



Diversionsary Hospitality Training for Disconnected Youth

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Disclaimer:

Please note: *The Chief Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians is an independent advisory body. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and are not necessarily reflective of those of the Office of Youth Affairs or the Northern Territory Government.*

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Table of Contents

CONTENTS

Abbreviations	4
Terms Used in this Report	5
Executive Summary	6
Introduction	6
Discussion	8
Diversionsary hospitality training model	10
Supporting research.....	12
Community consultations in Yirrkala and Gunyangara	12
Group consultation with current diversion clients.....	12
Mapping of current Youth Diversion Programs in Gove Peninsula	13
Consultation with community members, representatives of organisations, corporations and law enforcement	13
Distribution of invitations to participate in research, to organisations identified as examples of the success hospitality training provides Indigenous participants.....	14
Analysis of current research, recorded online and in academic databases.....	14
Conclusion	14
Recommendations	15
References	16
Appendix A	17
Appendix B NCL Town Vision- Five Pillars	18

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Abbreviations

ABBREVIATION	DEFINITION
EARC	East Arnhem Regional Council
NCL	Nhulunbuy Corporation Ltd
NT	Northern Territory
OYA	Office of Youth Affairs
VSA	Volatile substance abuse
YDP	Department of Corrections Youth Diversion Program

Terms Used in this Report

Youth/young people: Individuals aged 12-25 years of age.

Young Territorian: A person aged between 12-25 years who lives in the Northern Territory.

Yolngu: The Indigenous peoples of North-East Arnhem Land.

Gove Peninsula: The north-eastern corner of Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, consisting of the township of Nhulunbuy and the surrounding communities of Yirrkala, Gunyangara and Birritjimi.

Executive Summary

This report aims to illustrate the value of a youth diversion program on the Gove Peninsula that holds a specific focus on delivering hospitality vocational training, in conjunction with conflict management strategies, life skills and positive mentorship, to Indigenous young people residing on the Gove Peninsula.

Research was undertaken to gain a stronger understanding of youth justice in the Northern Territory and rates of re-offending for Indigenous young people. The Northern Territory Review into Youth Detention Centres reveals staggering statistics surrounding Indigenous youth in detention. Indigenous children constitute at least 54% of detained children nationwide, while the NT is home to the highest number of children in juvenile detention per 100,000 10-19 year olds. 97% of these juvenile detainees are Indigenous [Vita, 2015, p.10].

Youth offending is recurrent in communities across the Gove Peninsula. The profile of a young offender echoes the state-wide summary- Indigenous, male and aged 15-16 years when apprehended. In wake of recent reports damning youth detention centres and Indigenous incarceration rates in the NT, it is vital that actions are taken to divert young Indigenous youth from entering the recurring cycle of imprisonment that further entrenches social disadvantage.

This project proposes the following recommendations to the Northern Territory Government:

1. Expand upon youth diversion on the Gove Peninsula by investing in programs that upskill and boost opportunity for future employability.
2. Build and support Indigenous employment skills and training by establishing a hospitality training model for at-risk youth.
3. Support the development of a mobile food and beverage unit that can be utilised for local onsite training.
4. Support the provision of more diversion programs to improve outcomes for Indigenous young people, reduce re-offending rates and reduce the overall costs associated with the youth justice system.

Introduction

The Gove Peninsula refers to the administration centre of Nhulunbuy and the surrounding Indigenous communities of Yirrkala, Gunyangara and Birritjimi. Situated on the far North-East coastline of the Northern Territory, it is a picturesque corner of East Arnhem Land home to approximately 2,600 non-Indigenous residents (Nhulunbuy Corporation, 2016) and

an untallied number of Indigenous peoples (the 2011 Census places the estimated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resident population for the whole of East Arnhem Land as 8,634).

Diversionsary Hospitality Training for Disconnected Youth is a project proposal centred around youth diversion on the Gove Peninsula. It is a program scheme combining sustainable vocational training with life skills, conflict management strategies and positive mentorship, with the goal of supporting the securement of progressive social, educational and employment outcomes for young people at risk of criminal offending or participating in Youth Pre-court Diversion.

The goal is simple: establishment of a mobile food and beverage unit that can be utilised as a training hub for Indigenous young people referred for a diversionary or preventative purpose. Through on-site coaching and the study of theoretical components provided by a registered training organisation, participants would have opportunity to gain a nationally-recognised certificate in a sustainable vocation able to be utilised within the region. A trailer designed to support a working space, food and beverage equipment and a power supply is sufficient to allow for project delivery and removes the need to out-source amenities and a location.

In the wake of Rio Tinto Alcan's curtailment of the township's aluminium refinery, Nhulunbuy Corporation Limited has turned their focus to forging new economic opportunities and boosting local sustainability less reliant on a single industry. An all-inclusive stakeholder and community engagement process was undertaken to form a Community Vision plan expressed by five key themes. Consultation with the NCL's Town Plan Project Manager, Maria Robbins, confirmed this project proposal aligns with the following 'Future Direction' pillars:

1.1 Yolngu Country

Fostering two-way learning and harmonious cultural development

1.2 Unique Lifestyle

Maintain and enhance the cohesiveness of Nhulunbuy's strong and safe community

1.3 Community Participation

Initiating and managing positive community initiatives and shaping the future of their community

1.4 Building a Robust Economy

Discussion

Understanding the Issue - Youth Incarceration

The Northern Territory has a youth incarceration rate six times the national average, overall accounting for 1% of the nation's population, yet 5% of Australia's prisoners. A Safer NT Through Correctional Interventions (referred to here on in as the Hamburger Report) reports that 95% of youth detainees are Indigenous with a high recidivism rate, with a 'gross over-representation of Aboriginal people in prison' (Hamburger et al. 2016). In July 2016, ABC's Four Corners aired graphic footage of young detainees in Darwin's Don Dale Youth Detention Centre highlighting alleged mistreatment by Youth Justice Officers. The concerning allegations prompted Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to establish a Royal Commission into the Child Protection and Youth Detention Systems of the NT 'to investigate and expose the failings of the child protection and youth detention systems of the Northern Territory and in so doing ensure that those failings are corrected' (Turnbull, 2016).

As a community service worker operating under a case-management model, I have had considerable exposure to the issues that face young people living in a remote region of the Northern Territory. Of the clients I have worked with in the past two years, 95% have been Indigenous youth grappling with socioeconomic, sociocultural and environmental barriers. An outcome of this disadvantage is the repetition of behaviour brought to the attention of law enforcement: these behaviours include moderate to high misuse of alcohol and other drugs; volatile substance abuse; property offences and violence occasioning assault. Risk indicators that do not prompt police involvement but are still of high concern include lateral violence i.e. aggravated instances of bullying and teasing, truancy and disengagement from school, family and community. The Gove Peninsula is in need of a sustainable youth program that honours the purpose of diversion: to break at-risk behaviour and reduce opportunity to reoffend.

Due to the lack of accessible data on rates of youth offending across the Gove Peninsula, the focus instead centres on my personal experiences. It is a conservative estimate that 30% to 40% of young males residing in Yirrkala and Gunyangara have come into contact with the youth justice system or had an interaction with police as a result of harmful behaviour. Volatile substance abuse (VSA) is prolific in the communities and tends to act as a precursor to property offences; community efforts to limit access to volatile substances results in young people trespassing and breaking and entering into commercial properties to search for substances such as petrol. The local store in Yirrkala is often the target of break and enters, for reasons ranging from extreme boredom to gaining access to food when hungry. The increased risk associated with being on the streets unsupervised at night is largely exposure

of a young person to VSA, but a range of behaviours are exhibited that bring young people to the attention of police, Territory Families or service providers.

The township of Nhulunbuy is in the midst of a demographic shift. The curtailment of the primary mining industry has resulted in many non-Indigenous families leaving town and a wealth of residences standing empty. Jim Rogers, of the Department of Chief Minister, quotes demographic research when estimating that the Indigenous population of Nhulunbuy will rise from 5% to 30% in the nearing years. Nhulunbuy Corporation, citing community and stakeholder commentary, have incorporated 'Yolngu Country' as a development focus, to reflect the cultural amalgamation that will ultimately occur. It is a crucial effort, as harmony between demographics in an isolated region can fluctuate at times.

In regard to the contributions a youth hospitality program can make to congenial cultural development, I wish to touch upon the sporadic bouts of property offences that occur within Nhulunbuy specifically. The most common theft is termed locally as 'fridging', where the offender trespasses upon a property and removes alcohol and food from outdoor refrigerators. To assume that offences are committed solely by Indigenous individuals would be erroneous and figures do not exist to form an accurate picture of an offender profile. Despite this, and though targets often remain unaware of the offender's identity, there is a tendency for a vigilante mentality to occur in the wake of these thefts, inflaming racial tensions and creating further social divide.

Figures on whether these offences are committed more so by adults than youth are unknown but conjectured. However, it is anticipated that where young people are involved, their capacity to interact positively with residents outside of their communities is further limited. I do not believe that this is a common youth offence, purely through my professional relationships with young people who come into contact with the justice system; however, it serves to highlight the social discord that exists in Nhulunbuy. It is important to note that racial disparity and entrenched stereotypes are harmful and damage the accord in small communities; thus, any small step that can be taken to form pluralist relations can only be positive.

A by-product of delivering hospitality services within Nhulunbuy will be the forging of positive relations between residents, through customer service and consistent contact, thus also allowing for an increase in confidence to interact and communicate cross-culturally.

Too many Indigenous youth are exposed to the youth justice system; the annual report of the NT Children's Commissioner drew comment on the Territory's obligation to divert at-risk children *away* from this system. As stated by Commissioner Colleen Gwynne, "We are not

using those pre-court, pre-offending strategies that will work and stop kids from entering into child protection and the youth justice system” (Vanovac & Roussos, 2016). Whether this contact stems from their own offending or due to the familial obligations that see unwavering family support offered throughout the court process, it is exceedingly damaging to the future of Indigenous young people and it is frighteningly disempowering. It remains imperative that this contact with the law is not normalised or deemed a modern-day rite of passage for marginalised youth.

Diversionsary hospitality training model

The notion of vocational training as a pathway for disadvantaged youth is not new in Australia. Examples of hospitality expanding opportunity for at-risk young people include Mission Australia’s ‘Charcoal Lane’, a Victorian social enterprise creating an accomplished workforce and providing ‘leadership and mentoring to help vulnerable young people achieve their potential and gain long-term independence’ (Mission Australia, 2014). Kernot & McNeill (2011) report that the project includes ‘life and employability skills development’, an accredited certificate and ‘structured work experience enabling a successful transition to sustainable mainstream employment’ (p.8).

Opportunity exists to expand diversion on the Gove Peninsula. The absence of an overarching framework, defined by cohesiveness and a focus on future prospects, limits outcomes for service providers and for the young people in need of continuous opportunity to alter their pathway in life. Investment in additional diversionsary programs staffed by competent facilitators would greatly compliment the current services delivered.

The delivery of hospitality vocational training, in conjunction with conflict management strategies, life skills and positive mentorship, would target Indigenous young people who fit within the following categories:

- a) Are aged 15-18 years
- b) Reside within the township of Nhulunbuy or the surrounding communities of Gunyangara, Yirrkala or Birritjimi;
- c) Have been issued with informal or formal cautions from police and are suspected to be vulnerable to further at-risk behaviours;
- d) Have been ordered to complete a diversion plan by a magistrate or police;
- e) Are wholly disengaged from the education system and have not secured employment or training in place of regular schooling; and
- f) Have been identified as having impaired social, learning and peer relation skills due to disengagement from school, family and community settings.

The Gove Peninsula region embraces sport and social activities and offers recreational opportunities at a level unexpected of such a small community. Thus numerous openings exist for the program to be able to deliver hospitality services at an array of sporting, social and cultural events. A mobile trailer can access local football games, town markets, club gatherings and cultural festivities such as the annual Garma Festival. This heightens contact with local residents, opens up communication channels between young people and varying demographics they may not otherwise engage with and instils confidence to participate in community affairs. It is a socially cohesive measure that helps breaks down the division between Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents, especially within Nhulunbuy.

The strong rapport that exists between service providers and community groups would serve to offer additional opportunity for on-site training. Many organisations would be willing to host the program in order to encourage its success. For example:

- the project facilitators approach a local organisation to seek permission to set up in their immediate vicinity i.e. a workplace carpark, one day per week at a specific time;
- the organisation agrees to advertise to staff the project's presence on that day; and
- employees of that organisation are able to access food and beverages, such as expresso coffee and a breakfast roll and, having previously not had access to this convenience, continue to frequent the mobile unit.

Theoretical training can be undertaken in the centrally-located Charles Darwin University campus. This space is currently utilised for multiple educational purposes and offers adequate classroom facilities for delivering theory components of the certificate. This would re-introduce young people disengaged from school back into a formal education environment, without subjecting them to the anxiety of being immersed amongst a large peer group.

Projected outcomes can be numerous, but ultimately this project consists of six key objectives:

- To provide opportunity to be diverted from risky and antisocial behaviours to young people identified as susceptible to reoffending;
- To provide a safe, culturally competent environment with access to mentors, education and empowerment to young people impacted by social disadvantage;
- To promote Indigenous employment by teaching a sustainable vocation to young Indigenous people yet to enter the workforce;
- To provide conflict management strategies that minimises risk and imparts effective communication skills; and

- To promote positive peer engagement and interpersonal skills.

Supporting research

An adequate picture of youth detention across all Gove Peninsula communities was required to review whether additional programs able to complement existing services or introduce a new dimension were essential. Multiple research methodologies were employed to ensure thorough recommendations.

Community consultations in Yirrkala and Gunyangara

Community consultations were hosted in Yirrkala and Gunyangara with the aim of gathering community input that would tailor the program to meet community expectations and standards. Two hours were spent discussing the proposal and seeking feedback, ideas and constructive criticism from strong community women representing their Gumatj and Rirritjingu interests. After exploring the topic in depth and channelling Yolngu perspectives on viability, all five expressed full endorsement of the project and agreed to further consultation in the next stage. Merrkiyawuy Ganambarr Stubbs, co-principal of Yirrkala Bilingual School, expressed particular interest in the project growing into a permanent fixture in the community, where the project itself either morphs into a stationary café or provides the training for Indigenous youth to sustain their own community-led enterprise.

Group consultation with current diversion clients

The third consultation was held with a group of Youth Diversion males aged 14-18. Four were in attendance. Posters were made to express ideas visually and referred to when asking direct questions around the subject of hospitality. The young men all expressed support for the project but conveyed that they themselves did not hold an interest in hospitality; when questioned as to why, they responded that the preparation of food was a female concern. Further exploration revealed an interest if traditional Yolngu foods were to be introduced as a menu item and the concept of sourcing and preparing culinary items in line with cultural methods of food preparations was well received. All young men were asked what employment they would be interested in. All were mechanical or landscaping orientated.

The paucity of diversion clients available for discussion affected the ability to accurately measure male interest in hospitality. However, it was stated by Yolngu community leaders during consultation that young men who had learned culinary skills were utilising their abilities to provide for themselves or their families, and that this had also proven beneficial in a schooling environment where those men were able to share their talents with young male students.

Mapping of current Youth Diversion Programs in Gove Peninsula

Territory Families' Youth Diversion Program (YDP) is delivered to the Gove Peninsula by East Arnhem Regional Council (EARC) through targeted diversion tactics and tailored case management. Anglicare NT Youth Services is in receipt of intermittent funding from Youth Diversion NT Police for clients specifically requiring diversion, who are not covered under the EARC program. Both providers are staffed by dedicated professionals committed to obtaining strong educational outcomes for diversion clients. As an employee of Anglicare NT who consistently works alongside EARC, I myself have been privy to these processes and has gained insight into the need for additional programs to help support the current services.

The gaps exist in the lack of on-the-ground workers able to ensure comprehensive delivery of diversion methods. Both EARC and Anglicare NT direct funding towards capacity-building and educational pursuits tailored specifically for clients in either an individual or group setting. In a remote locale, funding is incapable of being stretched as far as an urban environment where costs are offset by availability and variety of resources. A by-product of ensuring limited funding is poured directly into client needs is inability to provide salaries to multiple workers to extend time and effort across a sizable cohort of at-risk clients.

Consultation with community members, representatives of organisations, corporations and law enforcement

Discussions were had with an array of potential stakeholders in all stages of the project. Initial communications centred around the viability of such a program being delivered on the Gove Peninsula. It was crucial that those with vested interests in youth justice were able to provide perspective on how hospitality as diversion would benefit this community. Senior Sergeant Erica Sims of Nhulunbuy Police affirmed the appropriateness of a program that would:

- a) focus on imparting skills that can be carried back into every-day environments; and
- b) recognise that behaviours aren't changed in a single instance and provide opportunity for young people to have more than one attempt at diverting from at-risk behaviours.

“We know how expensive youth justice is... why not be on the front foot offering diversionary-type programs other than ‘after-the-fact’ spending on maintenance of offenders? It’s a favourable option.”

(Sims, E 2016, pers.comm., 23 August)

Distribution of invitations to participate in research, to organisations identified as examples of the success hospitality training provides Indigenous participants.

A letter was distributed by email to several organisations identified as an example of the success hospitality has provided Indigenous participants, inviting them to take part in research for this project. It was advised that acceptance would involve either completion of a questionnaire by email or participation in an informal phone call, in which questions would be asked regarding the processes undertaken to reach project fruition. It was stated that no risks were anticipated and that it would be greatly appreciated to hear from those who had pioneered these ideas elsewhere in Australia.

Analysis of current research, recorded online and in academic databases

The following key documents provided the necessary information for understanding youth justice in the Northern Territory. These primary documents included:

1. Northern Territory Review into Youth Detention Centres, Michael Vita 2015
2. A Safer NT Through Correctional Interventions (Hamburger Report) Executive Summary, Hamburger et al. 2016

Please refer to References for a record of materials sourced.

Appendix A reveals the most recent data on criminal offences across this region. It is important to note that this table does not provide separate data on youth offending and thus statistics on juvenile crime is absorbed into overall figures.

Conclusion

Diversionary Training for Disconnected Youth is a diversion proposal centred on sustainable vocational training with life skills, conflict management strategies and positive mentorship. The aim is to support Indigenous young people to secure progressive social, educational and employment outcomes and divert them from at-risk behaviour.

Statistics on Indigenous youth detention in the Northern Territory paint a harrowing picture of a youth justice system in crisis. Young people living in communities on the Gove Peninsula are grappling with social, economic and environmental challenges that are able to drive them into a cycle of re-offending or worrying disengagement from positive societal structures.

This project offers opportunity to be diverted from risky and antisocial behaviours to young people identified as susceptible to reoffending, by involving them in a managed learning

environment in place of unsupervised and unsafe activities. The provision of a safe, culturally-competent environment with access to mentors and training supports the empowerment of young people marginalised by social disadvantage. The project's focus on capacity-building and a strengths-based framework would help explore pathways to employment for young Indigenous people, disenfranchised by lack of viable career pursuits in a remote location scarce on resources and opportunity. By working alongside other youth, participants will have to engage with peers in a manner that promotes positivity and encouragement and fosters interpersonal skills. Learning professional boundaries imparts conflict management strategies that can be carried over into real-life environments.

Ultimately, this is a community-led, grassroots concept, bolstered by the success elsewhere of similar models, that has the support of community members and stakeholders alike. It is essential that the wellbeing and empowerment of Indigenous youth pre-empts a childhood of contact with the youth justice system; the resilience, intelligence and spirited nature of young people in my community deserves to be nurtured by a program that is preventative instead of reactive.

Recommendations

This project proposes the following recommendations to the Northern Territory government:

1. Expand upon youth diversion on the Gove Peninsula by investing in programs that upskill and boost opportunity for future employability.
2. Build and support Indigenous employment skills and training by establishing a hospitality training model for at-risk youth.
3. Support the development of a mobile food and beverage unit that can be utilised for local onsite training.
4. Support the provision of more diversion programs to improve outcomes for Indigenous young people, reduce re-offending rates and reduce the overall costs associated with the youth justice system.

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Appendix A

OFFENCE STATISTICS

SELECTED

Appendix A

CRIME	01/09/2014 - 31/08/2015	01/09/2015 - 31/08/2016	% CHANGE
Assault	128	112	-12.5
Domestic violence related assault	81	71	-12.3
Alcohol related assault	96	84	-12.5
Sexual assault	5	2	-60
House break-ins	17	27	58.8
Commercial break-ins	23	29	26.1
Motor vehicle theft	16	12	-25
Property Damage	72	79	9.7

SUMMARY

CRIME	01/09/2014 - 31/08/2015	01/09/2015 - 31/08/2016	% CHANGE
Crime against the person	138	121	-12.3
Crime against property	205	229	11.7

Extracted from the NT Police PROMIS system, October 2016

Appendix B

NCL Town Vision- Five Pillars

Yolju Country	Unique Lifestyles	Community Participation	Quality Assets and Services	Robust Economy
<p>Respect Culture and Land Ownership Recognise Yolju as the traditional custodians of East Arnhem Land including Nhulunbuy and commit to long-term reconciliation.</p>	<p>Nhulunbuy is Home Reinvigorate and enhance our community through resident welcome and reconnection events, and through activities that celebrate our unique cultures and way of life.</p>	<p>Leadership and Volunteers Develop a volunteer network, including regular events and celebrations of the Nhulunbuy Community.</p>	<p>Quality Infrastructure Maintain our infrastructure, review our future needs and advocate for new investment in Nhulunbuy.</p>	<p>Regional Hub Recognise Nhulunbuy as a natural centre for meeting the business and service needs of East Arnhem Land, and continue to build capacity to service the broader region with quality services.</p>
<p>Two-Way Learning Blessed with one of the oldest cultures in the world, we will promote two-way learning that celebrates Yolngu culture and shares mainstream opportunities.</p>	<p>Active Lifestyles Create opportunities for individuals to participate in sport, social and cultural activities by supporting clubs and community organisations.</p>	<p>Communication and Engagement Ensure that our residents are kept up to date with what's going on in their community. We listen, consult and engage with each other.</p>	<p>Community Services Encourage and work with agencies and organisations to ensure Nhulunbuy and the broader community have access to health, disability, aged care and other social services.</p>	<p>Enterprise Acknowledge that Nhulunbuy's future lies in local enterprise and act upon this by supporting economic development initiatives and fostering partnerships across business networks.</p>
<p>Economic Participation Support initiatives that facilitate Yolju participation in education, training, employment and self determined enterprise.</p>	<p>Community Safety Our community will be safe because we all watchout for each other and hold ourselves accountable for being a safe and welcoming place.</p>	<p>Decision-making Provide meaningful opportunities for our community to have a say in the decisions that will impact them.</p>	<p>Education and training Support schools and community organisations to deliver excellence in education that recognises our unique context, including two-way learning with Yolju communities.</p>	<p>Investment Attraction Collaborate with all stakeholders to promote investment and address challenges and risks to business investment.</p>