances increased over time, peaking in January 2021 due the high number of repeat attendances in a 24-hour period.

Whilst the Hub’s popularity was well noted and attributed to the activity program there was a reduction in attendances at the Brown Street and Gap Drop In Centres compared to the 2019/20 school holidays. Data indicates that the Hub became an additional service for the same target group noting that the Hub counted attendances over a 24 hour period, whilst Brown Street and the Gap only during their respective opening hours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Brown Street</th>
<th>Gap Youth</th>
<th>YORET Hub</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 2019</td>
<td>1,457</td>
<td>1,939</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2019</td>
<td>1,287</td>
<td>1,564</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2020</td>
<td>1,498</td>
<td>2,113</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2020</td>
<td>1,420</td>
<td>1,439</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2020</td>
<td>1,471</td>
<td>1,341</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2019/20 TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,133</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,396</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2020</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>From 20 Nov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fri – Sun 24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2020</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>1,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>From 17 Dec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 days/24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2021</td>
<td>787</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>3,303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 days/24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2021</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fri – Sun 24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2021</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>849</td>
<td>502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fri – Sun 24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2020/21 TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,590</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,802</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,923</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Hub’s attendance success needs to be considered in the context of the existing funded Drop In Centres and how the system worked over the summer holiday period. The Hub was a new and novel service to young people, and also the most proximate to the CBD, making it the easiest for young people to access for a break, get something to eat, engage in an activity, toilet or similar. It is likely the Hub supported young people to remain in the CBD for longer.

The number of young people walking from the Hub, rather than leaving in organised transport home, emphasises the Hub was a convenience for young people. This was likely also the case for services patrolling the CBD as it was easier to move young people on to the Hub than to the Gap or Brown Street who were both operating activities during the high volume periods. The probability of a young person’s night ending in transport home from the Gap or Brown Street is higher due to their distance from the CBD reducing the chances of re-engagement with peer groups in the CBD.
Whilst YORET worked to encourage young people to return home, the nature of peer influence and group decision-making often thwarted these efforts. The Hub program was developed to provide limited options after midnight focusing on quiet, low stimulation activities like movies to normalize endings that would trigger transport home.

18. Transport home

Tangentyere provides the Youth Patrol bus transport for young people wishing to return home at night. The bus's usual operating hours is through to 3am. However, during the summer period, additional NTG funding was provided to extend this service through to dawn due to the number of young people presenting on the streets after this time.

YORET provided transport home for some young people when the Tangentyere bus was on a break or not available. Observations from YORET's transports included:

- By and large the same group of young people were frequenting the CBD with their home arrangements, or arrangements within their family group known by agencies.
- Often family members were awake, waiting for young people to arrive home.
- Young people tended to make a peer group decision to leave the CBD with greater success in encouraging young people to be transported home occurred when they were in smaller groups or pairs.
- Peer groups, despite frequent reminders of Tangentyere's bus arrangements, including the last bus time would not take up opportunities to return home until well after midnight reflecting the freedom of school holidays and normal adolescent development.

In March 2021, YORET amended their response from just providing transport for young people when they request or require it to providing transport to parents or family members to assist them to locate and pick up their young people from the CDB. This has been successful, with family acknowledging a lack of transport hampers their ability to pick up their young person. This is a resource intensive process and is not sustainable for the YORET as it draws away from their expected youth engagement activities.

19. Talice Security

Before the establishment of the Hub, the number of young people out after 3 am was very low. The frequency and numbers increased during operation of the Hub. In reviewing the Hub entry and exit snapshot data the entries into the Hub after 1 am was also low.

Talice Security data showed an increase in young people out very late at night suggesting service availability facilitated a change in behaviour despite best efforts to return young people home. It is noted that much of the work completed during COVID-19 to emphasise the social norm of returning and staying home was undone with a high-risk group of young people.

20. Education history

At the end of January 2021, the Department of Chief Minister and Cabinet facilitated the matching of a cohort of young people who had attended the Hub against their government school attendance history. Of the 217 young people confirmed to match the Department of Education’s records:

- 118 had attendance records in 2020 but only six of these students had over 80 per cent attendance
- 85 had no attendance in 2020

Whilst this was a labour intensive, point in time exercise, it provided insight into a cohort of young people on the streets at night seeking engagement and entertainment and assisted to shape the Department of Education’s school re-engagement strategy.
The exercise also highlighted the need for ongoing, joined up analysis of young people coming to the attention of the Drop In Centres.

21. Railway Terrace residents

Prior to the launch of the YORET Hub and during operations, ongoing consultations occurred with residents on Railway Terrace. However, despite efforts, private residents made multiple complaints throughout the trial.

Railway Terrace residents agreed that young people needed a Drop In Centre service and by and large appreciated the Hub's staff and the service they were trying to provide. However, they were of the view that the location of the service was inappropriate for a 24 hour service.

Railway Terrace includes residential units, houses and an apartment building who reported the Hub’s impact on their lives, particular those living in closer proximity to the Hub to include:

- Lack of privacy due to number of young people in the area, throwing rubbish, teasing neighbourhood dogs.
- Noise emanating from the Hub and from the street that includes young people yelling, screams and laughter increased traffic on the street particularly the Tangentyere bus and hooning of cars around the Hub, conversations of staff with young people, Tangentyere bus staff and similar on the street where voices and noise easily carries at night.
- Not feeling safe due to being yelled at by young people and their curtailing their usual activities around their home due to not liking being outside or on the street in case they come to the attention of young people.
- Heightened sense of needing to protect property and/or cars.

Despite increasing Talice Security's presence on the street around the Hub, neighbours did not feel any safer due to some young people's open disregard and rudeness to Security's attempts to address behaviour.

Hub staff patrolled the street and conducted street clean ups picking up rubbish left by young people in an attempt to maintain good relations with the neighbourhood.

The YORET Director met with neighbours and conducted ongoing relationship management that included making changes to Hub operations (loud noise/music stopping at 9pm and increasing security presence) however the neighbours' concerns did not abate.

While some views may have been amplified by overwhelmingly negative social media perceptions of young people, their concerns related to disturbances due to the traffic to and from the Hub. While Hub staff can actively work to manage activities and noise from within the Hub, young people may not feel bound by the same restrictions when in public spaces and this erodes peoples' sense of safety and wellbeing.

22. Impact on TFHC operations

The Hub required intensive oversight and support to establish and operate taxing the Child Protection, Youth Justice and Welfare Group operations considerably. All areas reported fatigue across their work units, amplified by difficulties in filling January 2021 shifts due to staff wanting a break alongside the normal leave arrangements experienced over school holiday periods.

The YORET and their direct line mangers were most impacted as they were consumed by Hub operations meaning their usual youth justice youth and family support functions were secondary to ensuring the Hub was staffed at all times. The team commenced ‘catch up’ on their caseloads in February while still in recovery from operating a 24 hour/7 day hub over the school holidays.
A positive, and by happenstance, support was the Welfare Group who had recruited casual staff for the COVID-19 response and were able to accept shifts in the Hub when there were no quarantine residents. This workforce has continued to provide frontline capacity for the Hub.

The operation of a prevention youth Drop In service was outside staff experience therefore considerable learning occurred supported by relevant corporate support units.

The persistent engagement of adolescents, let alone of those with complexities and challenging peer relationships, requires a high level of skill. Many staff were ‘learning on the job’ through team meetings and mentoring from team leaders and managers. The intensity of support to manage a relatively inexperienced workforce in a complex, and high-risk environment for the agency was considerable and directly contributed to the cumulative fatigue of line management staff who were operating the Hub in addition to their already, considerable roles.

23. Conclusions

The Hub was established and operated through the collective good will from TFHC work units who absorbed the service on top of their usual service delivery. This is an unsustainable model, both managing staff work/life balance, staff fatigue and in overtime costs. Due to the ongoing service, a casual workforce is being recruited.

Young people are a challenging cohort to work with and staff require training and development to understand young people’s reactions, behaviours, and social interactions that are often amplified by their history, circumstance and their perceived role in society.

It is argued, prevention youth Drop In Centres are best placed within the non-government community sector, and in reflection of the primary cultural identification of young people, by Aboriginal Community Controlled organisation (ACCOs) who by their very nature hold a depth of knowledge in cultural, social and family interactions that influence peer behaviours. Further, ACCOs provide natural opportunities for mentoring and supporting young people to develop strong and positive cultural identities.

Hub data shows well over 50 per cent of young people were from Town Camps and low socio economic suburbs such as Sadadeen and Larapinta. Therefore, Town Camp and suburb based services and activities through the Town Camps and suburban areas should be prioritised as a mechanism to reduce the need for young people to come to the CBD for activities and to foster opportunities for families to be part of programs and activities.

Should activities and programs run from the Town Camps and suburbs, Hub staff to support this transition with the view that this will facilitate the closure of the Hub leaving the Gap as the Drop In Centre for the CBD.

Funded services and government agencies working with youth (across all sectors) need to modify their hours of operations and work to proactively reach out to engage young people into their service or to meet young people's needs and developmental stage.

Young people need to be involved in the development of activity programs to ensure programs reflect their interests, balance young people's desire to take risks, try new things but need support particularly for youth in the vulnerable, high-risk group. Any youth specific service must have wifi capability for young people to access.

School activities calendar for Alice Springs Township, Town Camps and Remote Communities need to scaffolded and be operated as a whole system of support that proactively include the transition of families back to community for the return of the school year.

A proportion of young people require targeted response to re-engage them into Education or training pathways to support them and their families through the transition to young adulthood.
Should a 24-hour Drop In service be established for Alice Springs the site location needs to take into account the disruption to neighbours due to the service operations and primary service users.

The 24 hour nature of the Hub be reviewed taking into account that its location is likely facilitating young people remaining in the CBD for longer despite best efforts of patrols and Hub staff. A graduated reduction in hours could occur over a number of weeks starting with the Hub ‘closing’ at 3am with staff remaining on site to respond to young people who may present with needs and as this number lessens, reduce the staffing hours to 12pm to 3am.

24. Recommendations

1. Youth Drop In Centres are best placed within the non-government community sector.

2. Town Camp and suburb based services and activities through the Town Camps and suburban areas should be prioritised as a mechanism to reduce the need for young people to come into the CBD.

3. Funded services and government agencies’ hours of operations need to be modified in order to engage young people into their service.

4. Young people to be involved in the development of activity programs to ensure programs reflect their interests.

5. Alice Springs Township, Town Camps and Remote Communities need to have the school activities calendar operated as a whole system of support, including transition of families back to community.

6. Re-engagement into education or training pathways to support young people and their families through the transition into young adulthood requires a targeted response.

7. Site location of the Alice Springs 24-hour Drop In service needs to consider disruptions to neighbours.

8. Working group across Government and sectors to develop a sustainable youth model with the young people who are the target cohort.