

Australian Youth Justice Conference April 2024

HRT Project 11.2 Youth Justice NSW

AYC talks and forum content was reframed into key questions to address progress in: computers for youth in detention, what justice staff are offering to youth, what is offered by community controlled/led service providers in NZ and Australia, and engagement of the peer movement and youth voice across the justice levels.

Rather than prevailing traditional practices -that overly rely on punitive or criminogenic frameworks of practice- trauma informed and holistic approaches to individuals provide evidence based, contemporary mental health and health foci.

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Executive Summary:

The 5th Australasian Youth Justice Conference ‘*Strengthening Connections: The Power of Relationships & Strong Service Partnerships*’ was attended by at least 100 people. The Nairobi Declaration of Telecommunication Rights of youth in detention and the necessity to have computers for youth was raised during forum talks and informally with conference members. Compatible with the conference aims, Youth Justice organisations and departments across Australia were encouraged to include soft and hard digital infrastructure: the import model of services access used overseas in other countries; and for the necessary hardware of computers in cells that is already funded and occurring in NSW adult prisons.

Examples of various peer worker roles and voice were the topic of many talks and discussions.

Support from the AYJC in developing computers into places of youth detention was received during the speaker talk forums as well as during individual member discussions. [Youth access to Computers in Cells](#) was distributed to attendees, and is compatible with Australasia’s key thrusts from the conference: youth being involved in co-design of services/programs for them; beyond assessment and monitoring, bringing a refocus on rehabilitation services actually being provided to youth during their detention; the promotion of community controlled/led services for those in or at risk of detention; for increasing access to peer workers; and to provide trauma informed support. Hope for communities and for reducing recidivism lies in enabling a secure digital portal for external, community based/leg servicing to occur for youth at risk.

The Australian Youth Justice Conference (<https://ayjc2024.eventsair.com/ayjc2024/agenda> & [Abstract of papers](#)) was hosted by The Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science at Swinburne University of Technology and Forensicare and held at Melbourne’s MCG from 16-18th April, 2024. The theme for AYJC 2024 was *Strengthening Connections: The Power of Connections and Strong Service Partnerships*, with two major streams – Culture: a powerful connection to identity, empowerment and self-determination, and Building safe, stable and connected workforces:

Life experiences are highly influenced by relationships and shared connections. Strong relationships and quality interconnections between people and services aid transition between community and custody, enhance practice, strengthen workforces, empower cultural and family relationships and improve a range of outcomes for young people in youth justice, their families and communities. Cultural connection through storytelling in Australia and

whakapapa (lineage, tribes and land) in Aotearoa/New Zealand needs to be supported and encouraged to navigate connectedness and give a voice to young people. This Conference will provide a platform to hear from those voices.

The conference promoted understanding of how communities themselves deal with young people at all stages of the justice system, engaging to provide external services to prevent and divert youth entangling with the justice system. They have a vital role for those already detained to prepare themselves to cope better outside, in being offered services and sense of belonging with continuity and holistically, to achieve the throughcare support to live better and to reduce recidivism.

Issues raised during the conference included: diversion alternatives at the court stage; community led and controlled services in New Zealand for youth in detention or diversion; the role of clinical services and external community controlled services in Victoria. There are interesting examples of the peer movement - whether as peer collaborators, navigators, workers, voices and co-designers for program development.

Conference Supporters for access to computers for youth in detention

There was a call for all detained youth in Australia to be given access to computers in cells and that the import model must be used to bring services digitally into places of detention. There was interest shown by leaders and influencers in youth justice about youth getting access to computers, and for access via the import model.

During the initial forum's question time, we received positive feedback during the introductory Keynote speaker, Meena Singh. During this forum it was raised how vital to extend the resources given to adult NSW prisoners also to young offenders held in detention in Australia. Computer access based on the import model to give education support and counselling services was raised during question time. Singh responded, referring to the importance of throughcare services, and she lent support to this priority of computers in cells for education and to maintain positive connections to family and supports:

"Nothing can compare with being locked up in a cell by yourself. They need services too in lockdown. Programs are disrupted when they are in detention centres, and we should avoid people getting into them in the first place".

Victorian Commissioner for Youth Justice, Andrea Davidson also expressed her enthusiasm for computer related input. She stated that as a psychologist, she was interested in better services for youth, and that Victoria had now made the decision to provide computers for those in youth detention.

Hon Enver Erdogan, the Victorian Minister for Corrections had stated that the department was working with the Education Dept on provision of computers to juveniles in detention. It was in the specific context of providing digital education resources with online education materials at Parkville College, intended to support the wellbeing of youth through access to

virtual supports and programs with the aim of reducing reoffending. NSW's Youth Justice Mr Jihad Dib agreed during NSW Parliamentary Budget Estimates Committee hearing last year to provide computers to youth detainees by end of financial year, and importance of digital communication to families and elders, where national youth recidivism is 85% (88% for ATSI). Noted were: examination of costs of \$230,000 for security software, and annual maintenance of \$120,000. Cost of unlimited video/audio calls of \$1 pm per person or lower. \$1.8m per yr per youth is the average YJ detention cost in Victoria.

Thus we seek the rapid adoption of technology to provide positive influences and lessen imprisonment isolation - comprising access to education, counselling, health and mental health services, based on the import model.

Other current YJ reports:

- Youth Justice Report 'Fair Go for young people 2024 by YouthAction [Youth Action Report](#) recommendations to support young people, particularly those young people in conflict with law, to get a fair go. The report has key recommendations on: legal reform, connection to Aboriginal culture in the community, youth services and support in community, education, mental health and wellbeing, youth voice and participation and employment and training.
- [National Standards for Youth Justice in Australia 2023](#), Australasian Youth Justice Administrators (provides 'Aspirational standards' & 'reviewers checklist' that cover 12 Domains: Cultural responsiveness & safety, Prevention/early support & diversion, Family & Community, Partnerships, Health & Wellbeing, Informed advice. Procedural Fairness Accountability & Transparency, Service delivery, Workforce/organisational culture & staff wellbeing, Safety & Security, Infrastructure, International covenant & Legislative context, Standards peer review protocol. However, its [link](#) was not found on the AYJA [website](#).

What do Australia's Youth Justice jurisdictions directly offer?

Kate Bjur, Matthew Dwyer & Dr Sanne Oostermeijer

Talk: Youth Detention: Best Practice - we know what works so why don't we do it?

A Churchill Fellow and a senior leader in Queensland youth detention who is in collaboration with the Youth Advocacy Centre, the Centre for Mental Health at Melbourne University, they urge us to stop building more, expensive prisons and progress for YJ reform:

'There is extensive evidence, locally and globally, that shows what kind of youth detention models are beneficial for young people and able to reduce recidivism. Despite this large body of evidence Australian jurisdictions persist in building expensive large scale detention centres that continue to harm young people and staff, and do not reduce recidivism. There is now substantial evidence available on the positive impacts, as well as key elements and the process of reform [needed]..'
and we examine the obstacles to implementing best practice in YJ.

Orygen FMHS

Orygen provides the clinical service assessment and monitoring in Victoria's prisons and youth detention centres.

(<https://www.orygen.org.au/getmedia/0ff53bc3-34fe-44d3-9330-7f6ae7a20d92/Mental-Health-Clinician-Custodial-FYMHS.pdf.aspx>, operating in a similar role as NSW's Justice Health, Forensic Services. Legally and in practice they differ, for in Victoria detainees are not held in a prison's mental health facility and thus, no CTO's pertain to the prison system).

In the multidisciplinary approach offered by Orygen, staff said that assessment, diagnosis and *'ideally therapeutic interventions are crucial'*.

Multiple speakers from Orygen-FYMHS forensic services (comparable to NSW Justice Health's Forensic MH services in NSW) detailed how their focus was assessment and monitoring in the short and long term, yet little was stated about what support or counselling services were actually provided to detainees. One presentation emphasised trauma informed care and interagency connections. They encouraged couching violence in terms of ignoring underlying mental health problems (e.g. not getting services for depression, or reckless behaviours resulting from borderline personality disorder problems being 'managed' by substance use).

Laura Seeley

On behalf of the Orygen Specialist Program (OSP) provided by the Royal Melbourne Hospital, spoke of the complexities of developmental difficulties in the youth justice environment. She noted that youth incarceration occurs at a crucial stage of development and that the unique developmental differences among offenders significantly affects their custodial experience.

Research by Speech Pathologists show youth in custody have disproportionately high communication difficulties. Rates of speech, language and communication impairment experienced by young people are consistently high across custodial and community settings in Australia. Speech Pathology Australia recommendations include, greater inclusion and recognition of speech pathology services for youth prison population and access to speech pathology screenings for those who exhibit behaviours of concern.

Physical Disability

The Adelaide Youth Training Centre, Kurlana Tapa Disability Screening Assessment project was conducted by the Youth Justice Assessment and Intervention Services team as partners during March and April 2019. Multi-disciplinary screening assessments were conducted on: intellectual functioning, cognition, oral language processing, visual motor processing, executive functioning, sensory processing, criminogenic need and mental health. They found that out among the 36 participants, 9 in 10 had lower than average intelligence function. 9 in

10 were at risk of language disorder and 9 in 10 were at risk of reoffending. A quarter of these individuals were recommended for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. However, most did not receive services easily and were less likely to respond to warnings.

Mental Disability

David Rowland, Orygen Forensic Youth Mental Health Service

Talk: Enhancing youth custodial specialist mental health services: a holistic and culturally responsive approach.

FYMHS forms part of the specialist clinical programs of Orygen. FYMHS is made up of two separate streams – Community and Custodial FYMHS. David Rowlands, a Senior Addictions Specialist and Mental Health clinician on behalf of the FYMHS, believes that trauma informed care & culturally responsive interventions are needed to improve the outcomes for young offenders. There needs to be greater focus on inter-agency connections, largely between bureaucracies, which prioritise a trauma informed approach, and cultural and individual empowerment. Violence will only increase if mental health is not addressed and services are not provided.

Points:

- Critical need for a psychologically safe & trauma-informed setting for effective treatment.
- ICA East (site for youth, secure forensic mental health beds) has one Aboriginal Social Wellbeing Worker, for youth admitted from custody under the Mental Health & Well being Act.
- FYMHS Model of Care steps for youth admitted to custody: allocate Orygen case manager, clinical review, confirm diagnosis & formulate treatment plan, specialist assessments/services, regular reviews. Appears in involve community MH services & Cultural Support Team (CALD, ATSI), & Neurodevelopmental Team assessment (with a secondary consultation)
- *'Forensic Mental Health can occur anywhere within health and is not sole bastion of what we would traditionally consider forensic mental health clinicians.'*
- Violence can increase if don't address mental illness- people do not receive services
- High rates of complex trauma but less likely to engage in mental health support
- Increased risk of suicide or drug overdose following justice involvement
- High rates of exclusion from pro-social & normative development opportunities
- Over 80% of justice involved youth in the community, necessitating focus & investment in community-based services.
- CMHServices is part of 'safety net' & specialist forensic YMHS can assist capacity-building community MHS via training & consultation.
- Despite significant reforms in YJS, those with mental health concerns continue to experience disadvantages in accessing & receiving appropriate care, and need further mental health assessment.
- Youth Violence is to be viewed as a symptom to be treated
- Need for trauma informed care & culturally responsive interventions.
- Case examples:

- Youth in the residential care unit had lost his employment, enrolled but had not attended school that year, had no meaningful activities, early interpersonal trauma, poor parent relations, loss of family contact. Help was to get him into the sports team.
- CCMHARS & YJMHC (Custodial M H Team) seeks 'in-reach' services, & found youth typically refuses referral although 'care not to enter into coercive relationship'.
- Unsuccessful parole periods (DV), the youth conceptualises difficulties only around his substance use disorder & guarded around his own difficulties. Can present as contemptuous of staff but often described as 'distressed'. Engaged well in custody with a clinician but refuses MHS during parole.
- What works well? Low threshold for MHS referral, need to explore suffering under aggression, build clinical picture via cross-sectional assessment & share comprehensive service intercommunications/formulation rather than just a diagnosis label, psychoeducational opportunities, and use a 'therapeutic template' for positive experience.
 - 'Our advocacy must be as loud and sustained as the current condemnation of this cohort. Quietude will result in a continued dearth of specialised youth forensic mental health services, the police and courts continuing to see malevolence instead of pathology, increasing rates of youth detention and ongoing ostracism and traumatising of those who require our protection the most.'* (Belshaw 2020)
- Overall, focus appears about inter-agency connections (implies between bureaucracies largely) although couched in terms of being trauma informed, plus individual & cultural empowerment.

Dr David Broderick, Youth Portfolio Manager in Priority & Safer Communities Division.

Talk: *'Making the first contact the last: Victoria Police – Aboriginal Youth Cautioning Program'*

Addressed the Burra Lotjpa Dungaludja ('Senior Leaders Talking Strong') Agreement, developed to provide community-based cultural support for youth in police contact throughout Victoria to reduce barriers to cautioning for Aboriginal people. The vision for the Agreement is that it will provide Aboriginal people access to an equitable justice system that is shaped by self-determination, and protects and upholds their human, civil, legal and cultural rights.

However, the Agreement is expressly intended to enhance police oversight and has ultimately been adopted as a police-led diversionary initiative.

Lisa Consolmagno & Rebecca Kempton, Department of Justice Department of Health & Human Services, Greater Melbourne, Victoria

Staff spoke on behalf of the Behaviour Support Team Early Intervention brought a trauma informed lens. They find underlying drivers for behaviours of concern, & develop individualised evidence-based strategies with unit staff in conjunction with young people. They also build staff capacity & upskilling in trauma informed ways.

Sarah Sutton

Talk: Collaboration and partnerships to address the multiple needs of young people in custody.

A Forensic & Clinical Psychologist, she reported that at the Kurlana Tapa YJC has 5 units or 60 beds. 54% of the youth at the centre identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. She said there is a need to address multiple needs of youth in custody with the assistance of enhanced support teams work in Adelaide Plains, South Australia.

One recommendation is to have a senior Aboriginal Case Advisor Team for case coordination, to educate staff, to include child & adolescent health services, and have predominantly Aboriginal staff. And also, to look into the Moduled Family Violence Program.

Clement Ng

Talk: “Prevalence of Neurodisability among Indigenous Children in the NT Juvenile Justice System”

Children with developmental delays or neurodevelopmental disorders or disabilities should not be in the child justice system at all, even if they have reached the minimum age of criminal responsibility. They are disproportionately criminalised in the youth justice system, so Australasia requires contemporary reform.

Loretta Crombie

Talk: “Responding to young people with neuro-impairment in Queensland Youth Justice system”

A neuro-disability framework for Practice & Practice Standard is being developed, as codesigned with two First Nations communities. Pilot, & is need to access services

Trauma informed care/approach

Professor Keith Cruise

Keynote Address (Day 2): Complex trauma – What it is and why it matters to risk reduction, recovery, and resilience?

A clinical-forensic psychology & Adjunct Professor of Law, and Co-director of the Center for Trauma Recovery and Juvenile Justice.

(<https://www.fordham.edu/academics/departments/psychology/faculty-and-staff/keith-cruise/> & <https://health.uconn.edu/trauma-recovery-juvenile-justice/>).

He specialises in fine grain research about complex trauma, says the necessary characteristics to identify and what level and type of needs to address breaking down criminogenic factors in youth justice for trauma recovery & ‘polyvictimisation’ (i.e. trauma and other the multiple contributory factors to offending):

- Those who met the criteria for PTSD were 15% males and 25% females
- A combination of anger, arousal and reactivity can increase police contact

- Should consider this in how to arrest, to manage, and bend youth away from repeating the 'arrest cycle'
- What do we do that is adding to trauma?:
 - Isolation, bright lights, restrict movements, close physical proximity with strangers, participate in groups where people are made vulnerable in front of their peers
 - These factors increase dysregulation and trauma
- Complex Trauma involves multiple and cumulative physical/sexual/ abuse/neglect incidences, starting with family context
 - The result is polyvictimisation – where individuals cannot regulate, and experience severe dysfunction and primary attachment crises
 - This leads to dissociation and poor behaviour control
 - It also triggers Chronic Survival Coping e.g. hypervigilance, distrust, overt reactive aggression or gives up and shows indifference, increase in hopelessness
 - Reactive aggression: poor frustration tolerance and reactivity
 - Hopelessness: 'I don't care if I live or die'.
 - Chronic Survival Coping has numbing or callous effects i.e. hardened, callous shell to protect oneself
 - Showing emotional vulnerability is dangerous and problematic in justice settings
 - This includes those who say they are your camp e.g. professionals – as *'I'm too stressed and too bored, and too pissed off and angry to use my anger management skills.'*
- Assessing trauma reactions – mental health variables tend to fail to predict offending, after considering the pre delinquency factors.
- Child Trauma Screening Test identified 6 trauma factors in a subgroup of 10% that had complex trauma:
 - 32% had high needs plus high trauma
 - Had education problems, high rates of traumatic events, but may not show much trauma
 - Needs trauma informed way to reduce arousal enough to deal with trauma reactions and help e.g. school, peer relations, substance abuse
 - 15% had low needs and low trauma
 - Tended to show substance abuse needs and low social problems, and focus is to be on symptoms of arousal
 - Needs little input and great chance for successful diversion practices
 - 42% had low trauma needs
- Combination of trauma informed approach to deal with delinquency factors is self regulation and Chronic survival coping - Use a trauma informed lens in all practices.
- New York City study, in 2020
 - >100 trauma screenings in JJ
 - 95% were youth of colour
 - Average was 53 days stay, some for multiple years following 9-19 detention admissions

- 2497 were for violent misconduct incidents, often as aggression to peers, who had 65% trauma level reaching PTSD criteria
- Community violence divided into two groups:
 - C1 = experienced severe trauma eg seen deaths in community
 - C2 = other trauma e.g. seen family violence and victim abuse
 - C1 & C2 made up 45% of JJ
- Demographic differences predicting offending were age, drug use, prior convictions
- Implications of study on what increased violence risk was:
 - Deprivation factors in a facility, age, how were classified, length of stay
 - 40% of youth substantially affected by trauma means must coach staff in trauma informed care
- Model for Integrating Complex Trauma
 - Criminogenic factors
 - Must address trauma reactions
 - Mental health problems are a reaction to traumatic event exposure and can add aggression - but delinquency risk factors are bidirectional for substance use and violence in family/community
- Level of Survival Coping
 - Need to enhance the importance of relationships
 - This is a problem with a Deficits based model as the model of care is very different – use a Strengths based model instead.
- Following the talk, Cruise stated that the Peer Movement has a valuable role to play for those detained, and to refer to the Centre for Trauma and Justice.

Forum Discussion:

- There is an issue of cumulative load which affects poorer case planning as youth are concerned about daily survival so have to adapt to help youth get access to services
- Need to be strengths based approach, to reduce PTSD and promote positive regulation
 - Chronic survival coping - need to normalise responses and shift away from distress to meet kids where they are at, and increase empowerment, voice and choice (not mandate kids).
 - Learn from veterans trauma - be more creative and needs other than security thinking.
- When asked about the potential benefit of computers into cells for YJ & access to peer and elder services, Cruise said 'that's great', and that the Centre for Trauma and Justice website refers to how e.g. youth peers can be useful, and to co-facilitate model development.

Meena Singh

Introductory Keynote Address: *Through their eyes, with their voices – rehumanising children and young people who offend and reimagining youth justice.*

As the Victorian Commissioner for Aboriginal people and children, she urged that we hear the voices of young people who offend, and through their eyes, we should rehumanise and

reimagine youth justice alternatives to custodial practice. She also believes it is our responsibility to ensure that youth stay safe, supported and connected.

Reforms should be based on a compassionate approach, which includes raising the age of criminal responsibility and refuting the false media message that we should be 'catching kids' and that offenders are getting younger. There is a need to challenge false narratives and address the basis of misdemeanours, such as trauma, poor education outcomes, police contact, the burden of racism (e.g. police violence, or police telling Indigenous youth 'little black dog... I'll catch you').

Over policing is a substantial issue. Statistically, 23% of children picked up by police are not charged. When they were charged, 106 went to community services and 20 into custody/remand. There has been a 85% increase in youth suicides. According to 'Let us Learn', those in out-of-home-care or child removal, miss approximately 3 terms of schooling.

During the panel discussion, Singh emphasised that the justice system cannot use excuses because kids are not 'expendable'. *No Aboriginal child or young person should be incarcerated, it is the duty of long reforms to put an end to the incarnation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth.*

She noted the 2023 Child Trauma Study showed 62.2% of the kids were traumatised (mostly due to neglect), with most experiencing 3-5 times of various forms of maltreatment. Thus, all interventions must be trauma informed.

What services are provided by community controlled/led YJ servicing, and in relation to mentoring or peer related approaches?

(on Youth mentoring, peer navigation, advocacy, support workers, youth voices, youth co-design)

NZ:

Jayne King & Craig Clark

King and Clark are a part of Oranga Tamariki, also known as the Ministry for Children, a government department in New Zealand responsible for the well-being of children, specifically children at risk of harm, youth offenders and children of the State. The ministry for children set the bases for many community programs and under its approach has prevented more than 200 youth and 600 siblings from reoffending/entering the system and getting support. Kotah te Whakaaro closed gap on service delivery & does interagency collaboration. Kaupapa is an effective Maori way of research now being used. Prisoner desire to belong can be the focus on reducing negative behaviours, by instilling positive behaviours, in addition to providing access to education.

Sharn Manga

FORUM: Our Rangatahi, Our Future. Breaking the cycle of Māori youth offending
It is 50% more likely (than the general population) for Māori youth to experience mental distress, 8.5% more likely attend court, make up 62% of all youth court charges and 2.1% more likely to commit suicide. A lot of this is due to colonisation, resulting in grief, cultural assimilation and ingrained systemic racism. Rangatahi is used to refer to the Maori view of youth as budding flowers of a living plant (society).

'Being Maori in South Auckland means we need to be hard, and if we are not, then we get taught to harden up.'

Vaa fa'Aola-Pacific Focus Unit, & Saili Matagi Program

The main drivers are family strain or gang association (reduced stress tolerance). There is a need for positive Youth-Po pairing (work with families) and Teu Le Va Building (be patient & trust to deal with 'attitude'). Community interventions of Pasifika Youth Rehabilitation (non-violence program) and mental health support and a Specialty Pasifika Team are also appreciated.

'What can corrections do for that offender, rather than what can [the] offender do for corrections' (Tala)

There is a disconnect from positive role models, culture, upbringing & system failures. Maori ways for self determination - includes grief, systemic racism, shaping our own outcomes. Māori youth need help to disrupt intergenerational problems, prioritise family's immediate needs and take the whole family approach to offending to deal with underlying social issues.

Rayna Phillips

'Pasifika ' relates to the Samoan view is that the strength of 'VA' is family connection. 28.8% of violent offending - tend to be the older cohort of offender onset. The solution comes from the community itself offering a wrap around approach, over time; and in realising the pride of our ancestors. Pasifika values, e.g. of what unites us, are universal although how they are implemented differs between cultures. Pasifika and Australian Indigenous impact of migration and minimisation of cultural values. Cultural and clinical services are to work together, saying:

'Safety is not the absence of threat but is the evidence of connection'.

Prioritise families needs for social resources & collective decision making & greater governance via South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board to reduce offending.

Jodie Brahim:

Cultural governance for clients with complex needs. The Nunga team within the Exceptional Needs Unit is an innovative model of aboriginal cultural governance, that maps partnerships for the 'profound impact of Aboriginal leadership and cultural oversight'.

Jacob Tumanako: *Pūrākau: Using traditional stories, knowledges and experience to guide positive change within the Pacific community*

Maori Story teller, was a Moree case worker & remote communities, & in Blacktown's Western Sydney's Multicultural Hub

Marama Castle-Brown & Reegan: *Pukepuke: Whiti ki te Ora: healing from intergenerational traumas, that have led rangatahi down a path of offending*
Whiti ki te Ora 12 week Rangatahi (youth) program in hoani Waititi Marae focussed on intergenerational trauma. Lays on structure & objectives in cultural terms

AUSTRALIA:

Kerrie Bryant

Understanding interventions to reduce criminalisation for justice-involved young people, from a young person's perspective. Interview method to elicit lived experience from youth, juxtaposing youth and workers narratives from Ballarat Youth Justice Innovation Partnership

- [Youth Strategy 2022-2026](#)

Alison Grace

Lived experiences of youth detention in Australia.

- Focus on youth's stories, & include youth voice in decision-making, not do more jail time that even if a youth had received a sentence for an offence.
- What is hardest about detention?: 'not seeing family and friends as much as I want'.
What kids say they need?: more doctors while in detention to get some help; prepare for getting licence/skills, ID, Medicare, Centrelink assistance, job on release.
- Formed a panel to review the Qld MHS to include 2-4 youth with lived exp of detention in their jurisdiction & who have successfully transitioned, to help plan as paid advocate with Queensland Health, facilitated by AYJA DCM. One youth has returned as a mentor in his Youth Advocate role.

Lesley Gough

Conversations in self-care: Reducing the harm of vicarious trauma in Practice

Arrin Hazelbane

Hazelbane is a Senior Aboriginal Policy and Project Officer at the Youth Justice Department of Human Services.

Talk: Shared Responsibility and Aboriginal Family-Led Decision Making: Empowering Our Families by Embracing Risk & Upholding Self-Determination

Hazelbane emphasised that Aboriginal Family-led Decision Making (FLDM) is critical, as a pillar of empowerment & justice. The Child Diversion Program is an Aboriginal led service, delivered by the Department of Human Services of South Australia. It is available 24 hours, 7 days a week, advocating for the inclusion of Aboriginal people in decision making and self-determination.

Claire Moore: founder of 'Sweet Justice'

A former stockbroker turned farmer, Claire is a beekeeper based at the Whipstick National Park, Victoria and in the beekeeping industry. She is breeding genetically diverse queen bees and advocating for bee populations.¹

Beekeeping can be learned while inside detention provided from this outside organisation, enabling practical skills development and TAFE training (no literacy is required). These programs are very empowering as positive engagement occurs, long term, with jobs.

The disability (i.e. ADHD) or functional needs of youth and adults become advantages in beekeeping and the results can be real jobs, a real community of long term belonging and individual support. They now have 1500 hives, and 90% are employed from the justice system to: breed and care for bees, transport them for agricultural work across the state, harvest to make products and sell them. The organisation works with those in diversion, prisons and on parole.

Sweet Justice has received interstate calls for bee livestock for agricultural pollination purposes. Moore reiterates a critical need for more training in the juvenile justice system as sterile corrections environments are very problematic for neurodiverse people.

Australian Community-led Practice speakers

Nyachan Nyak; Melbourne, Victoria

Keynote Address (Day 2) : Collaborative Practice in AOD-Mental Health Treatment and Youth Justice: Enhancing Responses through Community Engagement

¹ <https://www.sweetjustice.com.au/pages/who>

As Project Manager for Centre for Multicultural Youth, is the founder of NAS Recovery Centre (NAS 'Restoring Hope'), a community-based Alcohol and Other Drugs and Mental Health treatment organisation supporting Culturally And Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people. As a South Sudanese refugee, her advocacy role may be understood in proactive terms (more than a single case worker' or even a service collaborator): for as someone with lived experience she can be perceived as a trusted 'peer' who negotiates with other services and bureaucracies and works directly with individuals affected. She also works on the Operation Path2 Home project, where she brings potential services to meet individuals and their families, to enable early service intervention for individuals. The individual can then voluntarily choose a service based on their identified needs, enabling a community-based capacity building, rather than police interaction.

She spoke regarding the importance of community engagement in enhancing responses to mental health treatment. She initiates early intervention by lobbying services access, then bringing invited services into family and individual home visits. She identified the importance of culturally tailored trauma informed approaches to build, repair and connect. She believes it is necessary to develop with individuals a plan based on choice, where she is to find the right services for an individual, based on their needs, to ensure engagement, and a compassionate approach towards support. Collaborating for practical strategies and intervention choices, ask:

'What if we could take the most culturally appropriate support service directly to the young person and their family?... and they could make an informed decision regarding their engagement in these support services?' (Sgt Harris, SD3 PPU).

She emphasised the importance of qualities such as empathy, understanding, respect and grace, within mentors. Mentors need to actively ask a person what they need and where they want to go, and assess their strengths. Complex cases need lots of hands of support, and casual referral means (not professional referral as accepting help becomes painted as a weakness).

She may be seen as a 'peer navigator' and 'peer advocate' to collaborate to bring the Drug & Alcohol Recovery Service to youth at risk of contact with the justice system.

Operation Path2Home is one project. She brings potential services to meet individuals and their families, to enable early service intervention for individuals, based on individuals being informed of services, being a voluntary choice by an individual for their identified needs; and it facilitates community-based capacity building. This is an alternative to more policing and police workforce resources:

- Operation Path2Home is where plain clothes police take an 'act of service' approach, based on trust and safety & family to help in what help person voluntarily seeks
- Use a peer response to lead the path to change
- Need better data and research, & invest in supporting CALD for a livable city
- Need cultural nuanced, consistent, work with other professionals on how to work together
 - Leads to effective collaboration for capacity building across all levels of government, with proper investment & resources (so volunteers don't burn out), invest to drive down over representation

Chrissie Franks & Shannon Hinton; Hunter Valley, NSW

FORUM: Mandate creates intersectional capacity for Aboriginal led practice in custody and community Settings

In December 2022, YJ NSW introduced Aboriginal Practice Standards as part of an Aboriginal Practice Mandate, for all service delivery across all levels of the agency. This was a 4 year plan ([2018-2022 Plan](#)). There was 'explicit support' in Northern Directorate of YJ NSW by using existing organisational support already embedded in the service system, focused on practical solutions to guide youth away from the justice system. The organisation was innovating with Aboriginal caseworkers and Practice Officers to offer risk assessment & support, and developing alternative sentencing options, increasing face to face time spent with youth in custody & community settings.

Sandy Pieper; Qld

FORUM: Queensland Youth Justice Intensive Case Management Program: Evaluation findings 2018-2022

The Intensive Care Management (ICM) prioritises cultural connectedness, voice and choice to empower youth & families to support positive life outcomes. The ICM cohort reduced reoffending after 6 months by 51% (i.e. 22% > reduction than comparison cohort) with 72% reduction in 'crimes against the person (compared to 59%). Additionally, the ICM demonstrated positive cost-benefit to the justice system of \$9.8 - \$19.1 million, when considering losses incurred due to youth crime.

Other Mentoring or Youth Voice Related Talks

Eleanor Booth

Young People and AVOs: successes and challenges from a mentoring program pilot in regional NSW

[For-Purpose Evaluations](#) for social impact:

Eleanor is a highly respected evaluator, facilitation & social impact measurement specialist. She has worked in the sector for over 10 years and founded For-Purpose Evaluations. Youth at risk of breaching an AVO, in Illawarra region, NSW from Australian Community Support Organisation, has successfully piloted an innovative mentoring program – BOOST that ended August 2023.

Partnering with NSW Police, NSW Youth Justice, University of Wollongong, offers a promising solution to address the root causes of violent behaviour. Pilot was evaluated. Future funding remains unconfirmed.