

AN EVALUATION  
OF THE

**SPAYC**

**+ PLACE**

**Program**

**Cairns**



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## 2.0 Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the Gimuy-walubarra yidi people, traditional custodians of the land, and pay my respects to their Elders, past present and emerging.

There are many other people I wish to acknowledge for their role in contributing to this evaluation of the SPAYC+PLACE program in Cairns. Initially I wish to thank Mr Michael Healy MP the state member for Cairns, for sharing his views and beliefs about the positive contribution the program made to young people and their families in West Cairns. In addition, I am extremely grateful for the co-operation and encouragement I received from Detective Senior Sergeant Scott McGrath, the project manager of Cairns Safer Streets (CSS) and Ms Arna Brosnan, chair of the CSS executive committee. Members of the multi-agency working group are recognised for their overwhelming commitment to the program and selflessly giving their time to assist the evaluation team with documents, statistical data, and sharing their candid views over the course of the evaluation. The evaluation team is grateful for the input from people at the coalface of the program such as the providers, facilitators, volunteers, and partners who opened the doors of their homes and offices and found time in their busy schedules to share their views about ways of enhancing the program. The large number of people who gave their time to speak to the evaluation team including young people who participated in the program as well as their parents and local residents, was instrumental in assisting the team to gain fresh insights into the lived experiences of people living in the Cairns West area. Finally, I wish to thank the other members of the evaluation team for their valued assistance in making this report possible. I acknowledge and thank the project's research assistant Dr Kirsty Broadfield specifically for her work on the literature review, observation of activities and analysis of the Our SPAYC project. I am also very grateful to Ms Christine Dawes for the hours of work she put into this report as a volunteer research assistant undertaking a myriad of tasks including wise counsel, editing, analysis and the suggested changes to some of the chapters. Without the goodwill and assistance from all these people, this report would not have been possible.

Dr Glenn Dawes (Chief Investigator); Associate Professor Sociology/Criminology; James Cook University.

03 March 2023.

### 3.0 Executive Summary

The SPAYC+PLACE program was initiated after receiving funding from the Queensland Department of Sport and Recreation to conduct activities as part of a three-year trial for young people and their families living in the Cairns West suburbs of Manoora, Manunda and Mooroolool. The major objectives of the program were to:

- Connect communities and enhance liveability through participation in physical activity,
- Increase engagement of community members through physical activity, and
- Improve family connections by delivering inclusive projects. (Program Logic, 2019).

The funding allowed for the creation of a co-opted multi-departmental working group under the auspices of Cairns Safer Streets and led by the Queensland Police Service (QPS) to design and oversee the introduction of five new projects in addition to the existing SPAYC project. The six projects included:

1. Space + Place Activities for Youth in Cairns (SPAYC): Increasing the availability and choice of structured diversionary activity for young people aged 8 to 12+ through a range of initiatives to activate spaces and places.
2. Parks to Clubs: Strengthening community through sport in a grassroots project linking young people aged 8 to 25 to sporting clubs.
3. SPAYC Cadets: Cultivating young community leaders and mentors aged 15 to 25 who show an interest or passion in taking on a leadership role within the SPAYC+PLACE program through mentoring and support.
4. SPAYC+: Targeting 13 to 25 year olds who are disengaged or at risk of disengagement from education or employment, are in touch with or at risk of entering the youth or criminal justice system, engaging in unhealthy and antisocial behaviours, socially disadvantaged, exposed to family violence in unsafe living conditions by diverting them into positive prosocial activities and linking them to appropriate supports.
5. Our SPAYC (Sharing People, Ancestors, Yarns and Culture): Supporting consistent and significant cultural awareness and acceptance through the development of a wide range of cultural activities where cultural practitioners work in partnership with individuals and communities for the purposes of growth, positive change, and improved health and wellbeing.
6. FIT Together: Introducing physical activity intervention approaches to at risk vulnerable families engaged with the CSS Early Family Intervention Trial.

James Cook University was approached to conduct a two year process evaluation of the program in 2021. The aims of the evaluation were developed in consultation with members of the Cairns Safer Streets Executive. The aims were:

1. To identify if there was an increased sense of social connectedness and wellbeing among program participants,
2. To gain the perceptions of coordinators, service providers and partners in terms of the program's success for engaging the participants and enhancing their physical and psychological wellbeing,

3. To analyse the levels of engagement and participation among the participants within and across the suite of projects,
4. To elicit whether an individual's involvement in the various projects and activities has led to increased levels of commitment, attachment and prosocial behaviours while addressing crime and recidivism, and
5. To ascertain whether families have experienced an increased sense of cohesion, social connectivity, and wellbeing due to their engagement within the program.

The evaluation utilised a mixed methods framework consisting of qualitative and quantitative data, to establish the degree to which the SPAYC+PLACE program achieved its stated objectives in relation to the five evaluation aims. The qualitative data included three hundred and twenty-three consultations over the two year period. Consultations included formal one on one interviews, small focus groups, 'one-minute grabs', unobtrusive observations, informal conversations and a SPAYC participant survey. Consultations also included interactions with members of the CSS executive committee, CSS working group members, partners, providers, facilitators, participants, family members and community members including residents. An analysis of existing documentation was undertaken to provide historical and contextual data about the program. Quantitative data included an analysis of surveys conducted with young people, QPS crime trends, broader demographic data about the Cairns West suburbs and a small sample of education data relating to social and emotional progress among young people due to their participation in the program. In relation to the evaluation aims, the analysis of the various data sets over the two year duration of the evaluation, produced several outcomes with regards to the success of the SPAYC+PLACE program.

On a broad spectrum, the SPAYC+PLACE program can be viewed as a success in that it provided structured physical activities across locations within the suburbs of Cairns West for young people who otherwise would not have had the financial or physical resources to access such activities. In essence, the program filled a void by providing free accessible activities to young people, which diverted them into a structured set of activities and reduced the risk of some youth becoming involved in antisocial or criminal behaviour. However, there is little evidence to suggest that participation in the program addressed offending or recidivism.

A major feature that contributed to the program's success was its inclusivity in providing a diverse array of activities for a range of age groups and abilities and females from other cultures who, traditionally, would not have been allowed to participate in male oriented sporting codes. Another highlight of the SPAYC+PLACE program was its flexibility and resilience in ensuring activities were conducted in alternative formats during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period as well as its sustainability in continuing to offer structured activities during school vacations over the duration of the three year trial.

The process tracing the evolvement of the program provides a cogent example as to how government departments can effectively work collaboratively across boundaries, share resources, and avoid the replication of services. The relative autonomy afforded to the CSS working group in making decisions about how the three year funding grant was distributed among the six projects, proved to be an effective model. In this scenario,



professionals who had knowledge about the needs of their community were granted a large degree of autonomy in making decisions for the delivery of the program. The distribution of resources to the providers contracted to deliver the activities not only assisted the West Cairns community, but also contributed to the Cairns economy. It is noted that while two companies delivered the majority of activities, a number of smaller businesses benefited economically and were able to expand their activities due to their inclusion in the program.

The data indicates a high number of youth derived personal, social, and physical benefits due to their inclusion in the program. Participation data indicated that a significant number of youths were involved in multiple activities on multiple occasions over the course of a week and stated that their social networks had grown owing to their interactions with peers while participating in team and group activities. Supporting data indicated that young people reported an increase in self-esteem as well as perceived improvements in their physical fitness levels due to regular participation in the program. Parents observed indirect benefits from the program for their children with regards to increased self-discipline and the development of self-regulated behaviours in the home. This in turn contributed to enhanced harmony and communication among family members. There is some evidence to suggest that student's educational outcomes may have been enhanced with students in a small sample showing progress in their personal and social capabilities due to regular participation in the program. However, this claim could only be substantiated if a more in-depth longitudinal study was conducted with a larger sample of students.

An additional factor that contributed to the success of the program was due to the creation of pathways between projects enabling some participants to transition readily. There were numerous examples of youth completing a project such as SPAYC and then entering another project such as Parks to Clubs. Transitioning into other projects such as Parks to Clubs or SPAYC Cadets often resulted in young people gaining further recognition in sporting representative teams or increased career and educational opportunities. Further, there were opportunities for participants to stay in contact with projects by obtaining paid work as facilitators under the mentorship of providers.

There are several areas where the program could be augmented to increase its positive impact in the lives of young people and families in Cairns West. Over the course of the evaluation, the team has met regularly with the program coordinator to discuss areas where the program could be further strengthened, and a number of challenges have been addressed. In addition, the executive of CSS has been kept abreast of the progress of the evaluation in the form of a verbal interim report presented to the committee in February 2022. The CSS working group could benefit from clarifying the roles and responsibilities of its members and building their data literacy skills. The working group could benefit from the inclusion of a professional from the health sector, and assistance with marketing to promote more awareness among the community about the nature of the program. Regular reviews of the individual projects could be undertaken to evaluate whether the aims and outcomes are being achieved including reflections about the balance between sporting and recreational activities across the program. Providers and facilitators could benefit from professional development opportunities on the practices and expectations when submitting written reports. Providers and facilitators could also benefit from professional development on managing the challenging behaviours of some

participants. Finally, a strategy for increasing parental participation in their children's sport as well as an approach for ensuring parents sign and return consent forms could be implemented.

In summary, the overall finding of the evaluation is that SPAYC+PLACE is an innovative community based program which positively impacted on the health and well-being of young people due its inclusiveness resulting in high levels of participation among youth residing in the three Cairns West suburbs. Observations of young people laughing, engaging with other youth and their facilitators, and actively enjoying the various activities, are further testament to the success of the program. There is tangible evidence that the program should be supported through recurrent funding. SPAYC+PLACE presents as a blueprint for investigating how similar iterations of the program could be adapted to other contexts within Cairns and across Queensland as a comprehensive intervention for fostering healthy and productive communities.

## 4.0 Recommendations and Suggestions

The data derived from the evaluation resulted in the development of key recommendations aimed at further improving the SPAYC+PLACE program. In addition to the recommendations, some suggestions have been included for consideration by Cairns Safer Streets.

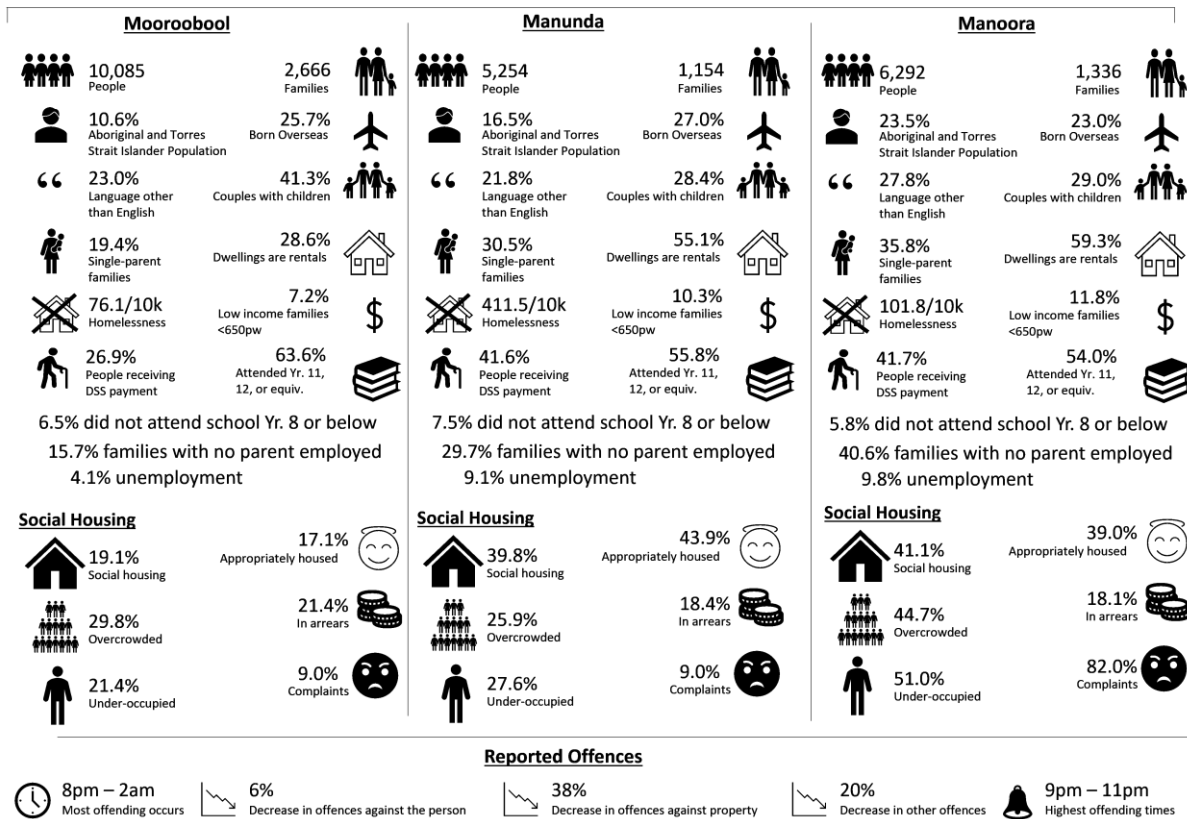
- Secure long term funding to ensure the sustainability of the program.
- Develop and resource a strategy for marketing the SPAYC+PLACE program.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of CSS working group members and implement clear processes and shared accountability for the SPAYC+PLACE program.
- Expand the working group to include a representative from the health sector. **Suggestion:** *The health worker could contribute to relevant areas of the program such as nutrition, mental health and sexual health.*
- Develop a consistent, unambiguous format with a shared understanding of definitions and key terms for program proposals and written reports.
- Build on the data literacy of CSS working group members to aid in the systematic collection, recording and communication of data.
- Implement an agreed, documented process for the collection of attendance/participation data. **Suggestion:** *Employ an Administrative Officer who has responsibility for data.*
- Expand participant intake data to include additional information. **Suggestion:** *Indigeneity*
- Identify and record all forms of in-kind support to determine the value.
- Develop a strategy to manage participants who do not have signed consent from parents/carers to participate in an activity. **Suggestion:** *This could involve school staff, the adoption of a designated sign on day, and/or a policy of “no consent no participation”.*
- Explore strategies for increasing parental involvement and attendance at their children’s sporting and recreational activities.
- Schedule project reviews throughout the funding cycle, to gauge their viability in relation to their stated aims and perceived outcomes.
- Establish scheduled opportunities for CSS working group members to increase visibility and provide assistance in the SPAYC+PLACE program.
- Explore transitional arrangements for young people who exit the SPAYC+PLACE program on the completion of primary school.
- Extend opportunities for youth in the 13-17 year old age group to increase options post SPAYC.

- Consider the inclusion of additional recreational based activities in the SPAYC+PLACE program.
- Consider implementing adult to participant ratios for SPAYC group activities.
- Establish a process for approving and monitoring drivers and the use of private vehicles to transport program participants. **Suggestion:** *The process could involve recording valid driver's licenses, vehicle registration and car insurance, and recording parental/carer consent for young people to travel in private vehicles.*
- Develop consistency of practice and clear expectations regarding provider/facilitator written reports to Cairns Safer Streets.
- Create a professional development plan that supports providers/facilitators to manage challenging behaviours. **Suggestion:** *Consider offer from Education Queensland staff to provide training to facilitators and providers.*
- Consider extending the SPAYC+PLACE program to other Cairns suburbs.
- Consider showcasing the SPAYC+ PLACE program. **Suggestion:** *Write a submission for a National Sport, Recreation and Play Industry and Innovation Award. Explore Queensland and National awards.*





Cairns West Profile Summary 2021



The estimated resident population of Cairns is 190,943 with 11.3% living in Cairns West suburbs. In Cairns West, 47% of the population live in Mooroobool, 29% in Manoora and 24% in Manunda. There is little difference between Cairns West and the Cairns (R) Local Government Area (LGA) in the composition of families in couple relationships with no children and couple relationships with children. In Cairns West, children are 7% more likely to reside in one-parent families compared to the Cairns (R) LGA. Thirty-six percent of couples in the Cairns West suburbs have no children. Mooroobool has the largest percentage of family couples with children at 41.3% and the lowest percentage of single-parent families at 19.4%. By comparison, Manoora and Manunda have lower percentages of couples with children and higher percentages of one-parent families.

Cairns West is home to an ethnically diverse population with greater than 20% of the population of each suburb being born overseas. Of the 25.5% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Cairns, 15.8% reside in the Cairns West suburbs. At 23.5%, Manoora has the highest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and Mooroobool the lowest at 10.6%. In Cairns West, 65.3% of residents were born in Australia, 6.6% in English speaking background countries and 18.8% in non-English speaking background countries.

In both Mooroobool and Manunda, the percentage of people born overseas is higher than the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations. In Mooroobool, the number of people born overseas is 55% greater than the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and in Manoora, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is greater by 0.5%, the number born overseas. Across all Cairns West suburbs, the numbers of people who are neither Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nor born overseas exceeds 53%.

Manoora had the lowest percentage of non-school attendance<sup>1</sup> at 5.8% compared to Manunda, the highest at 7.5%. There is a small gap between the 58.9% of young people living in Cairns West who have completed year 11 or 12, compared with the Cairns (R) LGA at 62.5%. Mooroolooloolool exceeded the Cairns (R) LGA with 63.6% of students completing year 11 or 12.

Less than 12% of residents in Cairns West come from low-socio economic backgrounds. The average yearly income for individuals is \$36,459 compared to \$42,068 for Cairns (R) LGA residents. In Mooroolooloolool, 7.2% of residents have an income less than \$650.00 per week. Of the 26.9% of recipients of a Department of Social Services payment, 61% receive the age pension. The unemployment rate is 4.1% with 15% of families having no one in paid employment. In Manunda, 10.3% of residents have an income of less than \$650.00 per week. Of the 41.6% of recipients of a Department of Social services payment, 71.4% receive the age pension. The unemployment rate is 9.1%, with almost one third of families having no one in paid employment. In Manoora, 11.8% of families have an income less than \$650 per week. Of the 41.7% of recipients of a Department of Social Services payment, 76.9% receive the age pension. The unemployment rate is 9.8% with 40.6% of families having no one in paid employment. In Cairns West, the percentage of people who undertook voluntary work was 13.3% compared to the Cairns (R) LGA at 13.9%. Overall, in terms of socio-economic status 58% of Cairns West residents fall into the most disadvantaged quintile compared to 27.2% in the wider Cairns area.

The provision of suitable accommodation is an ongoing challenge for residents living in the Cairns West area. The distribution of social housing across the three suburbs is highest in Manoora at 41.1%, closely followed by Manunda at 39.8% and Mooroolooloolool at 19.1%. The rate for non-payment of rent in Mooroolooloolool stands at 21.4% followed by Manunda and Manoora with (18.4%) and (18.1%) respectively.

Of residents in Manoora, 44.7% live in an overcrowded housing situation and 39% of residents are appropriately housed. At 82%, Manoora has the highest rate of complaints against social housing tenants compared to Manunda and Mooroolooloolool at 9.0%. Mooroolooloolool has 29.8% of residents living in overcrowded housing situations and 17.1% are appropriately housed. Twenty-six percent of residents in Manunda live in an overcrowded housing situation and 43.9 % are appropriately housed.

The highest rate of homelessness<sup>2</sup> is in Manunda at 411.5 persons per 10,000 persons. The combined three suburbs experience homelessness at 171.6 per 10 000 people which is more than twice the rate of Cairns (R)) LGA at 81.4 per 10 000 people.

Crime and antisocial behaviour continue to be a challenge for QPS across some of the Cairns West suburbs despite a decrease in some reported crimes. Most reported offences in the Cairns West region occurred between the hours 8pm to 2am with the peak hours between 9pm and 11pm (Cairns Safer Streets, 2022). Offences against the person included homicide, assault, sexual offences, robbery, and other offences against a person (Cairns Safer Streets, 2022). Offences against property include unlawful entry with intent, arson,

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<sup>1</sup> Did not go to school, or Year 8 or below

<sup>2</sup> When a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives, the ABS defines someone as homeless if their current living arrangement: is a dwelling that is inadequate, has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable, or does not allow them to have control of, and access to, space for social relations.



other property damage, unlawful use of a motor vehicle, other theft, fraud and handling stolen goods (Cairns Safer Streets, 2022). Between July 2020 and April 2021 there has been a significant decrease of 38% in offences against property in the Cairns West region. Finally, there has been a 20% decrease in other<sup>3</sup> reported crimes in the same period in the Cairns West region.

In summary, diverse ethnic groups populate Cairns West. Statistics indicate that a number of families come from low socio-economic backgrounds due to levels of unemployment, low median wages and a dependency on social services including assistance with accommodation. In the three Cairns West suburbs, statistics highlight a higher percentage of residents who did not go to school, or their highest level of schooling was year 8 or below compared to residents in the Cairns (R) LGA.

### 5.3 Evolution of the SPAYC+PLACE Program

This section provides a brief history of the SPAYC+PLACE program with reference to some of the interview data collected over the course of the evaluation. The genesis of the SPAYC+PLACE program can be traced back to a former member of the Red Cross who was passionate about soccer. When kicking a ball around at a park in Mooroolbool, he invited a group of children to join in. In an interview, he stated that; "We got involved and we ended up playing with the kids, and I forgot much about the rest of the day". A few years later, when working at a community hub in another Cairns West suburb, he began to have a series of conversations with two members of Cairns Safer Streets. The conversation turned to concerns about youth crime and what programs could be implemented to divert young people from a cycle of antisocial and criminal behaviour. As a response, the interviewee suggested that he could implement a street soccer project to involve any young person who wanted to play:

*We decided to do in kind support. It was very wise from the management of the three of us that they allow us to do it. Because it was not attached to any funding, was just play space principles, going to the place where the kids are, doing what they want to do, and just inclusion, whether you are good or bad at playing, it doesn't matter*

An interviewee who was the Operations Manager at the Red Cross at the time supported the street soccer initiative because there were few free accessible programs in the suburb that young people from low socio-economic backgrounds could access. He recalled working with the two other adults in trailing the soccer project and being surprised at the growing interest among young people who wanted to be involved in the sport:

*So going back years, maybe 2014 or 2015, I think. I remember going down and trying to get street soccer started on a Friday afternoon. We did it at a few locations, ended up not working out, but from that, we started doing soccer in Shang Park in Mooroolbool and then things just happened. People heard about this and then 'Oh can you come and deliver this? Do the same thing but in this park'.*

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<sup>3</sup> Includes drug offences, prostitution offences, gaming, racing and betting offences, liquor offences, breach of DVO, trespassing/vagrancy, weapons offences, good order offences, traffic offences, stock related offences, and miscellaneous and other offences.



- Connect communities and enhance liveability through participation in physical activity,
- Increase engagement of community members through physical activity, and
- Improve family connections by delivering inclusive programs.

(SPAYC+PLACE Program Logic, 2019)

A brief description of the six projects was outlined in the CSS Program Logic (2019):

1. Space + Place: Activities for Youth in Cairns (SPAYC) – Increasing the availability and choice of structured diversionary activity for young people aged 8 to 12+ through a range of initiatives to activate spaces and places in hard to reach areas of West Cairns, thereby improving protective factors for young people within those communities.
2. Parks to Clubs: Strengthening community through sport in a grassroots project linking young people aged 8 to 25 to sporting clubs.
3. SPAYC Cadets – Cultivating young community leaders and mentors aged 15 to 25 who show an interest or passion in taking on a leadership role within the SPAYC+PLACE program through personal and professional development streams.
4. SPAYC+: Targeting 13 to 25 year olds who are disengaged or at risk of disengagement from education or employment, are in touch with or at risk of entering the youth or criminal justice system, engaging in unhealthy and antisocial behaviours, socially disadvantaged, exposed to family violence and in unsafe living conditions by diverting them into positive prosocial activities and linking them to appropriate supports.
5. Our SPAYC (Sharing People, Ancestors, Yarns and Culture): Supporting consistent and significant cultural awareness and acceptance through the development of a wide range of cultural activities where cultural practitioners work in partnership with individuals and communities for the purposes of growth, positive change, and improved health and wellbeing.
6. FIT Together: Introducing physical activity intervention approaches to the families engaged with the CSS Early Family Intervention Trial, a holistic, coordinated, early intervention approach with identified or referred vulnerable and at risk families – specifically targeted to family units and/or adults.

(SPAYC+PLACE Program Logic, 2019).

#### **5.4 Evaluation Framework**

James Cook University was approached to conduct a two-year process evaluation of the SPAYC +PLACE program commencing in February 2021. A process evaluation consists of a description and analysis of the services and activities that were implemented in the projects as well as the policies and procedures which were put in place. It also consists of the presentation of descriptive statistics on characteristics of program participants such as age, ethnicity, gender, and education as a means of determining whether the SPAYC+PLACE program was reaching the intended targeted population and whether adjustments were required. Descriptive statistics are also beneficial in identifying the highlights as well as the areas in need of continuous improvement in each of the six projects. After consultation with members of the CSS executive, five key aims were identified and form the focus on this process evaluation. These aims were:

1. To identify if there was an increased sense of social connectedness and wellbeing among program participants,
2. To gain the perceptions of coordinators, service providers and partners in terms of the program's success for engaging the participants and enhancing their physical and psychological wellbeing,
3. To analyse the levels of engagement and participation among the participants within and across the suite of projects,
4. To elicit whether an individual's involvement in the various programs and activities has led to increased levels of commitment, attachment and prosocial behaviours while addressing crime and recidivism, and
5. To ascertain whether families have experienced an increased sense of cohesion, social connectivity, and wellbeing due to their engagement within the program.

The evaluation framework consisted of five stages:

1. Forming an evaluation team: The team consisted of a James Cook University senior academic, a paid research assistant and a volunteer research assistant.
2. Developing an evaluation plan and gaining ethics approval: A two year plan was developed consisting of a timeline for consultation, rapport building and stages of data collection. The project received James Cook University Human Ethics approval (H7980).
3. Collecting and analysing data: A plan for the types of data required to address the five aims of the process evaluation was developed. Appropriate data collection tools were identified as well as the most appropriate forms for analysing the data. The methodology is outlined in detail in the next section of this chapter.
4. Reporting to CSS executive: Members of the evaluation team presented an interim verbal report outlining progress including emerging findings to the CSS executive in February 2022.
5. Presenting the final report and a plan for dissemination to the community: In addition to the evaluation report, it was planned to present the outcomes of the evaluation to sectors of the Cairns community and academic colleagues.

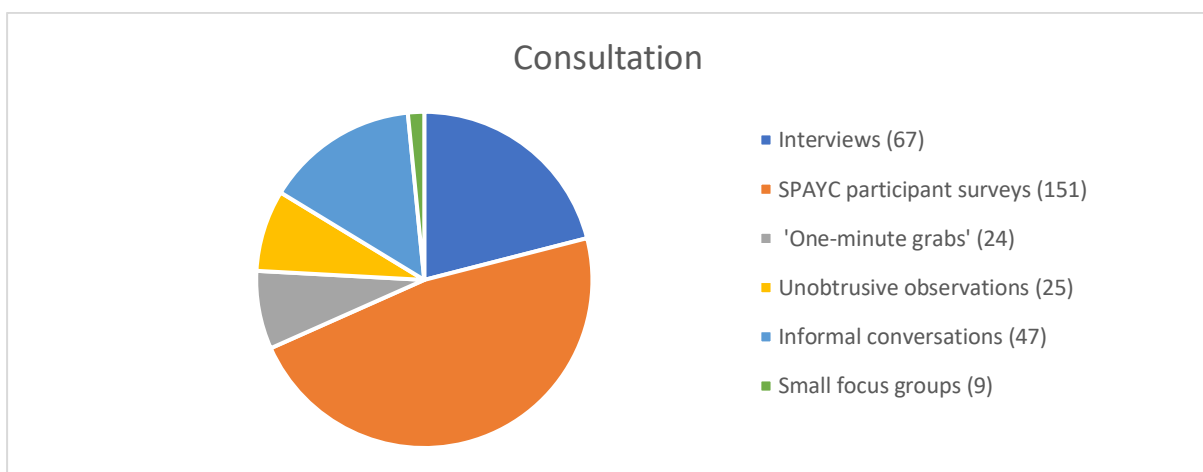
## **5.5 Methodology**

The evaluation utilised a mixed methods framework consisting of qualitative and quantitative data to establish the degree to which the SPAYC+PLACE program achieved its stated aims. Historically, quantitative methods have been viewed as a more reliable source than qualitative methods due to the reliance on statistical data and perceived objectivity. However, this approach has been critiqued as it only gives a partial account of the experiences of the participants, providers, facilitators, and partners who contributed to the program. By contrast qualitative data allows for an interpretation of the research subject's lived experiences in terms of their concerns, attitudes, and experiences of the program (Turner, Ireland, Krenus, & Pointon, 2011). The adoption of a mixed methods approach is therefore advantageous in that it allows multiple data sets to be triangulated

to give a more valid and reliable representation of the lived experiences of the people involved in the program (Turner, Ireland, Krenus, & Pointon, 2011).

## 5.6 Overview of Consultations

The evaluation involved 323 consultations over the two year period as represented in the graph below. Consultations took various forms including formal one on one interviews, SPAYC participant surveys, 'one-minute grabs', unobtrusive observations, informal conversations, and small focus groups. Consultations included interactions with members of the CSS executive committee, CSS working group members, partners, providers, facilitators, participants, family members and community members including local residents.



## 5.7 Secondary Sources

A considerable body of data was gleaned from an analysis of documents made available to the evaluation team through CSS. The list below includes an array of sources such as original proposals for the projects and provider case notes, which proved to be valuable in terms of obtaining background information about the program.

- MOU SPAYC+PLACE Program
- Cairns West Community Profile 2018
- Program Logic – SPAYC+PLACE Feb 2019
- SPAYC+PLACE Pilot Program July 2019
- Proposed PLACE Program
- SPAYC+PLACE Terms of Reference
- SPAYC+PLACE PILOT Funding Proposal 2019-2021
- SPAYC+PLACE Project Proposals 2019-2022
- Our SPAYC Consultation participant list Aug 2019
- SPAYC+PLACE Transition Strategy Feb 2021
- SPAYC+PLACE Partnership Workshop Outcomes report Feb 2021
- SPAYC+PLACE Service Providers Gathering March 2021
- Cairns Safer Streets Program Dashboards
- Cairns Safer Streets Annual Report 2020-21
- Cairns Safer Streets Tri annual report Nov 2020-Feb 2021

- Project Manager Update Dec 2020
- SPAYC+ Participant Surveys Feb 2020, July 2020, Apr 2021.
- SPAYC Cadets Participant Survey Data, Intakes 1, 2, 3 and 4
- Activities Specification Form-Space and Place Activities for Youth in Cairns-SPAYC (completed examples)
- Boxing Health Wellbeing 6 week program
- JUTE program schedule
- Flyers: Women's Yarning Circle, Mum's Stretching and Babies on Mat, Seasons of Dance, Sounds of Moorroobool, Cairns West Youth Yarns, The Dancing Rose Information pamphlet, Space and Place Activity Schedules Jan 2019-Jun 2022.
- SPAYC Cadets Graduation power points, Intakes 1,2, 3 and 4
- Cairns West State School Student Data.
- Our SPAYC Participant Surveys Feb-June and July-Sept 2020
- SPAYC+ Participant Surveys Feb 2020, July 2020, Apr 2021.
- FIT Together Family Case notes 2021
- SPAYC observations, NOV 2021
- Queensland Regional Profile: Cairns West Region (ASGS 2021)

## **5.8 Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis**

The major form of qualitative data was obtained through individual semi-structured interviews, 'one-minute grabs', unobtrusive observations, informal conversations, and small focus group interviews with individuals such as members of the executive committee, working group, partners, providers, facilitators, participants, family members, and local residents. A detailed description of each qualitative data methods follows.

### **5.9 Semi-structured Interviews**

Sixty-seven semi-structured interviews were conducted in various locations across Cairns. Semi-structured interviews involve asking the interviewee questions that endeavour to gain their insight into the SPAYC+PLACE program and their involvement with the program. Interviews were conducted with members of the Cairns Safer Streets Working Group, individuals who provided activities for the young people, representatives from the partner groups who supported each of the projects, members of the Cairns Safer Streets Executive, young people who participated in the program and the State Member for Cairns. In addition, nine focus groups were conducted. Some focus groups were program participants only, some parents only and some parents and participants.

All interviews were transcribed by a professional organisation and a thematic analysis of the transcripts was conducted using Nvivo software. The thematic analysis identified patterns, or themes, from the interviews. Inductive coding was used to identify key words or phrases from each interview and to create a code book. This allowed the themes to emerge based on the participants' narratives. Quotes from the interviews in the form of thick descriptive data was organised to support the themes. This assisted in the writing of the qualitative data. This data formed the basis of the individual narratives or "good news stories" which have been included in the majority of the projects.

### **5.10 'One-minute Grabs'**

Twenty-four 'one-minute grabs' were conducted at venues such as parks and other public spaces including the end of term supersessions which were held at Shang Park. 'One-minute grabs' consisted of members of the evaluation team walking around these sites, randomly selecting adults, and asking them two questions about the program. This data collection technique was particularly useful at the end of term supersessions where there were significant numbers of parents and community members present.

### **5.11 Unobtrusive Observations**

Twenty-five non-participant observations were conducted. These involved observing participants while they undertook an activity without the researcher being actively involved or interacting with participants. Unobtrusive observation can be structured or unstructured. The observation was structured with certain elements being observed. These elements included the number of participants, participants leaving early, the behaviour exhibited by the participants, and how the facilitator responded to negative behaviour.

This method is useful when trying to understand a phenomenon. The observer unobtrusively enters the community where interactions are occurring to observe the activities and interactions between social actors. In this instance, the activities observed were the SPAYC sporting and outdoor recreation activities scheduled in Term 4, 2021. The observations were conducted from 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021 through 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021 to maximise researcher attendance across the range of activities.

The data collected was analysed thematically using deductive coding. The following pre-derived codes: venues, facilitators, participants, external factors, and issues were observed.

### **5.12 Informal Conversations**

Forty-seven informal conversations took place over the course of the evaluation. The conversations were not recorded or analysed in the same way as the interview data as many conversations were anecdotal with the evaluation team member taking brief notes of interest after the conversation. In many cases, these conversations took place with the same person over several occasions to check facts or gain clarification about particular topics.

### **5.13 Quantitative Data**

The quantitative data was collected through a survey and using official statistics to produce a community profile for each of the three suburbs within the Cairns West area. A Social Connectedness Survey that consisted of twenty-three questions, was completed by one hundred and fifty-one people out of an original target of two hundred. The first four questions covered demographic characteristics of age, gender, suburb, and ethnicity. The following nineteen questions were focused on themes relating to social connection, safety at home and in community, health and fitness, and the activities offered. For each of these questions the participants were asked whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. The survey responses were analysed according to four key characteristics: gender, ethnicity, age, and suburb.

The next chapter of the report contains a detailed review of some of the research literature pertaining to studies about young people and physical activity. The literature search

includes existing studies, which discuss styles of mentoring that have been successful in working with young people in other international and national contexts. The review of the literature concludes with a discussion on the benefits of sporting and recreational activities for young females who have migrated to Australia from other countries. The remainder of the report consists of a description and analysis of each of the six projects, followed by the final chapter, which provides a summary and conclusion with reference to the five aims of the evaluation.



## 6.0 Review of the Literature

### 6.1 Introduction

Prior to an analysis of the six projects within the SPAYC+PLACE program, it is beneficial to review some of the existing literature that relates to the overall rationale and philosophy of the program. This review provides a discussion on the merits of outdoor sporting and recreational programs for young people in improving social connectedness with other children and within families. Further, it provides discussion on the impact of sports based programs in reducing juvenile's involvement in crime. The available literature also reports on the benefits of outdoor sporting and recreation activities in improving the physical and psychological wellbeing of participants through their engagement in programs. Finally, the review discusses the benefits of sports and outdoor based mentoring for young people and concludes with a brief overview of the positive impacts of sport and recreation for migrant/refugee females who have traditionally been excluded from sporting activities.

### 6.2 Method

This literature review was completed using the 'traditional review' method, as well as a methodical analysis of the literature through the creation of a literature matrix. The question at the heart of this literature review is multi-disciplinary; therefore, the database search was not confined to any one discipline. The table below demonstrates the keywords, phrases, and Boolean operators. (A Boolean operator uses words such as **and**, **or**, **not** alongside keywords to limit or expand search results).

Keywords / Synonyms	Phrases	Boolean Operators
Sport; outdoors; nature; wellbeing; crime; youth; benefits; outcomes; juvenile; mentoring;	"social connectedness"; "subjective wellbeing"; "crime reduction"; "youth offending"; "juvenile offending"; "community-based mentoring"; "industry mentoring"; "sports-based mentoring"	'AND' 'OR' 'NOT'

The results of this literature review focus on three key dialogues. Firstly, it discusses the connection between participating in outdoor and sporting activities with increased feelings of wellbeing. Secondly, it focuses on the potential benefits for youth who participate in sporting activities to increase social connectedness at both the family and community levels. Thirdly, it analyses the impact of participating in structured sporting clubs and activities to address youth offending. Finally, the review explores youth mentoring through sports and outdoor recreation activities before discussing the challenges for migrant/refugee females who wish to participate in sporting activities.

### **6.3 Defining Sport and Recreation**

Before discussing the research findings within the literature review, it is important to define both sport and recreation. According to May (2021:1) defining sport may be contentious due to it being, “operationally defined by its social interpretation as well as its strong association with physical exertion and performance measures”. May further distinguishes the difference between ‘sport’, ‘sport participation’, and ‘active recreation’. Sport is defined as, “A human activity involving physical exertion and skill as the primary focus of the activity, with elements of competition or social participation where rules and patterns of behaviour governing the activity exist formally through organisations and is generally recognised as a sport”.

Sport participation is when, “...a person takes part in a sporting activity, whether in a formal or informal capacity. Some examples of sport participation can be described by a particular role performed in sport (including playing and non-playing roles), such as an athlete (or player), coach (or trainer, instructor), or official (or umpire, referee)”. May defines active recreation as, “activities engaged in for the purpose of relaxation, health and wellbeing or enjoyment with the primary activity requiring physical exertion, and the primary focus on human activity”.

The benefits of participation in sport and recreational activities are highlighted in the Queensland Governments Sports and Active Recreation Strategy 2019-2023. The strategy states that, “Sport is a function, a lever and a partner in delivering social, economic, health and community benefits through promoting social inclusion, enhancing our sense of connection, building Queensland’s external profile and enabling more active and healthy opportunities” (Queensland Governments Sports and Active Recreation Strategy, 2018, p. 3).

One of the pillars of the sports and recreation strategy is focused on encouraging young people’s participation in a diverse range of activities and ensuring the removal of barriers to participation so that all young people are included and reap the benefits associated with physical-based activities. The strategy strives to:

- enable the development of physical, social, emotional and cognitive literacy and self-confidence for children,
- maintain participation, skills and wellness across the life course,
- build resilience, and
- offer innovative and accessible participation (Queensland Governments Sports and Active Recreation Strategy, 2018, p. 4).

#### **6.3.1 Outdoor and Sporting Activities and Increased Wellbeing**

There is a plethora of information, according to Allison, Dwyer, and Makin (1999), linking physical activity to reduced levels of mortality, as well as reduced rates in a variety of diseases and health conditions. They contend that physical activity is also, “associated with a range of both physiological and psychological benefits” (Allison, et al., 1999, p. 13). This is supported by Mansfield et al., (2018) who stated that several studies demonstrate physical, mental, and social health benefits derived from being in contact with nature in

an outdoor setting. They expanded on this by stating that, "being in outdoor settings has been found to improve mood, self-esteem, reduce anxiety and depression, and impact positively on social relations in those who are healthy...and those diagnosed with mental health conditions" (p. 7).

It is espoused by Cartwright, White and Clitherow (2018) that epidemiological studies cite a reduction in rates of, "depression, depressive symptomology and antidepressant prescription" (p. 1238) in people who were exposed to natural settings. Additionally, they stated that these studies also showed, "reduced stress levels, lower prevalence of anxiety and general psychological distress and improved...wellbeing" (Cartwright, White, & Clitherow, 2018, p. 1238). Other benefits of participating in outdoor and sporting activities include improved self-esteem, increase in self-confidence and a respect for one's body through a greater attention to diet and sleep (Bailey, 2005). Further benefits identified by Bailey (2005: 80) include, "opportunities to meet and communicate with other people; to take different social roles; to learn particular social skills such as tolerance and respect for others, and to adjust to team/collective objectives such as cooperation and cohesion". Thus, outdoor and sporting activities provide not only increased physical and psychological wellbeing, but also the opportunity for personal growth and development.

Although published thirty-one years ago, a study conducted by McTeer and Curtis (1990) contested Cartwright et. al.'s (2018) hypothesis about the perceived positive link between physical activity and psychological wellbeing (p. 341). They predominantly found that men had increased levels of wellbeing as their levels of physical activity increased even after controls for socio economic and socio demographic factors were introduced (p. 338). However, they did acknowledge that, "social interaction in physical activity proved to be one of the most important predictors in wellbeing" (p. 341) with social interaction occurring prior, during, and after the physical activity. For example, the study cited positive interactions occurring while people were travelling, in the locker room or during leisure time at home.

Twenty-eight years later, Testoni and Dolan (2018) supported the theory that posited that social interaction was enhanced if individuals were physically active in outdoor settings. Subjective wellbeing is described by the authors as, "the good and bad feelings arising from what people do and how they think" (p. 2). Furthermore, Testoni & Dolan (2018) observed that activities performed outdoors with family are, "associated with higher levels of subjective wellbeing" (p. 26) in comparison to spending time alone. They attributed this to the fact that, "being outdoors *and* with family members, boosts the effect that these activities independently have on subjective wellbeing" (emphasis in italics added p. 26).

The What Works Centre for Wellbeing (2018), promoted the view that there were three benefits for families who exercised together outdoors. These included, "the idea of self (self-identity, worth, value); social bondings and abstraction/feelings (escapism, sensorial, relaxation)" (p. 2). These three potential benefits are also highlighted in other literature. In reference to 'idea of self', Lubans, Plotnikoff and Lubans (2012) stated that physical activity programs, "may improve self-esteem and reduce depression in children" (p. 3). Lu and Buchanan (2014) posited that physical education is an area where children can learn to regulate emotions with peers resulting in increased, "interest, excitement, joy, happiness, pride, surprise, boredom, anxiety...disgust, anger or hopelessness" (p. 29). The concept of escapism as a perceived benefit of sport and physical activity is also espoused

by Cameron and McDougall (2000.) They suggested that as well as being fun, sporting activities might increase wellbeing among youth as, "a fantasy that allows one to escape from the day to day reality of family conflict, homelessness, or the temptations to use alcohol, drugs, or inhale petrol" (p. 2).

In terms of an increase in social bonds, Campbell (1981) posited that social interactions increased personal wellbeing through positive interactions with other people. Furthermore, Campbell believed that a lack of social interaction could lead to distress and low self-esteem. Building on Campbell's musings, McTeer and Curtis (1990) wrote that as much as physical activity takes place in a social context it could be assumed that, as social beings, the social interaction will lead to an increase in subjective wellbeing, rather than physical activity alone.

In summary, there is considerable evidence to support the view that partaking in some form of physical activity or just being outdoors in a natural setting can lead to increased wellbeing, both physically and mentally. Some of the literature considers the increases in family wellbeing because of a collective participation in outdoor and sporting activities. However, as Mansfield et al. (2018) found, "the evidence is limited as there is little of it and the study methods have some weaknesses" (p. 2). They go on to say that the limited evidence does not necessarily mean there are no wellbeing benefits attached to sporting and outdoor activities, but that better evidence with well designed evaluation methods is required (Mansfield, et al., 2018).

This section of the literature review discusses the connection between outdoor and sporting activities with increased wellbeing. The literature reviewed indicates that there is a strong link between undertaking outdoor and sporting activities with a range of health benefits, both physiological and psychological. Furthermore, it has discussed studies that demonstrate an increased level of self-esteem, with reduced levels of anxiety and depression associated with being in an outdoor environment. In addition, it was identified outdoor and sporting activities can contribute to an increase in positive social relations due to learning tolerance and respect, team objectives and providing a variety of emotional experiences not readily available in other areas of life. The next section of the literature review discusses the potential for participating in sporting activities to increase social connectedness at both the family and community levels.

### **6.3.2 Outdoor and Sporting Activities and Increased Social connectedness**

Social connectedness refers to an individual's, "subjective sense of closeness and togetherness with [their] social environment" (Yoon, Lee, & Go, 2008, p. 246). The importance of social connectedness is summed up by Hoye, Nicholson, and Brown (2015) who observed that it fosters, "positive human development, whereas a lack of social connectedness can lead to self-alienation, loneliness and a lack of meaning or purpose" (p. 5). There are specific psychological benefits associated with social connectedness for an individual, including a, "sense of meaning, self-esteem, sense of belonging and companionship" (Cartwright, White, & Clitherow, 2018, p. 1239). The authors observed that regular face to face interactions with peers or family is a major factor that contributes to high levels of social connectivity for young people. It can be surmised, that active participation in outdoor and sporting activities has the potential to enhance social connectivity among young people.

Some western countries claim that sport is, “a ‘social glue’ that binds communities” (Hoye, Matthew, & Brown, 2015, p. 4). Indeed, Cameron and McDougall (2000) suggested that sport and physical activity hold an important role in society today with many people gathering to play team sports, such as netball, football, or rugby. Furthermore, they posited that such activities have, “great meanings for many people” (Cameron & McDougall, 2000, p. 2). This is supported by the Victorian Government (u.d.) who reported that, “Forty-five per cent of Australian women and 55 per cent of Australian men” (p. 7) gained their social contact through some form of physical activity. Another Australian study conducted by Tonts and Atherley (2010) concluded that sport was a central aspect of social life in rural Australia due to, “drawing together social networks and underpinning a sense of place” (p. 394). This is especially true of team sports that value collective endeavours over individual pursuits (Walseth, 2008).

Despite the corpus of research that supported the hypothesis that outdoor and sporting activities contributes to increased social connectedness other studies were cautionary in their findings. A major study by Hoye, Nicholson, and Brown (2015) found that, “neither the intensity nor the length of time of organisational involvement were associated with higher social connectedness scores... (which was) ... unexpected in light of previous work” (pp. 16-17). The authors argued that, “while involvement in one or more community sport organisations was a significant but weak predictor of higher levels of social connectedness... involvement in non-sport community organisations was not significantly associated with social connectedness scores” (Hoye, Nicholson, & Brown, 2015, p. 16).

They suggested that the most likely reason behind this result is that, “other or additional measures of involvement are required” (Hoye, Nicholson, & Brown, 2015, p. 17). They posited that, had they included a measure of the, “nature or quality of involvement” (p. 17), they may have produced findings which highlighted the, “differences between involvement roles in relation to the effects on social connectedness” (p. 17).

Another study conducted in 2015 by Bower and Carroll had similar findings to that of Hoye, Nicholson and Brown. Bower and Carroll found, “no significant differences between groups in terms of connectedness to peers or family belonging” (p. 17), which they espoused as being unexpected because previous researchers had found, “that extra Curricular Activities promote teamwork, interpersonal relationships, and shared interests and are positively correlated to feelings of connectedness with others” (p. 17). However, they suggested that perhaps the, “strength of a relationship was not strong enough to indicate a significant outcome” (p. 17) and that a larger participant involvement in any future research may provide clearer results.

In 2012, Lenzi, Vieno, Pastore, and Santinello studied the association between adolescent civic engagement and social connectedness in an Italian city. The results from the study of 403 early and middle adolescents (47.9% of whom were male) showed that, “social connectedness is associated with higher levels of civic engagement in adolescence, and adolescents’ network of adults and their levels of attachment to the neighbourhood” (Lenzi, et al., 2012, p. 45). For Lenzi et al. (2012), civic engagement involves; “the feelings of responsibility toward the common good, the actions aimed at solving community issues and improving the wellbeing of its members and the competencies required to participate in civic life” (p. 45). Civic responsibility was found to be fostered in adolescents in communities where they had intergenerational closure (that is, a strong tie between

adults and youth). Lenzi et al (2012) rationalised that civic responsibility among young people was enhanced through the support they received from adults who acted as positive role models through, "a process of collective socialisation" (Lenzi, et al., 2012, p. 51). An example of intergenerational closure is where young people are supported by parents or other adults when participating in sporting and outdoor activities such as cheering on the sidelines, coaching teams, providing transportation, or modelling physical activities (Mansfield, et al., 2018).

It is posited by Cameron and McDougall (2000) that sporting and outdoor activities may provide a, "sense of belonging, loyalty and support" (p. 2), which could see a sense of civic responsibility developed among young participants. This is supported by Bailey (2005) who posited that sporting activities could develop social inclusion through a combination of four dimensions. These included: spatial, relational, functional, and power. Bailey contends that by, "bringing individuals from a variety of social and economic backgrounds together in a shared interest in activities that are inherently valuable (*spatial*), offering a sense of belonging, to a team, a club, a program (*relational*); providing opportunities for the development of valued capabilities and competencies (*functional*); and increasing 'community capital', by extending social networks, increased community cohesion and civic pride (*power*)" (pp. 76-77). Furthermore, Bailey (2005) suggested sporting and outdoor activities have a capacity to build social networks by creating opportunities to forge new friendships and reduce social isolation. As Kelly (2012) observed, for young people, participating in organised sporting activities with a group of friends is a great way to socialise without, "attracting negative police attention" (p. 272).

The literature reviewed in this section established that being connected socially provides individuals with several psychological benefits, including increased self-esteem, a sense of belonging, companionship, and a sense of purpose. While some of the literature speaks of sporting activities drawing together social networks, other studies did not find an increase in social connectedness because of participation in sporting activities. However, the authors did point out that this was an unexpected result and highlighted the limitations of their studies and improvements that could be made in future research. This section also discussed developing a sense of civic responsibility in adolescents through intergenerational closure, which could be done through sporting and outdoor activities where there was parental involvement. Finally, the section discussed four dimensions of spatial, relational, functional, and power, that can develop social inclusion through outdoor and sporting activities. The following section of the review discusses the potential for participation in outdoor and sporting activities to address youth involvement in crime.

#### **6.3.4 Outdoor and Sporting Activities and Crime Reduction**

There is international evidence to suggest that sports based interventions may have an impact on reducing crime and antisocial behaviour in young people within local communities (Chamberlain, 2013; Utting, 1996). This sentiment is echoed in the Queensland Governments Sports and Active Recreation Strategy, 2018 which stated, "Sport can and already does, play a role in early intervention with youth at risk, first time offenders and disaffected youth. It does this through its community connections and, with support, it can enable the connection of community policing personnel with regional and local sporting groups. Through these relationships and interactions, sport assists young

people to develop pro social behaviours and find a place to be valued and develop positive life skills. (Queensland Government Sports and Recreation Strategy, 2018: 4).

However, it should be recognised that most of the research evidence regarding sports-based interventions is anecdotal with small sample sizes that track the participants for short periods of time (Chamberlain, 2013). This is supported by other academics who state a lack of, "convincing empirical 'evidence' of impact in this field" (Kelly, 2012, p. 262; Coakley, 2011; Coalter, 2017; Morris, Sallybanks, Willis & Makkai, 2003; Smith & Waddington, 2004). Furthermore, a number of academics state that there is a paucity of literature on this topic (Kelly, 2012; Chamberlain, 2013). Despite this, many westernised, capitalist societies have integrated youth sporting programs into crime reduction strategies (see Haudenhuyse, Theeboom, & Coalter, 2012; Kelly, 2012; Morris, Sallybanks, Willis & Makkai, 2003; Nichols, 2007; Reid, Tremblay, Pelletier, & McKay, 1994; and Witt & Compton, 1996).

In 2000, Cameron and McDougall, examined different programs that, "appear to have had a beneficial effect in helping young people steer away from trouble" (p. 1). They posited that although sport and physical activity does not have the primary objective of preventing crime it maybe, "an extremely positive by-product" (Cameron & McDougall, 2000, p. 1). Moreover, they found that the sporting activities that are provided must be done in a, "supportive social context...[that is,] must be connected positively within the social fabric of groups and communities" (p. 1). This is supported by Morris, et al. (2003) whose analysis of 175 questionnaires from sports-based intervention programs found that the programs provided an avenue for personal and social development with a positive impact on behaviour.

Most programs analysed by Morris et al. in 2003 catered for both male and females, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth. However, 11% of the programs were tailored specifically to Indigenous Australian youth. Furthermore, 81% of the programs were geared towards, "youth at risk of or involved in drug use and crime" (Morris, et al., 2003, p. 2). Most respondents to the survey (74%) stated that the main aim of the program was to provide diversionary activities as a means of addressing deviant behaviour among youth (Morris, et al., 2003). The analysis supported this by showing that providing positive alternatives, "was the most likely intended outcome for these programs" (Morris, et al., 2003, pp. 2-3).

Nonetheless, Morris et al., (2003) demonstrated through their case study analysis that measuring antisocial behaviour was inherently complex and required, "both short and long term follow-up measurement" (p. 4). The researchers concluded that the evidence from their analysis indicated that sport and outdoor activity programs, "will not impact directly on reducing antisocial behaviour" (p. 4). However, they should still be considered as an important component when developing wider strategies for reducing crime and antisocial behaviour. They posited that a multi-agency platform is the most appropriate model with links to, "health, welfare, education, employment and leisure services" (Morris, et al., 2003, p. 4), because this combines a facilitation of personal and social development with a focus on addressing underlying factors that may contribute to an individual's behaviour.

An evaluation of literature conducted in 2005 by Bailey, reported that sport could contribute, "to a wide range of positive social outcomes, including reduced youth crime" (p. 74). Bailey's (2005) evaluation supports the findings of Morris et al. (2003) that there is

little evidence to directly link sporting activity to crime reduction but does stress the importance of sport and outdoor activities in aiding the personal development and psychological wellbeing of youth.

This is also supported by David Carmichael whose literature review conducted in 2008 stated that, “it is unrealistic to claim that organised youth sport *alone* can reduce the levels of youth crime in society” (p. 2). Carmichael contends that the factors for youth involvement in crime are, “complex and multidimensional” (2008, p. 2). In a similar vein to Morris et al. (2003), Carmichael suggested that sporting activities can contribute to a crime reduction strategy and aid in the personal growth of youths through building, “positive identity, feelings of empowerment...leadership, teamwork and self-governance skills” (p. 2) while under adequate adult supervision.

Several case studies from the United States of America, Australia, Canada, and England are cited by Carmichael (2008) to support his claim.

- Kansas City, U.S.A: an evening and midnight basketball program, “reduced the crime rate among African-American youth” (p. 2) and saw a, “one third to two third reduction in juvenile crime” (p. 2) in districts where the program was conducted.
- Alexandria, U.S.A: a running program for young women saw a reduction in crime by the young women who participated in the program sponsored by Road Runners Club of America.
- Non-Specific, Australia: rehabilitation programs specifically targeting Indigenous Australian juvenile offenders saw a significant reduction in crime in Aboriginal communities.
- Bristol, England: Targeting ‘at risk’ youth by engaging them in a multi-sport program saw a, “43% reduction in juvenile crime between October 1997 and January 1998 when compared to crime statistics from 12 months earlier” (p. 3).

Carmichael (2008) stated young people’s involvement in sporting activities might contribute to crime reduction and lead to an increase in young people’s competence and empowerment through interacting with other young people. He surmised that the benefits of sport are:

*It keeps young people busy and out of trouble; meets a need that youth have for excitement; makes young people feel empowered; meets a need that youth have for risk-taking; increases feelings of connectedness; develops problem solving skills; fosters teamwork; develops athletic abilities; increases self-esteem; develops cognitive competencies; provides positive role models and mentors; develops decision making skills; makes youth feel special; [and] provides employment opportunities. (Carmichael, 2008, p. 3)*

This viewpoint is also espoused by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence in the United Kingdom, which indicated that social connectedness through community and civic engagement is said to, “empower communities by increasing community members’ sense of political efficacy, build capacity, have a positive impact on indicators such as education, income and crime” (as cited in Victorian Government, u.d., p. 4).



Sporting programs as a form of community empowerment was embraced by Kelly (2012) who, drawing on Blackshaw and Crabbe (2004), believed that they fall outside a conventional view of authority, especially when staffed by members of the community. Furthermore, Kelly viewed these programs as, 'cultural intermediaries' (p. 6) as opposed to traditional agents of social control.

In summary, there is some evidence to suggest that sporting programs and participation in organised sports clubs can reduce youth involvement in crime and other antisocial behaviours. However, Chamberlain (2013) is mindful that the research is not conclusive. He suggested that the, "relationship between sport participation and crime is too complex as to be reducible to a simple causal relationship" (2013, p. 1285). Furthermore, Chamberlain suggested that there is a lack of longitudinal statistical data regarding offending rates where change can be measured in terms of the impact of sporting activities on future youth offending (Chamberlain, 2013).

The reviewed literature on the connection between outdoor and sporting activities and reduced juvenile crime established that much of the evidence on this subject is anecdotal and that there is a lack of empirical evidence in this field. Despite this, the literature established that there is a multitude of benefits accrued by incorporating outdoor and sporting activity programs into any crime reduction strategy. Many of the authors posited that the personal growth provided through participation in outdoor and sporting activities contributes to feelings of empowerment and competence in juveniles, which can divert them from antisocial behaviour and involvement in crime. However, many of the studies also indicated that the reasons behind youth offending are too complicated to link participation in sporting activities directly to a reduction in crime, particularly when there is a lack of longitudinal data. This section also established that the inclusion of a sporting program alone is not enough to reduce crime or antisocial behaviour. The literature supported the introduction of a multi-agency approach that is, housing, welfare, health, employment, and education, to tackle the underlying factors, which cause young people to become involved in criminal activity.

#### **6.4 Mentoring Through Sports and Outdoor Recreation Activities**

In 1989, Bidwell and Brasler defined mentoring as, "a long term, active process that involves an experienced person and a neophyte [trainee]. Through the developing relationship, the experienced individual provides sponsorship, guidance, education, and personal assistance" (p. 23). Nettles (1991) refined the definition by stating that mentoring consists of a, "one to one relationship between a youth and a caring adult who assists the youth in meeting academic, social, or personal goals" (p. 139). There has been a proliferation of mentoring programs with differing formats, which have been utilised in youth based programs both in Australia and internationally. These include:

- **Positive youth development**, which is defined as, "the deliberate processes of providing youth with the support, relationships, experience, resources, and opportunities needed to become successful and competent adults" (Bernat & Resnick, 2006, p. 10).
- **Community based Mentoring**, where an adult volunteer is matched with a young person and they spend, "one on one time in neighbourhood settings regularly over a determined period of time" (Goldner & Ben-Eliyahu, 2021, p. 2).

- **Industry Mentor**, where an industry professional, “will interact with student mentees to provide them with a deeper insight into professional environments and their future careers” (WIESOC, u.d., para 1).
- **Role Models**, while a mentor can be a role model, a role model is not always a mentor, as Tobin (2004) states; “Michael Jordan is a role model for thousands. If he is to become a mentor, it will only be for a handful of people” (p. 115). Role modelling is defined as, “a process through which a person takes on the values and behaviour of another through identification. The result of the process is behavioural change, which is usually permanent” (Bidwell & Basler, 1989, p. 23).
- **Outdoor and Adventure Mentoring** has no specific definition, but involves outdoor/adventure mentoring which was defined by Itin (1997) as; “the use of wilderness and adventure activities to change and support meta-level behaviours” (p. vii)
- **Sports Mentoring** has no official definition. However, Bloom (2013) states that, “there is likely to be little debate that coaches spend a great deal of their careers mentoring their athletes” (p. 476).

Ultimately, regardless of the form that mentoring takes the core focus of all mentoring should be offering, “companionship, support, and guidance” (Keller, 2005, p 45) in a one-on-one (or group) supportive relationship that helps youth to build confidence, develop personal growth, hone life skills, and gain a positive influence in their life.

It was posited by DuBois and Neville as early as 1997 that mentoring relationships could provide substantial benefits to youth. However, for these relationships to be a success there must be a good match between the mentee and the mentor (National Centre for Healthy Safe Children, 2009). Therefore, according to the National Centre for Healthy Safe Children (2009), the recruitment of “appropriate adults as mentors is an important component of a successful mentoring program” (p. 1). Further, they stated that, “a careful recruitment and screening process can help find people with personal characteristics that are a good fit for the youth in a mentoring program” (p. 6). Recruiting has several stages, including advertising, selection, and interviewing.

#### **6.4.1 Recruiting Mentors**

According to the literature, a variety of strategies can be employed to recruit suitable mentors. These include personally inviting people to mentor, media coverage, posters, adverts in school newsletters, presentations at corporate events, display booths at events, and/or word of mouth (Garringer, 2006; Garringer et al., 2015; Stukas, Clary & Snyder, 2013; Youth Affairs Council Victoria (u.d.). According to a survey of 1000 random American mentors commissioned by MENTOR in 2005 the top reason for becoming a mentor was, ‘being asked’ with 50% of respondents reporting that, “someone personally asked them to mentor (whether formally or informally)” (Stukas et al., 2013, p. 500). However, retaining those mentors can prove to be a challenge. It is, therefore, essential to not only be honest about what being a mentor entails, but to also have a carefully designed selection process during the recruitment phase (National Centre for Healthy Safe Children, 2009).

It is important that mentors are made aware that while the role can be extremely rewarding, it comes with obligations as well as a certain amount of frustration (National

Centre for Healthy Safe Children, 2009). This may potentially deter mentors who do not possess the resilience or aptitude to undertake the role (National Centre for Healthy Safe Children, 2009). In addition, a carefully designed screening process ensures that the most appropriate mentors with the right, “characteristics, skills and experience” (Youth Affairs Council Victoria, u.d., p. 1) will result in, “high-quality mentee-mentor matches and reduce tensions that frustrate mentors” (National Centre for Healthy Safe Children, 2009, p. 7). Reducing mentor attrition is therefore an important consideration in the recruitment process (Youth Affairs Council Victoria, u.d.; National Centre for Healthy Safe Children, 2009).

Challenges of note to a screening process include identifying the potential mentor's motivation, their time commitment as well as security checks (National Centre for Healthy Safe Children, 2009). However, the Youth Affairs Council Victoria (u.d.) included the caveat that, “the ‘best qualified/skilled’ people are not necessarily the best mentors. People with rich life experiences (positive and negative) who have developed coping and problem-solving skills can bring a lot to a mentoring relationship” (p. 1). Furthermore, they advocate recruiting mentors from diverse backgrounds as this will assist in the process of matching mentors to mentees.

#### **6.4.2 Matching Mentors to Mentees**

The implementation of successful procedures for the recruitment and selection of mentors should pave the way to ensure that the program's matching procedures are also a success (Keller, 2005). Grossman and Tierney (1998) contended that consideration should primarily be given to the needs of the young person as well as considering variables such as his/her family, educational background and any specific needs such as a physical or cognitive disability. The next step involves an assessment by the case manager to determine which mentor would work best with the young person (Grossman & Tierney, 1998). A good match between the mentor and mentee can help, “build a positive and productive relationship” (National Centre for Healthy Safe Children, 2009, p. 1). In addition, a good match also promotes mentor retention due to the positive outcomes derived from the relationship over time (National Centre for Healthy Safe Children, 2009; Goldner & Ben-Eliyahu, 2021). According to the National Centre for Healthy Safe Children (2009), there are two common matching methods: natural and assigned.

Natural matching allows the mentor and mentee to select each other (National Centre for Healthy Safe Children, 2009). This often occurs during group or team activity settings that allow the adult and youth to, “get to know each other and allow natural affinities to develop” (National Centre for Healthy Safe Children, 2009, p. 8). Further, it not only allows a good fit to occur naturally, but it also allows “ownership of the relationship” (National Centre for Healthy Safe Children, 2009, p. 8) by both parties. Assigned matches are undertaken by staff within the mentoring program who match a mentor and mentee based on, “the youth's needs, the mentor's temperament and skills, and other factors, such as shared interests, race, ethnicity, and gender” (National Centre for Healthy Safe Children, 2009, p. 8). The advantage of an assigned match is that it allows more experienced mentors to be assigned to youth who may exhibit challenging behaviours or require specific forms of assistance (National Centre for Healthy Safe Children, 2009).

### 6.4.3 Mentor Training

Before a mentor is matched with a mentee, they should undergo a formal orientation session because as stated by Essinger, a former manager of the New York City Mentoring program; "You're taking two people who don't know each other, who may not come from the same culture or age group. You cannot slap these people together like a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and say, 'good luck, we'll see you in June' (as cited in Smink, 1999, p. 23).

The orientation sessions outline the mentor program's parameters and prepare less experienced mentors for the relationships they are about to establish (Smink, 1999; Cannata et al., 2008; State of Victoria, 2006). Furthermore, these sessions allow the program coordinator to present; "the program goals and objectives, institutional policies and procedures, mentor requirements, resources available and general program operating procedures" (Smink, 1999, p. 25). Smink observed that ongoing training sessions could vary in length, from a basic 2 hour session to several sessions that equate to twelve or more hours.

Orientation and ongoing training sessions are advocated by the Office for Youth in Victoria who state that the training should include, "program requirements and rules, presentations on the developmental stages of youth, communication and limit setting skills, relationship building, ways to interact, cultural awareness, understanding of people with disabilities, risk management and protective behaviours" (State of Victoria, 2006, p. 15). Furthermore, they posited that the impact of this training is that it makes potential mentors aware of the commitment they are undertaking, developing realistic expectations of the program while understanding more about their role as mentors (State of Victoria, 2006).

As part of the orientation process, it is also advised by the Office for Youth to involve parents or carers to, "address any of their fears, concerns as well as to encourage their support with communication, feedback and celebration" (2006, p. 44). Cannata et al. (2008) advocated for the training of mentees, so they gain an understanding about their roles in the relationship with their mentor. This can include bringing in former mentors and mentees who can talk about their experiences to incoming mentors and mentees (State of Victoria, 2006). After orientation, it is suggested that there is a mentor training program as part of the ongoing training and support for mentors (Cannata et al., 2008; Sánchez et al., 2021; State of Victoria, 2006; Pardini, 2006).

The training program that the State of Victoria (2006) promotes has four core elements: the responsibility of the mentor, including their duty of care, establishing the mentor-mentee relationship; assisting the mentee on their pathway; and the mentor support framework. The mentor support framework, which is both structured and ongoing, includes, "mentor get-togethers, building into a support network, a 'mentor the mentor' program, ongoing regular training opportunities and opportunities for debriefing and counselling through the support of the coordinator" (State of Victoria, 2006, p. 46). This supports the follow up training promoted by Cannata et al. (2008) who suggested that such sessions should include discussions about issues that are being faced by mentors or concerns identified by the parents or young people. It is suggested by Cannata et al. (2008) that these sessions are held monthly or quarterly and should be approximately one

or two hours in duration. There may also be occasions when mentor program coordinators will opt to use an outside training agency in order to provide expert training on specialised subjects (Cannata et al., 2008).

More specialised training may be required for mentors who are working with youth who are high risk (Cannata et al., 2008; Smink, 1999; DuBois et al., 2002). These specialised areas may include, but are not limited to child abuse; drug and alcohol abuse and cross cultural training (Cannata, et al., 2008; Sánchez, et al., 2021). It was noted by Sánchez, et al. (2008) that in the United States there is a, “programmatically attention to differences between mentors and mentees’ lived realities” (p. 687). Further, they suggested that by ignoring these differences there is a potential risk to the relationship because it “leaves room for adults’ racial biases and inattention to systemic racism to go unchecked” (Sánchez et al., 2008, p. 687).

The authors suggested that mentoring programs incorporate anti-racism education that, “helps mentors to actively interrupt and oppose racism in their interactions and relationships with youth” (Sánchez et al., 2008, p. 688). They do state, however, that anti-racism training may cause the participant to feel, “shame, anger, guilt, and discomfort” (Sánchez et al., 2008, p. 706). It is recommended that mentors should be prepared in advance for this training, as they may need to confront their feelings should they emerge in the process and embrace it as part of the training experience (Sánchez et al., 2008). Another vital component of mentor training, according to the Office for Youth, is how to close a mentoring relationship safely and effectively (State of Victoria, 2006).

#### **6.4.4 Ending Mentoring**

A search of the literature on mentoring with a focus on the ending of mentoring relationships supports the assessment of Spencer, et al. (2014) that there is little empirical research on ending the relationship between mentors and mentees. The successful cessation of a mentoring relationship can, “reinforce the positive aspects of the relationship” (Spencer & Basualdo-Delmonico, 2013, p. 469). In an ideal situation the termination of a mentoring relationship should be mutual due to a, “positive and growth-promoting experience” (Spencer & Basualdo-Delmonico, 2013, p. 469) for both parties. However, in the event of a premature termination there may be negative academic, behavioural, and emotional consequences for the youth (Grossman, et al., 2012). Unfortunately, there are times when the termination of a relationship is, “abrupt and unexplained” (Grossman, et al., 2012, p. 44), which may leave the youth, “feeling hurt and confused” (Grossman, et al., 2012, p. 44).

Relationships between mentors and mentees may conclude for a variety of reasons as discussed by Spencer (2007):

- Mentor or mentee abandonment
- Perceived lack of mentee motivation
- Unfulfilled expectations
- Deficiencies in mentor relational skills, including the ability to bridge cultural divides,
- Family interference

- Inadequate agency support.

However, relationships may also conclude for reasons such as, “conflict, betrayal, or the discovery of unattractive personal characteristics in the partner” (Keller, 2005, p. 87; Spencer & Basualdo-Delmonico, 2013), or it could be simply that the relationship has run its course in terms of its, “usefulness, expectations, interests and life circumstances” (Keller, 2005, p. 88) of the youth. Whatever the reason behind a mentor relationship ending, the implementation of a closure process can assist in avoiding the pitfalls associated with relationship terminations (Spencer & Basualdo-Delmonico, 2013).

Building a ‘closure process’ into a mentoring program can, “model healthy endings for youth who have experienced poorly handled endings in prior relationships” (Spencer & Basualdo-Delmonico, 2013, p. 469). It is suggested by Spencer & Basualdo-Delmonico (2013), that one should, “start ending from the beginning” (p. 475) in that the closure of the relationship should be discussed and outlined at the outset of the mentoring partnership. They suggest that embedding closure as part of the service delivery model, “lays the groundwork for participants to know what to expect and to prepare for the next phase, whether it occurs sooner or later” (Spencer & Basualdo-Delmonico, 2013, p. 475). This may include a clear set of policies and procedures on when and how the relationship should end (with a degree of flexibility) and that these are communicated to participants, including their parents and the mentors. Incorporated into this procedure would be the regular monitoring and evaluation of the mentor/mentee matches to avoid potential conflicts or misunderstandings should a relationship be prematurely terminated (Spencer & Basualdo-Delmonico, 2013, p. 475).

Regular monitoring and evaluating the relationship assists the program staff to identify if a relationship between mentors and mentees is not progressing as planned (Spencer & Basualdo-Delmonico, 2013, p. 469). As part of this procedure, the program should have guidelines for determining, “when matches should be retained and when closure should be considered” (Spencer & Basualdo-Delmonico, 2013, p. 476). When a closure occurs, whether through natural attrition or due to a premature termination, an exit interview should be conducted where possible with all parties involved. The authors conclude that this allows the program to receive feedback on their service and identify areas for improvement. This feedback is important because, according to Moodie and Fisher (2009) the length of a mentoring relationship is an important part of measuring the impact of a mentoring program.

#### **6.4.5 Measuring Impact of Mentoring**

In 2009, Moodie and Fisher observed that in Australia, as well as overseas, there has been an increase in mentoring programs for at risk youth, but very few have been evaluated. Indeed, Roberts et al., (2004) suggested that the effectiveness of mentoring, “shows promise but remains in need of further research and development” (p. 513). However, there is some evidence of successful evaluations conducted on programs such as the impact assessment conducted by Grossman and Tierney (2002) on the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) mentoring program in America. The impact study of the BBBS mentoring program was determined using two groups. The first group consisted of half of the applicants who were randomly selected and placed in the control group and on the BBBS waiting list for 18 months (Grossman & Tierney, 1998). The other randomly selected group

(the 'treatment' group) were matched as soon as possible with a suitable mentor (Grossman & Tierney, 1998). After 18 months the outcomes of the two groups were compared using multivariate techniques (as a control for variations in the participant's baseline characteristics) to determine the program's impact (Grossman & Tierney, 1998).

A major conclusion of the study was that young people in the treatment group, "...were less likely to use drugs and alcohol or become involved in antisocial behaviour if they were exposed to positive role models who helped them to cope with peer pressures, to think through the consequences of their actions, and to become involved in socially acceptable activities" (Grossman & Tierney, 1998, p. 413). During the 18 month follow up, 11.47% of the control group had started using illegal substances, whereas those in the treatment group were 45.8% less likely to be using drugs (Grossman & Tierney, 1998). Furthermore, the study identified that youth from minority groups who were matched with mentors were 70% less likely to be using drugs (Grossman & Tierney, 1998). The statistics about alcohol use by youth in the treatment group indicate that 27.4% were less likely to start drinking alcohol than those in the control group (Grossman & Tierney, 1998).

Prior to their involvement in the BBBS program, many of the youths had reported incidences of violence against others (Grossman & Tierney, 1998). It was found that on average, those in the treatment group were 32% less likely to be involved in violent behaviour compared to their counterparts in the control group. The conclusion of the study also cited that there had been a slight improvement in the grades of the youth in the treatment group compared to those in the control cohort (Grossman & Tierney, 1998). A contributing factor for an increase in grades was due to members of the treatment cohort showing an improvement in school attendance with this group skipping 52% less days and 30% less likely to miss any school at all (Grossman & Tierney, 1998). A similar study conducted in 2002 by Keating et al. also found mentoring had a positive impact on youth in the 'intervention group'.

Keating et al. (2002) employed a similar research design to that of Grossman and Tierney with one group of youths matched with a mentor for six months (the intervention group) and another group of youth who were placed on the waiting list (the non intervention group). The data collected by Keating et al., was collected in two phases, pre intervention and post intervention (Keating, et al., 2002). One difference between this study and Grossman and Tierney's was that if a child was matched while on the waiting list that child moved from the non intervention group to the intervention group and within two weeks of this the youth and their parent would undertake all the pre intervention interviews. The findings indicated that in four out of seven variables the matched youth showed significant positive changes in comparison to the non-matched cohort of young people (Keating et al., 2002).

Reports from both mothers and teachers in the data collection phases indicated that six months of mentoring had resulted in the matched youths moving, "from a clinical range of externalising and internalising behaviours to a level closer to a nonclinical range" (Keating et al., 2002, p. 730). It was concluded by Keating et al., that the program, "was successful in helping to decrease problematic behaviours, suggesting that exposure to caring adults helped youth to feel better about themselves and to engage in less destructive behaviours towards themselves and others" (p. 731). Keating et al., then turned

their attention to identifying the impact mentors had in positively impacting on the lives of their mentees.

It was hypothesised by Keating et al., that perhaps it was the 'mentors' attention, support, and guidance [that] helped youth to feel better about themselves, to negotiate problems more effectively, and to engage in more age appropriate tasks" (p. 731). However, they also noted that many of the youth engaged in the study were also receiving help from other services such as family counselling (Keating et al., 2002). The research team cautioned that the mentoring program might not have been the only variable that produced positive changes for the mentees (Keating, et al., 2002). Three meta-analyses conducted in 2002, 2014, and 2019 all suggest positive outcomes; however, they also caution that multiple variables may contribute to the overall success of individual programs (DuBois et al., 2002; Tolan et al., 2014; Raposa et al., 2019).

In 2002, DuBois et al. conducted a meta-analytic review of the effectiveness of mentoring programs for youth. They indicated that mentoring programs have the potential to influence youth across a variety of areas, such as academic, career development, gainful employment, and emotional and behavioural functioning (DuBois et al., 2002). The focus of their meta-analysis was, "whether benefits of mentoring are evident across this diverse range of proposed outcomes" (DuBois et al., 2002, p. 161). In addition, they considered, "the type of data source or information utilised as well as the timing of outcomes assessment relative to the active period of the program operation" (DuBois et al., 2002, p. 161). The results of their fixed-effects model analysis found that there was a positive impact, on average, of the programs included in their analysis (DuBois et al., 2002).

Their results also indicated, that, "it may be most appropriate to expect the typical youth participating in a mentoring program to receive benefits that are quite modest in terms of absolute magnitude" (DuBois et al., 2002, p. 187). They suggested that due to the differing goals and styles of mentoring there is, "a rationale for innovation and experimentation with enhancements to program design" (DuBois et al., 2002, p. 190). From their analysis, the researchers observed that there were limited numbers of older people who were recruited as mentors. It was argued that older people possess more life skills that could enhance their roles as mentors due to their experiences in child-rearing (DuBois et al., 2002). By contrast a meta-analysis conducted by Tolan et.al., focused on studies that measured the impact of mentoring on four outcomes: delinquency, aggression, drug use, and academic performance.

Tolan's et al., (2014) team reviewed studies between 1970 and 2011 that were primarily conducted in the United States with high risk youth (Tolan et al., 2014). Across the four variables of delinquency, drug use, aggression, and academic performance, the effects of the mentoring programs were quite modest (Tolan et al., 2014). The authors indicated that these results were comparable with other interventions for high risk youth (Tolan et al., 2014). They concluded that through the studies included in their meta-analysis, it appears mentoring has positive effectiveness for those who are at risk of delinquency or antisocial behaviour (Tolan et al., 2014). While both Tolan et al. and DuBois et al. focused on the impact of the mentoring programs, the meta-analysis conducted by Raposa et al. in 2019, included a discussion on the other factors that can moderate the effects of a mentoring program.



Raposa et al. (2019) observed that mentoring for youth maybe more beneficial for mid to late elementary, school aged children because adolescents are less likely to build a close relationship with people they are not familiar with. They also found that gender influenced the impact of mentoring due to males and females referred to programs for differing reasons. A tentative conclusion was that programs with a higher proportion of males had more positive outcomes compared to those with high numbers of female mentees (Raposa et al., 2019). A point of contention in their analysis is whether the socio economic status of the mentee could be a variable in determining the outcome of a mentoring program (Raposa et al., 2019). The analysis cited a study by Thompson et al. in 2013 suggested mentees from lower socio economic backgrounds benefited more from mentoring but cite a study by Herrera et al. also conducted in 2013 that indicated that there was no difference among mentees from different socio economic backgrounds (Raposa et al., 2019). It is not just mentee characteristics that can influence the impact of a mentoring program, but those of the mentor as well (Raposa et al., 2019).

The characteristics of mentors has also been shown to impact on the effectiveness of mentoring programs with the age of the mentor being a significant factor (Raposa et al., 2019). Research by Raposa et al. showed younger mentors to be less effective than older mentors. Older mentors with experience in the helping professions, such as social work, counselling, or therapy appear to have more effective outcomes in mentoring than those from nonhelping backgrounds (Raposa et al., 2019). However, other variables such as race or gender have been shown to have little effect on the outcomes of a mentoring relationship (Raposa et al., 2019). The conclusion by Raposa et al. (2019) was that their findings support the efficacy of one-to-one mentoring programs between youth and a caring adult. Not only do mentoring programs need to be measured in terms of the impact they have on the participants, but they also require evaluation from a cost benefit point of view (Grossman & Tierney, 1998; Moodie & Fisher, 2009; Johns, Grossman, & McDonald, 2014).

To bridge this gap Moodie and Fisher (2009) undertook an evaluation of the Big Brothers Big Sisters Melbourne (BBBS-M) mentoring program. Their analysis found that BBBS-M is cost effective because; "it offers the potential to provide long-term cost savings of much greater value than the costs of delivering the program" (p. 6). They found that the program is relatively low cost to deliver, while diverting youth who are at risk of becoming involved in criminal behaviour and/or substance abuse. In the long term, mentoring programs like BBBS-M may save costs to the community which are associated with dealing with youth when they enter the juvenile justice system (Moodie & Fisher, 2009). This was supported by Raposa et al. (2019) who also suggested that mentoring programs are "low cost interventions for youth" (p. 423) that have the potential to, "reach large groups of youth and prevent more intensive treatments" (p. 440). Furthermore, it is espoused by Choi et al. (2015) that the activities involved in the mentoring program can be an important factor in determining the effectiveness of mentoring in teaching young people life skills. Choi et.al. espoused that some of the most effective programs utilise sport and recreation as a vehicle for establishing platforms for the establishment of positive mentoring relationships.

#### **6.4.6 Sports and Adventure based Mentoring Programs**

As discussed earlier in this review, there is no shortage of literature on sports and adventure based programs and the benefits that are accrued by young people and their mentors.

However, there is a noticeable gap in the literature specifically focusing on sports and adventure based *mentoring* programs as opposed to 'sports-based intervention programs'. At the same time, it needs to be recognised that mentoring occurs in differing formats in many sports and adventure based intervention programs for vulnerable youth (Peralta, Cinelli, & Bennie, 2018; Norton & Watt, 2013). Further, the literature shows that when mentoring is provided as part of a larger program, the level of positive change is greater than when provided as a single mentoring only program (Farruggia et al., 2011; Hollis et al., 2011; Andrews & Andrews, 2003).

The Melbourne-based 'More than a Game' is an example of such a sports based program (Johns et al., 2014). It involved 60 youth, predominantly of Lebanese heritage, aged between 15 and 25 for 12 months. The focus of the program was to utilise sport as a way of promoting not only a proactive lifestyle, but also the development of social connectedness skills through participation in enjoyable sporting activities while using non sporting time for mentoring activities. These activities included building social and leadership skills that incorporated conflict resolution. The 'off-field' mentoring worked in conjunction with the sporting activities to, "promote values of interfaith and intercultural harmony by developing participants' communication skills and work-shopping some of the positive effects of engaging in dialogue instead of violence" (p. 64). The sport based activities, however, were identified as, "being critical to these values being fully embraced" (Johns et al., 2014, p. 64). There were strong findings in the evaluation of the program that the sports based mentoring makes a significant contribution to not only confidence and self-esteem, but also to breaking down cross cultural barriers.

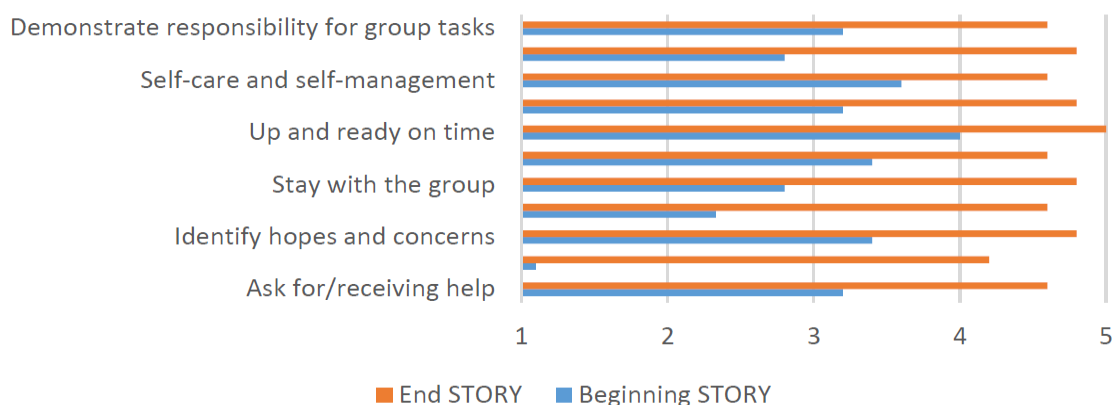
In terms of adventure based mentoring programs, the United States of America (USA) based Relate Expedition also assists in building cultural competency as well as other skills, such as teamwork, social skills, problem solving, and communication (Norton & Watt, 2014). The Relate Expedition is a weeklong program that operates in several regions across the USA and, "cultivates relationships between teens [aged 13 to 18] and caring adult mentors who serve as one-on-one volunteers during the wilderness program" (Norton & Watt, 2014, p. 341). The program's one-to-one ratio of teen to adult in this context is unique but was designed to, "increase developmental assets in the youth participants by providing *both* outdoor experiential opportunities and positive, caring adult relationships" (Norton & Watt, 2014, p. 341). The evaluation conducted by Norton and Watt (2014) showed that the program had a positive impact and although the program does not officially offer follow up for the participants their research found that some hubs have undertaken follow up outings in which the youth can reconnect with their mentors. Furthermore, they also found that some hubs encourage their mentors to continue the relationship through ongoing correspondence (Norton & Watt, 2014). The ultimate finding from their research was that adventure based mentoring programs with a one-to-one ratio play a vital role in addressing the complex needs of at risk youth by building meaningful relationships and life skills in a supportive and fun environment (Norton & Watt, 2014).

In Far North Queensland, The Northern Outlook (TNO) is currently putting that research into practice by supporting and facilitating two types of programs: adventure intervention programming (AIP) and experiential activities (The Northern Outlook, u.d.). The adventure activities implemented by TNO are designed to, "require high levels of group work, interaction, cooperation, and problem solving" (The Northern Outlook, u.d., p. 2), which

allows the staff to, “transition from instructor to facilitator/mentor/coach” (The Northern Outlook, u.d., p. 2). Furthermore, trauma informed practice is incorporated into the programs to build individual, as well as group safety and trust while highlighting individual choice and collaboration to ensure outcomes are achieved (The Northern Outlook, u.d.). Spending 2 to 5 days in isolated locations in closed groups in adventure intervention programs provides a perfect environment for mentoring, modelling of social connectedness behaviour, learning reinforcement, and new patterns of thought (The Northern Outlook, u.d.). During the program, the participants will make poor choices and decisions, but this is part of the effectiveness of the program, according to The Northern Outlook (u.d.), because it can be used to, “assist participants to reconceptualise what it is to make choices and learn through reflecting on the outcomes of those choices” (p. 3). Essentially, it promotes ownership of the skills that the participants learn, which encourages further engagement from them (The Northern Outlook, u.d.).

An example of a program run by TNO is The STORY Program, which stands for Strengthen Through Outdoor adventure, Real life and Yarning (Department of Youth Justice, u.d.). The program, “provides intensive supervision for young people with moderate to high risks, meets programming requirements of the court and reduces risk factors relating to reoffending or breaching bail conditions” (Department of Youth Justice, u.d., p. 1). The aim of the program is to, “stabilise and develop social connectedness behaviour and group work (community) skills of young people to maximise their potential to remain in the community” (Department of Youth Justice, u.d., p. 1). Seventeen young people were referred to the program with eleven offered a place (Department of Youth Justice, u.d.). The six young people who did not participate became the control group with five commencing the program and four completing the program (Department of Youth Justice, u.d.). The graph below gives a visual account of those who completed the program as opposed to those who failed to complete.

### Collaborative staff assessment of outcomes



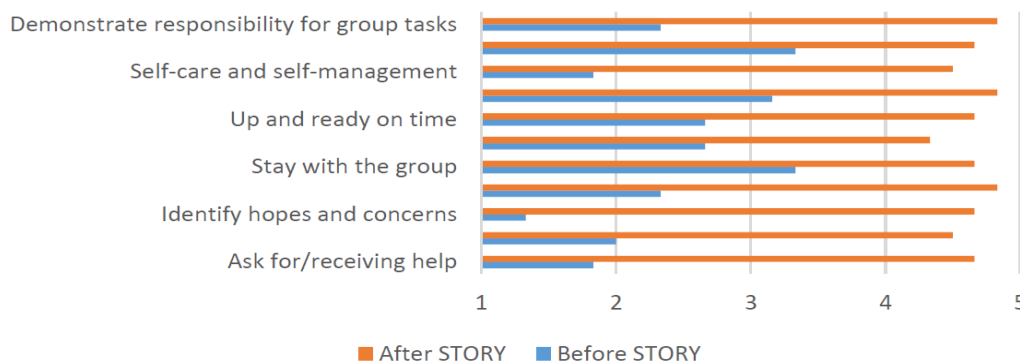
Of those who participated in the program, 60% were in the medium risk level and 40% were high risk, 60% were male and 40% female. In the control group 66.6% were medium risk and 33.3% high risk, 83.3% were male and 16.6% female. Sixty percent of the group were on community service orders, followed by 40% on probation, and 20% on conditional bail programs, conditional release or in detention. The three core outcomes of the program for this group were 1) the development of pro social behaviours and life skills, 2)

increased capacity to engage in a group positively and consistently, and 3) increased capacity to set and work towards personal and group goals.

The graph below shows a summary of outcomes as identified by the young participants. There was a marked improvement in the assessment outcomes by both the young people and The Northern Outlook staff (Department of Youth Justice, u.d.). One case manager stated:

*She said the things she came out realising is how much she's capable of doing, physically and mentally... the things she wants to improve in herself. She has (identified) three strengths... her leadership, her confidence, and organisation... I asked her what she needed to work on... She said the way I communicate with others and my emotions... emotional regulation. And it also got her to see that there is a good way to take your energy out... not just walking around the streets doing silly things and that she wants to lead to do good as opposed to doing bad... there was a sense that she was actually proud of her achievements.*

Young person's self assessment of outcomes



A participant stated:

*We learn how to be more responsible, more respectful and we build that trust where we feel safe around you's... our relationship is getting stronger and stronger... once we get to know each other and go through all of this stuff, you know, it is good to keep our mind motivated... we all got stuff going on at home but the STORY program is actually keeping us on our feet and changing our mood from angry, upset, depressed, worried to happy, motivated, eager, keen...*

Staff at Northern Outlook stated that the adventure intervention programs could be effective in the youth justice context if they adhere to the practice guidelines, as well as pointing out that with at risk or medium to high level risk clients, AIPs are one part of the bigger intervention picture (The Northern Outlook, u.d). The next section explores the existing literature on the benefits of participating in sports for refugee/migrant woman.

#### **6.4.7 Refugee/Migrant Women Participating in Sport**

Much of the literature that explores the participation of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) females focuses on the inclusion or exclusion of Muslim women (migrant or otherwise) with little attention given specifically to migrant females. Articles that discuss migrant female participation in sports concentrate more on the barriers to females accessing sport in both their home countries and their new, 'host' countries rather than any changing role or empowerment (McMichael, Gifford, & Correa-Velez, 2011; Agergaard & Botelho, 2014; Maisala-McDonnell, 2020; Morgan, 2018; Spaaij et al., 2019; Truskewycz, Drummond, & Jeans, 2022).

A consistent theme occurring within most of the available literature is that heavily defined gender roles based on the parents' cultural and religious background are the biggest barrier to participation for young females. Both Truskewycz, et al. (2022) and McMichael, et al. (2011) stated that CALD adolescents not only have more gendered expectations but that CALD females are bound by firmer parental control than males. While family relationships are seen as a protective factor in migration, they can pose a barrier to the participation in sport for female migrants due to gender based family obligations such as domestic labour and child care (Farello et al., 2019; Spaaij et al., 2019).

This is supported by Maisala-McDonnell (2020) who posits that these gender specific roles, "define young females' duties and which activities are suitable for them" (p. 5). Furthermore, Maisala-McDonnell states that the activities of female migrants outside of the home, "are not valued as much as young males' activities" (p. 5). This was also found in a study conducted by Alemu, Nagel, and Hanna Vehmas (2021) who stated that female migrant participation in sports in Switzerland is 15% lower than male migrant participation. The female participants of Alemu et al.'s study attributed this to, "domestic responsibilities and placing women in the role of 'caregivers'" (2021, p. 678). Further, the participants expressed that the gendered roles and cultural expectations only increased as they got older (Alemu, et al., 2021).

In a study of African women refugees' experiences of football, Truskewycz, et al. (2022) found that all the women they interviewed, "identified that football was not publicly supported or appropriate for women and girls to participate in" (p. 589). This was supported by Agergaard and Botelho (2014) who stated that the development of women's football in three African countries was obstructed by, "the often cited idea that culture prohibits women's participation in sport" (p. 524). Certain cultural or religious mandates that pertain to dress codes are often viewed as a gender based constraint on the participation of women in sports due to specific uniforms or attire being worn as part of the sporting requirements (Morgan, 2018).

It was also found in the study by Alemu et al. (2021) where participation in sports is perceived within the traditional cultures of the Ethiopian and Eritrean communities as being, "a male dominated space in which women have no place" (p. 679). It is believed that this stems from the patriarchal beliefs of their home countries where, "participation in vigorous sport can be viewed as 'unfeminine' or 'unwomanlike'" (Alemu et al., 2021, p. 679). Further, these women often experienced verbal or sexual harassment from their compatriots when they participated in sporting activities in the host country (Alemu et al.,

2021). It is not only the cultural and gender stigma that causes a barrier to sports participation but also the financial costs.

Most refugees arrive in their host countries with, "no possessions or financial assets" (Olliff, as cited in Morgan, 2018, p. 14). Therefore, it is not surprising that many refugees struggle to meet the ongoing financial costs of participation in sports, particularly those associated with the club and representative sports (Alemu et al., 2021; Morgan, 2018). These costs do not only involve the fees for participation but also the cost of uniforms and equipment, as well as the additional expense of social 'get togethers' after sporting activities (Alemu et al., 2021).

As mentioned above, there has been much written about the cultural and religious barriers to the participation in sports by female refugees and migrants, and some discussion around the economic barriers faced by refugees, male or female. However, there is a notable gap in the literature on the contribution of sports to the changing roles or empowerment of female refugees and migrants within their host nations, which indicates a need for further research into this area.

## **6.8 In Summary**

This literature review explored the connection between outdoor and sporting activities with increased wellbeing, social connectedness and a reduction in juvenile involvement in crime. It also examined the impact and benefits of youth mentoring through sports and outdoor based activities, as well as the benefits for refugee/migrant women participating in sports. It has established that outdoor and sporting activities contribute to increased subjective wellbeing, as well as having physiological and psychological benefits. Furthermore, it maintains that participation in outdoor and sporting activities has a positive impact on an individual's sense of belonging, self-esteem, and social relationships.

The review has also confirmed that while participation in an outdoor or sporting activity has not been directly correlated to increased feelings of social connectedness there are indications that participation can develop a sense of belonging, companionship, loyalty, and social inclusion. Furthermore, it has revealed that outdoor and sporting activities can foster civic responsibility in youth through intergenerational closure with parental and family involvement in these activities.

The literature highlights a lack of empirical evidence relating to the link between sporting activity and a reduction in crime. It has suggested that a reduction in crime cannot be attributed solely to participation in an outdoor or sporting activity due to the complexity behind the reasons for young people's involvement in crime. However, it has indicated that reductions in crime rates can be a positive by product through young people's inclusion in an outdoor sporting activity, particularly when a multi agency approach is adopted. Moreover, this review has highlighted that the personal growth that juveniles can develop through their involvement in outdoor and sporting activities increases their sense of wellbeing which can provide a sense of empowerment that can impact on the decision making process with respect to becoming involved in crime.

The findings of this review demonstrate that youth mentoring programs that use sports, outdoor, or adventure based activities have a positive impact on the young people who participate in the programs. These impacts include a reduction in substance abuse,

increased school attendance and increased academic performance. Furthermore, the review has demonstrated that although a significant focus has been given to the religious and cultural barriers to refugee and migrant women participating in sport, there is a significant gap in the literature pertaining to the empowerment of migrant and refugee women through participating in sporting programs.

The literature contained in this review is beneficial in gauging the effectiveness of the SPAYC+PLACE program in assisting young people to increase their wellbeing and social connectivity with other youth as well as their family members through participation in outdoor sporting and recreational activities. In addition, the research cited in this review provides useful background data in determining whether the program has provided successful interventions to divert youth away from crime and into pro social activities with the assistance of adult mentors. Finally, the literature gives insights into some of the barriers that prevent some youth from participating in activities outside of their homes, which in turn allows for a reflection as to how the SPAYC+PLACE program has provided opportunities to include young people into the program. These and other considerations are discussed in the following six chapters of the report that describe and analyse the six projects that contribute to the SPAYC+PLACE program.

## **7.0 SPAYC**

### **Increasing the Availability & Choice of Structured Diversionsary Activities for Young People**

#### **7.1 Project Proposal**

The SPAYC project is the largest activity across the suite of projects within the SPAYC+PLACE program. It was the first funded pilot project before major funding from the Department of Sports and Recreation enabled the creation of a further five projects. The rationale for the SPAYC project is based on research that indicates a lack of structured leisure and recreation activities as a significant criminological risk factor for young people. Further research supports the notion that positive and frequent use of public parks and spaces discourages antisocial behaviour, improves a community's view of itself and creates a sense of ownership and belonging. SPAYC is also viewed as an important prevention and intervention strategy to divert young people from offending or disengaging from education. The project offers a range of structured and diversionsary activities for youth aged 8-12. An outcome of the range of initiatives is to activate spaces and places to improve the protective factors for young people in the west Cairns communities.

Cairns Safer Streets have partnered with the Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC), Australian Red Cross (ARC), Centacare FNQ Multicultural Services (CMS) and Cairns Regional Council (CRC) to support SPAYC. In addition, sporting club members, sport entities and/ their governing bodies, family members and service providers are community partners in this project. Similar to other projects the SPAYC project is planned, resourced, coordinated and delivered through a fee for service model. Partnership agreements with key stakeholders are implemented and monitored through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The SPAYC project budget totals \$300,000 to be expended over 3 years and equates to 33% of the total grant from the Department of Sport and recreation. The projected annual budget allocations include \$100,000 for purchased services from years 1-3 with partnered services for years 2 and 3 to be confirmed.

A procurement process for services and providers was undertaken. Expressions of Interest with SPAYC specific selection criteria were addressed by applicants. A panel of providers who had the capability to meet and deliver the project was established. Service contracts were entered into with work orders raised for delivery of specific services. Key to the process was contracting service providers who represent the SPAYC project, Cairns Safer Streets, and the Queensland Government both ethically and professionally.

#### **7.2 Findings**

The sheer breadth of the SPAYC project in terms of its history and the high number of young participants and activities meant that several qualitative and quantitative research tools were employed to triangulate the various data sets. This section initially follows a similar format to the evaluation reports of the other projects by providing statistical data about the types of activities, numbers of providers as well as a visual representation of where the activities took place across several park-based locations in the Cairns West suburbs. This



section also includes the outcomes of a survey, which spanned 24 months as well as a detailed report covering one-month of intensive observations across all activities offered during that time. The data was triangulated with in-depth reportage about the perceptions of providers and facilitators based on semi-structured individual interviews over a two-year period. Finally, the perceptions of parents and community members are represented from a series of 'one-minute' grabs gathered over two supersessions. The chapter concludes with a good news story about several young people who engaged with education and participated in the SPAYC project.

### 7.3 Participation

The table below shows the participation rates across the project from 2019 to the end of term one 2022. A reading of this data suggests that there has been an increase in the number of participants since the inception of the project. Despite the advent of COVID-19 and its subsequent restrictions in 2020-21 the project coordinators offered online activities for young people which may explain the growth in participation rates during this period.

SPAYC	Number of Participants			
	2019	2020	2021	2022
	3269	6538	7351	1085 (Term 1)

### 7.4 Activities

The table below indicates the array of activities that were offered over the two and a half year span of the evaluation.

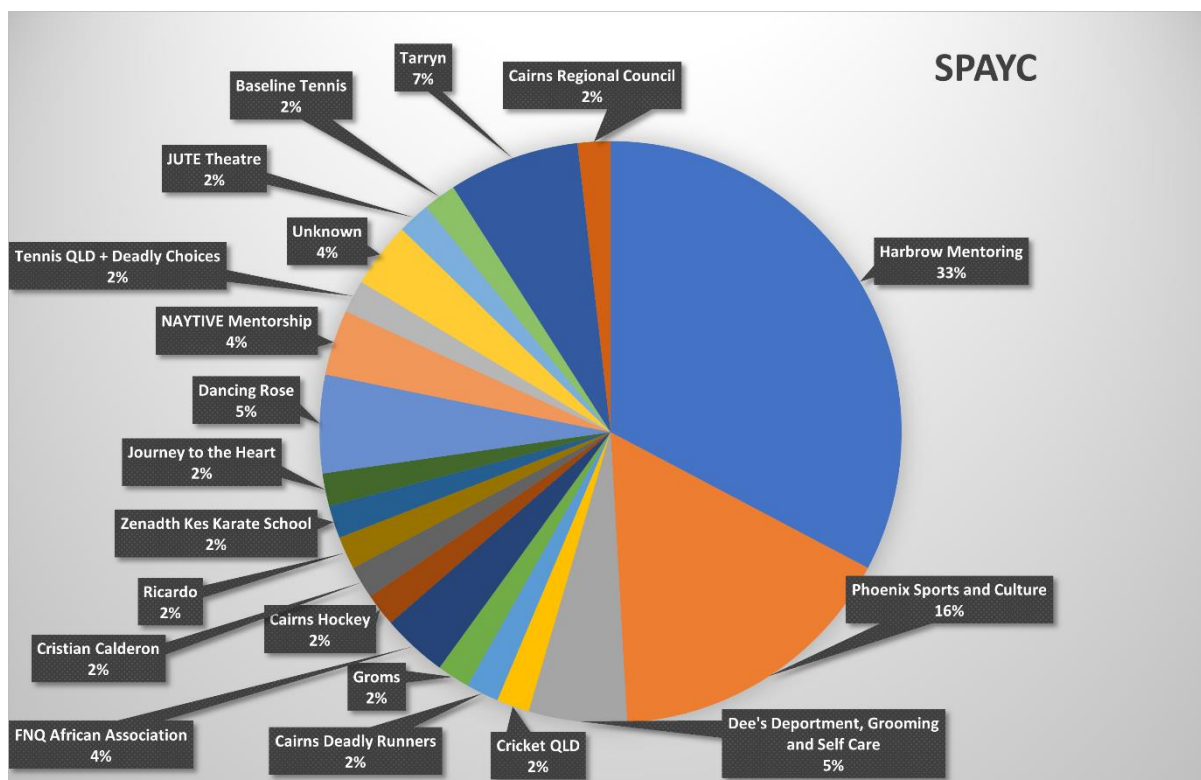
Provider	Project
Harbrow Mentoring	Youth Gym
	Active Sports
	Fun in the Park
	Volleyball
	Edor
	AFL
	Fun Driveway Games
	Youth Yarns
	Deadly Ninjas
	Aussie Footy Skills
Multi Sports	

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Project</b>
	Cricket Rounders Basketball Comp Deadly Fun Games Music and Dance
<b>Harbrow Mentoring, Phoenix Sports and Culture Club</b>	Edor/Touch Footy Oztag Touch Football Dodgeball Tennis
<b>Harbrow Mentoring, Murray St/Shang Park; Phoenix Sports and Culture, Shang Park</b>	Basketball
<b>Phoenix Sport and Culture Club</b>	Netball Cultural Activities Taggin in the Park
<b>Tarryn</b>	Games in the Park Acrokids in the Park Reading Matters
<b>Dee's Department, Grooming and Self Care</b>	Girls Beauty Bunch Boyz 2 Gentlemen Strong Families
<b>The Dancing Rose</b>	Get Fit Have Fun Hula Hoops Lead the Dance Movere Movement
<b>NAYTIVE Mentorship</b>	Naytive Hip Hop TikToc Dance Party
<b>Cairns Hockey Association</b>	Hockey Hockey Fun Zone
<b>Cairns Deadly Runners – Indigenous Marathon Foundation</b>	Deadly Runners & Walkers

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Project</b>
<b>Groms Skate Coaching</b>	Skate Boarding
<b>Cristian, Harald Falge Park; FNQ African Association, Cairns West State School, Ricardo Sandoval, Harald Falge Park</b>	Street Soccer
<b>Zenadth Kes Karate School</b>	Karate Kids
<b>Deadly Choices and Tennis Queensland</b>	Deadly Choices and Indigenous Tennis
<b>JUTE Theatre</b>	Drama+Kichido
<b>Baseline Tennis</b>	Tennis Hotshots
<b>FNQ African Assoc</b>	Hip Hop Dance
<b>Cairns Regional Council (in-kind)</b>	Animal Games
<b>Cricket Queensland (in-kind)</b>	Cricket Blast
<b>FNQ African Association</b>	Hip Hop Afro Dance

## 7.5 Community Providers

The pie graph below offers a visual breakdown of the percentage of activities offered by each of the SPAYC providers. What is evident is that Harbrow Mentoring were responsible for offering nearly half of all activities in the project (44%) followed by Phoenix Sport (16%). The rationale behind this representation is that these two organisations were established entities before the major funding from the Department of Sport and Recreation and were therefore in a position to tender for the provision of multiple activities. A benefit of this process was an inclusive approach allowing smaller providers to conduct activities that contributed to the small business economy of Cairns.



## 7.6 Venues

The table below lists the venues where activities identified in the previous tables were undertaken. In particular, the table highlights the scope of the project in terms of ensuring activities were cycled to different sites at different times to ensure young people could attend a variety of activities without being dependent on transport. There was a total of 17 venues including two local primary schools, which were distributed over the three suburbs of Manoora, Manunda and Mooroolbool. Over half of all activities were conducted in Manunda. Activities were offered to young people across all four terms of the school year and alternative projects were offered during school vacation periods. Project guides were available online including a brief description of each activity. Project coordinators made provision for alternative sites during periods of inclement weather.

	2019				2020				2021				2022	
VENUES	WEEKLY SESSIONS													
	T1	T2	T3	T4	T1	T2	T3	T4	T1	T2	T3	T4	T1	T2
<b>MANOORA</b>														
Murray Street Park	1	2	3	3	1		3	4	2	2	2	2	3	4
Manoora Centre	1	1	1	3	1		1		1	1				
Jensen St Park					1		1							
118 Murray Street	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	6	1	
<b>Total Manoora</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>MOOROOBAL</b>														
Mooroolbool Hub	3	2			1		1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1

Shang Park	2	4	4	3	7		4	4	4	5	5	5	5	4
Balaclava State School		1	2	2	2		3	3	2	1	1	1	1	2
<b>Total Mooroolool</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>MANUNDA</b>														
Cazalys Stadium	1													
Cairns West State School	2	1	2	2	2		3	4	4	3	3	3	4	4
Harald Falge Park	2	1	2	2	2			3	3	2	2	3	3	4
Pumeri Park			1											
Plaza Palms			1	1										
Guginy Reserve				1										
Raintrees Shops				1	1		1							
ARC Disability					1									
Cominos Place Park							2		1		1	1		
Manunda Hawks Club House											1	1		
<b>Total Manunda</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>		<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>

## 7.7 Activities

The table below shows the range of activities offered across the school terms from 2019 to mid 2022. In total 49 different activities were conducted over 13 school terms. An average of 18 activities per week were conducted across this time-period with activities of 1-2 hours in duration. Term four of each school year had the highest number of activities compared to other terms. In terms of longevity, 3 activities were offered over the entire 13 terms compared to 20 activities being offered for a single term. The Movere Movement offered targeted activities over 3 terms for children with special needs. In terms of continuity, the SPAYC project offered holiday activities and catered to young people during the pandemic lockdown through the Cairns Safer Streets Facebook page. A celebration and showcasing of activities took place during the end of term supersessions.

<b>SPAYC SCHOOL TERM ACTIVITIES: 2019-2022</b>															
<b>PROJECT</b>	<b>DURATION</b>	<b>2019</b>				<b>2020</b>				<b>2021</b>				<b>2022</b>	
		<b>T1</b>	<b>T2</b>	<b>T3</b>	<b>T4</b>	<b>T1</b>	<b>T2</b>	<b>T3</b>	<b>T4</b>	<b>T1</b>	<b>T2</b>	<b>T3</b>	<b>T4</b>	<b>T1</b>	<b>T2</b>
Reading Matters	2 hrs	x		x		x									
Deadly Runners & Walkers	2 hrs	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		
Girls Beauty Bunch	2 hrs	x													

**SPAYC SCHOOL TERM ACTIVITIES: 2019-2022**

PROJECT	DURATION	2019				2020				2021				2022	
Stomping Grounds Skate Workshop	1 hr	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Dance workshop	1.25 hrs	x													
Street Soccer	1-2 hrs	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Basketball Comp	1.5 hrs	x	x												
Karate Kids	1 hr	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Youth Gym	1.5 hr	x			x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		
Active Sports	1.5 hr	x	x	x	x	x		x							
Fun in the Park	1.5 hr	x													
Get Fit Have Fun Hula Hoops	1 hr		x	x	x			x							
Basketball	1.25-1.5hrs		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Boyz 2 Gentlemen	1 hr		x												
Lead the Dance	1.25 hrs		x		x										
Deadly Fun Games	1.5 hrs		x												
Deadly Choices and Indigenous Tennis	1.5 hrs		x												
Netball	1.25hrs			x		x									
Music and Dance	1 hr			x											
Strong Families	1 hr			x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Volleyball	1.5 hr			x	x	x		x	x	x				x	x
Edor/Touch Footy	1.5 hr			x	x										x
Edor	1 hr							x				x	x		

SPAYC SCHOOL TERM ACTIVITIES: 2019-2022															
PROJECT	DURATION	2019				2020				2021				2022	
Drama+Kichido	1 hr			x											
Tennis Hotshots	1.25 hrs			x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Reading in the Park	1 hr				x			x	x						
Hip Hop Dance	1 hr				x	x									
Animal Games	1 hr				x										
Movere Movement						x			x	x					
Cricket Blast						x									
Hockey	1 hr					x		x	x						
AFL	1.5 hrs					x									
Oztag	1.5 hrs					x		x						x	x
Native Hip Hop	1 hr							x	x						

The table below shows the range of activities offered during school vacation periods from 2019 to mid 2022. Seventy different activities were offered over 12 vacation periods. Activities during these periods were scheduled between 10.00 am and 11.00 am and from 4.00pm to 6.00 pm. In 2021 activities were scheduled between 4.00pm and 8.00 pm including extended days on weekends. Activities were distributed across the three Cairns West suburbs with some activities being offered several times across a single vacation period. In addition, Aspire Hockey, Youth Gym and Reading Matters were offered through the Cairns Safer Streets Facebook page. At the same time, the driveway project provided young people with activities that they could undertake at home. Several family fun days were included in each of the vacation periods.

SPAYC School Vacation Activities: 2019-2022														
Year	2019				2020				2021				2022	
Months	Jan	Apr	Jul	Sep /Oct	Jan	Apr	Jun/ Jul	Sep /Oct	Jan	Apr	Jun/ Jul	Sep /Oct	Jan	Apr
Number of Days		9	10	10	15		14	10	21	11	13	12	15	11
Project														
Deadly Fun Games 1.5 hrs		x						x	x	x	x	x		

Basketball 1 hr		x	x	x	x			x						x	x
AFL 1.5 hrs		x	x	x	x										
Beautiful Families 1.5 hrs		x	x												
Street Soccer 1 hr		x	x		x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Multi Sports 1.5 hrs		x									x				
Karate 1hr		x			x										
Active Sports 1.5 hr		x			x	x									
Women's Fitness 1 hr		x													
Reading in the Park 1.5 hrs				x	x										
Hula Hoops 1 hr				x	x	x									
Roller Skating 2 hrs				x	x	x									
Volleyball 1.5hrs				x	x			x	x				x	x	
Strengthening Families 1 hr				x											
Lead the Dance 1 hr				x	x						x				
Touch Football 1 hr				x	x	x		x	x						x
NAIDOC Family Fun Day 5 hrs				x											
Skate Boarding 1 hr				x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Animal Games 2 hrs					x										
Fitness in the Park					x										



1 hr														
ARC Beats Drumming Circle 2 hrs				x										
Drama+ Kichido 1 hr				x										
Reading Matters 1.5 hrs					x									
Youth Gym 1 hr					x		x	x						
Hip Hop Afro Dance 1 hr					x				x	x	x	x	x	
Strong Families 1 hr					x		x	x	x			x	x	
Native Hip Hop 1 hr					x		x							
Aspire Hockey 1 hr						x								
Sports at Home 1 hr						x								
Basketball Skills 1 hr						x								
Strong Families 1 hr						x								
Youth Gym 1 hr						x								
Unleash a Star 1 hr						x								
Reading Matters 1 hr						x								
Soccer Skills 1 hr						x								
Hip Hop Afro Dance Party 1 hr						x								
Footy Skills 1 hr						x								
Fun Driveway games 1 hr						x								

Youth Yarns 1.5-2 hrs								x	x	x	x			
Footy Skills + Drills 1 hr								x						
Cultural Activities 1 hr								x						
Deadly Ninjas 1 hr								x	x	x	x		x	
Netball Skills + Drills 1 hr								x						
Handball Comp 1 hr								x						
Taggin in the Park 1 hr									x		x			
Edor 1 hr									x		x	x	x	x
Acro Kids in the Park 1 hr									x	x	x			
Mini Comps 2 hrs									x					
Tic Tok Dance Party 1 hr									x					
Big party Games 1 hr										x	x			
Aussie Rules 1 hr										x				
Hockey Fun Zone 1 hr										x				
Tennis 1 hr										x				
Slip n Slide 1 hr										x				
Playground Tag 1 hr										x				
Good Vibes											x	x		

4 hrs														
Strong Family Fitness 1 hr														
Edor Comp 3 hrs														
Boxing Fitness 1 hr														
Noodle Hockey 1 hr														
Hip Hop Dance battle 2 hrs														
Games in the Park 1 hr														
Basketball Comp 2 hrs														
Youth Games Night 2 hrs														
Youth Cooking Comp 2 hrs														
Dodgeball 1 hr														
Movie Madness 2 hr														
Red Rover 1 hr														
Oztag 1 hr														
Cricket 1 hr														

## 7.8 Online Survey

Due to the high number of participants and the array of activities in SPAYC, it was agreed that an online survey would be an appropriate data collection tool. Most responses came from young people in the SPAYC project, which is why the survey was included in this section of the report. The intent of the survey was to capture data that closely aligned with the aims of the evaluation. Data collected included responses to whether young people enjoyed participating in the activities, if participation in activities fostered an increase in wellbeing and fitness, if the activities produced a sense of social connectivity among the

diverse social and cultural groups across the three suburbs and young people's perceptions about personal safety and crime in their area. The original aim was to collect and analyse 200 surveys. One hundred and fifty-one surveys were collected over an eighteen-month period. In retrospect, the evaluation team agrees that the design of the survey and the way some of the items were phrased may have been a factor in not reaching the overall goal. The team also reflected that more surveys might have been administered if additional time was spent attending activities. In retrospect, capturing data via other means such as voice recorders may have increased survey participation. However, despite these limitations the data presents a representative sample of the views of young people.

The survey consisted of 18 items, which were designed to give participants a voice about their perceptions of the SPAYC project. In the main, administration of the questionnaire occurred during the supersessions held four times per year at the conclusion of the school term. Prior to the questionnaire, participants stated their gender, age, ethnicity, and residential suburb. Participants identified as male or female and ages were recorded in the age brackets under 8, 8-12, 13-17, 18-25, 26-45, 46-65 and 66+. Incidental data was collected from the twelve people in the 26-45 age group, two people in the 46-65 age group and one in the 66+ age group. People in these age brackets wanted to share their views about the project. While they did not complete the survey, their views about similar issues were captured in the one-minute grabs at the supersessions so as not to skew the participant data. More in depth data from people in these age brackets is captured in the qualitative interviews at the end of this chapter.

## 7.9 Contextual Data

Contextual data, was captured under the categories Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) and Other. Participants identified their suburb of residence as Manoora, Moorooloolool, Manunda or other. The tables below are a demographic summary of the participants in the SPAYC project.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
	36%	64%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Ethnic Category</b>	
	Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander	56%
	CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse)	26%
	Other	17%
<b>Suburb</b>	<b>Suburb</b>	<b>%</b>
	Manoora	20%
	Moorooloolool	44%
	Manunda	19%

	Other	17%
<b>Age</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>%</b>
	Under 8	4%
	8 – 12	53%
	13 – 17	27%
	18 – 25	6%
	26 – 45	8%
	46 – 65	1%
	66+	1%

The remainder of the survey consisted of eighteen statements where participants were asked to respond to items by strongly agreeing, agreeing, disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. The table below summarises responses to each of the items by all respondents.

<b>Item Number</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Strongly Agree/Agree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree/Disagree</b>
<b>1</b>	I know the people who live near me	74%	26%
<b>2</b>	I get along with people in my family	89%	11%
<b>3</b>	I have friends who I can talk to	93%	7%
<b>4</b>	People who live near me will help me if I ask them	80%	20%
<b>5</b>	I feel good about myself	87%	13%
<b>6</b>	When I wake up in the morning, I look forward to the day	79%	21%
<b>7</b>	Most of the time I feel fit and healthy	87%	13%
<b>8</b>	I like most people who I see during my day	83%	17%
<b>9</b>	I enjoy participating in SPAYC activities	99%	1%
<b>10</b>	I regularly attend SPAYC activities	89%	11%
<b>11</b>	I now feel fitter and stronger after participating in SPAYC activities	95%	5%
<b>12</b>	I have made new friends since participating in SPAYC activities	84%	16%

13	I like the people who run the SPAYC activities	97%	3%
14	I think there should be more activities in the SPAYC project	79%	21%
15	I feel safe when I am at home	85%	15%
16	I feel safe when I walk down the street	51%	49%
17	There is not a lot of crime in my suburb	44%	56%
18	People in my suburb will help you if you get into trouble	72%	28%

The items with greatest overall satisfaction rates related to enjoying the SPAYC activities, liking the providers of the activities and feeling fitter and stronger after participating in the activities. Having friends they can talk to is a further strong agreement. Conversely, the issue of safety recorded the lowest overall satisfaction with almost half the participants not feeling safe while walking down the street and over half the participants agreeing there is a lot of crime in their suburb.

Four themes: safety, social connectivity, health and wellbeing, and project (SPAYC), emerged from the questionnaire items. Representation of the grouping of the items into these themes appears in the table below. It is acknowledged some items can be analysed across themes.

<b>Safety</b>	
15	I feel safe when I am at home
16	I feel safe when I walk down the street
17	There is not a lot of crime in my suburb
<b>Social connectivity</b>	
1	I know the people who live near me
2	I get along with people in my family
3	I have friends who I can talk to
4	People who live near me will help me if I ask them
8	I like most people who I see during the day
12	I have made new friends since participating in SPAYC activities
18	People in my suburb will help you if you get into trouble
<b>Health and wellbeing</b>	
5	I feel good about myself



At least 75% of the participants agree or strongly agree that they get along with their family. Participants living in suburbs beyond Cairns West, score highest in this item and 25% of participants living in Manunda disagree or strongly disagree with this item.

Over 90% of males, females, all ethnicities, and participants residing in Moorooloolool and suburbs beyond Cairns West agree or strongly agree they have friends with whom they can talk. Except for 22% of 18-25 year age range, respondents of all ages agree or strongly agree they have friends they can talk with.

Forty-two percent of participants in the 26-45 age range disagreed or strongly disagreed that people who lived near them would help if asked. Thirty percent of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse participants disagreed or strongly disagreed that people who live nearby would not help them if asked. Twenty-seven percent of participants living beyond the Cairns West suburbs and 23% of participants residing in Manoora responded that people who live near them would not help if they asked for help. Respondents living in Manunda are the more likely to receive help if requested.

Twenty-one percent of participants identifying as Indigenous and 21% of participants in the 18-25 year age range disagreed or strongly disagreed with the item 'I like most people I see during the day'. Agreement with this item was 8% higher for participants in suburbs beyond Cairns West while 20% of participants from Manoora disagreed with the item.

Thirty percent of participants living in Manoora, 33% of the 18-25 year age range, 22% of the 13-17 year age range, and 20% of Indigenous participants, responded they had not made new friends since participating in SPAYC activities.

### **7.12 Health and Wellbeing**

With the exception of 22% of participants in the 18-25 year age range, 18% of participants living in Manunda and 20% of participants identifying as CALD, reported that they felt good about themselves.

Participants living in suburbs beyond Cairns West and Manoora, are most likely to wake up in the morning looking forward to the day, and one third of participants living in Manunda and Moorooloolool did not look forward to the day.

Thirty-three percent in the 18-25 year age range and 25% of participants identifying as CALD, responded they do not feel fit and healthy most of the time. Indigenous males felt the fittest and healthiest most of the time.

Except for participants in the 18-25 year age range, all participants felt fitter and stronger after participating in SPAYC activities.

### **7.13 Project**

There was strong agreement from all participants to the questionnaire items relating to SPAYC activities. At least 99% of participants said they enjoyed participating in SPAYC activities. Gender, ethnicity, age, and suburb of residence were not determinants of agreement.

Apart from the 18-25 year age range, over 96% of all participants liked the providers and/or facilitators who conduct activities in the project.



Seventy-five percent or greater of all participants, regardless gender, age, or ethnicity, think there should be more activities in the SPAYC project. Ninety percent of participants residing in Manoora and 88% of participants residing beyond the Cairns West suburbs also responded there should be more activities in the project. Participants residing in Mooroolbool were the most satisfied with the number of activities on offer in the project. Children in the under 8, and the 8-12 years age range added they would like to do more recreational based activities with a significant number of CALD participants aged under 8-25 years old reporting that they would like more opportunities to engage in reading or speaking English with adults.

#### **7.14 Unobtrusive Observation Analysis**

The evaluation team undertook observations of most activities over one month in 2021. The rationale was to identify interaction patterns among the young people and the providers/facilitators and to examine how attendance was collected, the ways providers responded to challenging behaviours and how activities were conducted.

Unobtrusive observation involves observing participants while they undertake an activity without the researcher being actively involved. This form of observation can be structured or unstructured. In this case, the observation was structured with pre-defined elements being observed. For example, the number of participants, participants leaving early, the behaviour exhibited by the participants, and how the facilitator responded to behaviours. In this instance, the activities observed were the sporting and outdoor recreation activities listed in the SPAYC project for Term 4, 2021. The observations were conducted from 3 November 2021 through to 3 December 2021.

There can be challenges to collecting observational data when observing a small cohort and trying to remain as unobtrusive as possible. Furthermore, it is a time intensive method and access to the observed activity may be limited. Many of the SPAYC activities occurred back-to-back on the same day, but in different locations separated by several kilometres. Therefore, to observe all activities at least twice within a month took careful planning and even then, not all activities were able to be observed multiple times. For example, Stronger Families was observed once, while Youth Gym and Hip Hop Afro Dance were not observed.

Furthermore, some activities scheduled for observation were cancelled without notice. For example, basketball at Cairns West State School was cancelled twice, once due to the resurfacing of the multi-purpose centre and once due to the multi-purpose centre being used for a science fair. On another occasion, the researcher attended the location of what was scheduled on the program as 'dodgeball' at the allocated time on the project to find that after 25 minutes the facilitator had failed to attend. Finally, the observation of the multi-games was not conducted due to a misunderstanding of the venue.

Observations were conducted in the month of November 2021 to enable attendance at as many of the activities as possible. The table below shows the schedule of planned observations.

2021

# November

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
01	02	03 4-5 Cricket rounders HFP	04 4-5 Strong families @ Mooroolool Hub	05 3-4 Tennis @ Shang	06	07
08 3.30 - 4.30 Games in the Park, Murray St Pk	09 2.45 - 3.45 Hockey Fun zone, BSS 4.30 - 5.30 Edor @Shang	10 2.45 - 3.45 Karate CWSS 5-6 Skateb/ing @ Shang	11 2.40 - 4.00 Basketball CWSS	12 3-4 Tennis @ Shang 5-6 Tagging in the park @Shang	13	14 4 - 5 Dodgeball @ Shang
15 3.45 - 4.45 St Soccer, HFP	16 2.45 - 3.45 Hockey Fun zone, Balaclava SS	17 2.45 - 3.45 Karate CWSS 5-6 Skatebing @ Shang	18 4-5 Strong families @ Mooroolool Hub	19 4-5 Volleyball @ HFP	20	21 4 - 5 Dodgeball @ Shang
22 3.30 - 4.30 - Games in the park, Murray St Park	23 2.40 - 4:00 Street Soccer, CWSS 4.30 - 5.30 Edor @Shang	24 4-5 Cricket rounders HFP	25 2.40 - 4.00 Basketball CWSS	26 4-5 Volleyball @ HFP	27	28
29 3.45 - 4.45 St Soccer, HFP	30 2.40 - 4:00 Street Soccer, CWSS	01 3.30 - 4.30 Multi sports - Murray St	02	03 4-5 running and walking, Murray St	04	05

The observations focused specifically on the factors shown in the template below.

Observations	Response
Activity	
Date and time	
Location	
Is provider punctual?	
When does the provider set up (that is, before or during)?	
Equipment provided	
Number of participants at beginning	
Late arrivals	
How and when is data collected?	
Behaviour (for example, antisocial behaviours)	
Any external incidents to the activity (for example, fights)	

Any YP leave early?	
Any parents attend?	
Parents provide transport?	
Provider provides transport?	
How did others get there?	
Did event start and finish on time?	
Did provider provide afternoon tea? If yes, what?	

### 7.15 Observations

There are three main venue types for the activities in the SPAYC project: parks, two local primary schools, and community buildings. Observations occurred in three parks; Harold Farge Park, Murray Street Park, and Shang Park.

Harold Farge is a large park with existing play facilities, a toilet block, and several large trees that the children enjoyed climbing. The advantage of Harold Farge Park is its proximity to Cairns West State School and the fact that it is regularly used by a local outside school hours care provider. The challenge with this facility is that the side where the activities are set up is very close to Lennon Street, which is a very busy road. It was observed during the volleyball and street soccer sessions that the ball would frequently veer onto the road. The facilitators were quick to remind children not to follow the ball onto the road and took responsibility for retrieving the balls.

Murray Street Park also has existing play equipment, but no toilet facilities. The advantage of Murray Street Park is its location in the heart of Manoora and its available open space. As with Harold Farge Park, the challenge of this park is its proximity to a road, which has a steady flow of traffic. Again, it was a frequent observation that children would accidentally kick or throw the ball too far and it would land on the road. The children would run onto the road to retrieve the ball, and often the facilitator was unaware.

Shang Park is a large park in Mooroolool, and has a basketball court, tennis court, an open area with 'goal posts', an undercover picnic table, and fixed play equipment. The advantage of Shang Park is its proximity to the homes of many of the children who attend the activities and is close to the Mooroolool Hub. Due to the existing tennis and basketball courts, Shang Park is the ideal location for both tennis and skateboarding to take place. The challenge of Shang Park is the influence of older youth, particularly in terms of antisocial behaviour. Smashed glass bottles are frequently found on the tennis court, and drug use by a number of youth was observed.

Cairns West State School and Balaclava State School are in Manunda and Bungalow, respectively. Predominantly migrant, refugee, and Indigenous students attend. Both schools have excellent facilities with large ovals for soccer, as well as multi-purpose centres for basketball and hockey. The benefit of running the projects at the schools is a captive

audience for attendance, free marketing of the project through the school, the potential for parental buy-in to the project and available facilities and equipment.

The Mooroolbool Hub is a community centre that provides support for people in need, activities for children, and a space for events and meetings. The Stronger Families facilitator offers personal grooming activities at the hub, and uses the hub as a cooking facility during the supersessions. The benefit of the hub is its proximity to Shang Park, as it is located at the edge of the park.

The providers and facilitators of the activities in the SPAYC project varied in terms of age, experience, and ethnicity. The overarching characteristic observed was that facilitators were predominately in their teens or early twenties. Most facilitators and providers were friendly and engaging and appeared to have good relationships with the young people. Some of the facilitators appeared resilient and adaptable by not becoming upset or offended by some of the behaviours on display and managed to de-escalate potential conflict situations between some of the participants. For example, a young facilitator was able to intervene in a situation where a young male was verbally abusing a female. The facilitator remained calm while placating the abusive child before he left the scene. Other facilitators ignored antisocial behaviour and concentrated on the youth who were interacting positively in the planned activities.

The number of participants varied within and across the activities with some activities attracting large numbers of participants. Tagging/Edor had 30 participants, and basketball, 22 participants in one session. It was noted that occasionally, these sessions had one facilitator supervising, although a local primary school teacher would attend and assist with these activities. In some cases, facilitators had difficulty engaging participants. They appeared to lack strategies in dealing with challenging behaviours. By comparison, most providers had little difficulty engaging young people and had few incidents of antisocial behaviour during their sessions. Some young facilitators successfully engaged the children and managed inappropriate behaviours, despite being faced with large numbers of children, either directly involved in the activity or in the vicinity of the activity. For example, facilitators of the tennis at Shang Park conducted sessions with groups of 15 and 16 year old youth. They also had to contend with a number of youth hanging around the periphery and not involved in the activity. Some facilitators conducted sessions with a small number of children and in some cases appeared to be unable to engage the children or manage disruptive behaviours. An example of this was at the hockey session at Balaclava State School where there were seven youth. The children engaged in hockey for a couple of minutes before running around outside or in the sports hall. Another example was at Games in the Park, which had seven participants. Few young people engaged and instead spent most of the session throwing balls onto the nearby road.

Due to the location of the activities and the types of activities being undertaken, participant behaviour was easy to observe. Overall, most of the antisocial behaviour involved the use of foul or obscene language, usually directed at each other. Three children displayed aggressive behaviour on several occasions. At one of the volleyball sessions, a young boy was verbally aggressive towards other children. The behaviour was not addressed by the young, female facilitator. During tennis, some children became physically aggressive with the facilitator who was attempting to pack up. The children would hit his hand to get the balls to drop. Then they would snatch the balls and run away.

The facilitator remained calm and appeared to be frustrated. He kept repeating that it was time to pack up and that he would appreciate some assistance from the children. Eventually, he managed to pack up with the help of two older children.

There were two specific incidences of physical fighting between participants, one at street soccer and one at the end of the tagging/Edor. Both incidents were de-escalated quickly by the facilitators. During street soccer at Cairns West State School, the young boy who was aggressive at the volleyball got into a fight with another child and was sent from the pitch by the facilitator. He sat next to the researcher crying and asked to be allowed back on. He was informed he would need to ask the facilitator. When he asked the facilitator, he said he was reluctant to allow him to participate, as this was not the first time fighting, and that on one occasion the boy had attempted to hit the facilitator.

Another incident escalated quickly at Games in the Park when the facilitator told the children that she had not had time to prepare an afternoon tea for them. One young boy was very angry about this and began verbally abusing the facilitator for around 15 minutes before he left. He returned later and began verbally abusing her again. At one point the boy said, "*I could just hit you right now*". The facilitator continued playing with the other children while calmly telling the child not to speak to her this way. Tennis at Shang Park is another activity in which antisocial behaviours were observed. The behaviours consisted of children repeatedly using the rackets to hit each other, or repeatedly smashing the tennis rackets on the ground or bench near the tennis courts. The facilitator would walk up to the children and ask them to refrain because they would not be able to play tennis if they broke the tennis rackets.

At the hockey and basketball, most participants were disruptive. During a hockey session, the children were disrespectful of the equipment by throwing it around and using hockey sticks to 'climb' the mesh walls of the sports centre. Children were spitting water at each other and over the floor before running out of the centre into the school grounds. At one session, two girls were observed removing their school shirts and sitting around in their bras. The facilitator told them this was inappropriate. While the children put their tops back on, it was only a matter of time before they took them off again at which point the facilitator, just shrugged. By comparison, the more experienced providers presented with confidence and appeared to possess the skills to resolve any conflicts among the participants. For example, the karate facilitator frequently spoke with the children about respect, a core component of karate. In addition, the experienced skateboarding and 'Edor/Tagging' providers experienced minimal antisocial behaviour during their activities and all young people appeared to be engaged in the activities.

Several antisocial incidents external to the SPAYC activities were observed during the observation period. While waiting for the skateboarding facilitator to arrive, children were observed writing graffiti on the pillars edging the park. While observing the Stronger Families activity in the Moorobool Hub, two young boys were banging on the hub door and using obscene language towards the girls inside while attempting to open the doors to gain entry. Two of the more serious external incidents involved the starting of a fire and drug use at Shang Park. The SPAYC participants took very little notice of either of these incidents and continued with the activities.

Prior to the start of a tagging/Edor session, children were collecting dried tree bark and leaves and starting a fire. The fire grew to a considerable size before an older child began to extinguish the flames. Upon arriving at one of the skateboarding sessions, it was observed that the facilitator looked upset. When asked if he was okay, he responded that a teenager, who had been involved in a volatile incident at his day job, was now at the park with a group of peers, and he was concerned the earlier incident would escalate. The facilitator calmly continued with his session as the children were now starting to turn up, but he kept his eye on the group of youth.

It was also observed that a group of around nine youth, aged approximately between 10 and 17 years of age, were graffitiing an electricity box in the park. Following this, the group began to smoke from bongos and inhale from plastic bottles. The children involved in the session began trying to take the facilitator's skateboards further into the park. The facilitator could feel the mood in the park shifting and decided it would be wise to pack up early considering the threats of violence the youth had made towards him earlier that day

Basketball at Cairns West State School starts at 2.40pm; however, the school day finishes at 2.30pm. For ten minutes, the children were unsupervised in the multi-purpose centre (MPC). During the 10 minutes, the children were observed running around pulling equipment out of the school cupboard, hitting each other with it and attempting to throw balls into the overhead lights. The facilitator stated that, *"the session pretty much runs itself until halfway through when I get them to do a game of boys versus girls"*. Until then there appeared to be little structure to the activity. Further, the facilitator appeared to not notice a child who entered the venue on a bicycle and proceeded to ride around the MPC. During the session, the school grounds maintenance officer came into the MPC and whistled loudly to get everyone's attention before stating *"you are either in here doing basketball, sitting down on the bench, or not here. All of you that can read know it says no bikes!"* Shortly after this, the facilitator told the children who were playing with tennis rackets and balls to go outside the multi-purpose centre to play, contradicting what the school grounds maintenance officer had just told them. Further the facilitator said, *"I am not responsible for what they do outside the gates of the MPC, I can't control what they do out there"*.

All facilitators were punctual except, on one occasion, a facilitator was late by 15 minutes. However, the session was conducted for the full hour. Just under half of the facilitators/providers arrived several minutes prior to the start of the session to set up their equipment. This included cricket-rounders, games in the park, street soccer, and volleyball. The providers of hockey, tennis, skateboarding, and tagging/Edor arrived on time and began setting up the equipment. At tennis, Edor and skateboarding the children were keen to start the activities started and would either initiate helping the facilitator/provider or would help after being asked. During tennis, some children began playing with the rackets and tennis balls while others would assist the facilitator to set up the nets. The hockey facilitator ignored the children while she emptied equipment from a bag and placed it on the ground. At this time, the children were amusing themselves with other sports equipment in the sports hall. Most activities started and finished on time. One skateboarding session finished under the hour due to an external incident. The

tagging/Edor sessions ran for an extra half hour due to the engagement of the participants and facilitator availability.

Facilitators recorded attendance in a variety of ways and at different times. Attendance data was recorded in several ways. Most facilitators collect attendance data at the commencement of the session. There were a number of observed activities where children's attendance was not recorded because the recording took place during the game and the children had already played for a while and left. Some facilitators asked the children to record their names and ages on a registration sheet, whereas other facilitators would record it themselves. Other observations revealed that some facilitators used their phones to record attendance data. At the street soccer activities in the park and at the school no attendance data was collected.

A complication arises with the recording of attendance data for late arrivals. All but two of the activities observed had late arrivals, and by this time, the facilitators were engaged with the children already in attendance. Many of the facilitators stopped the activity, recorded the information of the new arrivals, and then re-engaged with the children. However, as observed at the basketball, some facilitators were so involved in the activity that they did not stop to check if the participant was recording his/her attendance. Further, if participants left before the facilitator had a chance to record the information, as was observed at the volleyball, the participants were not recorded at all. On another occasion, participants were attending volleyball at the beginning of the session and left after 15 minutes. The facilitator had not yet recorded the attendance data, so their participation was not captured. One of the biggest observed challenges to recording participant data at Shang Park related to the sheer fluidity of the children who regularly opted in or out of sessions. Many of the children started the game then left but another child then took their place. The facilitator may not have noticed that this child had been replaced and therefore did not record that this was a 'new' child due to the sheer numbers involved.

The Games in the Park facilitator provided afternoon tea for participants. The facilitator stated that they usually provided sandwiches, watermelon, kabana sausages and crackers, or cheese and water in an esky. The Edor/Tagging facilitator provided an esky with water for the Sunday sessions.

In terms of parental engagement, four of the 23 activities observed had parents attend. One mother attended the skateboarding with her two girls from Freshwater Christian College on one occasion<sup>4</sup>, one father attended the karate on two occasions while one grandmother brought her children to the tagging in the park on a Sunday.

## **7.16 Analysis**

The description of the activities allows for an analysis of the observational data. Quantitative data contained in the table below serves to triangulate most of the data contained in the description of observations in the previous section as well as qualitative data based on the perceptions of providers and facilitators that appear towards the conclusion of this chapter. Quantitative analysis of the data shows that 60.9% of all

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<sup>4</sup> She was going to attend on the second session, but when she was informed of the potential unrest and the drug taking happening in the park, she decided to go home.

activities are conducted by young adults in the late teens to early twenties age category. There appears to be a correlation between the age and relative inexperience of some facilitators and resultant disruptive behaviours with over 60.9% of all observations recording at least one incident of antisocial or disruptive behaviour. Of all the situations where children were disengaging or displaying antisocial behaviour 85.7% of the facilitators responded but in some cases the responses may not have been effective, particularly in large group situations.

Of the activities, 91% started on time but some facilitators were still setting up the activities after the starting time. For example, the tennis activities were scheduled from 3pm to 4pm. The facilitator would start setting up at 3pm. At 3.15pm, tennis would commence and at 3.45 pm the facilitator would announce it was time to pack up because it took 15 minutes to pack the rackets and balls and fold the nets.

There are large variations in how and when attendance data was recorded. On three occasions, there was no recording of attendance for street soccer at any of the venues. In 13% of the activities in which data was collected, it was left to a young participant to collect the data, or the children were asked to register their own details. Of the facilitators, 87% collected the data at the beginning of the activity, and 43.5% collected additional data as late participants arrived. On one occasion, participants were attending volleyball at the beginning of the session and left after 15 minutes. The facilitator had not yet recorded the attendance data, so their participation was not captured.

Observation	% Observed
How many activities had a ratio of 1 facilitator to 10 children or more	69.6% <sup>5</sup>
How many of the activities are run by young facilitators	60.9%
How many of the facilitators set up beforehand	21.7%
How many activities started on time	91.3% <sup>6</sup>
How many activities started late due to the facilitator	4.3%
Attendance data collected by participants or self-completed	13%
Attendance data collected at beginning of activity	87%
Attendance data collected (added) as participants arrived	43.5%
No attendance data collected	13%
Number of activities in which children left early	82.6%
Of the activities in which children left early, how many were activities in which children fluidly left and re-joined	42.1% <sup>7</sup>
How many external incidents occurred	26%

<sup>5</sup> Basketball and Edor had the highest ratio of adults to participants at 1:22 (both observations) and 1:30.

<sup>6</sup> A little difficult to gauge accurately because some activities technically started on time, but the facilitator had to continue setting up.

<sup>7</sup> Mostly at Shang Park, but also at the other parks



How many antisocial behaviours occurred	60.8% <sup>8</sup>
How often did the provider/facilitator respond to the antisocial behaviour	85.7%
How often were the activities disrupted by antisocial behaviour or external incidents	21.7%

## 7.17 Good News Stories

### Increased Personal and Social Capability through Participation in the SPAYC project

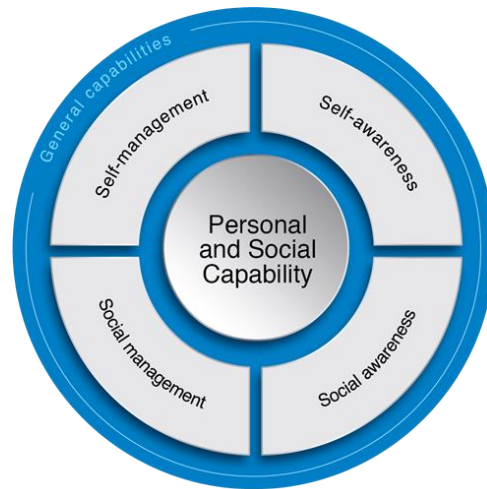
One of the aims of the evaluation was to identify the degree to which engagement in sporting or recreational activities had a positive impact on young people's health and wellbeing. A further area of interest was to inquire if there was any evidence to suggest that participation in the SPAYC activities had any impact on other areas of young people's lives such as education. With the assistance of Cairns West State School, the evaluation team was able to examine a small sample of young people who regularly attended the after-school activities to identify if there was any link to positive educational outcomes. One area of interest was to find out whether a student's personal and social capabilities increased due to their participation in the SPAYC project. Personal and social capability involves students in a range of practices including recognising and regulating emotions, developing empathy for others, and understanding relationships, establishing, and building positive relationships, making responsible decisions, working effectively in teams, handling challenging situations constructively and developing leadership skills. (Personal and Social Capability Version 8.4).

Furthermore, personal, and social capability supports students in becoming creative and confident individuals who, as stated in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008), 'have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing', with a sense of hope and 'optimism about their lives and the future'. On a social level, it helps students to, 'form and maintain healthy relationships' and prepares them, 'for their potential life roles as family, community, and workforce members' (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 9).

When students develop their skills in any one of these elements, it leads to greater overall personal and social capability, and enhances their skills in the other elements. In particular, the more students learn about their own emotions, values, strengths, and capacities, the more they are able to manage their own emotions and behaviours, and to understand others and establish and maintain positive relationships. The key ideas for Personal and Social Capability are organised into four interrelated elements in the learning continuum, as shown in the diagram below.

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<sup>8</sup> Mostly inappropriate language



Cairns West State School use a comprehensive assessment tool to collect student data on Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). Data is recorded against eight performance areas as shown through the following scales:

- Self-Awareness Competency Scale: Assesses how well a student can recognise his or her emotions and thoughts and their influence on behaviour including accuracy of assessing his or her skill level and a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism
- Self-Management Competency Scale: Assesses how well a student can control or regulate his or her emotions thoughts and behaviours in different situations including stress management, impulse control, self-motivation and goal setting
- Social Awareness Competency Scale: Assesses how well a student takes the perspective of and empathises with others who are different from him/her
- Relationship Skills Competency Scale: Assesses a student's ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with others
- Responsible Decision Making Competency Scale: Assesses a student's ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behaviour and social interactions in a way that considers ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, consequences and the wellbeing of self and others
- Academic Competence Scale: Provides an overall indication of a student's academic functioning including motivation and performance in reading and mathematics (Elliot, & Gresham, 2018).

Each of the eight performance areas yields a separate score ranging from 1-5. Scores in level 1, the red area, clearly indicate concern and the need for instructional intervention. Scores in level 2, the yellow level, indicate a moderate level of concern but suggest intervention is needed, and will likely be effective. Scores in levels 3, 4 and 5, the green levels, are indicative of students functioning at an average or above-average level relative to their grade or age.

Several school staff members identified 13 students who regularly attended the SPAYC project and had made significant progress regarding their results on some of the eight

performance areas over the previous two years. The analysis of the data resulted in several case studies charting young people's progress. While there can be no definitive outcomes due to the small sample, the data does indicate the possibility of a correlation between improvements in areas such as self-awareness, social awareness, increased school attendance and progress in reading and maths skills.

### 7.17.1 Jane

Jane is an only child with a significant history of severe mental health including a dual diagnosis and childhood trauma. Jane is described as an isolated child who seldom leaves her bedroom other than to attend school. In 2021, Jane commenced playing street soccer and attending karate lessons. Both activities are held one afternoon per week in the grounds of her school. Jane's school attendance rate has increased from 65% in 2020 to 90% in 2021. The social-emotional monitoring table below shows Jane's social-emotional competencies have improved from areas of concern to functioning at or above average in the areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making. Jane's family members report she is no longer isolated playing in her bedroom but is connecting with community. School staff report family engagement with the school has also increased.

	2020	2021
<b>Self-Awareness</b>	1	3
<b>Self-Management</b>	1	3
<b>Social Awareness</b>	1	3
<b>Relationship Skills</b>	1	3
<b>Responsible Decision Making</b>	1	4
<b>Motivation</b>	1	1
<b>Reading Skills</b>	1	1
<b>Maths Skills</b>	1	1

### 7.17.2 Abraham

Abraham belongs to a school cohort consisting of a diverse group of Indigenous and refugee children. He is described as culturally different to his peers as there are no other children in his cohort who speak his language. Through the after-school hour's street soccer project, Abraham has found a means of communicating with his peers as he demonstrates outstanding ball skills. He has transferred these skills and the discipline that comes with a team sport to his commitment to education. This has been a contributing factor leading to the decrease in the numbers of suspensions related to major incidents that occur on the school oval during play breaks as shown in the table below.

Year	Number of Major Incidents
2019	126
2020	119
2021	98

### 7.17.3 Jacob

Jacob is a transient student who has attended seven different schools over 4 years. In 2021, he attended the same school for the full school calendar year and attended after school sporting activities three afternoons a week. As seen in the table below, in 2021, Jacob recorded his highest attendance rate in the history of his schooling. There was also a significant reduction in the numbers of major incidents resulting in suspension and the numbers of recorded minor incidents.

Year	Attendance Rate	Number of Incidents	Number of Major Incidents	Number of Minor Incidents
2019	67%	14	10	4
2020	59%	65	40	25
2021	76%	9	3	6

### 7.17.4 Adam

Adam commenced SPAYC projects in 2020. He displays increased motivation to attend school to participate in the out of school hours sports projects four afternoons per week. This motivation has led to a significant improvement in school attendance that now exceeds the department's minimum attendance rate requirement. Adam is disappointed when the afternoon projects conclude and needs strong encouragement to leave the school grounds.

Year	Attendance Rate
2019	55%
2020	69%
2021	87%

Adam has shown improvement across self-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills. In each of these performance areas, he has progressed from a level of concern and targeted intervention to an average level relative to his age level. Alex has shown improvements in self-awareness and social awareness. This is evidenced in the social-emotional monitoring table below.

	2020	2021
<b>Self-Awareness</b>	2	3
<b>Self-Management</b>	2	3
<b>Social Awareness</b>	3	3
<b>Relationship Skills</b>	2	3
<b>Responsible Decision Making</b>	3	3
<b>Motivation</b>	3	3
<b>Reading Skills</b>	2	2
<b>Maths Skills</b>	2	2

### 7.17.5 Alex

Alex commenced SPAYC projects in 2020. He also displays increased motivation to attend school to participate in the out of school hours sports projects four afternoons per week. This motivation has led to a significant improvement in school attendance that now exceeds the department's minimum attendance rate requirement, see table below. Alex is disappointed when the afternoon activities conclude and needs strong encouragement to leave the school grounds.

Year	Attendance Rate
<b>2019</b>	59%
<b>2020</b>	69%
<b>2021</b>	92%

As depicted in the social-emotional monitoring table below, Alex has shown improvement across self-awareness and social awareness skills. In each of these performance areas, he has progressed from a level of concern and targeted intervention to an average level relative to his age level.

	2020	2021
<b>Self-Awareness</b>	2	3
<b>Self-Management</b>	2	2
<b>Social Awareness</b>	2	3
<b>Relationship Skills</b>	2	2
<b>Responsible Decision Making</b>	3	3

<b>Motivation</b>	3	3
<b>Reading Skills</b>	2	2
<b>Maths Skills</b>	2	2

### 7.17.6 Aurora

Aurora has a background of trauma. Her school attendance exceeds the department's minimum attendance rate and has continued to improve in the past 3 years. Aurora has a long history of low academic achievement across all learning areas, and until 2021, was unable to achieve a minimum C standard, see table below. In 2021, Aurora engaged daily in SPAYC activities outside school hours.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Attendance Rate</b>	<b>English Level of Achievement</b>	<b>Mathematics Level of Achievement</b>
<b>2019</b>	88%	D	E
<b>2020</b>	90%	D	E
<b>2021</b>	99.3%	C	C

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Self-Awareness</b>	3	3
<b>Self-Management</b>	3	3
<b>Social Awareness</b>	3	3
<b>Relationship Skills</b>	2	4
<b>Responsible Decision Making</b>	3	3
<b>Motivation</b>	3	4
<b>Reading Skills</b>	3	4
<b>Maths Skills</b>	2	3

In the social-emotional table above, it is evident Aurora's relationship skills have improved from a level of concern to an above average level related to her peers. She is now able to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with others. Aurora's academic functioning including motivation and performance in reading and mathematics has improved. There is a direct correlation between this data set and her level of achievement for both English and Mathematics.

### 7.17.7 Wangmo, Kiba, Lham, Dema, Karzi and Yuden

Wangmo, Kiba, Lham, Dema, Karzi and Yuden are Nepali speaking refugee girls from Bhutan. All have school attendance that exceeds the minimum departmental expectation. During school hours, they refuse to engage in any sport or physical education instruction and receive an “E” rating for the subject Health and Physical Education. The girls are usually shy. However, they report to staff each Wednesday that they will be attending the after-school hour’s karate classes held on the school grounds. Their attendance at karate class is 100% and they report their favourite part is getting to wear the karate uniform.

### 7.17.8 Sarah

Sarah is in Year 5 and experiences childhood trauma. Outside school hours, she has responsibilities caring for several younger siblings. Her school attendance exceeds Education Queensland’s minimum attendance rate of 85%. In 2021, when permitted by her parents, Sarah attended every SPAYC outside school hours sport and recreational activity offered on school grounds. As depicted in the social-emotional monitoring table below, Sarah’s social-emotional Learning shows improvement from average to above average in five of the eight performance areas. School staff have noted an improvement in Sarah’s general happiness.

	2020	2021
<b>Self-Awareness</b>	3	4
<b>Self-Management</b>	3	4
<b>Social Awareness</b>	3	4
<b>Relationship Skills</b>	4	4
<b>Responsible Decision Making</b>	3	3
<b>Motivation</b>	3	3
<b>Reading Skills</b>	3	4
<b>Maths Skills</b>	3	4

## 7.18 Perceptions of Providers

The qualitative data was collected through in-depth individual semi-structured interviews with some of the providers and facilitators who were procured to conduct after school activities across the venues within the Cairns West suburbs. Interviewees were asked several questions about what they perceived to be the benefits of the project in terms of health and wellbeing, inclusivity and social connectedness among the young participants and their families.

Most providers and facilitators stressed that the over-arching advantage of the SPAYC project was the provision of a variety of sports and recreational activities that were free

and accessible to young people. Others identified that the scope of the project was instrumental in increasing inclusivity and reducing boredom among young people through the provision of activities over most of the calendar year including school holiday periods as expressed by one experienced sports provider:

*But I think more than anything else, it was about just giving them something to do after school while we're there. So the goal was never to create fantastic tennis players. The goal was just to keep these kids off the street and give them something to go to, so they didn't get into trouble. So we just did a lot of ball skills, got them into some rally stuff, kept it really fun and light so they would always come back each week. So like I said, they have something there to do.*

There was a global perception among the providers and facilitators that most young people enjoyed the activities. This provided an impetus for their continued participation. While enjoyment in the activities was perceived as a desirable outcome, there was a shared observation that participation in sporting activities provided the conduit for providers and facilitators to reinforce pro social values such as self-discipline and resilience with the young participants. One provider who offered a project in deportment and grooming described the importance of teaching young people to take on responsibility and adhere to expectations such as deadlines as an important step in assisting them at school as well as other avenues in their daily lives:

*So, it's teaching the young girls well, and the boys too when they were doing it with me as well as routine and it helps them with school. It helps them at home, it helps them as they grow up and transition into older people, so they know what to do when they come in. So, I was giving them a daily direct, I call them little daily directors and they put their hands up and volunteered, so helping them to be responsible and accountable. So, somebody would come in, "Okay, we'll do the attendance. Okay. Who's taking the names down." Somebody else will help putting things out and setting things out. And then we'd go through a process, wash your hands, wash your face, get cleansed. This was well before COVID that they were learning all these things and they would all be coming in like all straggly and hot and looking like somebody who is just being, yeah, running around loose, like mad.*

By comparison, several other providers highlighted that the highly structured nature of their projects fostered self-discipline within participants, which in turn assisted them to focus on goals such as completing tasks at home, attending school regularly and completing homework assignments. One provider described how he fostered self-discipline as a role model through an adherence to living a healthy lifestyle through eating nutritious food and avoiding alcohol and drugs to train effectively in his sport. At the same time, he insisted on an adherence to a set of strict rules designed to increase the focus of the young participants with their sporting activity.

*I point out to them, I say, 'If you want to train for a long time, you're going to play sports for a long time, don't drink, don't smoke and don't touch drugs.' I have a ruling that you come to my class you can't tell me anything about your home. You're not allowed to talk about your mum and dad. Because to us, mum and dad is the ultimate, so you can't tell me anything about what's*



*happening at your home, and you can't ask me personal questions. All you can ask me is questions about this discipline. So, we speak about nothing else. There's three, four kids who regularly come each session. Very good discipline. Dedicated. And who obviously have a passion for the game. And then I've seen their controlling, their awareness of the game has improved a lot.*

There were additional examples where providers and facilitators stressed that in addition to coaching young people in the skills associated with the sport, they also perceived themselves as mentors and positive role models for the young participants. There were accounts from providers and facilitators that describe how positive mentoring experiences were able to assist some young people who may have been at risk due to unsatisfactory or unsafe home environments that included an exposure to alcohol, drugs, or forms of domestic violence as described by one coach:

*Yeah. Like pretty much every single young person that I've worked with at Spayc+Place down at Shang Park, they have got some form of risk factor associated with them. Whether they're at risk of harm, or at risk of any of the other things in their homes that you've mentioned as well. Like they might be at risk of navigating financial hardship within the home, and then being exposed to the usage of substances and all that. But in specific to what you're mentioning with the whole youth crime and offending and stuff like that, there are a select few young people that I work with that do sit within that basket so to speak. And they do engage with me well – they don't skate as much, but it's a lot of mentorship that [occurs] through conversations.*

Another provider recounted a positive mentoring experience that resulted in a young male desisting from a period of prolonged bullying within the group. Through several months of mentoring, the provider was able to build a rapport with the young male. This resulted in the young person not only desisting from bullying but also voluntarily taking on a leadership role by assisting the provider to set up the equipment prior to the session:

*There was a young boy I was talking about over at Murray Street who used to bully the smaller kids as well as the girls. I used to take him aside and have these little talks, which went on for about a month and gradually he stopped this behaviour. I saw a real change in him where he used to come early and help me set up the equipment and always went last allowing the little kids to go first. At other times he was showing the other younger boys and that what to do with the dumbbells and how to do a bicep curl. And they're all lined up on the seat and he's showing them. I was like ... And I just give him a bit of a wink. And so, him and his sister were doing well together. His change of attitude was the result of a number of little talks over a few months and encouragement, which went a long way in changing his behaviours.*

The emphasis on including all young people in the project resulted in opportunities for children from different cultures to participate in the various sporting activities. Some providers perceived this as an opportunity to break down barriers that may have existed between some of the ethnic groups in West Cairns:

*Everyone gets out on the street and plays and with the soccer, it's really good because you've got all those different cultures mingling and playing together*

*and they definitely develop connections between the different communities and they've got a lot in common, having those refugee backgrounds.*

Other providers took the opportunity to discuss issues about race, ethnicity and tolerance when opportunities for discussions presented themselves during the weekly activities.

*And I was like, "No, you're not going there. They're pointing and things and I'm like, "Who're you talking to?" "Oh, they're not allowed to come in here." I was like, "Why?" "Because they're not one of us." I was like, "What's one of you?" They go, "Cook Islanders." I said, "Do you know they're Torres Strait Islander." And they're like, "Yeah, miss us. Well, we don't want them in here." I said, "Guess what? I'm a Torres Strait islander too." And they're like, "What? Are you? Oh, but we love you miss." I said, "Well, if you don't like them, that means you don't like me." So, I used that to break it down and then they came in and they're all doing things together.*

Experienced providers identified that their roles as mentors and role models extended to nurturing young facilitators who were perceived as valuable contributors to the activities as well as ensuring future sustainability of the project. Most facilitators were employed by providers due to their past association with the SPAYC+PLACE projects such as SPAYC Cadets and Parks to Clubs. Facilitators saw this as a positive outcome in terms of imparting their skills to assist the young people and giving something back to the program while receiving remuneration. One provider described how she mentored a young facilitator and prepared her for a major role in co-delivering her activity.

*Yeah. Last year she graduated as a cadet and now she's doing some work with me as well. In the afternoons, I do a women's group activity as well for fitness and exercise. And she's a part of that with me too. But as far as this Cairns Safer Streets goes, I'm trying to put her up there, at the forefront instead of behind it as a shadow for them to see too, like the different cultures working together as well.*

Facilitators expressed an appreciation for the support and encouragement they received from Cairns Safer Streets who provided valuable induction sessions and addressed issues such as risk assessments, applying for blue cards and first aid skills. This training provided an impetus for some to plan structured activities, which were associated with their chosen sport:

*Yeah. Soccer, yeah. And there was a blue card as well. Those were the major ones I had to do. And then there was a bit of courses here and there, like just to improve my leadership. And then I basically, on my time, I see coaching videos and stuff; how to improve the kids' soccer, and good drills that would help them improve their skill acquisition in general.*

Most providers and facilitators identified that the greatest challenge to conducting SPAYC activities was responding to inappropriate behaviour not only within the class but also with other youth who were on the periphery of a session. There were numerous accounts of young people using substances and drinking alcohol in the parks, which had the potential to derail the activities and promote negative role modelling for the young participants.

Experienced providers adopted several strategies to respond to these situations such as engaging with members of the peripheral groups in a non-confrontational manner:

*There were a couple of times where there was a group of young people using substances and weren't really discreet about it either. And they were drinking alcohol, and smashing bottles, they were a bit rowdy and stuff like that. And they did present to be quite rough – I don't want to speak a little bit out of turn, but yeah – they seemed quite rough and if challenged or opposed there was potential for a risk there. What I did to navigate that was just to keep the young people away from that and move towards the other end of that concrete section to increase space. And then I just walked over to them and said, "Hey guys, look – you do what you need to do, but just keep in mind that there's young kids here, five-year-old kids and stuff." And they were still somewhat disrespectful, but at the same time you could see it was a little bit like, 'Yeah all right.'*

Knowing when to intervene and reduce potential harm to young participants was recognised as a necessary skill required when working with young people. Providers who possessed the skills for undertaking risk assessments to ensure parks were cleared of debris or broken glass stated that it was necessary that all providers and facilitators undertook mandatory training in risk assessments to ensure participants did not sustain physical injuries. Experienced providers stated that training was instrumental in assisting them in remaining vigilant about the physical safety of participants who came into contact with each other or if there were instances of inappropriate behaviour among the cohort:

*Essentially, it's got to be about the safe environment to actually facilitate or participate in the activity. So the presence of broken glass, the presence of sticks from the trees nearby, the cracks in the concrete, rocks – those environmental factors. The other factors I've got to consider as well is like these young people that I'm working with may come from traumatic backgrounds or have experience of trauma. So I'm extremely mindful of physical contact in supporting them to develop their skills. I'm also mindful of any form of presence of sexualised behaviour that they may exhibit.*

*Just being super cautious there and navigating that, so if there's any display of any form of sexualised behaviour which hasn't really presented itself. I mean a young person needed to go to the bathroom once and had a dress on, so decided to go behind a tree in the park. At that stage it was about just kind of keeping the general other group attention away from that, and you know and also making sure that that young person was safe as well. So making sure that no one went over to that tree.*

The account above highlights the significant difference in how experienced providers responded to at risk behaviours compared to less experienced younger people who were employed as facilitators. Facilitators admitted they did not always have the experience in dealing with large numbers of young people as well as inappropriate behaviours. An eighteen year old facilitator relayed an account about not possessing the skills to resolve a conflict situation with a ten year old participant. The facilitator stated that he would

have benefited from additional training in behaviour management skills if it was offered as part of his professional development training:

*Yeah. Great bunch of kids but there's a lot of profanity, swearing, and sometimes they won't listen to me. They are very enthusiastic. Very energetic. But there's also cons from that as well. But at the end of the day, we're just going to ignore that, even though we – even if we have not good relationships with the kid on that day Next week it might just keep going. There was an instance where the kid – I was telling him to stop kicking the ball. And then he just doesn't listen to me. And then he just kicks the ball all the way, away. And then I just got a bit frustrated. And I was like, "hey, mate, stop!" And he's like, "hey, this-and-that," you know? Swearing, yeah. And then – yeah, and I had to tell him, "I'm not going to let you play if you don't respect me and respect your team mates." And then he was a bit agitated. So I just left him alone, gave him a soccer ball to play with. But I could probably have handled this situation a bit better. Yes, I would probably benefit from some training in how to deal with these kinds of behaviours because I don't want another kid acting up and causing problems.*

Several other younger facilitators also identified that they would benefit from additional training in risk management skills to ensure the safety of their participants. One facilitator admitted that he found it difficult assessing potential risk situations particularly when working with large groups of young people:

*At times I do lose sight of everything that is going on when the kids are buzzing around. There have been a few situations when kids were in the corner of the park hitting each other with sticks which I didn't notice until one was crying...so I guess a bit more training in how to manage risky situations would be really helpful for me and some of the others who are new to this type of work. In the induction we had a casual conversation about it. I wouldn't say it was really formal or just specifically designated for risk assessment.*

Providers who had experience in conducting sessions over several years perceived that the most effective approach in dealing with inappropriate behaviours among young people was to respond to a situation immediately and if possible, de-escalate the situation before it affected the dynamics of the rest of the class. Some providers indicated that they regularly met with their facilitators to talk about issues such as inappropriate behaviours that arose when conducting the activities:

*The young guy told me that there was one kid, he was f-ing this and f-ing that.' And I asked him how he dealt with that. He told me he said to the kid; "oh, mate, you know, you can pick a better word than that, can't you?" And he'll joke around a little bit about it and that sort of stuff. He's very unfrontational anyway, as a person, and we will yeah, just chat weekly during the session. We won't go into it massively, but it might be a one-minute conversation.*

Providers who had extensive experience in delivering projects within SPAYC+PLACE were prominent in extolling the value of positively reinforcing good behaviour and acknowledging the progress of individuals. Positive reinforcement took varying forms from verbal encouragement to material benefits such as certificates or food. One successful

business provider described how she rewarded nine young female participants by inviting them to a high tea at a luxury hotel:

*Back a couple of years ago about nine of the girls who went straight through the project with me over the year were invited to come to a high tea. I do a NAIDOC high tea, and that's an event that I did at the Shangri La. So, I organised someone from Cairns Safer Streets to attend and gave the girls an opportunity to practice their etiquette skills. During the afternoon I gave them a certificate on stage because that then opens them up even more to their confidence as well, which is great.*

*Yeah. I take it to them too to try. Sometimes I'll reward them and buy some stuff for them to take home every other week. If somebody has done well, I'll bring them a reward and a treat and things like that. So, they feel appreciated. And when they do something, they do get rewarded.*

Another challenge for some facilitators was keeping an accurate record of attendance for their participants particularly in the larger classes. While there were a number of methods employed to capture attendance data such as on mobile phones or via checklists there were concerns that the accuracy of the data was sometimes compromised due to not recording late arrivals or in some cases failing to capture young people who left before the class had finished.

*There was a brother and sister at Balaclava school and the brother would always want to go and walk off. But the sister would always be like, 'No, no, no, no, come back here, you can't go anywhere.' That's probably one of the challenges of the project is that, if a kid wants to go and walk off, because the parents quite often weren't there, aren't there. So sometimes it's hard to always know how many kids leave half-way through the session and how many you finished with especially in the bigger classes like soccer or basketball.*

Interview data indicated providers and facilitators adopted differing methods for recording attendance. This potentially may have compromised the accuracy of attendance figures for the overall project as in these two accounts:

*So there's an attendance sheet. I use my mobile phone. I like to record that data digitally rather than having like a notepad and pen. It's just easier to keep it on the phone. And then I mark the attendance – like as soon as I get out of the car, I walk straight over to the area that we're using, see if there's any glass, clean it up. You know, make sure that the environment is safe. And then from there I then pull my phone out and I start doing the attendance, marking everyone off. And then as other people come along, I just pull my phone out and go bang, and just whack them in.*

*...Yeah, so whoever is the facilitator will just write it down, or some, but everyone does it differently. I've now changed it to a spreadsheet, so they can just go straight on to it, if they've got an iPad or whatever, they can just type it straight in and that gets submitted to us.*

In other contexts, keeping accurate attendance records was further compounded when the younger siblings of some of the participants attended classes. There were accounts of unaccompanied children as young as three or four attending some sessions resulting in chaotic scenes for the providers in delivering the activities:

*But we were getting like three year olds, fours and fives because they were the siblings of the other girls who were coming. And if family orientated, if they were coming then they had to bring their little ones with them, sort of thing. And it made it really hard because they couldn't focus on what I was teaching them there. And the other ones were crying and always running around, and it was just madness.*

A small cohort of providers stated that they were less concerned about keeping accurate attendance records and were more interested in young people participating in their activities even if they arrived late or left early. There was, however, an acknowledgement among some members of this cohort that there were potential risks if there were not accurate records capturing attendance data particularly if young people left the project before its conclusion:

*The project for me is all about inclusion. So if a young person rocks up late, they're not missing out. But also like the young people, they might have challenges that I'm not aware of within their life that only allows them limited capacity to engage, you know? I admit though that we could run into trouble if one of the kids left early and something happened to them...*

A common perception among the interviewees was that some of the challenges associated with inappropriate behaviour could be addressed through increased parental involvement in the project. One very experienced provider stated that he had successfully incorporated a small cohort of parents by inviting them to participate in the activities. He observed that over a short period of time the parents gradually gained an appreciation about his training philosophy based on self-discipline and personal reflection. Several parents reported that they had adopted a similar approach to parenting, which had resulted in their children becoming more focused on their academic work and fostered better overall relationships within the family. The provider reflected:

*Two to three parents came in and joined in with the kids. This has allowed a consistency and that things like routine and self-discipline are now occurring in the family home. Because if there are no parents at the session what happens then? Who picks up the pieces when I'm not there? No one, if the parents don't and they try their best and they are very good when they're with me. Now they get to continue when they go home. So these parents have less conflicts and the kids have less conflicts with their brothers and sisters and they are more focused on their schoolwork as well.*

### **7.19 Parent and Community Perceptions of the Project**

While there was some success in obtaining parental buy-in to specific projects, there was a view that there were challenges accessing transport, cultural differences, and a lack of communication.

Perhaps the best example of involvement among parents and supporters occurred in the end of term "supersessions" which were regularly held at Shang Park in the suburb of Moorabool. Shang Park was also one of the prime locations where SPAYC activities were conducted across the school term. Supersessions served as an opportunity to showcase the array of sporting and recreational activities to parents and local community members. The format of the sessions consisted of several activities operating simultaneously which involved large numbers of young people while family and community members attended as spectators. Supersessions also provided a rare opportunity for community members to connect socially within a carnival-type atmosphere. People freely mingling with each other within a background of music, free food, and drinks. These occasions also served as an opportunity for the working group members, executive members of Cairns Safer Streets as well as the local state member of Queensland Parliament to communicate informally with members of the local community and increase public awareness about the project:

*No, it is really hard to get the involvement of the parents and family. We're getting really good buy-in when we have our events especially in the supersessions. We're seeing a lot, because maybe two or three years ago, when we'd run a community event, the kids would all be there, but you wouldn't see many parents or families, until the food came out. But over the last year or so we are seeing more parents and friends turning up and learning about the project.*

Another provider added that the supersessions provided parents with an opportunity to reflect on the benefits of sport as a form of self-discipline and self-regulation, which potentially could assist them in their roles of parents and caregivers:

*I think it's a good way to bring people together and I think it's important in the community. That doesn't have the same privileges like other communities have. It's a pretty rough community and the parents are not as well off as other communities. And when they see kids disciplined, they start to think about themselves and how they might flow on in their roles as responsible and loving parents of these children.*

## **7.20 One-Minute Grabs**

The supersessions also provided members of the evaluation team with the best opportunity to gather data from parents and community members about their perceptions of the SPAYC project. The method of data gathering consisted of obtaining short 'one-minute grabs' from people who attended two of the supersessions in 2021 and 2022. The intent of the one-minute grabs was to randomly select people who were observing the supersessions and ask them about their knowledge of the activities as well as commentary about the perceived benefits for the children through their participation. The one-minute grabs were organised under two themes: benefits to the children and suggestions for the project.

A shared perception among parents and supporters was that the project provided opportunities for children to connect socially with other children and across different cultural groups:

*...Likes the project. It brings people together to have fun. Her children participate in activities every day. Also said the project keeps kids out of trouble because they have something to do. The project will change the mindset of the community and bring people together. Would like to see more supersessions. Likes the good feel....*

*...Likes that there are many different cultures coming together to play sport in the park...*

*...It's good to see kids down here and involved....*

*...It's about involving community. Likes that youth are helping out. It's good for the young ones to look up to the older ones.*

*...Have three kids in the project. I love it. The kids are playing with kids from their school. So, they've got mates here. Kids in Year 1. Noticed her kids are more prepared to give things a go.*

*...Our grandkids come here. They get involved. We like watching them play.*

*Other comments related to how the project promoted good health and provided a structure to young people's lives through a regime of exercise, which positively assisted them in becoming more self-disciplined and focused on other parts of their lives:*

*...Dad thinks the project is a good project. He enjoys seeing the karate and dance. Dad is very happy his daughter goes to the karate activity because it is healthy to do karate....*

*.. seven children participate. 3 times per week. Keep the kids off the street. Not bored because activities are happening. Has attended all supersessions. Children are happier when they come home because they are "worn" out and ready for dinner. Children need to run and burn themselves out...*

*...three children 12, 14, 15 years old. Attend every day. Her children have fun...*

*... Look at the children here now. They are stress free. Look at them enjoying the dancing...*

Older adults reported that the project enhanced the personal safety of young people who otherwise were likely to be the targets of bullying by older children in the park. This concurs with responses from adults, who participated in the survey during the supersessions (in the 26 to 45 year age group), who strongly agreed there was a lot of crime and personal safety was an important issue for all people living in their suburb. Of the older cohort only 50% of 50 year olds indicated that they felt safe when walking down the street in their suburb:

*...Young people need to feel safe when they are in the park. Even older people like me do not feel safe in the suburbs or even on the street. I keep to myself these days because I have been broken into twice this year.*

*...Parent only lets her children (2) attend the park when there is an organised activity. She says there is a lot of bullying in the park.*



*...three children 12,14,15 years old. Attend every day. Would like longer activities every day. Too much bullying in park. No bullying during activities. Has attended all supersessions.*

Several parents and supporters offered suggestions for variations to the project in terms of extending the number of minutes per session as well as conducting more supersessions during the school term due its popularity among the younger participants:

*Would like to see more supersessions. Likes the good feel.*

*Would like longer activities every day.*

Other parents and supporters suggested that the project could be expanded to include more Indigenous based physical games like Edor, which do not require as much equipment compared to other activities. Another group of elders suggested that the project expand its focus to include more recreational activities such as art for young people who have interests outside the physical activities:

*...Would like to see more islander cultural games like Edor because they don't need much equipment.*

*...Got grandchildren here. They go to Balaclava school. I am just here visiting from Aurukun. Never seen anything like the supersession before. Wants to see one in Aurukun. The project is good for the kids because it gives them rules and expectations they don't see in the house. Would like to offer art to the children as many children enjoy art and it may be good for those who don't enjoy sport...*

There was concern among the parents of children who were about to make the transition to secondary school in 2023. In these cases, continued attendance in the activities that are held at the primary school would be difficult due to a lack of transport once they entered secondary school.

*Worried that the children won't be able to continue the project once they go to high school because it's held at the primary school. The kids won't have transport from high school and won't be able to make it in time for the project which will mean they will miss out on an activity they have been enjoying for the last two years.*

## **7.21 Evaluation Highlights**

1. Increase in participation rates and the range of activities since the project's inception.
2. Fostered inclusiveness due to availability of activities across a range of sites and over most of the calendar year.
3. Evidence of increased social connectedness among participants and tolerance among children from diverse cultures.
4. Participation fostered an increase in self-discipline, which positively impacted in other areas of young people's lives.

5. Some evidence which indicates a positive correlation between participation in SPAYC and enhanced engagement with academic work and pro social behaviours.
6. Former participants in SPAYC gained paid work as facilitators in the project, training skills and some professional development.
7. Parents perceive their children are safer when attending the activities.
8. Supersessions showcase the project and foster a sense of community connectedness including increased parental involvement.

## **7.22 Continuous Improvement**

1. Provide further training in behaviour management and risk management strategies for young facilitators.
2. Review the process and method of recording attendance data at the sessions.
3. Consider adopting a ratio of adults to participants when conducting certain activities. Some highly subscribed activities may warrant the employment of more than one facilitator or provider.
4. Providers to mentor and monitor the progress of the younger facilitators on a regular basis.
5. Explore opportunities to promote greater overall parental involvement in their child's activities.
6. Explore options for including more recreational activities in the project.
7. Explore options for young people who transition to secondary school so they can continue with their project.

## **8.0 Parks to Clubs**

### **Strengthening Community through Sport**

#### **8.1 Project Proposal**

The introduction of the Parks to Clubs project occurred in conjunction with Cairns Safer Streets receiving state Government funding from 2019 to 2022. Research and project evaluations acknowledging that participation in team sports may divert young people from potential involvement in antisocial or criminal behaviour is the ethos underpinning the project. Furthermore, the project acknowledges that many families in the Cairns West suburbs cannot afford the costs associated with their child/children playing organised team sports.

Parks to Clubs operates at a grass roots level, linking young people to sporting clubs. The participants are aged 8 to 25 years and have an interest in or talent for playing sport. In the first year of the trial, 80 participants across AFL, Rugby League, Soccer and Netball were projected. In the second year, there were 120 participants across an increased range of codes and in the third year, 200 participants across all club sports.

In the trial first year, Cairns Safer Streets partnered with the PCYC Manunda and the Australian Red Cross to support the Parks to Clubs project and in the second and third years, Centacare FNQ Multicultural Services (CMS) became an additional partner.

The documented delivery of Parks to Clubs includes several key factors and milestones. The first year of the trial focused on the development of guidelines and criteria for club and family participation. At the same time, targeted clubs and sporting associations were approached to ascertain their interest in being part of the project. Targeted clubs in the Cairns West location were invited to trial the project's processes and guidelines for club and family participation. Participating clubs engaged in a SPAYC+PLACE induction that included the values and principles underpinning the program and the role of in house mentors. In the second and third years, based on the first year learnings, an open expression of interest process was undertaken. This process devolved into a procurement process for services and providers.

The Parks to Clubs project receives financial support through Family Assist and Club Assist. Eligible young people and their families can access Family Assist funding to help cover the costs of sporting club registration, insurance, clothing, and equipment. Club Assist is a funding source designed to build the capacity of clubs. In-house mentors and building the volunteer and social capacity of a sporting club are examples of funding allocations.

The Parks to Clubs project budget totals \$200,000 to be expended over three years. This equates to 20% of the grant. Family Assist allocates funding to provide financial assistance for young people entering clubs. The projected annual budget allocations are Year 1, Family Assist \$16,000, Club Assist \$24,000, and Partnered Services; Year 2, Family Assist \$24,000, Club Assist \$36,000 and Partnered Services and Year 3, Family Assist \$40,000, Club Assist \$60,000, and Partnered Services.

## 8.2 Findings

The review of available research literature indicated there are several physical, mental and emotional benefits derived through participating in sport and recreational activities for young people. As highlighted, the Parks to Clubs project provides opportunities for some youth in the Cairns West suburbs to participate in a range of activities through membership of a Cairns sporting club. This section of the report provides a summary of outcomes based on the perceptions of providers, young people, and their parents. Collection of data was through individual semi-structured and small focus group interviews over an eighteen month period. The interview data was analysed resulting in the formation of three key themes: physical and social benefits through participation in team sport, positive mentoring experiences, volunteering, and inclusivity. The chapter concludes with a good news story based on the experiences of one young person who participated as a parent and coach within the Parks to Clubs project.

### 8.2.1 Community Providers and Partners

Cairns Safer Streets, Headspace, Harbrow mentoring, the MaraWay Hub, Cairns West State School and CMS, partner the Parks to Clubs project. Meetings to share information and identify improvement occurred bimonthly. Nine clubs facilitated codes in the project, each club having their own partners and sponsors.

Saints Soccer Club is located at Endeavour Park, the home of Cairns Junior Soccer, and provides opportunities for juniors to play soccer in a safe, family friendly and inclusive environment. Support to deliver the project comes from the Cairns African Association, Cairns Bhutanese Community Incorporated, Cairns Member for Parliament Michael Healy (MP), The Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland (ECCG), Trinity Bay State High School and Cairns West State School. A formal partnership with Ronald McDonald House is long standing and six local businesses provide sponsorship.

Aspire to be Deadly, *LIVE WELL, LEARN WELL, LEAD WELL*, is a sport for development project delivered through the Cairns Hockey Association. The project aims to increase awareness, understanding and respect for the culture of First Nations People of Australia, and focuses on education, wellbeing, employment, and leadership opportunities. Using the sport of hockey as a vehicle to drive positive social outcomes, Aspire to be Deadly prioritises capability and capacity building among Indigenous young women and girls.

The North Cairns Tigers Netball Club has approximately 1500 members who train at Watson's Oval in Manunda. The club affiliates with the North Cairns Tigers AFL Club. Platinum, gold, silver, and bronze sponsors assist the clubs along with individual players.

The Phoenix Sports and Culture Club is a not-for-profit organisation with a mission to improve life outcomes of Australians by promoting a healthy and active lifestyle and encouraging sporting participation and community engagement. Six sponsors support the club through a range of packages.

The Cairns Hawks Juniors AFL home ground is Cazaly's Stadium in Westcourt. Eight sponsors support the junior AFL project and its 174 members.

Baseline Tennis Coaching offer both group and private lessons working towards players reaching their tennis potential.

Kangaroos Junior Rugby League Club, located in Mooroolool, strives to provide the highest standards of coaching and support for junior rugby league players of all ages and abilities. Several sponsors provide generous and ongoing support to the club.

Wanderers Rugby Union Club plays under the banner of Cairns RSL Wanderers. The club has a close association with the Cairns RSL, the major sponsor of ten years. The club prides itself on being a long-standing family orientated club with past players and social members maintaining a loyal and involved association.

### **8.2.2 Referrals**

Participants in Parks to Clubs must live in or have a strong connection to the suburbs of Manoora, Manunda, or Mooroolool and must have written parental signed consent to participate. Depending on club offerings, Parks to Clubs teams can be female only, male only or mixed. Participant ages range from 6 to 18 years old. Participants are from several backgrounds, with one code supporting players from 12 differing cultural backgrounds.

Referrals of children and young people to the Parks to Clubs project occurs in a range of ways. One club uses contacts accredited facilitators make in the sporting clinics they offer through SPAYC. Young people identified have a passion for a sport and are actively searching for club competition. Recruitment of potential participants occurs, and club mentors transition the young people from the SPAYC project to the Parks to Clubs project when agreements between clubs and participants are finalised.

In addition to recruiting children participating in the SPAYC project, a second club uses background information of families to identify potential recruits. Other clubs use informal networks such as staff at Cairns West State School, Balaclava State School, and Trinity Bay High School to identify potential players. One club promotes its code with posters and club members visit the parks in the Cairns West suburbs to talk about the project. Another club has members who visit the community to encourage parents to let their children play outside and explain the Parks to Clubs project. In some instances, the young people themselves self-identify by contacting clubs via social media platforms.

### **8.2.3 Funding Support**

The financial contribution for any one recruit in the Parks to Clubs project is \$500 per sporting season. The \$500 is made up of Family Assist funding of \$200.00 and Club Assist funding of \$300.00. At the commencement of the sporting season is a Family Assist payment of \$200. This payment goes towards the cost of club registrations, insurance, uniforms, and equipment. The Club Assist payment of \$300 is paid in two instalments. The first payment of \$200 is paid to the recruit's nominated club after five weeks of continuous engagement. The second payment of \$100 is paid to the club upon completion of the sporting season and when reporting outcomes are met.

All participating clubs spend the monies as per the Parks to Clubs Agreement. In some clubs, corporate sponsors supplement the \$500 with monies and/or items. Most clubs fund raise to offset player expenses. Some clubs actively seek and apply for grants to reduce the costs associated with playing a sport. One club has the financial capacity to fund bus transport twice per week and another provides all players with a free team photo.

### 8.3 Activities

The Parks to Clubs project commenced in November 2019 and ran for the duration of the inaugural funding. The initial offerings were Netball and Aspire to be Deadly Hockey. The second year saw the introduction of soccer, basketball, Oztag, junior AFL, touch football and tennis and in 2021, the inclusion of junior rugby union. In 2022, not all codes continued and/or commenced due to the seasonal nature of some codes and the 6 month timeframe. Code offerings increased 400% over the project. The table below presents an overview of the sporting codes, years of offering, age and/or gender of participants and providers.

Code	Year	Participants	Provider
Netball	2019-2022 Feb-Dec	11 and 12 year-old females	North Cairns Tigers Netball Phoenix Sport and Culture Club
Hockey	2019-2022 Mar-Dec	Male and female	Aspire to be Deadly Hockey
Soccer	2020-2022 Mar-Sept	5-17 years old Male and female	Saints Soccer Club
Basketball	2020-2022 Feb-Sept	Male and Female	Phoenix Sport and Culture Club
Oztag	2020-2021 Feb-Sept	Male and female	Phoenix Sport and Culture Club
Junior AFL	2020-2022 Mar-Sept	6-18 years old Male and female	Cairns Hawks Juniors AFL North Cairns Tigers AFL
Touch Football	2020 Jul-Sept		Phoenix Sport and Culture Club
Tennis	2020-2022 Jan-Dec		Baseline Tennis Coaching
Junior Rugby League	2022 Mar-Aug	Under 8-12 years old Male and female	Kangaroos Junior Rugby League
Junior Rugby Union	2021 Oct-Dec		Wanderers Rugby Union

### 8.3.1 Participants

Parks to Clubs	Number of Participants			
	2019	2020	2021	2022
	(2 seasons)	(2 seasons)	(2 seasons)	(1 season)
	24	95	103	51
	(across 2 codes)	(across 7 codes)	(across 8 codes)	(across 7 codes)

The recording of participant involvement in a code is the responsibility of the provider. Providers used a generic SPAYC+PLACE 'attendance sheet' to record personal details including participant name, age, and gender along with the date the consent form to play is received. Entry of dated attendance occurs weekly. There is provision on the sheet to record numbers of participants, coaches and volunteers per week, and any reportable incidents. As a response to COVID, there is capacity to enter an online activity record. From 2019 to the end of 2021, the Parks to Clubs trial participant numbers grew 77%.

### 8.4 Thematic analysis of Interview Data

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with facilitators, providers and volunteers who interacted with young people across the various activities. The interview data was analysed which produced key themes relating to the perceived benefits to young people as well as some of the challenges associated with conducting activities. A major intent of Parks to Clubs is to provide a pathway for young people to gain the benefits of being part of a team through participation in organised sport. Providers and parents expounded positive long term life changing benefits to young people. An AFL provider stated: "And just my passion for AFL, I just thought, If I get some kids that can play some football and have some team spirit, it might change their lives."

The wide-ranging benefits of the project for a young person included a demonstrated commitment to attending regular training sessions and participating in competitive fixtures over a season. While there were potential physical and social benefits for young people through their participation in team-based sporting activities, there was also a shared view among stakeholders that the project could also be perceived as an intervention, which disrupted a common trajectory of at risk young people interacting with the juvenile justice system:

*I think the project is critical because it gives kids an opportunity and something to do, rather than not, I think. So, youth crime is always an issue up here. You've got to be able to get into the kids before that behaviour starts to come into place. Because once it's happened, and it's a long road, back from there, so it's putting in the positive structures and activities that they can do with positive role models. So some of them are learning off people that aren't necessarily in their family group at the moment. They're not learning positive things. But*

*through sport they meet other people who support them and teach them positive values...*

The providers from the sporting clubs cited that involvement in team sports served to reinforce pro social values such as commitment and respect for others as well as themselves. There was a shared view among providers that when a young person signed for a team there were expectations that they would demonstrate a commitment to support their fellow team members and respect for the club in terms of how they acted both on and off the playing field. The inculcation of positive values such as possessing a respect for the club's volunteer coaches and for the reputation of the club was undertaken informally and regularly through one-on-one conversations with the club's president or coach. One coach surmised:

*I've spoken to them, and said, "This is your club. Wear your dress with pride. Look after your dress. Be respectful of other people – especially Miss..., your coach. She volunteers. I volunteer. When you come here to netball, if you're walking past the rubbish, pick it up and put it in the bin. Listen to what the rules are.*

Engaging young people through consistent messaging about social connectedness values such as supporting fellow team members as well as an allegiance to the club resulted in positive attitudinal changes in some young people. One example cited was a young female who had previously walked out on a netball team when substituted during a game.

*We had one kid that left one day because - there is only seven positions on a netball court, and if there is nine kids they've all got to get a go. So, she left because she got taken off. It was her turn to come off, so she left.*

*...this young lady, the one that took off, half-way through. She's now, when she comes, she asks if she can help, "Can I go and get the balls? Can I put the goal post pads on?" She's very loud, very vocal – very athletic, too. She now has a little bit more respect, a bit more self-esteem as well.*

Her positive shift in attitude and commitment led to an increase in self-esteem and a willingness to assist with team members in tasks such as setting up equipment prior to the start of a game as a contributing club member.

Other codes reinforced the importance of good sportsmanship both on and off the field. There are reports of young people feeling angry after experiencing a loss during a game. Club coaches took these opportunities to debrief players about the importance of participation rather than winning. Encouraging appropriate behaviour among players was reinforced by what was described as alternative or "replacement behaviours" which were reinforced through an allegiance to symbols such as club colours and how behaviours reflected on the reputation of the club:

*There's always challenges. I mean, anytime you have such a wide mix of individuals there's always challenges. We put a lot of work in at the start on expectations, and what is required, what the bigger picture is. So, this isn't just about us now mucking around and playing at a local park. This is now you are*



*part of something bigger and you're now representing the shirt that you're wearing and a lot of people in Cairns are going to be taking note of that. What are the behaviours that we expect? We have had to do a lot of that work at the start. Where required we use cultural type mentors to overcome language barriers. Some behaviours are frustration about anger and getting beaten. So, it's about teaching replacement behaviours.*

Most clubs outlined their expectations about appropriate behaviour and commitment in a more formalised context such as asking new recruits to sign a contract which explained the club's expectations for young people and what young people expected of themselves when signing up for the team. One club initiated a system whereby young people were invited to identify how they felt when they arrived at a training session. If they registered that they were not feeling well or were dealing with issues such as trauma or anxiety, they were assigned to a club mentor who would take them outside for a walk to discuss their feelings. If this method was not effective in assisting the young person to resolve their personal issues, arrangements to transport them back to their homes via the team bus occurred.

A majority of providers shared the belief that while sport had obvious physical benefits for the individual, it had more far-reaching advantages in producing positive social outcomes and enhancing the wellbeing for youth through their exposure to sporting activities. For example, a provider from Cairns Hockey observed that when young people entered hockey in the SPAYC project, the description of the focus was on developing a 'play culture'. The skills of hockey were taught but more of a focus was on assisting young people to learn about their body in terms of how it works or when it is not working to its capacity. The club undertook a process titled "self-identification", providing young people with the tools to identify how they are feeling, what they are feeling and where they can turn. This was considered an integral objective of the project.

*So our focus is on living well, learning well and leading well. So hockey is just simply the vehicle that drives those positive social outcomes to change behaviour, to learn how to be your best self or whatever. And that's why I suppose, like everything in this space the collaborations are so important because we can put a lot of things together but then we need someone who understands the space but drives some wellbeing projects.*

There is little quantitative data over the three-year duration that provides evidence that young people have increased physical fitness or better health outcomes due to their participation in the Parks to Clubs project. There is anecdotal evidence from the interview data that suggests some young people have increased their physical fitness while others have accrued other benefits such as improved self-esteem, a greater focus on education, and an increase in social networks due to their participation.

The quantitative data relating to improved fitness and health is from a survey conducted with 131 young people. While the survey did not specifically focus on individual projects, 90% of young people agreed with the statement: "I now feel fitter and stronger after participating in SPAYC+PLACE activities." Interview data from one parent of an African male reveals some positive physical and resultant social impacts on his son due to his inclusion in the soccer activity. The parent reported that his son had lost weight, increased

his self-esteem, was now producing higher grades at school and demonstrated a positive outlook to life since his commencement in the project:

*There is even the health perspective. My son was only 9 years old and weighed 37kgs. Then after he joined Saints Soccer club his BMI is now 22. And before he was on 29. He lost a lot of weight and he's very happy now. Before he was very angry at home. Now he's the most behaved kid in my home. His grades were low, very low, 40% but now 70%. He now has lots of friends has also learnt more English which has given him a social connection.*

An interview with an AFL provider demonstrated how an immersion in sport and interactions with other young people had a positive outcome in increasing the self-esteem of a formerly shy Aboriginal male due his success in winning a premiership in his first AFL season.

*When he first started playing – He was an ex-rugby league player, and then we recruited him because the league wasn't happening last year because of COVID. When he started, he was very shy. He wouldn't talk to anyone. By end of year, he had won a grand final and won a premiership. He had the biggest smile and just talking to everybody. From a shy kid to what he was at the end of the year, it was amazing. It was amazing, the transformation, the self-esteem, and the ability to go from feeling worthless, to feeling like you've just won a grand final and you were a part of a team and feeling like 100%, just feeling great.*

Interviews and anecdotal conversations with players, providers and parents highlight that there are other observable positive changes to young people's attitudes towards education and improved relationships with their parents. Parents of young people reported that their children had developed a focus and structure to their day in terms of allocating set times for studying, attending school and sports training. One young person was able to explain the structure of his weekday routine, which revolved around his membership of the basketball team:

*We have school time and basketball training time. We train sometimes at night time or afternoons. We start five to six. We still have a time to learn, and we have a fitness too. When we get home we eat, we start learning about tomorrow, about school and go to bed and get up early next day ready for school...*

Parents highlighted that their children had developed a more positive outlook in terms of their school attendance, which had resulted in several young people improving their academic grades. There is no longitudinal data within the scope of this evaluation which shows a definitive link between an involvement in sport to a resultant improvement in academic grades. However, cases were identified in the interviews with young African refugees. Some youth identified a marked improvement in English proficiency due to increased social interactions with non-African young people within the team sports. One parent observed their son's positive academic progress:

*So he's now got very good school reports and his other sons have been improving as well because of the sports opportunity. By mixing with others their*

*English is improved and now they learn more words so they mingle with other kids, and they can now communicate better.*

Another parent cited an increase in their son's productivity through turning his attention away from long periods playing X-box games and now focusing on gaining acceptance into a representative rugby team: *"He used to drift around by spending time with the games and other things which are not productive for him. Now he's productive with this project and he is now focused on getting into the rugby rep team as a future goal."*

Interview data strongly suggests that one of the biggest advantages of the Parks to Clubs project is that it increased social connectivity among young people and their parents with other people beyond the Cairns West suburbs. This was particularly evident when speaking to members of the African community who had gained membership of the Saints Soccer Club. There were numerous accounts about how young people's world views and experiences had been expanded due to increased social interactions both on and off the field with other young people who also participate in the 'world game' of soccer:

*Before the (African) kids never mix with other kids. Now they are in the soccer club now they have friends. They have increased social interaction because they have friends. They have developed strong relationships and because of that they are now confident. They are so confident now to go out and speak to other kids..... You see now because of the project they join it has attracted them towards soccer. Every day when they open the TV they are putting on soccer activities, like the sports project. Before they were being immersed into the tv games and other stuff, but now they watch soccer shows from across the world.*

It was also perceived by parents that young people's involvement in sporting clubs assisted in the process of integration into mainstream society, particularly for newly arrived African refugees, *"When the kids play in the soccer club it brings them friendship and brotherhood with other kids from another state in Africa or from a different nationality. The sport breaks down those bridges so as a result they grow close and make more friends"*.

Young people's participation in organised sporting teams also had the added advantage of increasing social connectedness among other members of the family. There were numerous accounts where younger siblings attended training sessions and weekend fixtures along with their parents to observe their older brother or sister participating. The experience as a spectator often encouraged younger siblings to seek membership into the project. A soccer coach recalls:

*Last year I had so many players, because they saw their brothers or their cousins play, then they come up and say, 'Mister, can I join?' So it was the roll-on effect. And I go, No worries. Go and see .... recruiter', or I would say, 'Give me your email or something that I can send these through'. Most times, they'd go back to the recruiter. So if the recruiter was, say, 16, and his cousin who was 13 wanted to join, then that's the roll-on effect of last year. It was a lot of kids would sit there and watch their siblings or cousins or whatever, and they'd go, 'Oh, I wouldn't mind doing that...And that's when I'd go, Well, you can. You live in Manoora'. That's why I keep on saying, if you live in the three M's, you can play football.*

Providers and volunteers play a key role in mentoring experiences for young people when they enlist in team sports offered through Parks to Clubs. Interview data gleaned from providers and volunteers highlighted an over-arching belief that while sport provides young people with opportunities to gain skills and increase health and wellbeing outcomes, it also provided opportunities for mentors to develop strong relationships with young people as a means of fostering youth into positive future pathways: *“Yeah, I want to stop them from going down bad paths, bringing them into associations, being part of a team culture, that family the environment where they can be leaders and build friends and relationships outside of their current networks”*.

In a similar vein to other projects within SPAYC+PLACE, there are examples of formal/traditional as well as informal/incidental approaches to mentoring which occur among the clubs. An example of a structured formal mentoring approach occurs within Aspire Hockey which provides opportunities within the afterschool SPAYC project and the Parks to Clubs project. The club provided an extensive training program to mentors enabling them to gain credentials in the Certificate IV in Community Recreation and Fitness. Mentors were financially supported by the club to complete the courses. In addition, prospective mentors attend a two-day workshop and received training in dealing with difficult behaviours through short courses offered by specialist teachers. The provider of the hockey activity offered a rationale for equipping their mentors with these skills and knowledge:

*Yes. We provide Certificate IV in Community Fitness – no Community Recreation and Fitness. So it's two, I think. This is so they understand – we get them to understand what things about the fitness, the physicality and then community recreation which is more understanding how to deliver out a project in that space. And then we add that with some specific sports skills, so they do their hockey skills so they're familiar with it. And then we add two or three plays – you know the play – the Hockey Australia, not Hockey Australia, the Sport Oz. You know when you play - So then they do that. We then do Play by the Rules. They do all of the Play by the Rules, so the problem solving, the conflict resolution. They do all of that and then they have first aid, CPR as well as they do a leadership – we do a leadership two-day workshop every year. And then we have the kids from – sorry we have the teachers or the specialised teachers from the schools doing every six months how to do some dealing with at risk kids.*

The club invested in mentors by encouraging them to undertake further study to improve future opportunities. The four existing mentors are currently enrolled in TAFE courses such as Certificate III in Business and Certificate IV in Business Leadership while another young female has plans to enrol in nursing at university. Each of the mentors worked with young people from the Parks to Clubs project supervising activities within the hub on Wednesday afternoons while others assisted in the classrooms at Cairns West State School.

Aspire Hockey's mentoring approach has been extended by creating an additional tier of support through what they term as the ambassadors project. Ambassadors consist of four former female mentors from the club who were participants in the SPAYC project before transitioning into the Parks to Clubs project. Since then, each young person has made successful transitions to professions such as fashion, education, and medicine.

Ambassadors are committed to sharing their experiences with the younger hockey participants through forms of social media such as weekly blogs as well as returning to Cairns several times a year to inspire young hockey participants to focus on future pathways, which may potentially lead to improved opportunities:

*We have four mentors at the moment, and we have two that are – we call ambassadors that have gone out of the – and they've got careers of their own now: one's a fashion model in Sydney, got a contract with ING; another is a doctor – we've got three, another's a doctor, went through university, doctor at – she's at Mt Isa now. And the third one is finishing her teacher's aide credentials and she'll – I think she's gone to Sydney because her partner is in the navy and that's where the base is in Sydney. So they do blogs. So they do blogs and every Tuesday and Saturday or Wednesday when the kids are here, depending on when they come, they'll either come up three or four times a year or we put the television on and they show what they're doing.*

Mentoring is also provided incidentally by coaches, providers and young people who volunteer to coach the sporting teams. Saints Soccer Club has provided opportunities to utilise the time before and after training to address issues and encourage discussion about social and personal issues, which may be confronting young people in their daily lives. The soccer club has invited guest speakers to talk about mental health, sexual health, educational pathways, obtaining a drivers' licence and the safety issues associated with social media use:

*The big one we had a couple of weeks ago which was very popular and the kids, a lot of questions got asked was around – so, we had one around internet safety and social media. That created a stir. Yeah, and they just don't understand. They have no concept of what is private and what isn't and who is out there and who is trying to get your details. And yeah, that was an eye opener for them all.*

Paying former Parks to Clubs players to enrol in coaching courses in the soccer club has provided positive opportunities for younger people to develop close relationships with coaches. This resulted in breaking down some of the barriers to integration experienced by many former African refugees. Some of the African coaches gained experiences in the SPAYC project before transitioning into Parks to Clubs. In other cases, some of the parents have gained coaching qualifications. This encouraged other parents to attend games to watch their children play:

*What we've been able to do is get some of the parents involved. That's been critical to it as well. I can't take on 50 or 60 kids from all parts of the world and then not – expect it all just to work without some sort of assistance. So, we've got, now, two dedicated coaches who are from African descent who speak language. We've also got two or three of the local older kids who keep coming down and assisting. We've put three of those guys through coaching courses now. Through Junior courses. A couple through referee courses now, too. So, they assist us through all these processes.*

All the mentors interviewed cited that they had a duty of care in protecting the mental and physical wellbeing of the young people who often came from disadvantaged

backgrounds. Establishing strong relationships over time was central to building trust and learning about some of the challenges facing young people. One of the mentors described how he developed trusting relationships with young basketball players by sharing stories about his own life growing up as a young person in Cairns West. Another mentor always started a training session with a check in session to identify if a young person was encountering any negative issues at home or school:

*I'd sit with them and just chat and see if there were any problems or anything happening and if everything was good or, "Why weren't you at training"? If no one was at training I would go up and say, "hey what's going on? You got a problem at home you can't go to training?" So, I think the communication between myself and the other three committee members who are on the Parks to Clubs is good. We all make sure that these fourteen felt like they were at home here and felt safe, felt like it was a second home. So, every time they come here, they always meet and greet me and say, 'Hello how are you?'*

The role of providers, coaches and parents who gave their time to support young people so they could participate in the various team-based sports is largely under-reported. The interview narratives contain many anecdotal accounts of people who willingly provided in-kind support at their own expense and time to ensure that the disadvantaged young people in the Parks to Clubs project were able to participate in their chosen sporting activities. It could be argued that these extra forms of in-kind support supplemented the financial assistance offered to clubs from CSS to ensure young people from disadvantaged backgrounds were included in clubs as explained by one provider:

*This is, obviously, not just our sport, but a lot of junior sports now becoming completely unaffordable for people who are in tough situations. If you're from a refugee background, or you have parents who may not work or you're from a disadvantaged background, Junior sports, are almost unachievable for anybody. Fees for our game are close to \$300 and that's without buying your own boots, or shin pads, or shorts, all those things that you need. So, without Parks to Clubs, the kids that we've been able to support through the project wouldn't be able to do it.*

In addition to cost, a potential barrier to participation in the project related to a lack of transport. This prevented some young people from attending training sessions and participating in weekly competitive fixtures. Clubs were aware that some families did not own a car or could not afford the cost of petrol to run a vehicle. In other cases, there was a perception from volunteers that some parents had little interest in whether their child was in an organised sporting team while others were happy to allow their children walk to training venues providing, they were near their homes. Clubs responded to this problem in different ways. For example, young people in the hockey activity, were transported by a club bus to attend training at the Cairns Hockey Association grounds. An executive from the hockey association explained that transportation depended on a fulfilment of club criteria tied to 90% minimum school attendance, exhibiting good behaviour and regularly attending training sessions:

*We provide transport of up to 20 kids on the bus as part of the Parks to Clubs project. But we have some expectations on who gets on the bus such as they*

*have to be in grade 4 before they can get on the bus. Also, to get on the bus, they must have a minimum 90% attendance rate everywhere for example at school, during activities and good behaviour. The school provides us with attendance data.*

The provision of a bus to transport participants as well as parents to sporting venues was a suggestion in a focus group interview including soccer parents and a provider from AFL:

*But if the club can have a bus where they can take kids, many kids will join. But most of them, they are locked inside where they cannot access that means of transport. And if that can happen, having funding for bus, if the club has a bus, many parents would join too. Most of them, they don't have licence so they are staying home because how can I go?*

Other providers described their duty of care to young people to ensure that young people arrived safely at home after training or games. It was a common practice for coaches to use their private vehicles to take young people home after parents failed to arrive on time or return at the end of the session as expressed by one rugby parent/coach:

*There are a lot that don't, they just drop off. Our team staff have all got blue cards, so there's three or four team staff per team that take care of the kids; and there's always – there's kids that are left behind after games. Parents, they've dropped the kids off to the game and they've gone, and then they come back and they're late, or for whatever reasons. We make sure that the kids are all taken care of by the team staff. And quite often, in most teams there is – the manager or the coach will be picking up and dropping off kids before games and before training as well.*

Several providers and club volunteers expressed their concerns about the personal safety of young people walking home after training sessions. As a duty of care, many providers resorted to offering young people transport in their private vehicles to ensure the participants arrived home safely:

*You've got to understand, when they walk from here to home – That's the scary part in my eyes, is that they've got to walk from here to home. If they're in their little group, I'm not worried. But I worry about when they go to then – And then, you've got to the park down here, and then you have other groups hanging around. That's when I get worried. And that's why I keep on saying, 'It's all right if you go in your group. But if you're going by yourself, I'd rather you just jump in my car and I'd just go and drop you off. Or you go into someone – get a lift home'. There was plenty of times last year while I was training, I said, 'Look, I have a big car. Jump in my car. Where is your home?' I would never go to the front door. I'd just drop them off, make sure they're walked in, and then go – and then, I'd drop someone else off.*

All club providers gave accounts of how they provided other forms of in-kind support. For example, netballers were provided with after school care after being transported from school to the netball courts. They were also given a light meal before they played their Tuesday night fixture. At the end of games, the club president collected playing uniforms and washed them in preparation for the following weeks' game:

*Yes. And with that, when I picked them up in the bus, I'd take them straight from school, because that was the best way to get them there. And then I'd go – and Cairns Netball let us use their meeting room. So, I'd have sandwiches, fruit, and whatever, and some drinks and that for them. Yes. So, a bit of after school care. And then we – because it was a long time before they played. Then they would do – they would have their training beforehand with the coach. And then they would play their game. So, we supplied the uniforms. I took them home and washed them, so that we made sure we kept them. And that they had them, game day. The following year we didn't have as many kids, but I picked up a number of them.*

In addition to seasonal playing fees, costs were incurred for the purchase of playing attire such as sporting uniforms, footwear, and mouthguards that in some cases amounted to well over the standard \$500 given to clubs through the Parks to Clubs project. There were accounts from club officials where their clubs provided extra support to participants to ensure they felt included as a valued team member. For example, the AFL club Cairns Hawks, provided new recruits with a training package consisting of boots, socks, shorts, and singlets:

*I think it's because of the Cairns Hawks. We treat them very well. The main thing you've got to understand is, when they're recruited and then they come to the club, I make them feel special. So I normally have a Christmas bag, has a brand-new pair of boots, there are three pairs of shorts, three pairs of socks, polo shirt, free. And that's their, perhaps, welcome, 'Welcome to the club'. So before they even get onto training, they have a package...*

*...So if I know what the size of their boots are, I'll go and buy the boots. I then give them the pair of boots, give them a pair of Hawks socks, Hawks shorts, which is worth – The boots are normally over \$100, the shorts and socks are about \$40, the polo's about \$30. It's all about building a sense of belonging to the club and young ones feeling they look like the other team members.*

There were examples whereby clubs offered other forms of in-kind support such as waiving playing fees that were above the \$500 limit offered to each young person sponsored through Parks to Clubs. Providers rationalised that if young people showed a commitment to training as well as the potential to advance into higher levels of their sport they should be supported. The tennis provider is one example whereby the club provided additional financial support for two promising Indigenous sisters who displayed exceptional talent in gaining selection in the Far North Queensland championships:

*We do a lot of offers anyway to include these kids into the tennis club, so we'll give all the kids a free racket anyway and a free T-shirt. They get a really nice hotshot tshirt, so they'll get that anyway, so that takes away that obstacle. But most of it generally goes towards their coaching fees, but their coaching fees will come to - I mean if they do once a week, that'd be \$600 a year, so we just take \$500. We don't charge the kids...My God, there's some families, the family has two daughters who are part of a lovely family. Their kids are playing two or three times a week. Their invoice potentially, over a year, would be around*



*\$4,000 and we're getting \$2,000. And we just waive the other two, we waived the other two last year. They didn't pay a bean, the family.*

There were other examples which highlight the degree of extra support clubs were willing to give to ensure young people from disadvantaged backgrounds were included in organised team sports. An interview with the provider from junior rugby league highlighted an example of how one female coach assisted a young male to attend a representative carnival in another city by providing him with personal transport and financial assistance so he could attend the sporting event:

*He's in Under 11s, actually, so let's give him as an example. He's needed additional support in that – he's the one that I mentioned that had been having troubles at home with this particular one, and I asked the manager to give him extra special attention, which just meant making sure he was there at the game; that he was applauded; that he was involved. They actually went away to a carnival, and she went out of her way to make sure that he had extra money to spend, made sure that he was okay. He had to go down with the coach, so his transport and everything was taken care of for the whole weekend. And he was taken care of by the team.*

Perhaps one of the strongest examples of inclusivity in Parks to Clubs is contained in the narratives from the interviews with providers, parents and participants highlighting the positive outcomes for young females who were chosen to participate in the project and in some cases have gone on to represent their region and state. The increased participation of young African females in the Saints Soccer Club is an example of how sport has empowered youth by providing them with opportunities to break out of traditional gender roles where females were excluded from participating in sporting activities in their former countries. In focus group interviews parents reflected that in many African countries, females were expected to undertake traditional domestic roles and were discouraged from participating in sporting activities. Parents identified that since arriving in Australia, their daughters had opportunities to participate in a range of educational, sporting, and recreational activities, which had expanded their world view and increased their life chances:

*We are very happy and glad to be in this place where we are where the kids like our girls are being allowed to go and join with other kids and play soccer outside. It shows that our kids now have been given the freedom to do things that we could not allow them to do before just because of the culture where we grow up. But now there is a massive change in our girls. They can choose now what they want to do.*

The limited opportunities for females to participate in sports compared to males in African society supports the parental perceptions as surmised in an individual interview with one young female soccer player:

*No, I start to play soccer here because in Africa, it was don't have opportunity to play soccer. I was like to play soccer, but I couldn't play soccer, yeah. Because I used to help my mum to do jobs at home, I can't find time to go to play soccer, but I was like to play soccer. Yeah, it was girls can stay home to help your mum, but boys can play, soccer, basketball, like that.*

Additional positive life impacts due to their inclusion in competitive soccer resulted in an increase in self-esteem and greater connectivity with the wider community. Obtaining a drivers' licence and employment are two examples of increased social connectivity among the female cohort. As cited by one provider, *"I guess for the girls it's the confidence they now have... We're seeing some of them getting their driver's licences and getting jobs. I think all of the projects working together has had that positive impact"*.

Opportunities to participate in organised team sports through Parks to Clubs has resulted in young people gaining selection into a range of representative sporting teams. Some of these young people started their journey in activities within the SPAYC project when they were in primary school before transitioning into Parks to Clubs. The mother of one young female athlete cited that the family would not have been able to afford the high cost associated with participating in a representative netball team.

*Our daughter would never have been involved in the netball rep teams because my family simply could not afford these costs. The help our family has received from the netball club has helped her to participate in the Cairns representative netball team. Now she wants to make all the rep teams that she can qualify for until there's no more rep teams, and like, just try to get into a feeding team for, like, to play for, like, big squads, like the Firebirds in - and Lightning.*

Another inspirational story involved a 12 year old Indigenous female from a single parent family who was supported to join the Cairns Hawks netball club. The young person, who had no prior experience in playing netball, was upgraded into the Under 14 competition due to her skills and fitness. In addition, she gained selection in the regional school representative team and was later included in the state schoolgirls representative team. The club supported her financially and encouraged her to take on a refereeing role during the competitive season.

Despite these success stories, various members of the sporting codes identified challenges encouraging more parental involvement in their children's sporting activities. As in the previous discussion, there was widespread recognition that a lack of transport presented a barrier to attending sporting events for some parents. Other perceived barriers included a lack of self-esteem among some parents due to their ethnicity and dress as identified by one African parent:

*The biggest barrier for many African parents is related to a low self-esteem. They probably aren't comfortable going out into a much bigger environment where there's tonnes of other people that they're not going to know. They're going to be dressed in all their African clothes, or whatever and it's – they're going to stand out. So, I understand that but we're slowly getting better.*

Other codes such as rugby league have encouraged parental involvement by asking for assistance as volunteer coaches.

*Well, he was involved; he actually home schools his children. So, when he mentioned the Parks to Clubs to me and he brought his kids along, I'm like, "Yes, we're happy to fund your kids though this Parks to Clubs, and we'll do this; in*

*return, we are desperate for coaches, so can you do that for us?" And he took that up.*

In comparison, Aspire Hockey adopted a pro-active strategy, which increased parental involvement within the association. In acknowledgment of the high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the club, the association hosted open days that coincided with important Indigenous cultural days. For example, the club hosted cultural days during the National Under 18 State Championships, during Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC week and another cultural day which included a well-known Aboriginal Dancing Group. Parents volunteered to assist with preparing traditional food during these events while also taking the opportunity to watch games and interact with other parents.

The numerous examples of goodwill and forms of in-kind support by volunteers, parents, and providers from the various sporting clubs no doubt made a major contribution to the success of the Parks to Clubs project. It could be argued that without these forms of support some of the young people from disadvantaged social backgrounds may not have been able to access the opportunities and obvious advantages of being included in an organised team sport with a recognised club. While all the volunteers interviewed supported the project, some clubs with minimal volunteer support expressed a need for assistance with recruiting young people.

Some of the volunteers stated that they did not have the time to venture into the community or attend the supersessions to recruit participants due to multiple commitments within their clubs. For example, one parent volunteer described having the roles of club president while coaching junior teams as well as attending his son's games, which prevented him from pursuing other tasks such as the recruitment of Parks to Clubs players:

*I'd like the Cairns Safer Streets people to recruit a little bit more, if they can. There's plenty of kids out there with skills in basketball and everything like that. I would love to have more kids this year, and that's the aim for next year. I'd like to see more. This year, it seemed to be all up to me, and I don't have the time to go down to the parks to recruit. I don't have the time on the weekends, I've got so much to do on a Saturday and Sunday, and I was told I'll go down to their activities on a Sunday. That's my own day off, and I don't have it. 'The recruiters are supposed to be doing this'. They did it last year. In the start of the season – and I'm sure, the other clubs – we've got to get all the kids signed on, then we've got to get everything registered. Then, we've got to get the teams organised and nominated and everything, then get the fixture going. By the time that happens, the season's starting, and that's when I'm getting a phone call saying, 'Oh, how many you got?' And I'm going, 'Well, I haven't had the chance to even move'.*

Other providers cited that recruitment of potential participants could be improved if there were designated people such as school Chaplains or other volunteers in the schools who could identify interested young people and then sign them up. This would reduce the onus on providers to undertake recruitment tasks:

*Yes, there is scope for that. I'd like to think that I could have a goal of maybe 25. Again, if you had one person looking after this, and they could do a better job at it, actually mention it to – contact the schools in the local area and let them know this is what we're looking for, and that sort of thing. That's how I'd imagine it would run, because there's certainly – the school chaplains is probably where I'd go to, in an ideal world. And they're going, 'You want to play AFL? You've got the Hawks, you're closer to the Hawks. Here, here's some paperwork'. Fill them out, get their phone numbers, chase up on them, say, 'Hey, I give you that paperwork. What's going on?' Then, once that's done, get them down to me, introduce them to me, and I get them into their team. And then, from then, we have that routine.*

Volunteers and providers cited that the process of registration could be simplified in terms of having additional support for volunteers to ensure consent forms were returned and that surveys were reviewed to ensure young people understood the questions:

*I think the survey you've got to do with the kids is Dumb...Well, they give you a survey to fill in before you get your final, all your payments. It was last year, or so. And it was, "How do you feel? How does a 12 year old feel? They don't know. Did you like playing well, I would rather say, "Did you like playing this sport, or would you rather go and play another sport? If so, what sport would you like to play?" ...So, the wording of the survey could be improved. I think it's a little bit deep for 10 to 12 year old, 14 year old kids.*

Another provider added that, a more simplified process for registering online as well as a common format for recording attendance and behaviour. This would assist providers who were very busy fulfilling multiple roles in clubs:

*Yes, another survey. And then I was supposed to encourage all the participants to complete the survey and that sort of thing. I'm like, "It's hard enough trying to get them to register online". It's not a great deal of administration, but certainly you need to have some, because they need to be accountable for whether these kids are turning up and doing the training. And I have evidence of that as well. But yes, the least administration, the better. If they could administrate it themselves.*

There were also shared views among providers and volunteers that additional outreach support could be provided to assist clubs to track young people who exited the club before the end of the season. Volunteers cited that they did not have the time to visit young people and their families to identify the reasons for the young person's exit from the code. The lack of follow through on exiting players was perceived as a waste of money and time which otherwise may have been given to another potential participant:

*On the initial intake, we've committed to these seven kids, they (CSS) gave us \$200 per child to cover their registration fees. And I also gave them some vouchers to a local sports company to get their boots and socks, which cost more than what the \$200 was. However, it was on the hope that we would – once they'd attended training for five weeks, that we would get then an additional \$500 per participant. So, of those participants, there was one that didn't complete the five weeks. So, that's five weeks of training and game*

*attendance which was wasted. If someone had the time to find out why the young person left, we may have persuaded him to return so the money was not wasted.*

There was consensus among the interview cohort that the recruitment of young people and parental support would improve if CSS increased visibility in the Cairns West community through a more comprehensive marketing strategy to raise the profile of the project. One suggestion was that members of the CSS working group make regular appearances at the various club venues. Another idea was to find alternative forms of marketing and communication to inform parents and young people about the project:

*Just turn up and say g'day to the kids, take some photos. He did come to the Club, when he introduced that particular family; he came with a teacher, actually. He's a very good administrator. When that happened – and I guess COVID may be a bit of a challenge with that as well, but just getting a representative from Parks to Clubs to come to the Club and be visible there once in a while, once a month, something like that would increase the line of sight of the project...*

### **8.5 Good News Story: Dedan's Story**

*"This project is fantastic. It is breaking down the barriers",* Dedan (the soccer dad)

Dedan arrived in Cairns in 2010 aged 31 after being granted a humanitarian visa. He fled his native country Rwanda due to political persecution by the military junta. Upon arriving in Cairns, Dedan was assisted by the Centacare service in Manoora to find temporary accommodation as well as his first employment opportunity as a part-time cleaner. In 2011, he married, and the couple moved into what is still the family home. The couple now have four young children who attend school in a nearby suburb. He reflects on his early days in his new country:

*It was very hard. New person new place. Where you don't know anyone. It was hard to establish myself. But luckily when I got there, we had CENTACARE Migrant Services to help.*

Dedan recalled integration into the Cairns community was marred by his lack of proficiency with English and that his previous university qualification obtained in his native country was not recognised in Australia. His entrepreneurial skills and determination assisted him to form his own cleaning company. At the same time, he enrolled in a bridging course at James Cook University and through encouragement from one of his tutors enrolled in the Bachelor of Nursing course a year later before graduating in 2016. *When I went to James Cook University, I met one wonderful teacher. One tutor. "He encouraged me. My passion was to work in the community. To help the community. I said I'm going to do nursing".*

Four years later Dedan was offered permanent employment as a nurse with Queensland Health.

From experience, Dedan was aware of the difficulties encountered by other recently arrived groups from Africa, Nepal, and Bhutan in the Cairns West area. He noted that many arrivals suffered from mental health conditions due to the traumas they had

encountered in their former country. As a response, Dedan founded his own NDIS Company, which focuses on assisting his seventy-two clients to access mainstream health services, keep medical appointments and undertake everyday activities such as shopping for food or clothing. Dedan indicated that ensuring newly arrived immigrants were socially connected through their involvement in activities and services was key to ensuring that they successfully integrate into the community.

*They have to be qualified as a disabled person. As someone who cannot do certain activities. So, what we do we employ a support worker who can assist them to go shopping or to do recreational activities. Or assist them to access a medical appointment.*

In his spare time, Dedan was committed to continuing his passion for soccer. Prior to coming to Australia, he played for Rwanda. His expertise in the world game was a catalyst for his involvement in the Saints Junior Soccer club as a parent of one of the players, and, later as a member of the club's coaching staff.

Dedan's connections within the African community placed him in a position to take an additional role as a recruiter identifying young people who had an interest in soccer and suitable candidates for entry into the Parks to Clubs project. He stated that initially he encountered a reticence among some of the parents to allow their children to play with the Saints club. In other cases, he had to overcome traditional views that females should stay in the family home and perform domestic duties rather than joining sporting teams: *"Yeah, girls are seen as domestic in their homeland. They are not involved with the boy. But now, we just go and talk to the parent and show them good things we are doing outside with the soccer. Now there are many girls coming out"*.

He cited how the club has supported the formation of female as well as mixed gender teams consisting of young people from diverse cultures within Cairns West.

After persuading parents about the benefits of being involved in sport, Dedan voluntarily provided a transport service to ensure young people attended the twice-weekly training sessions and the game on Saturday at the nearby soccer fields. A perceived benefit of providing transport was that it allowed Dedan to informally mentor young people about the value of staying engaged in education and focusing on their physical fitness through maintaining a healthy diet. He recalled a conversation with an adolescent who was inspired to work hard with his education due to hearing Dedan's success story upon arriving in Cairns.

*I mentor and teach them. "Look let me tell you one good story". One of the children from Nepal asked me; "How did you come to be a nurse?" I want to be a nurse because I can see what you are doing, and I want to help other people." I said, "You just come, I'll show you what to do."*

Dedan identified the positive cognitive and physical changes experienced by young people including his own son due to their involvement in the Parks to Clubs project.

*This project is fantastic. I'll even go to my children before they would come from school and play games on the computer. When I heard about the project I said, "yes, let's go out come home from school, go to the park and play*

soccer". This has helped the whole community now. We say to the parents; "Let your kid go out and have a social interaction with other kids outside the school."

The positive impacts of the project were highlighted with reference to his son's cognitive and physical growth over a two-year period. Before joining the project his son rarely went outside the family home, preferring to spend time using social media to connect with people or play games. Dedan expressed his concerns about his son's anger and hostility towards his parents when they suggested that he should participate in some form of physical activity. In addition, his son's school grades had plummeted which indicated he was at risk of disengaging from education. Dedan was concerned about his son's lack of motivation, general unhappiness, and anger which was a major factor for encouraging him to join the Saints Soccer under nine team.

After signing to Parks to Clubs, Dedan saw positive changes in his son. His physical fitness and health improved after joining the club two years ago. Emotionally his son was happier and was more cooperative and respectful towards his parents. Additionally, his social connections expanded to include new friends with African and non-African peers.

*It's wonderful. I'm telling you especially for these kids from Africa or from a refugee background. When they come here, for that time when they cannot speak English, but the more they go out and meet other kids it gives them better English and closer social connection*

Dedan is a fervent supporter of the Parks to Clubs concept which has created new opportunities for under-privileged young people to participate in club sport. He acknowledges that most of the youth in the project would never have had the opportunity to play club sport due to the expense associated with registration fees and other items such as soccer boots, socks and shorts. Dedan cited two examples of a young female and a male who had both reached representative level in the senior ranks of the game after gaining the opportunity to enroll in the Parks to Clubs project.

Recently his role has been extended to co-coaching one of the teams due to the encouragement of the club president. This has inspired five other parents from the African community to show an interest in gaining coaching qualifications as well. Dedan would like to see more parents become involved in the sport and admits it has been difficult to encourage parents to attend the training sessions and Saturday matches to support their child. He does see some encouraging signs with more parents now providing transport for their children to attend the training sessions but admits it would be great to see more people. "Before, no parents ever come to the games. They had no interest to come here to the ground. But now more are coming. Yes, I pick up kids and then if there is space parents will come too. Or they will come with other parents too".

The other challenge presented to Dedan is finding additional places for young people who want to enrol in Parks to Clubs. This is difficult due to the quotas that have been placed on the numbers of youth who can gain places in the club. However, Dedan is optimistic that the numbers of young people will increase as soccer continues as a favoured sport by so many young people.

*For me what I do is just go and spread the word into the community and say, "look bring your child so they can join in with other kids. There's a project that can help them." We know that things like sports helps with cognition development, social development and if you have that, it's fantastic for kids.*

## **8.6 Evaluation Highlights**

1. Financial assistance to clubs enabled over 273 disadvantaged youth to participate in organised team sports.
2. Several young people re-engaged with education due to their participation in the project.
3. Evidence indicates that many young people experienced an increase in self-esteem, positive social values, and improved physical fitness.
4. Due to their participation in the Parks to Clubs project, several young people gained selection in representative teams at regional and state levels.
5. An increase in social connectivity with other young people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds outside of the Cairns West area was evident.
6. Volunteers and providers established strong, positive relationships with young people through formal and informal mentoring.
7. All clubs offered in-kind support, thus maximising inclusion of young people in the project.
8. Inclusive practices led to increased levels of participation among cohorts such as young African females, Indigenous youth, and parents.

## **8.7 Continuous Improvement**

1. Identify strategies targeted at increasing parental involvement in their child's sporting activities.
2. Explore transport options to assist some young people and parents to attend training and competitive fixtures.
3. Build on the capability and capacity of clubs to undertake recruitment, registration, and surveying of participants.
4. Identify appropriate human resources to follow through on participants who exit the project before the end of the season.
5. Identify appropriate human resources to assist in the identification and recruitment of potential participants.
6. Explore marketing opportunities to promote community awareness of Parks to Clubs.



## **9. SPAYC Cadets**

### **Leadership and Mentoring**

#### **9.1 Project Proposal**

The 2019 proposal states the SPAYC Cadet project was developed under the logic that sport and recreational activities are contributing factors that assist in addressing the challenges of youth crime, boredom, and antisocial behaviour. Additionally, it has the potential to reduce the risk of reoffending by creating alternative pathways. These pathways enable young people to reach their potential while empowering them to take ownership and ultimately contribute in a positive way to their communities. The aim of the project is to increase the future opportunities of participants through access to education, training, and employment opportunities.

SPAYC Cadets is a leadership development project, which strives to improve the life skills of young people through three key pillars: Leadership, Mentoring, and Sport. The Cadets are aged from 15 to 25 years and supported by mentors throughout the project. They are encouraged to assume leadership roles and assigned to assistant/youth mentor roles to support SPAYC service delivery and activities. The cadets link to high risk young people aged 10 to 14 years to provide peer-to-peer support.

Cairns Safer Streets partner with PCYC, ARC and CMS to support the SPAYC Cadets project. Additionally, several community providers and services support the project. A procurement process for services and providers was undertaken. Tenders for Expressions of Interest were called and a panel of providers who had the capability to meet and deliver the project was established. Service contracts are entered with work orders raised for delivery of specific services.

The SPAYC Cadets project budget totals \$120,000 expended over three years and equates to 12% of the overall SPAYC+PLACE grant. The projected annual budget allocations are Year 1, Personal and Mentoring Development \$10,000, Professional Development Program Design \$14,000, and Partnered Services; Year 2, Personal and Mentoring Development \$18,000; Professional development Delivery \$30,000; and Partnered services and Year 3, Personal and Mentoring Development \$18,000; Professional development Delivery \$30,000; Partnered services; Purchased Services \$17,000, and Partnered Services.

#### **9.2 Findings**

Individual semi-structured interviews with the working group representative from the Cairns Safer Streets project team, the founding director and operations manager of Harbrow Mentoring, several young participants, a key mentor/role model and the referrals were the focus of the qualitative data collected for the SPAYC Cadets project. In addition, the evaluation team observed a focus group interview with former participants. Quantitative data in the form of exit surveys from most of the cohorts as well as participation rates for each cohort was analysed as part of the evaluation. A profile of the journey undertaken by one successful Indigenous female is included as a good news story.

### 9.2.1 Referrals

Potential SPAYC Cadets either self-refer or are put forward by a range of agencies or organisations. Harbrow Mentoring receives referrals, via word of mouth or through a written referral form, for young people who exhibit the potential for inclusion in SPAYC Cadets. The written referral form includes the young person's details, learning status, interest areas, consent information, referee details and the reason for referral. The reason for referral includes a subjective recommendation about the young person's potential to complete the six month project.

Providers in SPAYC+PLACE, Harbrow Mentoring staff and the teacher in charge of the Department of Languages and English at Trinity Bay High School in West Cairns have the capacity to refer potential Cadets. A teacher at the Trinity Bay High School works primarily with young people from refugee backgrounds. While integrating into the Cairns community, they are facing challenges such as learning English and participating in local sporting and recreational activities as highlighted in this observation:

*So, if I think of the challenges linking into sporting activities. So, for me, many, many years ago, I'm talking about this historically, I would personally go and I would take students because it was too intimidating for them to go and sign up at the soccer club. Many of our students wanted to play soccer for example, or basketball. So, I would take them to Edge Hill State, the Tigers, and try and do all the paperwork and try and get all of that happening.*

The experiences of an Ethiopian youth who had expressed an interest in seeking a teacher's aide position at the school reflects how potential candidates may gain selection through an informal or related process. The teacher recommended the young person for inclusion in the project based on an informal conversation about his long-term goals. He gained acceptance into the project through a written referral from the teacher at Trinity Bay High School, "At the time when I was trying to get hired as a teacher aide, which is at the start of this year, so I've talked to her. And then she mentioned I had to just give my phone number and name. And what I had to do was get a referral. And then I got a referral."

Also considered for inclusion in the project, are young, vulnerable people at risk of disengaging from school or engaging in antisocial or criminal behaviour. Facilitators or providers of projects offered in SPAYC identify some young people. One facilitator describes assistance from Harbrow Mentoring to include a young, Indigenous female disengaging from school:

*Janet was on the verge of being kicked out of school. She was caring for her mother, and we knew it, but the school wasn't across it. So, we went into bat for her before she got kicked out and missed graduation. So, the school said we are going to keep her in here. She got her certificate and graduated and went to the school formal dinner. She was going to school every day while working with Harbrow Mentoring as well. The following year in her gap year, she enrolled in SPAYC Cadets.*

Another mode of attracting potential recruits is through informal family networks and exposure to celebration activities. The Foundation Director cited several examples

whereby younger siblings gained inspiration by observing their older siblings receive recognition for their achievements at the formal graduation sessions:

*Last intake we had some young people, and now this intake it's their siblings. Siblings get involved due to seeing older ones succeeding... His brother came and watched him graduate and then did the project the next intake. That was really cool. We've had that happen a couple of times.*

Collated referrals undergo a selection process by staff at Harbrow mentoring who identify a maximum of 15 candidates based on their perceived potential to complete the project. A consultative screening process, including an online survey and an information session provides the opportunity for potential Cadets to meet other potential Cadets. At the same time, they meet some of the project's mentors and learn about structure and content of the project. During the information sessions, the SPAYC Cadets Founding Director reminded young people of the need to commit to the project in terms of regular attendance at the weekly sessions as well as the requirement to complete the essential online courses, which enables them to apply for paid positions as facilitators in the SPAYC+PLACE program:

*For this newest intake we made them meet us halfway and we were straight up about that at the information session. We're not here to hand you everything on a platter. We are actually getting them to do everything that an approved facilitator under SPAYC+PLACE has to have to deliver a program. They have to have their first aid, CPR and a blue card. They have to do the community coaching general principles online course including the play by the rules protection course and attend the induction. This all goes on their resume, and they do 10 hours of community volunteering before they graduate.*

The founding director stressed that consideration of the participant's leadership potential and the likelihood of how their future opportunities would improve through exposure to a mentor was a determinant:

*Cadets only take 15 young people at a time as this project requires one on one mentoring. In a nutshell we are building their resumes. The ones who are referred are not the school captains or in school councils. They are the next tier down but show some leadership potential. Its 15-25 year olds so some are still school aged.*

An analysis of quantitative data indicates that young people from the SPAYC+ project account for 53% of SPAYC Cadets participants. The perception is that they have the potential or readiness to assume a leadership role.

*I mean, for SPAYC Cadets, it's not going to be all SPAYC+ coming through, because some of them in SPAYC+ they're too at risk. They still need that intensive level of mentoring, but there are definitely ones that we've identified who have been coming along to SPAYC+ and like, "Okay, you're ready now for SPAYC Cadets." So, it's a bit of a mixture. You get ones that are really at risk, and they really need that intensive support, or those ones that are like, "Okay,*

you've benefited from the support, you're ready for that next level of leadership and mentoring."

Discussions with youth not accepted into the project occurs and alternatives are suggested.

### 9.2.3 Community Providers and Partners

Offering support to the project is a cohort of community partners including Queensland Police Services and the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy (DATSIP). Queensland Health support identified youth through the Headspace service. Over the four intakes, 24 representatives of projects, organisations and events have supported the SPAYC Cadets project by providing community-volunteering placements. As shown in the table below 70% of placements are with providers procured through the SPAYC project. Organisations and events each account for 15% of placements.

Intake				Community Volunteering
1	2	3	4	
<b>SPAYC+PLACE Program</b>				
5		3		SPAYC - Supersession assistance and planning
5	8	8		SPAYC - project delivery assistance
3	1	1	1	SPAYC - Ebor competition
		1		SPAYC - School holiday planning
			12	SPAYC - Cairns Youth Week Ultimate games night
2	1	3		SPAYC - Dees Department, Grooming and Self Care - <i>Strong Families Project and Fitness activity</i>
1				Parks 2 Clubs - Saints Soccer Club soccer coaching
	1			Parks 2 Clubs - Kangaroos Rugby League Club girl's junior team assistant
			4	Parks 2 Clubs - Manunda Hawks Football Club canteen
	2			SPAYC + - Fishing activity
<b>Organisations</b>				
		1		PCYC Edmonton - <i>Drop In Activity</i>
2				Department of Housing - letter box drops
			10	Cairns African Association - Cairns African Festival
		1		Harbrow Mentoring - graduation planning
	1			Chamber of Commerce – meeting participant
<b>Events</b>				
			8	Eco Fiesta project – display creations
2				Mooroobool Community - clean-up day
	1			Indigenous Round Table - participant/representative
	1			Harmony Day Event - volunteer
		1		Cairns Festival Parade - Mooroobool multi-cultural float
		1		Outreach Sports Gordonvale - rugby league carnival

## 9.4 Attendance

SPAYC Cadets is currently in its fourth iteration. The first intake in June 2020 consisted of 38 youth referred through the Trinity Bay State High School. After a screening process, 16 potential cadets attended an information session. Of the 16 potential cadets, 13 committed to the project. The second intake received 32 referrals from several agencies and organisations including Trinity Bay State High School, Centacare, Harbrow Mentoring, Phoenix Sports and Culture Club and Cairns Safer Streets. Eighteen potential cadets attended an information session and completed an online intake survey as part of the screening process to select the 15 cadets. Intake three of the project included 15 participants and the current project, Intake 4, has 15 participants. The operations manager observed that the majority of young people across all intakes were in the 18-25 year age bracket as it was likely that younger people would be enrolled in school and potentially have less disposable time to participate in the SPAYC Cadets project.

*SPAYC Cadets is currently in its fourth intake. The first intake we had too many referrals with 38 young people which we had to cut to 15. We had to cut out the younger ones who were 15 as we needed a balance of older ones in the 18-20 bracket. So, the ones who never made the first intake were younger and who still have the potential to make future intakes.*

The table below reflects participation numbers over the four intakes. A highlight of the SPAYC Cadets project is that every young person in each of the four intakes has successfully completed the six month course, the only exception being a young person from intake one who left Cairns to reside in Sydney.

SPAYC Cadets	Number of Participants			
	2019 (Intake 1)	2020 (Intake 2)	2021 (Intake 3)	2022 (Intake 4)
	13	15	15	15

## 9.5 Framework

Delivery of the project, whereby cadets identify and understand their leadership style and learn what it takes to become a leader in a chosen field, occurs in three stages over six months. Mentors, role models and activity providers supervise and train the cadets.

**Stage 1 Become a Leader:** This consists of eight weekly leadership themed sessions delivered over 2.5 hours. In these sessions, exploration of such topics as growth mindset, mental health and wellbeing and communication and presentation occurs. Social interaction among participants occurs at the commencement of each session over dinner. The final session in this stage requires cadets to set goals and map strategies for goal achievement against their chosen pathway. The founding director describes how this stage of the project focuses on assisting young people aspire to future career goals by linking them with industry-based mentors. He cited the case where the organisation acquired the services of a lawyer who volunteered to speak to the cohort during the first phase of the project. This presentation inspired a young Indigenous female to enrol in a law degree after completing SPAYC Cadets:

*Stage 1 is about intensive mentoring and leadership development. They are at the office from 5.30-7.30 pm every Wednesday night. They are given dinner by 6.00pm and we get industry professionals to come in. One of the things they do is close your eyes and lick your fingers. When you open your eyes what would you want to be? And that's one of their goals their big dream. Rosie said she wanted to become a criminal lawyer, so we brought in a renowned criminal lawyer and sat him in front of her. Here you go talk to him and find out from him how hard it was and how long it took to be a lawyer, so it's not sugar coated. She was inspired even more. We've had engineers, professional sporting coaches so we get in real people. Even the financial controller for the Novotel Hotel came in because someone wanted to deal with finance.*

**Stage 2 Get the Skills:** This stage focuses on cadets being matched with an industry mentor based on their perceived career goals documented in the intake survey. The role of the mentor is to assist the cadet to remain focused on their goals, and assist, where appropriate, in forming linkages with relevant people and organisations who may be able to provide further training and development and/or employment opportunities including small business development. The mentor also supports the cadet to complete a minimum of 10 hours community volunteering.

The *Get the Skills* stage schedules weekly activities over eight weeks with social nights, held fortnightly and skills nights held on alternate fortnights. The social nights include a meal, games, and opportunities to share progress and challenges in a supportive setting among familiar people. Cadets connect through a private Facebook group linked to the Cairns Safer Streets Facebook page. A computer lab is the venue for the skills nights attended by the cadet with their mentor. Cadets are required to complete *Community Coaching General Principles* and *Play by the Rules Child Protection*, two courses which are offered online. Attendance at a two hour SPAYC+PLACE induction session is also a requirement. Additionally, support is available to Cadets to obtain their Working with Children Blue Card and First Aid Certificate including CPR, and refine their resumes as surmised by the foundation director:

*So, in this stage every second Wednesday night is a social night. So, we go from real structure to "ok let's learn about each other on a more personal and social level now. But in between that we are going have you got your blue card, your L's, how many hours have you done towards your licence? We link them into Job-link which counts towards their work experience hours. So, they are getting skills and building their resume at this stage.*

**Stage 3 Steps to Success:** The final stage of the project is scheduled over two weeks. The first session, *Stepping Up*, enables the sharing of successes such as certificates, qualifications, licences, tickets, and work experience. Resumes are individualised and financial independence including how to budget money is discussed. The second session, *Stepping Out*, is an invitation to friends, family members, mentors, and dignitaries to attend a Graduation Ceremony to witness the Graduates presented with their certificates and to share in the successes of the cadets:

*The final stage is heading towards graduation and exiting the project, so we are hoping they have some sort of work experience even through volunteering*

*for a minimum of 10 hrs. So, we try and link them into the SPAYC+PLACE project for volunteering. So, we are breeding our own crop and then we won't have to look for service providers.*

## **9.6 Mentoring**

A major focus of Harbrow Mentoring is developing the full potential of participants through a guided mentoring framework. In an interview with the foundation director, there was a discussion about what he perceived to be the major factors that contribute to a successful mentoring experience for the mentor and mentee. He identified that mentoring consisted of forming a close relationship through one person supporting another person over time. In addition, he cited that the organisation relied on connecting young people to mentors based on their aspirations and needs at the time and that there was a point whereby the relationship ended.

As they progress through the three phases of the six-month SPAYC Cadets project, the mentoring philosophy is contextualised and adapted to meet the individual needs of young people. In each of these phases, exposure of young people to a range of mentoring experiences from staff within Harbrow Mentoring as well as community people and organisations such as Industry Mentors, Role Model/Providers and Community Volunteer Mentors occurs.

Upon entering SPAYC Cadets, one of the first activities of new participants is the collection and recording of a range of data, which enables Harbrow Mentoring staff to provide individualised support to cadets as well as identifying their aspirations in terms of future pathways. At intake, the collection of information around contact details, current commitments, communication, connectivity, community volunteering, career pathways, wellbeing, skills, and qualifications occurs. Personal details include date of birth, a physical address, phone number, and email address. Current commitments include whether the cadet is attending school, and if yes, the year level of study, and if no, the highest level of study. Further, collection of information about commitments that may influence participation in the project occurs. Examples include employment, sports training, and family commitments. Information gathered around communication includes whether the cadet has transport to and from the sessions, days for individual mentoring sessions, timeframes including morning or afternoon for individual mentoring sessions or community volunteering, and the most appropriate means of keeping in regular contact. For example, a phone call, text message or email. Information provided around connectivity includes whether a Cadet has access to a laptop, tablet or iPad, Wi Fi, and a mobile phone.

*The collation of this data about each young person provides staff to begin conversations with young people about possible career or training goals with a view of connecting them with suitable mentors. One activity towards this goal is to ask young people to close their eyes, click their fingers and to identify their 'dream job'. They are then asked to write a list of the three types of employment or training they would aspire to when completing the cadets project.*

The organisation attempts to identify suitable community based mentors for each mentee. The role of community based mentors is to provide young people with real life experiences

under the guidance of people employed within an array of industries in Cairns. The founding director of the organisation stated that:

*Young people have the opportunity to complete their ten hours of voluntary service with a mentor in an industry in which they may want to work in the future. So, if a young person wants to be a mechanic, we try to link him or her up with a mechanic.*

He provided the caveat that it was not always possible to find mentors who directly mirrored the aspirations of the mentee and conceded that even at the conclusion of the project some young people were undecided about their future work or training destinations.

An analysis of quantitative data provided by the organisation underlines the challenges of matching a young person who has a specific career goal directly with a community volunteer mentor who works in the same field. For example, except for 11 cadets from intakes 2 and 3, each cadet identified a career goal or aspiration. The existing data on the table below indicates the matching of five cadets to mentors who work in the field of their goal or aspiration. Direct matches occurred when an aspirational professional soccer coach was linked to Saints Soccer Club, an aspirational professional rugby league player was matched to the Kangaroos Rugby League Club, an aspirational movie video Director gained work experience in the End Credits Film Club, an aspirational events manager was linked to a Harmony Day Events Committee member and an aspirational beauty therapist to Dee's Department, Grooming and Self Care.

Intake	Goal/Aspirations	No. Cadets	Mentor(s)
1	Accountant	1	Nil
2		1	Nil
1	Construction industry	3	Nil
2		3	Harbrow Mentoring; Dee's Department, Grooming and Self Care
3		1	Harbrow Mentoring
1	Engineer-Information Technology	1	Nil
1	Clinical Nurse	2	Nil
3		1	Harbrow Mentoring
1	Sports Administration	1	Nil
1	Pro Soccer Coach/Architect	1	Saints Soccer Club
1	General Practitioner	1	Nil
1	Criminal Lawyer	1	Harbrow Mentoring; NAYTIVE Mentorship
1	Business Administration	1	Dee's Department, Grooming and Self Care



Intake	Goal/Aspirations	No. Cadets	Mentor(s)
2	Truck Driver	2	Harbrow Mentoring; Dee's Department, Grooming and Self Care
2	Undecided	4	Harbrow Mentoring; Cristian Calderon
3		7	Harbrow Mentoring; Dee's Department, Grooming and Self Care
2	Pro NRL Player	1	Kangaroos Rugby League Club, Harmony Day Events Committee member
2	Not Identified	1	Cristian Calderon
2	Music Video Director	1	Harbrow Mentoring, NAYTIVE Mentorship, End Credits Film Club
2	Events Manager	1	Harbrow Mentoring, Harmony Day Events committee member
3	Aged Care Worker	1	Dee's Department, Grooming and Self Care
3	Tourism and Hospitality	1	Harbrow Mentoring
3	Youth Worker	1	Harbrow Mentoring; Cairns Safer Streets
3	Car Mechanic	1	Harbrow Mentoring
3	Beauty Therapist	1	Harbrow Mentoring; Dee's Department, Grooming and Self Care
3	Child Care Worker	1	Harbrow Mentoring

In addition to providing youth with experiences through volunteer mentoring in the community, SPAYC Cadets also gained insights into the world of work through exposure to a range of industry mentors. The industry mentor component of the project occurred in the first eight weeks whereby professionals from the Cairns community gave candid inspirational talks to the group about how they entered their profession, some of the challenges, as well the highlights and successes they encountered in their job. The table below lists the speakers across the first four cohorts of the project.

Organisation/Individual	Topic
Cairns Reef Casino	Moving up the ladder
	Growing up in different countries, a career journey
Ex NRL Player	Life journey, career pathway, NRL career, struggles growing up, dealing with mental health
Lawyer	Life journey, career path, staying true to goals
Centacare	Volunteer opportunity – community festival
National Joblink	Hospitality industry, having the right attitude and giving new things a go
Dee's Department, Grooming and Self Care	Presentation, communication, staying true to your values and hard work
Cairns Taipans	

Organisation/Individual	Topic
Headspace	Mental and physical health and wellbeing, services Head Space offers
Youth Group Leader	Self-development and growth, finding your values
Teacher	Career journey, staying passionate and trying new things
FNQ Hooked	Career pathways, business owner, going for your dream, sticking it out through the hard parts
Deputy Principal	Working with children and child safety training
Dingo Fitness and Tropic Nutrition	Being a business owner, career journey, importance of looking after the body and mind
Autopride Car Detailing and Mechanic	Career journey, life as a business owner, continuing to learn and grow
National Joblink	Qualities and values of a good employee, what employers look for, working as a team
National Joblink	Adventure based learning day – activities to promote good teamwork and problem solving
National Joblink	Understanding leadership and how to become a successful community leader
Ex AFL Player	Making it to the highest level, staying grounded, pushing yourself and working on the little things
Ex SPAYC Cadet	How SPAYC Cadets has helped with confidence and making the most of opportunities
Volunteer	Eco festival project – making a coral display from recycled rubbish
Novotel Hotel	Financial controller – the financial arm to running a hotel
Registered Nurse	Discussed her career pathway

Young people interviewed stated that presentations from industry mentors ranging through elite sports people, lawyers and chief executive officers of business corporations were inspirational in assisting them to project themselves into future career goals as observed by one male:

*I really liked listening to this lawyer and his life experiences. He came last year, and he was in the same situation as me. He finished Grade 12, he had to do – take two years' gap before he studied law. And he was doing the same job as me. Last year I was doing construction, labouring. And then I was like, "yeah, this is inspiring." And then he pretty much went to university and then became this big lawyer like someone you can look up to and respect.*

An Indigenous female highlighted how she was inspired to enter the legal profession after listening to a presentation by a successful Aboriginal lawyer based in Cairns. The lawyer had previously worked with Aboriginal communities on landmark land rights cases:

*Yeah, well when I started the SPAYC Cadets, we had like a business session, where we dressed up to be dressed like we were going for an interview, and they brought in businesspeople, like accountants, lawyers, nurses, doctors, all*

*that sort of stuff. And I got to meet the lawyer, he was Aboriginal too himself. And he came in and I just asked him a couple of questions...*

Another stated advantage of the industry mentor sessions is their perception as opportunities to expand young people's professional networks and possible employment options:

*Through my mentor I met a lot of different people in high levels for example the mayor, politicians, and business owners. I have a hope to get a good job if I can get uni qualifications and then stay in touch with some of these people. It may open a door to a new opportunity for me.*

The third major form of mentoring within the project describes role models/providers. According to the founding director, this category encompasses service providers within the project, Harbrow Mentoring staff, as well as people from the community who may provide opportunities for young people. One example of a role model cited by the founding director, describes how a local environmental group invited the cadets to participate in an environmental recycling event. The experience of working with the environmental group produced a positive impact among the cadets by making them more aware of the environment and the benefits of recycling materials.

In other cases, individuals from the Cairns community have had positive impacts as role models in the lives of young people. One example is a local Indigenous businessperson who has worked with youth across three of the intakes. She describes her commitment to the project as a mentor and role model:

*Well, the thing is in the project, they don't ask you to be a mentor. It's kind of automatic. You just feel as though that you need to put the extra time in and support these young people because they have that hunger to want to develop and grow and do new things, and we're all excited about that. Putting forward that role as a mentor is important, for me it's important as a businessperson, but also as the role model and mother figure and all those sorts of areas that kids look up to.*

Several mentors shared the view that young people required a realistic plan to achieve their career goals. In most cases young people did not have the immediate academic qualifications to enter a university degree project so mentors provided a graduated pathway consisting of a series of steps which could potentially lead the young person to achieve their ultimate career goals. For example, one mentor shared the story whereby her Indigenous mentee aspired to entering nursing. As a response, the mentor initially introduced the young mentee to professionals in the health industry through her networks and then they collaboratively mapped a realistic pathway that would lead the youth to obtaining entry into a university nursing course:

*Long story short, this young lady is in her second year of the school-based traineeship with them as a nurse, or assistant, with the Far North Queensland Health Services (FNQH), yeah, and loving it. I spoke to her about that, and then after when she finishes high school she wants to go to uni, so I explained to her, because I also have worked for TAFE for 19 years, and in there I was managing Indigenous primary health. That's why I know about the different levels, and*

*also managed North Queensland and Far North Queensland Blue Care for the intake of assistant nurses and nurses and things like that. That's why I explained to her, let's do your school-based traineeship, look about, look at your Cert III, so she's doing Cert III in Health at school, how to change her studies.... As a nurse. Yeah, Cert III and then go onto Cert IV. I said, use them as a steppingstone so you go towards your Diploma, because you don't want to spend a lot of money going straight to that area and then you find it so difficult. Ease her into it. They're the type of things that a lot of young people need...*

In other cases, effective mentoring outcomes have resulted when local business entrepreneurs have utilised their networks in the local business community to match several young people with industries that align with their career aspirations:

*A couple of girls, one wanted to be a model, so I got her a modelling contract as well as a chance to model at the Wedding Expo. Just giving them genuine support and making sure they are placed into areas that they want to go into, so they are not feeling forced to go into areas or even getting trained for things that they do not want to do.*

Another mentor agreed that her reputation in the local business community made it relatively easy for her to place aspiring young people into fields where they had an interest as in this account:

*Because I have already had many years of working in the industries like that, and it makes it easier with my connections, because I've built that rapport and that relationship and reputation over the years. That's why, for somebody new comes in and say, look, you take this person on, or whatever, would be most likely different to me coming in and saying, hi, you know, can you take this person on? Because they've already known what I've been doing and done, without even my say so it's already out there in the world.*

The businessperson cited that each young person should have a viable transition plan before completing SPAYC Cadets. She observed that not all graduates such as those who enrolled at school had firm career aspirations by the time they graduated. This indicated the need for additional pathways upon completion of SPAYC Cadets. She provided an example of a project she established whereby young female graduates from SPAYC Cadets were able to transition to a work experience project while still studying at school:

*It would be good to be able to support the ones who could potentially come across to my project and progress them. That way I could nurture them ... and then the young person could transition from one project to another while still studying. Because their headspace can only take so much when they are at high school, and they are thinking about having to get a job or study ... so they need someone to ease them in.*

It is apparent that within the SPAYC Cadets project mentoring is currently identified and analysed under the categories of: Community/Volunteer, Industry, and Role Model/Provider Mentors. However, the use of the term becomes unclear when analysing how specific skill-based activities are recorded.

An interrogation of the data sets indicate that the term mentoring is often used as a catch all term which encompasses a plethora of other skill-based training activities such as completing the necessary hours to obtain a driver's licence or writing resumes. A further example is the recording of other activities such as community volunteering hours under the term mentoring. For example, data records of what each young person has completed within the course indicates the interchangeable usage of the terms, mentor, provider, and trainer. Mentors/trainers/providers describe and record sessions against seven differing categories: community volunteering, training, driving hours, mentoring session, workshop/information session, meeting/connecting with support services or industry contacts and the facilitator connecting with support services or industry contacts on behalf of cadets. A summary of the activities appears in the table below:

Category of Session	Activity/Task Undertaken
Community Volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertaking activities in the SPAYC+PLACE program; supporting the rugby league coach; participating in the Cairns Council Youth Forum</li> </ul>
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitating accredited activities including First Aid and/CPR training, refresher training and Youth Mental Health First Aid.</li> <li>• Assisting with Blue card, Medicare, and Prep L applications</li> <li>• Transporting participants to First Aid training.</li> </ul>
Driving Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assisting cadets undertake accredited driving hours</li> <li>• Assisting with the driver's licence written test.</li> </ul>
Mentoring Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HM staff facilitating individual mentoring sessions. Tasks undertaken include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ resume, cover letter and job application assistance.</li> <li>○ the completion of consent forms for National Joblink</li> <li>○ Tax File number application assistance</li> <li>○ assistance to open a Transport and Main Roads online account</li> <li>○ support to better understand questions for assessment in a TAFE course</li> <li>○ support to use a scanner and printer</li> <li>○ activity support</li> <li>○ support to apply for the Cairns City Council youth week concert as an artist</li> <li>○ support to create an email account</li> <li>○ transportation to get a driver's licence contacting Cadets via phone, email or one-one meets to check in</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Category of Session	Activity/Task Undertaken
Workshop/Information Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPAYC+PLACE induction</li> </ul>
Meeting/connecting with support services or industry contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of transport to and from home to training location for first aid course attendees</li> <li>• Connecting with the Back to Work activity by assisting with the online application, applying for an ABN and explaining the purpose of an invoice</li> <li>• Provision of transport and connection to Dee's Department and Grooming for volunteer hours</li> <li>• Organising driving lessons</li> <li>• Assistance with certified course options</li> <li>• Assistance with traineeship paperwork.</li> </ul>
Facilitator connecting with support services or industry contacts on behalf of cadets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting attendance at the Back to Work initiative meeting looking at eligibility and incentives</li> </ul>

There is little doubt that the various forms of mentoring have positively influenced the lives of many young people who have completed SPAYC Cadets. Young people who had successfully completed SPAYC Cadets participated in one of seven semi-structured interviews. The interviews focused on gaining the young people's perceptions about their experiences in the project in terms of employment and training outcomes, and the impacts of mentoring in increasing young people's sense of wellbeing and connectivity to their communities. Additional data from a small focus group session with six graduates from the first intake provided the opportunity to reflect on the impacts of the project in terms of their professional and personal growth. Other than anecdotal evidence based on conversations with former graduates there is little other data available about their destinations in terms of employment, education, or training outcomes. This data would assist in providing a more comprehensive analysis of the longer term outcomes of the SPAYC Cadets project.

### 9.7 Positive Outcomes of the Project

Interviews and surveys conducted with participants who graduated from SPAYC Cadets indicate perceived positive outcomes in terms of personal growth and enhanced opportunities for finding paid employment or pathways into training or further education. However, it is difficult to generalise participant outcomes across the four cohorts, due to the dearth of data about the post-project destinations of each young person.

An analysis of available survey responses across the four cohorts indicated that most young people experienced an increase in self-confidence and better communication skills, due to their involvement in the project. Internal surveys indicate that most graduates in intakes two and three expressed having increased self-confidence and felt that they possessed better communication skills which could assist them in finding employment opportunities after completing SPAYC Cadets.

In addition, most young people indicated an increased sense of social connectivity with their families and community through very high numbers of positive responses to the questions; how connected to your family do you feel? and Do you feel included in your community? Participants in the individual and focus group interviews share similar views. For one female, the project increased her self-esteem and confidence when stating; *"I was shy at the start but now I am better at communicating"*. By comparison, a young male cited that he felt more confident in socially interacting with other people. *"Yeah. I feel like I'm more confident. I would say I'm more relaxed, like meeting different types of people."*

Another female perceived that her increase in confidence was a significant factor contributing to her gaining paid employment at a retail outlet in Cairns. *"I managed to get a job. The interview was successful 'cause I was more confident than before. Now I can really talk and explain myself to people."*

It is also worth noting that a small number of youths cited that their involvement in SPAYC Cadets assisted them to become reflexive in developing altruistic goals for assisting their families and communities. For example, an Indigenous female stated that the project afforded the opportunity to do some common good and, *"give back something to my family and community"*. Her male counterpart from the first cohort of cadets stated that the project enabled him to obtain leadership skills, which had the potential for helping other young people in his Indigenous community. *"Well, I liked everything about it. Just being the leader and that role model, I guess inspired me to want to be more of a role model to my community, and especially to the younger generation."*

Another graduate stated that the project had increased her self-esteem to the extent that she now had the confidence to demonstrate her skills as a dancer in public events such as NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) week celebrations.

*Well, I do cultural dancing with the dance group. But I've been dancing, doing cultural dancing since I was seven years old. But now I have the confidence to do performances all around Cairns, or NAIDOC weeks, or any days, anytime basically. And I do cultural dancing, I do contemporary dancing as well, and I went over to America for that.*

The SPAYC Cadets project would benefit from a follow up data collection process, which tracked young people when they had completed the project. The founding director acknowledges this data would be useful to measure long term impact of the project and that due to funding limitations, this was not possible at the time. However, he did identify existing forms of formal as well as anecdotal data, which provided some indication of the positive impacts of mentoring on young people. For example, exit surveys conducted by the organisation show positive comments by most youth while the formal graduation ceremony highlights the individual achievements of each young person over the duration of the project. A focus group with five of the first intake students provided a partial snapshot of post project destinations. Informal anecdotal accounts based on staff meeting former students undertaking paid work in restaurants or bars are another indicator that some of the young people have moved onto forms of paid work since graduating.

Workshops and skill building sessions provide learning opportunities for cadets. An advanced professional development project enables cadets to enrol in bridging courses

or upskill for further study. Enrolment in accredited educational pathways is available to some participants. Cadets are provided with capability building opportunities including sports coaching, project development, health and wellbeing challenges, mental health strategies, working with at risk young people and child safety information.

An analysis of survey exit data shows that the project is individualised with staff and mentors working closely with young people to develop career goals and identify the key skills and achievements required to obtain their goals. The table below maps the key achievements obtained by the participants under three categories namely; work preparedness, gaining certifications, and employment outcomes. The table indicates that besides an increase in confidence and better communication skills, completing driving hours and participating in driving lessons were the most subscribed activities in the work preparedness category.

By comparison, most participants gained certification in First Aid, CPR, child protection and community coaching courses as part of the certification category. Due to the dearth of data, it is unclear about the outcomes of the project when considering the actual numbers of youth who found paid employment because of their participation in the project. Data in the table indicates there are 18 youth in the paid employment category. It is unknown if employment occurred at the commencement of, or during participation in the project or whether they found employment after completing SPAYC Cadets.

### 9.7.1 Participant Achievements

Achievements	NUMBER OF CADETS			
	Intake 1 (12 Profiles)	Intake 2 (14 Profiles)	Intake 3 (15 Profiles)	Intake 4 (15 Profiles)
<b>Work Preparedness</b>				
Birth Certificate	2			
Working with Children Blue Card	5	1	13	10
National Police Check	1			
Graduated Year 12	3			
Resume and Cover Letter			6	
Job application			11	
Australian Business Number			1	
DATSIP Youth Empowerment application	1			
Driving Hours	6	5		1
Driver's Licence – L Plates	4	6	2	5
Driving Lessons	9	5	10	9
Developed clear communication skills		9	6	9
Gained high levels of self confidence		12	14	13
<b>Certification</b>				
Certificate: First Aid	11	5	12	2



Achievements	NUMBER OF CADETS			
	Intake 1 (12 Profiles)	Intake 2 (14 Profiles)	Intake 3 (15 Profiles)	Intake 4 (15 Profiles)
Certificate: CPR	11	5	12	2
Certificate: CPR Refresher			1	2
Certificate: Youth Mental Health First Aide Certificate			1	
Certificate: Child Protection, Play by the Rules	11	11	2	
Certificate: Community Coaching, General Principles	11	11	14	14
Certificate: Community Coaching Course-Tennis	1 enrolled			
Certificate: Junior Soccer Coaching	1			
Certificate I in Construction		2		
Certificate III in Main Roads and Mining		2		
Responsible Service of Alcohol				2
<b>Employment</b>				
Paid Employment	8	5	5	4
Unpaid Employment: Guests Talks with Young People			1	
Unpaid Employment: Mentoring Young Children			2	
Unpaid Employment: Assisted in the establishment of the Mooroolbool Group	1			
Your Entrepreneurship Project (YEP) connection	1			
School Based Traineeship				1
Traineeship (other)				1

Participant surveys and individual interviews highlighted that most young people held positive views about the skills and achievements.

Interviews with SPAYC Cadet graduates highlight several pathways that potentially led to some form of paid employment. SPAYC Cadet graduates, are encouraged and supported to establish themselves as paid facilitators in the SPAYC+PLACE program. For example, several young people described how their volunteering experiences as SPAYC Cadets led to paid employment opportunities as facilitators in the SPAYC+PLACE program. Young people described their sense of satisfaction in utilising the mentoring and leadership skills gleaned from SPAYC Cadets to nurture and pass on skills to children who participated in the SPAYC after school activities:

*Yeah. Working with younger kids more, and especially now with teenagers now I'm working with, just getting to know what they like and what they don't like, and just building more relationships. Yeah, I would speak to them and let them know my story, and how this program helped me throughout my lifetime.*

Another male cited that an added advantage of the facilitation role in the SPAYC+PLACE program was gaining regular paid employment over most of the calendar year.

*I used to be in the parks programs a few years ago and did things like Oztag. Now I do some of the mentoring where me and one of the mentors just pick up kids and take them to do programs and run activities. I get paid \$20 a session and do 5 hours a week.... We do gym and boxing activities in one of the parks.*

In the case of one African graduate who gained employment in SPAYC as a basketball and soccer facilitator:

*Some have gone onto become facilitators after graduating from the project. One of them just turned 18 and finished school last year and he has been supporting Phoenix Sports and Culture Club to deliver basketball on a Friday at Shang Park with some guidance from the provider. He's already getting paid and we are linking him up with another provider so he gets industry mentoring as well. Another young African is a facilitator with the Cairns African Association, and he runs soccer from Cairns West State School on Tuesday.*

As highlighted in a discussion with one young soccer enthusiast, an added cited advantage of gaining paid employment in the project for some youth was that they delivered sporting activities that were congruent with their own recreational interests.

*And then we were just having a car ride from soccer, and then he was talking about, "we have an opportunity from SPAYC for kids, to provide soccer." And then they were having a conversation, and my friend, [Yo], he mentioned my name to him. I was like, "yeah!" And at that time I didn't really have a job, and – plus, soccer is a passion. I want to do, and I want the young people to learn in my community. So, I was like, "yeah, why not take it and see – explore the opportunity?" And I continued after that until now.*

When asked to reflect on how the SPAYC Cadets project assisted them in locating employment opportunities some young people were able to provide examples of how the skill-based achievements prepared them for new destinations in the world of work.

*It was just basically, it opened doors by giving me the skills and capability of working and getting jobs and connecting more with other organisations and stuff. I was sent the requirements to fit for the position, which was doing the community coach course for soccer. The blue card helped as well. At the same time, I learnt how to improve my leadership. And then, I basically, on my time, I watched coaching videos and stuff; how to improve the kids' soccer, and good drills that would help them improve their skill acquisition in general.*

Locating traineeships with established organisations through assigned mentors resulted in the creation of another pathway towards potential paid employment for SPAYC Cadet graduates. One mentor stated that her primary aim was to develop clear communication

about her mentee's type of employment goal and then work with the young person to develop a plan to achieve that goal:

*One young person's sister wanted to do construction and engineering. She's now doing a traineeship in construction. A couple of the other girls, one wanted to be a model, I got her a modelling contract as well to model for the Wedding Expo. Things like that. Just giving them that genuine support and making sure that they are placed into areas that they want to go into, so that they're not feeling forced to go into areas, or even getting trained for things that they don't want to do.*

An interview with one of the referral agencies for the project cited an example of assistance from a mentor whereby a young African female with limited English and few social networks obtained a traineeship in the health services in Cairns. The mentor, who worked as a health professional, was instrumental in guiding the young female into first completing a Certificate III in Health and then encouraging her the next step to gain a traineeship in the health services industry:

*There was a year 11 girl who arrived in 2018 with no English. She's now secured a Cert III in allied health and she's doing a traineeship, and a large part of that, she actually got an award at the school, a large part of that is because Marc's project SPAYC Cadets, he sets them up with mentors. So, this lady who works in the health industry, I can't remember her name, Deborah something or other, she's worked as a mentor. So, that's what our kids need because a lot of their parents have not worked in Australia, do not know the networks, do not know how to navigate these systems. So, through that project, he has provided them with the confidence. He has provided them with interview skills. All of those kinds of things that these students need. So, I can't speak highly enough of that project.*

Other young people found opportunities in gaining work experience through their mentor's employment networks, which had the potential to transition into paid work. The case whereby a young Indigenous male who had completed his resume during the SPAYC Cadets project and was assisted by his mentor in being offered unpaid work experience in an Indigenous owned specialty clothing store, is another example of the positive impact of mentoring:

*So now I am doing work experience. My mentor knew a mate and he asked me about it, so I handed in my resume. The place is called Deadly something they sell shirts like Indigenous shirts. I hope to get a job there and get paid.*

In rarer cases, there were opportunities for some young people to gain employment in a business owned and operated by their mentor. The mentor elicited the goals of graduates and employed them in part-time positions in her own business which gave them insights into the world of work and assisted them to project the kinds of jobs they might aspire to in the future as in this example:

*They're just being my assistants with the department and grooming projects, or events. Actually, it was so beautiful. Two of those graduates with two other young ladies coordinated the floor for me here at the Shangri La at a NAIDOC*

*gala event. Now, that was huge. So, they were ticketing and doing all the floor arrangements and things like that when I was greeting the guests and I had to attend to other things. It helped them to grow and step up.*

While there was an emphasis on providing young people with individualised activities that reflected their career goals, many of the activities within the SPAYC Cadets project focused on the importance of working within teams to obtain collective goals. One example of collective output was a trio of Indigenous youth who produced short films and rap music. The three young people created several short films about growing up in the Cairns West area and wrote lyrics to rap songs about social issues such as mental health and the over-representation of their people in the juvenile justice system. The young people received payment to produce film footage of new cohorts of SPAYC Cadets. The film was a form of reportage to the Cairns Safer Streets Executive as outlined by a member of the SPAYC+PLACE working group:

*They did a course in editing videos and made videos and put music behind it. It was a 5 day intensive course. They said they actually liked making music and working in their suburbs. The themes of the film were why is culture community and family important to you? Another film was focused on breaking down the negative stigma of Cairns West as the three worst suburbs in Cairns. Then someone said why don't they come and record SPAYC Cadets and they have just done that and they are getting paid for it. They take photos and do interviews with the new intake. Then once a month they present me with a film which I send off to the executive.*

### **9.8 Good News Story: Rosie's story**

*"I want to help my community", Rosie*

Rosie is 18 years old, lives in the suburb of Mooroolbop and has experienced personal and professional success due to her participation in the SPAYC Cadets project. She lives with her mother, two brothers and younger sister. Rosie attended Balaclava State School before transitioning to Trinity Bay High School and graduated in 2019. She recalls enjoying her school years, particularly through her participation in athletics and rugby league. She reflected that as a young person, a turning point in her life was witnessing Cathy Freeman win the 400 metres event at the Sydney Olympics and displaying the Aboriginal and Australian flags during her victory lap. Freeman's win inspired Rosie to focus on becoming a positive role model for young Indigenous people and to work as a lawyer to defend the rights of Indigenous people within the criminal justice system.

*As I was getting older, I started to realise more about myself, so I like started getting active and basically connecting with my community and trying to be a role model in my community.*

After the completion of secondary school, she elected to have a gap year in 2020 to gain some work or volunteering experience before attending university. Rosie had been working as a volunteer at the local Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) from the age of 14 and had previous contact with the director of a mentoring organisation with whom she had kept in periodic contact. The director informally invited her to join the first intake of

the SPAYC Cadets project due to her volunteering work as well as her leadership qualities, which were evident during her work at the PCYC.

*... they just texted me one day and was like; "hey you want to do this project that we're starting up, it's about ages from 15-25, just young people. We can help with the driver's licence and all that sort of stuff and interviews and job applications.*

Rosie was one of a cohort of fifteen young people selected to participate in the inaugural six month SPAYC Cadets project. She stated that what she enjoyed most was meeting and connecting with new people particularly from other cultures and building long-term relationships. She stated she enjoyed the leadership unit of the project and gained inspiration from the project's guest speakers who shared the challenges and successes associated with gaining positions in their respective professions. Rosie recalls the young Aboriginal lawyer and the Indigenous rugby player who described their pathways to success despite the challenges they encountered along the way. She reflected that all speakers shared a common message: to achieve success in your professional and life goals, you must be resilient and stay focused. She recalled how inspired she was listening to the rugby league player relay his story overcoming challenges that may have easily derailed his ambitions to play with the NRL:

*Well he especially came from a struggle, like the kid's parents passing away and stuff, and how he grew from that, and how he handled himself throughout the years. He said there was going to be a lot of no's and a lot of yes's.*

Participation in the leadership component of the project reinforced Rosie's life goal, aspiring to give something back to her community by assisting young people with their aspirations.

*For me success is being a role model in my community, getting the kids involved in activities and having visitors come into my community. And especially connecting to country when I go over to Yarrabah and see all my family over there... It's like a healing place you know when we go back to country, it's like we're home, it feels safe and comfortable, and you can do what you want to do.*

The final unit of SPAYC Cadets provided opportunities for young people to obtain practical credentials to assist with the transition to post-school employment or training opportunities. For example, Rosie cited that she gained assistance in compiling a resume, obtaining a Blue Card so she could work with children, completing a first aid course and volunteering with a local soccer club. During this period, Rosie was also able to work towards obtaining her learner driver's licence, which she perceived as a major milestone towards independence.

Recognition of the achievements of the young people who had successfully completed the project occurred in a celebration at the Novotel Hotel and attended by the parents, supporters, and friends of the graduates. Rosie described her excitement by the support of her mother and aunties who attended the event. The culmination of the evening saw Rosie share the leadership award with a male graduate. When asked why she deserved

this honour Rosie reflected that it was primarily due to her diligence in communicating with other students and the providers with organising some of the activities.

*Yeah, that ceremony was at the Novotel in Lake Street Cairns. It was small but a good one. Me and this other boy got the leadership award. I guess I got it because I would always text in to check if anything was on, or if they needed anything. Just connecting with them and communicating with them more than the other cadets did.*

## **9.9 Outcomes of the Project**

Rosie's participation in the SPAYC Cadets project created a springboard, resulting in new opportunities due to an increase in her self-esteem and self-confidence. For example, she identified she had the confidence to contact one of her previous teachers who advised her to apply for a Cairns Indigenous Art Fair (CIAF) traineeship. Despite gaining this traineeship, Rosie instead elected to accept a traineeship with the Jonathon Thurston Academy because it involved working with Indigenous children who were at risk of disengaging from school. The academy invested in Rosie by providing her with training in Brisbane. This resulted in her employment in the Johnathon Thurston "Believe Program" within the Yarrabah community south of Cairns. Her role in this program consisted of attending the school and working with at risk young people who were on the cusp of disengaging from school. Rosie reflected that she had achieved some success in connecting with some of the students and convincing them to attend school regularly.

*I try to encourage them to come to school every day. Each term we go on a rewards trip and the Academy takes us to, well, this term we are going to Fitzroy Island and a lot of girls really want to come. And I'm like "well you have to come to school every day and have good behaviour... Since I've been coming over an extra day a week the girls have started to come to school, because they like hanging out with me.*

Rosie's personal growth as a young adult has not been confined to a successful transition to employment after completing the SPAYC Cadets project. Her desire to be a leader in the Indigenous community reflects in her commitment to engage other youth to lend their voice to raise public awareness about social issues such as youth suicide, over-representation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system and land-rights. She is part of a RAP group called 3M Pride. The group has written and performed three songs about these issues and featured on YouTube. The group received an invitation to perform these songs at various community events including NAIDOC week celebrations.

*Well there are three videos, one was just about 3MPride just talking about us and who we are and stuff. Then we have another video called "Change Starts with Me". That video is about changing who you are to be a better person. The third video is about youth suicide, so we try to prevent that, and just spread awareness, I guess.*

The SPAYC Cadets project is now in its fourth iteration and Rosie continues to volunteer at the sessions as a mentor to the new recruits. She simply describes her role as "helping out" and giving back to the team which originally gave her the opportunity to realise her

potential and to instil in her the self-confidence and resilience to project herself into a position as a future leader for her people.

*Yes, I want to continue working with kids more and especially now with teenagers now I'm working with, just getting to know what they like and what they don't like. Just building more relationships in the group.*

### **9.10 Evaluation Highlights**

1. One hundred percent of young people successfully graduated the SPAYC Cadets project.
2. Provision of an individualised program to prepare young people for post-project destinations such as paid employment, traineeships, or work experience.
3. Evidence some graduates travelled several pathways that led, or potentially led to paid employment.
4. Several youths finding paid work within an established business, owned by a role model/mentor in the project.
5. Young people reporting very positive experiences through interactions with aspirational presenters from the community.
6. Graduates reporting increased self-esteem, self-confidence and perceived increased social networks due to participation in SPAYC Cadets.
7. Some graduates setting altruistic goals and expanding social connections because of volunteering experiences in SPAYC+PLACE.
8. SPAYC Cadets provided opportunities for youth to celebrate success with families and friends at graduation ceremonies.

### **9.11 Continuous Improvement**

1. Develop a shared understanding of "mentoring" to enhance clarity and consistency of practice.
2. Develop processes to match participant career aspirations and industry-based mentors to enhance further training and employment prospects.
3. Develop a transition plan with Cadets prior to graduation and including the possibility of an extension of time in the existing project, to maximise education, training, and employment opportunities.
4. Develop and implement processes to measure the long-term impact of the project to inform future directions.

## **10. SPAYC +**

### **Launching Strong Bodies and Active Minds**

#### **10.1 Project Proposal**

Increasing the choice and availability of structured activities for young people is key to the SPAYC+ project. Through participation and engagement in these activities, the health and wellbeing of young people is improved and the risk of engagement in unhealthy and risk-taking behaviour reduced. Participant involvement in SPAYC+ created pathways for further development opportunities.

SPAYC+ was an extension of the existing SPAYC project and catered to young people aged 13-25 years. Attendees of SPAYC+ presented with several risk factors. This included disengagement or at risk of disengaging from education or employment, being in the company of people in the youth justice or criminal justice systems, or people at risk of entering the youth or criminal justice systems, engaging in unhealthy and antisocial behaviour, social disadvantage, exposure to family violence and/or residing in unsafe living conditions.

Cairns Safer Streets partnered with the PCYC, ARC, CMS and CRC to support SPAYC+. Additionally, several community partners with funded services delivered physical, diversionary, interventional and engagement activities to SPAYC+ participants.

The delivery of the SPAYC+ project included several key factors. SPAYC+ service providers established and developed positive relationships, delivered education and key health messages in an unobtrusive way and promoted help seeking behaviours. Targeted activities aimed at the needs of the cohort, were delivered by targeted service providers. Participants volunteered to participate or were identified through their engagement in SPAYC+PLACE activities. The SPAYC+PLACE Leadership and Mentoring Project (SPAYC Cadets) supported project delivery. A role of SPAYC+ partners was to oversee and support activity delivery, to identify needs/opportunities and match them with existing resources.

The SPAYC+ project budget totalled \$50,000 expended over three years and equates to 5% of the grant. The projected annual budget allocations were Year 1, Purchased Services \$16,500, and Partnered Services, Year 2, Purchased Services \$16,500, and Partnered Services, and Year 3, Purchased Services \$17,000, and Partnered Services.

A procurement process for services and providers was undertaken. Applicants addressed SPAYC+ specific selection criteria through an open Expression of Interest process. A panel of providers who had the capability to meet and deliver the project needs was established. Service agreements enabled the raising of work orders for the delivery of specific services.

#### **10.2 Findings**

Individual interviews with the working group representative from the Cairns Safer Streets project team, the Founding Director and Operations Manager of Harbrow Mentoring and two facilitators, who were responsible for delivering the project to young people, provided qualitative data relating to the SPAYC+ Project. Focus group interviews conducted with three young people who participated in the SPAYC+ project provided additional data. A



profile of the journey undertaken by two successful participants of the project is included as a good news story. The Founding Director and a group representative of the SPAYC+ project provided quantitative data pertaining to the numbers of participants as well as the numbers of activities in which young people were engaged.

### 10.3 Referrals

Referrals for young people to the SPAYC+ project are through both formal and informal channels. A Cairns Safer Streets member, who was aware of a young person or whose family had contacted them, could formally refer a potential participant. Service providers and facilitators from SPAYC (The Space and Place Activities for Youth in Cairns), could identify and refer a young person who has been attending this project and identified as being potentially at risk.

*They've been doing SPAYC+PLACE in the parks. Dropped out of school for various reasons, and then we were able to capture them and say, 'Hey, come along to the SPAYC+ projects, come along,' so they weren't just doing nothing on the streets, being at home. They were still connected with us. So they were doing the SPAYC+PLACE program, activities in the park, and then we identified them for SPAYC+ project, and then we were like, okay, this person would be perfect for cadets.*

The Founding Director highlighted that young people who were at risk of either entering the juvenile justice system or disengaging from education were often identified by facilitators as potential participants for the SPAYC+ project:

*And we sort of target, but don't limit it to... We target those who may be already at school but are on the brink of not going to school at all, the ones that are in a trajectory of going the Youth Justice pathway, we try and capture that cohort and say, 'Hey, hold on, come and do this,' and occupy their time for a minimum three hours at night.'*

Government agencies such as Department Youth Justice Children and Multi-cultural Affairs (DCYJMA) referred some young people to the boxing activities run by a facilitator aligned with Centacare.

*I'll get huge referrals through from Youth Justice with a big list of all the history of a child which can be quite full on to read. To me it doesn't deter me, they're the kids I want to work with, they're the ones that need it the most.*

Community organisations such as Centacare or the Cairns Regional Council Youth Services Manager's forum, who are familiar with the young person or the project, may also make a referral to SPAYC+. In addition, a teacher of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) students at Trinity Bay State High School was a source of referrals.

*It's usually the service providers that run those activities that see them each week. You know, they only see them for one hour a week or so, but they can see they need some more support, so they also refer to us as well. Also, through Cairns Safer Streets, everyone on that team, they get contacted by parents, community, teachers, and they want some help, and they suggest this project*

*as well. But most of it's the ones that we're already working with in the community.*

Other referrals were less formal and eventuated through siblings or friends who had previously been involved in the project. Siblings and friends of those attending SPAYC+ were able to attend after providing background information, and ensuring they satisfied the age and background criteria for the project. Based on their positive experiences as a former participant, some family members referred relatives to the coordinator or facilitator. A project facilitator described some of the ways young people gained admission to the project:

*Otherwise, if it's a friend of another young person who's already coming, we usually let them come along and meet them ourselves and gauge where they're at. Then if there's issues that we think are worth exploring, we may contact the school, or if they're involved in another organisation, we may find out to get a little bit more information. Usually, if there's issues, if they just want to come along and we can see that they're going to benefit from the project, just through building that relationship we usually just let them come. Because it is referral based, but we also know that if they're wanting to come along, they're wanting to come along for a reason. They're gaining something out of that, so we open it up to those ones who just want to come along as well. Through getting to know them, we can see, yeah, this project's good.*

If the referral comes from a Cairns Safer Streets member, the member will complete the CSS referral form on behalf of the applicant. If the referral comes from outside CSS, a CSS member will assist with the form filling. The parents or carers of participants are required to sign a consent form prior to commencing the project.

*So, once a term, or once they're in the project, that consent form will cover them for the project. Yeah, and so just the medical history, address, phone number, emergency contacts.*

Several members of the CSS Working Group suggested enhancement of the referral form to capture additional biographical information. One member suggested the collection of data around whether a young person identified as Indigenous:

*...the other point I was going to make was in terms of, around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, and capturing, I guess, what are numbers around this.*

A second member observed that collecting more in-depth biographical data on each young person when they entered the project would assist the team in demonstrating the level of inclusiveness of the various ethnic groups who participated in the gamut of projects in Cairns West:

*I guess it shapes or demonstrates the inclusiveness of the project. It is important because I guess we want to be able to show that we are engaging the wider community and not just specific communities... we just need to capture the background of the young people.*

Some members of the working group observed promotion of the project through wider channels of communication had the potential to increase awareness and membership of the project.

*In terms of the communication outwards externally to the community around what is Cairns Safer Streets, whose is eligible to come along or who... Any of that information. So, I have family that live in those areas. and they say, "Oh, who you work for?" And I tell them, and they're like... "Oh, I never knew that existed. That'd be great and fun there. I'd be sending my kids there." I'm like, "Well, you're welcome to send the kids there.*

Several members of the CSS executive observed that the project's public profile could be expanded through increased interactions with local media services and social media platforms through the promotion of positive narratives about how the project has benefited young people in the Cairns West suburbs:

*But then the publicity you know, communicating the good news stories to the community through social media platforms. Also like local media like the Cairns Post. If you had a person whose focus it was and had the skill set as well – because social media in itself is a skill set. So if you had them, all of a sudden, your exposure to everybody, the world is multiplied by ten. So it's important to not only do the good work, it's also communicating it to the right people.*

#### **10.4 Transport**

Participants were restricted to a maximum of 10 depending on the availability of transport. Additional young people could attend if a minibus, which one of the facilitators owned, was available. Due to transport limitations, facilitators attempted to elicit responses from attendees in the morning to ascertain their availability for the evening sessions. Young people received text messages from facilitators indicating the proposed pick-up time and location, which was often their home address or a nearby park. If they did not respond, the facilitator assumed that the young person would not be attending. This strategy assisted the facilitator in gauging the potential number of participants and enforced the need for young people to be punctual and committed to attending the program on a regular basis:

*... because usually that morning I'll send out a text, and whoever gets back to me and say either to their own personal phones or their parent's if they don't have one. And usually I sort out who I'm getting for that night. So, I'm not left to rocking up at Shang Park and having ten kids, and I'm going to have to choose eight of these kids.*

For young people referred by Youth Justice, a lack of transport hampers participation in activities such as the boxing program. The boxing coordinator lamented that the boxing program could increase its participation rates among this cohort of young people if there was a reliable system to transport youth to and from the venue:

**Interviewer:** Yeah, so for you, [participant], one of the barriers or one of the things you'd like to see changed is some form of transport, so kids get to there and get home again.

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Is that an issue?

**Participant:** Yeah, I think it is, definitely.

**Interviewer:** That's an interesting thing to put in. Other people have said transport too.

**Participant:** Especially from a Youth Justice point of view. I mean out of all these conversations with these people that are supposed to be creating positive steps in these kids' lives, the fact that it's just transport is sad.

**Interviewer:** That's why this other kid disappeared; do you reckon?

**Participant:** I think most of them are around transport.

### 10.5 Venue

On a typical evening, young people arrive around 5.30pm at the premises of the mentoring organisation. The organisation is in a rented house in Cairns West and consists of a large central area for administrative work. The conversion of existing bedrooms has created additional office spaces. Underneath the high blocked house, gym equipment such as free weights and a punching bag were available for use by the participants. Many of the young people felt free to visit the office to undertake fitness activities, play guitar or interact with other young people. SPAYC+ participants enjoyed an evening meal before they set out to enjoy the evenings planned activities:

*Yeah, we cook them – fill them up. We chill around here. We've got an X-Box here, so they play around on that. They play music. Some of them play guitar even. Or they go downstairs, just punching the boxing bag. Sometimes we've got a fire running. Back there, sit around the fire eating food. And then after about an hour, so say around seven, seven to nine, we go out. Maybe around 7:30, depending. If they do get a bit bored around here, we straight away take them out fishing or Esplanade.*

### 10.6 Attendance

Attendance at SPAYC+ activities is recorded and voluntary. There were no timeframes around how many weeks a participant could attend, and young people participated in activities over varying lengths of time. Some young people had been attending SPAYC+ activities for eight months. Some exited the activities for reasons related to home or school, then returned over time. Individual participation data is not available for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021 rather; aggregation for the 3-year period occurred. Therefore, it is not possible to analyse data trends and it is unclear how the participation numbers are calculated. For example, one of the providers produced differing data to that recorded. Furthermore, it is unclear if any/how many of the participants were attending multiple activities per week over several weeks. The available documentation of the participant data appears in the table below.

SPAYC+	Number of Participants			
	2019	2020	2021	2022 (Jan-Apr)
	1735			98

Furthermore, there is limited evidence as to the positive long-term outcomes of the project in terms of young people and their participation in the various activities. While the project may serve as an intervention, there is little to suggest that it has resulted in youth desisting from crime or antisocial behaviour. One CSS executive observed the difficulty in obtaining quantitative data that produces observable project outcomes:

*At the moment, what we've seen so far is there is no real evidence of young people involved in crime being diverted out through their participation in these projects... So how do you measure a young person's engagement with an authority figure? I'm talking mentors in general. So that's where the true value of looking at pathways, but how do you measure that?*

Ongoing support beyond SPAYC+ activities and the linking of young people to appropriate supports and pro social activities when needed/requested was core to the work of SPAYC+ staff. Help seeking behaviours from the young people was encouraged and promoted with some participants who were not attending, continuing to receive support from SPAYC+ staff. The coordinator added that it was preferable if 2-3 young people from a previous cohort enrolled in a new intake to mentor and support new enrollees.

*Yeah. No, they can return. We also don't limit that. So, I think it's important that two or three do return, because they have done the project and they can lead on. The ultimate goal of SPAYC+ is to exit them to greater opportunities as well. So, we try not to just say, "Yep, cheers."*

## 10.7 Facilitation

Funded services and Government agencies delivered diversionary, intervention and engagement activities. SPAYC Cadets and other volunteers support all aspects of SPAYC+ service delivery and operations.

In the main, activities were delivered by two facilitators, one male, and one female. A second female attends on an as needs basis. The coordinator, who had previous experience in delivering the project, mentored the facilitator team. In a focus group interview, the facilitators described having an interest in working with young people due to their past work and study experiences. The male facilitator worked in an administrative position with the Department of Children, Youth Justice, and Multicultural Affairs (DCYJMA). He was interested in working in the CLONTARF program, which supported Indigenous youth at a nearby secondary school. By comparison, the female facilitator was a student in a physiotherapy degree program. Previously, she worked in sports and recreation with youth in Cairns:

*That's how I met the coordinator through work experience, in Grade 11. I was doing work experience as a Youth Worker slash Sport and Rec. And then I started studying Education after school at James Cook. And then I took a break and then started working. And then stumbled across this organisation and then now I've changed my Degree to Physiotherapy.*

The facilitators had received professional development on trauma informed practice. The trauma training included such topics as identification of at risk young people, and how trauma affected the brain.

*Any sort of training that comes up that we think that they would benefit from that were in the space; like we have had people from other organisations. When we were getting a couple of young people having suicide ideation and been having bad thoughts we were like, okay, this is a bit out of our scope or range. We've made contact with, okay, who in the community would be good to come in and talk to us and tell us, okay, what services are available. It's not the best sort of training, but it is some sort of training we have received ....*

Both facilitators identified that further professional training opportunities around child safety challenges, mental health and adolescent development would be valuable in their current roles in the organisation:

*I'd definitely get some more training. But, at this point in time, we have tried to line up for us to get certified in fitness because our job is basically sport and recreation. But in terms of child safety and mental health issues maybe. That would be great.*

Central to SPAYC+ is the building of trusting, positive relationships whereby young people could talk comfortably with their peers and workers alike. A goal was for young people to feel secure to ask questions and discuss their challenges. A private Facebook page provided a non-threatening space for honest, open communication among the SPAYC+ community. Activity environments were consciously informal and key messages delivered in unobtrusive ways.

An identified advantage of the project was that it gave young people respite from conflicts, which may be occurring in their homes or neighbourhood. Additionally, it provided older children in some families with an opportunity to meet other youth and enjoy activities outside of their suburb while freeing them of domestic restraints such as caring for younger siblings:

*It's also a space for young people to get away from home, if they need that time away. Especially if there's older ones who are responsible for the younger siblings and they need time away to just be themselves. That's also another good thing for them.*

## 10.8 Activities

Participants engaged in positive pro social activities, which occurred twice per week from 6pm to 9pm. On Wednesdays, females and males participated in separate activities while on Fridays a combined activity took place involving all participants. The scheduled activities occurred in week's two to nine of the four school terms in accordance with the Queensland state school calendar. Activities were not scheduled during the state school vacation. The break between activities enabled the facilitators and coordinator to recruit potential participants and ensured the signing of consent forms prior to the start of a new rendition of the SPACE+ project as described by the Foundation Director:

*Yeah. So, we work in line with school terms, purely for the timeframes. So, an average term is 10 weeks, so we'll start week two, finish week nine. So in week one and week 10, they're used to get referrals and consent forms and all those sorts of things, and then it kicks off week two of school, ends week nine. So, there's an eight week block, and then you have your two week school holiday project. So, it'll run in the two weeks...*

The foundation director described the project as recreational based with an outreach focus, providing an intervention for at risk youth:

*We also were a part of creating a recreational type project. So the flip side of outreach where we go to where the kids are, was taking the kids out of where they are every day, which is, that's a recreational type approach. We identify teenagers from 13 to 19-20 type teenage bracket.*

The activities were responsive to individual, and group needs exposing participants to mentors, potentially life long, in a relaxed, pressure free environment.

*...the connection between the facilitators and the kids are quite strong. So over the time I think that they've developed that connection with the kids and get to know them. And so they're dealing with issues outside of that space of three hours. And to me there's a relationship there where the kids trust and they're going to people for help.*

*There was one participant that we were very, very involved with. It's still ongoing in terms of her home life...she ran away a couple of times and we were her first point of contact.*

On occasion, the facilitators decided to combine the female and male groups into one activity as described by a facilitator:

*Sometimes the boys and the girls group combine, especially if there's only a couple of young ones that week, but if they feel like there's perhaps a couple of girls and they're going through a hard time and they would benefit from not being in a combined group, that's a decision that the facilitators set, "No, we're going to do it separate today." So that's between the facilitators.*

The table below is a summary of providers, and the activities offered over the past three years. Harbrow Mentoring were the first and only provider at the commencement of SPAYC in 2019. They continued to offer most activities in the SPAYC+ project. At the

Harbrow Mentoring office, the youth played X-box and listened to music prior to an evening meal.

*We provide dinner, so usually it's a barbecue out at the beach, or sometimes we have dinner at our office, and they eat there.*

They then ventured to the evening's activities. Fishing was the favoured activity of the participants.

*It's active recreation. Fishing, mostly fishing. They choose a spot each week, or the facilitators choose a spot each week based on the tide as well, and there's several locations that are covered for the risk assessment and they go to those spots.*

Following fishing, basketball on the Cairns Esplanade was a preferred activity. Adventuring, in the form of trail walking with head torches on the red and yellow arrow tracks that wind through the Mt Whitfield Conservation Park and the Earl Hill Summit Walking Tracks at Trinity Beach, is an example of a challenging active recreation.

Activity	Year	Provider
Fishing	2019: 8 weeks 2020: 20 weeks 2021: 27 weeks	Harbrow Mentoring
Basketball	2020: 5 weeks 2021: 2.5 weeks	Harbrow Mentoring
Music/XBox	2020: 23 weeks 2021: 16 weeks	Harbrow Mentoring
Music and Songwriting	2020: 22 weeks 2021: 16 weeks	Naytive Mentorship
Boxing	2021: 16 weeks 2022 (Mar-Apr): 5 weeks	Centacare
Sexual Health	2021: 1 week	True Organisation
Water Play	2021: 1 week	Harbrow Mentoring
AFL	2021: 1 week	Harbrow Mentoring
Hanging Out	2021: 1.5 weeks	Harbrow Mentoring
Watch football	2021: 1 week	Harbrow Mentoring
Adventuring	2021: 8 weeks 2022 (Mar-Apr): 6 weeks	Harbrow Mentoring
Cultural Camp	2021: 7 days: 4 x 1 day; 1 x 3 days	Harbrow Mentoring

On occasion, the facilitators took the opportunity to encourage young people to participate in organised sporting events such as the AFL Nines. A mentoring team including several eager SPAYC+ players as well as older, more experienced players, nominated. The male facilitator explained this was a great opportunity for the young people to enjoy a new sport while working in a team environment. An added advantage was that the older players took on a mentoring role during training and game situations that served to build the self-esteem of the youth who had never played AFL previously. One of the interviewees



cited an example whereby older AFL players teamed up with a group of young people to play in a mixed-aged AFL competition:

**Participant 2:** *So, but we wouldn't just let them go out in the field, so there'd be about six SPAYC+ and then there'd be four of us senior – not necessarily us workers*

**Interviewer:** *You are part of the team.*

**Participant 2:** *Yeah. I'll grab a few footy boys that are good role models, bring them down. And they see these guys and they hear about these names. We always try and bring the ones they want.*

**Interviewer:** *So they can play with them. So, how long did that go for?*

**Participant 2:** *That went for about – I reckon it would have gone for about maybe seven or eight weeks.*

**Interviewer:** *Was that good?*

**Participant 2:** *It was very good. They loved it. All the kids loved it. And it literally – I wouldn't think half of them never played AFL before. And they were all showing up. Like they were all so surprised seeing these kids come out of their comfort zone, marking the ball. And it's good because our team – we were the youngest, but we were some adults, and these adults would let us kick goal or something. Give them to the young kids. And if some young kid kicked a goal, you could see the smile on their face. That's what keeps me going you know.*

Outsourcing of services for any young person requiring support that goes beyond the scope and expertise of SPAYC+ staff occurred. The SPAYC+ founding director and operations manager researched potential service providers and determined the best service and staff to meet the needs of a young person. The young person was linked to the appropriate supports as strategies for intervention and engagement.

Staff sourced support from community agencies on topics that were relevant to the physical and emotional development of the participants. For example, a presentation from members of a sexual health team was helpful in increasing awareness about contraception and sexually transmitted diseases. There was an identified need for further educational sessions on relevant topics such as alcohol and drug use, domestic violence, and mental health, from community providers. However, it was often difficult to obtain these forms of external support, as most agencies did not operate outside their 9am-5pm business hours.

*We had Cairns Sexual Health, which is like a True relationships organisation and they come and have a chat. They just met the group last week, and we're teeing up a session for them to come and sit more properly and go through some healthy relationship stuff, especially with the girls. They've identified last term is, okay, maybe we would really benefit from this chat because they're*

*asking questions about boys, they're asking questions about sexual health, and we thought it was a good opportunity to bring someone in who's professional and have that chat in an informal way.... It is very hard at that time to get anyone to come, that's been the biggest struggle. That 6 to 9 o'clock, a lot of the services don't run at that time. So we have these ideas, like, let's get these people in; they're not available. They don't operate in those hours. That's been a little bit difficult.*

Sexual health, Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Services (ATODS), legal awareness, child protection, mental health, social and emotional wellbeing and parenting were topics, delivered through physical and pro social activities as chats or informal conversations rather than formal presentations. The True organisation provided an information session on improved relationships and sexual health.

A well-attended boxing and wellbeing activity, run by Centacare from a PCYC venue, commenced in 2021.

### **10.9 Mentoring**

The major intent of the project was to mentor young people perceived to be at risk of disengaging from education or interacting with the juvenile justice system. During informal conversations with young people, facilitators took the opportunity to encourage youth to re-engage with education as a way of developing positive future pathways:

**Participant 2:** *But I've got kids that haven't been going to school, but because of the project, I've been like "Come on guys. Get to school. We can keep doing these things." And they start to –*

**Interviewer:** *And they're going back.*

**Participant 2:** *Yeah, they're going.*

**Interviewer:** *So, you're intervening in such a way that they're staying on the track, rather than going off track.*

**Participant 2:** *Yeah. And there's a lot of times where if they are down and all that, you checked up on them and then next week, they're so much better and listen to me.*

An observable advantage of young people returning to education was an increase in pro social behaviours as well as a demonstrated self-control in potential conflict situations with other students as outlined in this account:

*Well, there's some girls that have had ongoing issues with fights in school. A lot of them were already there, a lot of those things are the impacts that we don't have any control over. But they still come to the project and tell us about it. There's still that listening ear, what happened, and you can't change all of these behaviours overnight but we're that person to guide them and say, 'Hey, do you think you could do this? Maybe thought about this a little bit better? What could you have done next time?' There's been times when they've come*

*to us and they're so proud. They're like, 'This person wanted to fight me, but I didn't do it anything, Miss, I walked away.' Like, that's massive, if they're going from several fights a week to one fight a week; that's still an improvement in behaviour.*

Peer to peer mentoring is also an important component of the SPAYC+ project. A number of the current participants in the SPAYC Cadets project were former participants of the SPAYC+ project and were encouraged to attend some of the evening sessions to mentor and support the new participants. The project coordinator reported that the former participants were often instrumental in modelling positive forms of behaviour among the new participants:

*I have had a few kids that have been through SPAYC+ and sometimes I'll go over to the Cadets and bring them to our SPAYC+ as well, and so they can mentor and teach them the young ways. I know the ones that engage the most, that's the ones I like most. It's also good to have the older ones because, say if I've got four kids or something, in a car, and one of them's playing up and I'm trying to speak, and I literally, full-on be like "Everyone be quiet right now and listen to me." Sometimes I've got to raise my voice and the boys in the back will go "Oi, oi. Jacob, Jacob. Listen, listen." And because if he's just trying to muck around or whatever, and they actually shape him up.*

Interview data highlights that due to increased social connections with individuals and organisations some youth have found paid employment, traineeships and/or enrolled in school-based apprenticeships. The operations manager reflected:

*She applied for a traineeship and was really excited the other day. She just came to the office in the morning. I was there. And showed me 'look I've received this email, they want to contact me about this traineeship which is a rain forestation group. They employ a lot of indigenous young people'. She was excited to share her good news and we're hoping she goes down that path.*

Several members of the cohort stated that they had gained paid part-time employment post the SPAYC+ project.

*Yeah. And that was the other thing, my AFL coach, he's the boss at the Reece, then he heard about this SPAYC Cadets. And so, he just asked me if I wanted to work with him, with the warehousing. And I agreed to that. So, he contacted Mark and then and just asked him if I could work with him. And, yeah, that's how I just got my job.*

In other cases, the identification of young people as being at risk of becoming victims of sexual or physical violence within their families prompted the facilitators to intervene by reporting to government agencies such as DCYJMA.

*There's definitely been some young people who we've had concerns for their safety, things going on at home, and we've had to go through the child safety reporting, and some of them have been removed from those situations. The weekly activities provided opportunities for young people to discuss issues with the facilitators, which were important to them such as problems encountered*

*at school or peer pressure to become involved in crime. We hear a lot of, like, whenever I'm with them, they mentioned a lot of stolen vehicles and all that. Not them, but it's like their older cousins or something that they see, and it's bad. They look up to them and seeing that. So, this project is trying to get them away from that kind of home life, or bad peers as well.*

A common theme for discussion among the cohort centred on personal issues such as body image or relationships with peers:

*We talk about – they're at an age where they're having boyfriends and friendship problems and stuff. So, we'll talk about that. And also, I've had a couple of boys, even, talk about their relationships. So, it's just kind of – because it's very new to them, and they get the shame but it's just kind of being open, to talk about stuff that they can't talk to their parents about, or they can't talk to their siblings even, because there's a big shame factor, or they'll get in trouble.*

### **10.10 Good News Story: Greg's and Albert's Stories**

#### *New Beginnings, New Opportunities*

Greg and Albert's stories are examples of how young people at risk of disengaging from education or entering the juvenile justice system diverted into projects, which enabled them to pursue new opportunities and lead productive and rewarding lives. This good news story also describes how some young people successfully transitioned to the SPAYC Cadets project that provided them with opportunities to make social connections with individuals and institutions that could lead them onto pathways of training or employment.

Both young people participated in the SPAYC+ project before selection in the inaugural cohort of SPAYC Cadets, which graduated at the end of 2019. They hail from disparate backgrounds but share common views about the positive features of these projects in terms of the positive role models who mentored them and ultimately gave them the self-confidence to set goals and follow a pathway to achieving these goals.

Greg was born in Cairns and spent his early years in the Aboriginal community of Yarrabah south of Cairns. He is a reserved quietly spoken young person who lives with his family in West Cairns. Greg recalled that he regularly attended primary school and liked some of his teachers but started getting into trouble when he entered Trinity Bay High School. Greg said he was experiencing "*personal problems*" in year eleven and started getting into fights with other students. He recalled that he only liked one subject based on reef studies and observed how his female teacher encouraged him while in class:

*I was good at learning about the reef and that. The teacher I liked, and I was able to do the work. She got impressed and that, because I was so good at it. But sadly, I got kicked out and I was sad about it.*

He was suspended for repeated incidences of fighting and then dropped out of school altogether. Greg noted that there was no contact from the school and he never went back to collect his books. He spent the following twelve months drifting between friends and home and admitted that he was bored and lacked direction and the self-confidence to look for work or training opportunities. He stated:

*I just get up in the morning and see what my friends are doing. Having a catch up and maybe calling in here for a chat. Not much else to do.*

He admitted that this was one of the lowest points of his life. At this time, a close friend told him about the SPAYC+ project which appealed to Greg in terms of meeting new people as well as providing him with opportunities to participate in the activities.

Albert was born in Weipa in far north Queensland and is one of eight children. He stated that he came to Cairns when he was 13 to live with his grandmother so that he could receive better educational and employment opportunities. He and his two brothers are currently living with their third foster family and Albert is in year 11 attending Woree Secondary School. While attending secondary school, Albert played rugby league and AFL with the Cairns Hawks Club. He learnt about the SPAYC+ project through a friend of his foster parents. While he was engaged in school and enjoying his sporting activities, Albert became aware of the SPAYC+ project and decided to attend. *"They just asked me about school, and they told me about this SPAYC Cadets." They talked about it to me, and they asked if I was interested in being in the first group of cadets. So, I said; "I'll do it".*

Both young people stated they enjoyed participating in the evening activities associated with SPAYC+. The activities included fishing, basketball, and volleyball at the Cairns Esplanade. Occasionally they night walked the steep Red Arrow track in Edgehill with the aid of torches. For Greg these twice-weekly outings also afforded him the opportunity to widen his circle of friends and structured his time in terms of having to be ready for pick up at a certain time as well as providing him with a leadership role in mentoring some of the younger people in the project. Greg's leadership qualities resulted in an invitation to facilitate the soccer skills activity that was part of the SPAYC project for 8-12 year olds.

Albert observed that the female and male facilitators provided mentoring to youth during the weekly activities. He reflected that the mentoring often consisted of informal one on one conversations with young people at opportune times while fishing. Albert recalled having a conversation with the male facilitator during a drive home one night. He asked about how he might secure a school-based apprenticeship as part of his year eleven subjects.

*I was looking for a job to them one night in the car on the way home. We talked and he said if you want a job maybe I could get it through them, maybe when I was finished school.*

After successfully completing eight weeks of the project, Albert and Greg received an invitation to participate in the inaugural SPAYC Cadets project consisting of 13 young people. Albert perceived the successful transition to SPAYC Cadets as acknowledgement for his leadership and commitment to SPAYC+ activities. Greg and Albert realised that potentially, the SPAYC Cadets project was a pathway to obtaining employment or training opportunities as well as the opportunity to obtain practical skills such as writing a resume and obtaining a driver's licence. Greg conveyed a positive outlook for his future employment prospects after successfully compiling his resume while participating in the project:

*I just wanted to get myself together and get my resume done. Before that I had nothing. But after that I basically had everything then I was ready for a job.*

By comparison, Albert enjoyed the leadership component of the project where successful individuals within the community gave presentations about their professional experiences. He was inspired about the rugby player with the Canberra Raiders who had overcome injury and adversity before becoming a coach with the club. Greg highlighted that his interactions with the staff in the project as well as young people from other cultures provided him with increased confidence to interact with people in formal situations such as a job interview.

Both young people agreed that attending SPAYC Cadets each week at the same time assisted in structuring their day, which in turn trained them with the qualities of punctuality, diligence, and motivation, which are valued traits in the workplace. Albert stated:

*What I found out about myself is that you just have to be ready at a set time. So, mainly for work I used to be late and late to school and sometimes when they came round to pick me up for the project, I used to be late. But now I think it's got better with time. I wake up early and I'm not late for work or school anymore.*

The highlight of the year for Greg was gaining the leadership award in conjunction with a female colleague at the graduation ceremony held at the Novotel Hotel in the city. Greg's mother and grandmother attended the ceremony and he recalled how proud they were of his success. He reflected on how the SPAYC+PLACE program had contributed to his personal growth and how it had afforded him a new pathway that had purpose and direction.

There can be little doubt these young people gained additional skills and a newfound self-confidence that placed them in a position to gain employment or further training due to their participation in the SPAYC+PLACE program. There was acknowledgement that new opportunities were also attributable to the networks that were associated with the mentoring organisation providing the program. For example, Albert obtained a school-based apprenticeship through his coach at Hawks AFL club. The AFL club is also a provider for the Parks to Clubs project and familiar with the coordinator of the SPAYC Cadets project. Albert currently works part-time for eight hours per week with the firm while completing his Certificate II in Warehousing. He projects that this certificate may create other pathways in the future and is confident of obtaining full-time employment after he graduates with his year 12 certificate.

*It was my AFL coach who is the boss of the plumbing shop. He knew someone from SPAYC Cadets and asked if I wanted to work for him in the warehouse. So, he contacted the coordinator and asked if it was ok to work for him and that's how I got the job.*

At the time of this interview, Greg had obtained an interview for two prospective jobs with the same company. One position was as a Ranger, while the other was associated with work on the Kuranda Skyrail. He attributes this success to assistance he received from the SPAYC Cadets provider who located these opportunities online and assisted Greg to tailor his resume and application to address the criteria for these positions. He stated that he quietly felt confident and was grateful for the assistance of his mentors for preparing him for the interview while reflecting on his personal growth and sense of direction since

completing the SPAYC+PLACE programs and the resultant opportunities for reaching exciting new destinations.

*I really enjoyed meeting new people getting the confidence and getting prepared for maybe my first job, or even an interview.... I reckon if I wasn't in this program, I have no clue where I would be right now.*

### **10.11 Evaluation Highlights**

1. The development of close relationships with the facilitators through an informal mentoring project leading to interventions, which positively influence young people identified as being at risk. Interview data with the participants indicate that they have positive interactions with the facilitators and that they enjoy interacting with their peers while participating in weekly activities.
2. There is strong acknowledgement that SPAYC+ provides opportunities for youth to experience recreational activities outside of the suburbs in Cairns West and new vistas and experiences outside of their family. These experiences increased the social connectivity among members of the cohort and with others.
3. Anecdotal evidence suggests that participation in mentoring, has had positive impacts in re-engaging some youth into education and providing them with pathways, which may lead into employment or further training.
4. Data indicates that mentoring has resulted in some young people adopting pro social behaviours at school, which reduces the likelihood of exclusion from further participation in formal education.
5. Engagement in the SPAYC+ project has created opportunities for some youth to gain further mentoring support as well as leadership and life skills by transitioning into the SPAYC Cadets project.
6. There is strong acknowledgement that attending SPAYC+ provides some young people with occasions to escape the responsibility of having to look after younger siblings, which is a common expectation particularly for female adolescents.
7. SPAYC+ provides a refuge and support for young people who experience conflict and feel unsafe in their home environments.
8. Participation in SPAYC+ leads to multiple pathways such as traineeships, part time/fulltime employment, and/or work experience.

### **10.12 Continuous Improvement**

1. Expand intake documentation to include such information as Indigeneity, country of birth, and involvement with agencies for example, DCSYJMA.
2. Explore a range of data collection techniques to measure project impact on participants.
3. Provide further opportunities for facilitators to build their capabilities.
4. Explore mutually agreeable times for community agencies to deliver information sessions to participants.

5. Explore transport options to maximise attendance.
6. Explore marketing opportunities to promote community awareness of the project.



## 11. Our SPAYC

### Sharing People, Ancestors, Yarns & Cultures

#### 11.1 Project Proposal

The target group for the Our SPAYC project was community members who would benefit from cross cultural learning and sharing, and those community members who are interested in passing their cultural knowledge to younger generations.

Our SPAYC aimed to create relationships between young people and elders in their communities by focussing on cultural identity and developing resilience. A Cairns Safer Streets representative describes the project as *“supporting significant cultural awareness and acceptance, and bringing different cultures together and yeah, learning from one another in a cultural space”*.

The Our SPAYC project budget totals \$80,000 expended over three years. The projected annual budget allocations were Year 1, Purchased Services \$26,500, and Partnered Services, Year 2, Purchased Services \$26,500, and Partnered Services and Year 3, Purchased Services \$27,000, and Partnered Services.

A procurement process for services and providers was undertaken. Applicants addressed Our SPAYC specific selection criteria through an open Expression of Interest process. A panel of providers who had the capability to meet and deliver the project was established. Service agreements enabled the raising of work orders for the delivery of specific services.

#### 11.2 Findings

##### 11.2.1 Facilitation

The activities delivered in Our SPAYC, are modelled on the Developmental Relationships Framework (DRF). The DRF consists of five elements that are expressed in 20 specific actions that create powerful relationships in the lives of young people (Search Institute, u.d.). These elements are:

- Express care (show me that I matter to you)
- Challenge growth (push me to keep getting better)
- Provide support (help me complete tasks and achieve goals)
- Share power (treat me with respect and give me a say)
- Expand possibilities (connect me with people and places that broaden my world)  
(Search Institute, u.d.)

According to the Search Institute, the DRF builds relationships that are “close connections through which young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them” (Search Institute, 2018, p. 1). Our SPAYC has incorporated the Developmental Relationships Framework into activities that combine movements, such as dancing, yoga, and acting, with culture and tradition.

### 11.2.2 Activities

Seasons of Dance, Chair Movement-Art, The Lullaby Project, Sounds of Mooroolbool and The Blossom project are five activities offered through Our SPAYC.

The Dancing Rose is a movement-art practitioner contracted to offer Seasons of Dance. Primarily Centacare, a community partner, referred community members to The Dancing Rose programs and a smaller number of participants self-referred. Additionally, they provided a translator for the Nepalese speaking Bhutanese women who attended. The MaraWay, a not-for-profit organisation, partnered with Our SPAYC to provide the venue for the Seasons of Dance program which was held weekly.

The central focus of Seasons of Dance was connecting past and present expressions of culture through dance, music, and the arts. The Dancing Rose invited participants to 'bring their families, share tradition as we move...across the world'. Initially, Seasons of Dance was held outdoors, and participation numbers grew and shrunk "*depending on who was in the park and wanted to participate that day*". In one program iteration, 30 participants performed at the Cairns Safer Streets supersession as a culminating activity.

An icebreaker was included at the commencement of a new iteration. A Cairns Safer Streets representative described the icebreaker as "*maps, putting points on where you came from, then it's talked about, again, some language barriers there*", and describes the multi-cultural participants.

*...the young African kids that have been here a couple of years were helping the others that weren't so skilled. We had a Colombian; we had an Argentinian. We had Rose, I mean, South America was represented. Asia was represented. Africa was represented. Obviously, I come from the North, we had a Canadian, we had a German woman.*

The Cairns Safer Streets representative stated that an older woman attended and told the story of how she, "*rescued children in war and put them in safe keeping*". The older woman's story was told through dance and a song written in her honour.

The facilitating practitioner explained that Seasons of Dance was not only about developing an awareness of the physical body, but also about using the senses to invoke memories that encourage discussion around differences in culture. By incorporating elements of aromatherapy and meditation into the sessions, the participants were encouraged to focus on memories and if they felt comfortable, to discuss those memories as a group.

In addition, some sessions incorporated a guest, usually someone from a migrant community, who had thrived in Cairns and was willing to share their experiences with the group. This was an encouraging part of the project for some of the Bhutanese participants. One female participant shared:

*I feel that I will make a better connection to the community because I meet with different members of the community who share their stories and the cultural aspect of the project means that I am learning about the Australian culture.*

*I like listening to other people because I have not travelled to other countries, so I like to learn about other people's cultures and listen to the stories from other countries.*

The facilitating practitioner provided the example of a young Brazilian woman who came to Australia with little English and now works as a civil engineer. She attended a session to share her story with the group of mainly Nepalese women. With the help of a Nepalese translator, the Nepalese and Brazilian participants found common grounds in their struggle to learn the English language. The Brazilian participant offered tips on how she learnt the language and the activities she found helpful to develop her proficiency with the English language. A few participants explained that although they came to Australia with no English at all, not even the words 'yes' or 'no', they found their basic English has improved by attending the sessions, *"I have found the Seasons of Dance has helped improve some bits of English and I can practice speaking to other people in English. I like the group because I learn some English and learned as I go to the group"*.

It was not only English language speaking that improved during the participants' time in Seasons of Dance. The physical movement helped to develop a sense of confidence in a few of the participants:

*I used to have fear before but now I feel more confident to ignore anyone who might call out at me. Hearing from different people in the group I feel more confident to handle difficult situations.*

*I really like the 'English' dancing that Rose does because there is more freedom of movement, and that Nepalese dancing is very rigid. Also, I like the fact that there is no judgement.*

*If I stay at home, I find I am very tense but when I come to the group, I am free of tension because I enjoy the activities.*

The Dancing Rose was also contracted to deliver Chair Movement-Art, which is an activity involving physical movement for women with low mobility. The sessions were tailored to women who were looking for a higher quality of life and energising those with low physical activity, so they had mobility with purpose. Chairs were used as tools to support participants who had difficulty with upward and downward movements in daily activities. Chair Movement-Art improved coordination, flexibility, and balance. The perceived benefits of the project included increasing daily functional fitness, assisting with weight management, improving mental health, and increasing self-esteem. The facilitator stated that Chair Movement-Art also helped reduce the risk of developing coronary disease and type 2 diabetes. In addition, the social aspect of the activity encourages the participants to develop new social networks in a relaxing environment.

The main goal of The Lullaby Project according to the coordinator, was for *"people to become aware of other culture's norms and normalise the fact that we all sing to our babies"*. The Lullaby Project was offered through Jute Theatre, a regional theatre company missioned to developing and telling diverse stories that challenge, inspire, and bring us together through the power and magic of theatre. The project took the form of a series of workshops held over 8 weeks. Male and female participants from a range of countries including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Bhutan, and

Myanmar attended the project. The basis of the project was story telling whereby participants were encouraged to explore and share songs that they sang to their children and babies. The underpinning premise was that lullabies and children's songs are uplifting in any language and provide comfort and strength due to their calming nature. Additionally, they connect individuals to their culture and families. The project culminated in a performance held at Bulmba-ja, a theatre, gallery and creative development space managed by Arts Queensland. A Cairns Safer Streets representative concluded the Lullaby project:

*...gave the participants an opportunity to create song and dance of their culture that they shared with others. And eventually they created a new one that they shared a few words of each language and they performed at the end. They told a story and performed it based on consensus of agreement and that all was done within an eight week period. And then the performance actually took place on stage at the Jute Theatre, which is in the Bulmba-ja.*

Centacare, a community partner, provided transportation and interpreting services for participants. One of the challenges associated with providing another iteration of the Lullaby Project, was the expense of offering another iteration of the activity. The project manager stated, "I could not afford to do it again based on the slim budget this project has".

The table below lists the core activities offered in the Our SPAYC project. It is acknowledged that other activities occurred during the three year period but it is unclear about the participation rates for these activities. The major activities are listed below including the aims of each activity and participant numbers based on data, which was given to the evaluation team.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Aim of Activity</b>	<b>Participant Numbers</b>
Villas Women's Group	To provide social inclusion opportunities for a multi-cultural group of vulnerable women	6-10 per fortnight
International Women's Day	Workshop and presentation	37
Bhutanese Elder's Group	To provide movement, Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) tapping therapy, flexibility and stretching activities to improve wellbeing	30 per fortnight
Blossom Program	To address bullying, body image, and wellbeing through movement-art, yoga and breathing exercises	20 x years 5 and 6 students

Activity	Aim of Activity	Participant Numbers
Cross-cultural women's group	To provide movement, EFT tapping therapy, flexibility and stretching activities to improve wellbeing	"Large" numbers (participation numbers were not recorded)
Our SPAYC	To incorporate the fundamental pillars of our physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing through movement and Art	159 (across 9 weeks)

### 11.3 Participant Feedback and Demographics

Eighty participants responded to a feedback survey of Our SPAYC activities. Of the respondents, 77% were female, and 60% of respondents resided in the Cairns West suburbs. The age of project participants ranged from 6 to 85 years old. The Blossom Program was delivered to students aged 10 to 12 years old, Chair Movement-Art, by far the most popular program based on participation numbers, was attended by people 25 to 85 years old, The Sounds of Moorobool participants ranged from 8 to 60 years old, and The Seasons of Dance participants ranged from 6 to 85 years old.

The survey respondents rated an activity in terms of how it made them feel about themselves, their connection with their families, their inclusion in the community, and how healthy they felt. Responses were scored from 1 to 5 with one being the least score and 5 being the highest. Of respondents, 73% felt very or really good about themselves, 80% felt connected with their families and 76% felt very included in their communities. Of respondents, 41% felt a medium level of health and 19% felt very healthy.

Eight survey respondents completed the section *what they enjoyed the most*. Feedback for Chair Movement-Art included, *"fitness and pampering, and talking with the ladies"*, *"being with the women and the exercise"*, and *"the exercise – I felt the weight lift off my shoulders"*. The Sounds of Moorobool received feedback that included *"afternoon tea"*, *"you are great for the community and the kids"*, *"drums with my papa"*, and two comments of *"singing"*. One Seasons of Dance participant said that what they enjoyed most was making *"new connections"*.

### 11.4 Good News Story: Ambika's Story

*"...it reminds me it is never too late to learn something new"*

Ambika is a 38 year old Nepalese speaking Bhutanese woman who has lived in Australia for around 10 years. Ambika belongs to a group of Nepalese speaking Bhutanese known as Lhotsampas, "people of the south". The Lhotsampas lived peacefully in Bhutan until the Bhutanese King and the ruling Druk became concerned that the growing population of Lhotsampas could be a threat to the majority rule. As a result, the Government of Bhutan began to impose policies that meant that all people living in Bhutan had to adhere to the Druk dress code, cultural and religious practices, and language. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, a humanitarian crisis had developed with the Lhotsampas subjected to

imprisonment and other forms of persecution. This led to an exodus of Lhotsampas to refugee camps in Nepal.

Ambika was living in a refugee camp in Nepal when she and her husband decided to seek residence in Australia as they were searching for a new beginning for their family. Ambika was a homemaker in Nepal and had obligations to care for her husband's parents who were elderly, and her disabled brother-in-law. Ambika rationalised there would be more assistance for the elderly parents and disabled brother in law in Australia than in Nepal's refugee camps. Such assistance would enable her to seek employment and engage in social activities.

Ambika migrated to Australia with both her family and her husband's family and located in Cairns. Initially, Ambika felt homesick for her family in Bhutan and found the differences between Australia and her home country overwhelming. However, the families enjoy living in Cairns because it has many green areas that remind them of their home country. She understands that her children may leave regional Cairns in the future to explore further opportunities in the larger cities. When she arrived in Australia, Ambika had "*basic, minimal conversation and understanding of basic words*" in the English language. This made it difficult for her to form social connections with others in the community. She took the opportunity to enrol in an Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) at TAFE, and this built her confidence communicating in English and aided community connections.

After studying English at TAFE for 18 months, Ambika enrolled in a childcare course. On completion of her field placement, she was employed as a casual worker in the childcare centre. She successfully applied for a childcare worker position with CentaCare and, over time, promoted into various roles. In her current role, Ambika is a "*community engagement officer*", and an "*unofficial translator*" for participants in Nepalese Bhutanese community projects.

Since its commencement, Ambika has been attending the Seasons of Dance program as both a participant and translator. She enjoys the Seasons of Dance sessions because, "*after hearing from different guest speakers, how they have struggled it reminds me it is never too late to learn something new*". Furthermore, she says, "*all the people I meet are migrants at Seasons of Dance, and they are all struggling with language, jobs, education, so it makes me feel like I am not alone*". By attending Seasons of Dance, Ambika said she has found "*more confidence in speaking to people, I am also learning therapy and exercises, as well as learning new cultures*".

### **11.5 Evaluation Highlights**

1. Our SPAYC provided opportunities for social connections among the multi-cultural groups living in the Cairns West suburbs.
2. Our SPAYC provided a safe, caring environment where people from migrant communities could share their positive and negative experiences associated with settling into a new country.
3. There is evidence Our SPAYC provided 'role models' and 'exemplars' which assisted migrants to communicate in the English language.

4. Our SPAYC was multi-cultural and inclusive of people with disabilities and limited mobility to ensure social connection was intersectional.
5. There is evidence Our SPAYC provided opportunities for people from diverse cultures to share their culture and learn about others' cultures.
6. The Seasons of Dance project increased self-confidence among migrant women due to their interactions with other women in a safe environment.
7. Our SPAYC provided opportunities for younger community members to interact with their community elders, providing a grounding for further social connectivity.

#### **11.6 Continuous Improvement**

1. Review marketing/advertising strategy for Our SPAYC to encourage higher participant numbers.
2. Consider strategies for encouraging Indigenous women to enrol in the activities.
3. Actively encourage participants to complete feedback surveys about Our SPAYC activities.

## **12. FIT Together**

### **Activities for Families**

#### **12.1 Project proposal**

FIT (Family Intervention Trial) Together is a physical activity intervention approach for families with school-aged children. The student welfare team from one of the local schools identifies families who would benefit from an early intervention approach. While families are referred to FIT, participation is voluntary.

The documented rationale behind the FIT project is that early intervention relating to antisocial and/or criminal behaviour risk factors can decrease the likelihood of children becoming involved in the criminal justice system and therefore improve life outcomes. The risk factors described are "poor academic performance, antisocial personality patterns, a problematic home environment and problematic leisure and recreational activities". The documentation states that collaboration and multi-agency responses are key to both individual and community crime prevention. It evidences that while existing young offenders link into extensive services through various youth justice orders, the families and siblings of the young offender receive little to no mandated support. Finally, the FIT project proposes to encourage participants to engage in a regime of good health including physical exercise and eating a balanced diet to promote an overall increased sense of physical and mental wellbeing.

The existing community based infrastructures such as Cairns West State School, Manoora Community Centre and Moorool Hub were three venues used for the delivery of the FIT project. Consultation with individuals and groups inform the development of a project which focuses on approaches for addressing the social determinants of inequities in physical activity and sedentary behaviours. Mental health, good nutrition, positive parenting, and behaviour management are elements of the project.

Cairns Safer Street partner with FIT Together along with several community partners including government agencies and funded services. The Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, Queensland Health, Queensland Police Services, Department of Housing and Education Queensland, Primary Health Network, Wuchopperen, ACT for Kids and the Cairns African Association share and contribute their areas of expertise.

The FIT Together project budget totals \$50,000 expended over 3 years and equates to 5% of the grant. The projected annual budget allocations are Year 1, Purchased Services \$16,500, and Partnered Services; Year 2, Purchased Services \$16,500, and Partnered Services and Year 3, Purchased Services \$17,000, and Partnered Services.

A procurement process for services and providers was undertaken. Open advertising for expressions of interest with FIT Together specific selection criteria were addressed by applicants. A panel of providers who had the capability to meet and deliver the project was established. Service contracts were entered, and work orders raised for delivery of specific services.



## **12.2 Findings**

The evaluation of the FIT project has been presented in a different format to the other five projects within the overall SPAYC +PLACE program. The rationale behind FIT consisted of specific interventions with eight families who were high risk due to problems that affected their overall functionality. The information contained in the case notes made available to the evaluation team is highly sensitive and required extensive time to de-identify the data to protect the people involved in the project. As a further measure to de-identify the data, the evaluation team decided to present the report in a generalised format rather than writing eight separate case studies. As a result, the format of this chapter is based on themes such as how families were referred, followed by an analysis of the documented data before analysing the types of interventions and perceived outcomes of each.

## **12.3 Referrals**

The FIT Together project team received referrals from several sources. In schools, teachers, deputy principals, guidance officers and agency staff attached to the school generated referrals. The school's student engagement services team received the referrals, which were then endorsed by the school principal. Beyond the school, families who were directly or indirectly connected to Cairns Safer Streets could self-refer. Additionally, staff from participating agencies and organisations could identify or refer.

All referrals were processed by the project team, which consisted of a representative from Cairns Safer Streets, Red Cross, Maraway, Education Queensland and Harbrow Mentoring. The number of families identified or referred exceeded the available resources. FIT team was challenged by the small number of providers who had the skill base required to address some of the specific needs of families.

The referrals for each of the eight families undertaking the FIT project came from people who knew the family and/or their situation. Staff members from a local school in the Cairns West suburbs, referred two families, Centacare referred three families, two officially and one unofficially, the Maraway, a community hub aiming to break the cycle of suffering due to homelessness, poverty, sickness, substance abuse and family violence, referred one family. It is unknown who referred two families to the project. Except for a family referred for general and housing support and another referred when a parent requested help from her child's school, there is no documented rationale as to why six families were referred to the FIT project.

## **12.4 Documentation**

The evaluation team derived data about each of the eight families referred to the project, primarily from documentation provided to the team by the coordinator. Contextual information about each of the families was derived through an analysis of documentation from various sources such as family profiles, family information and consent forms, family initial surveys, a FIT together project referral form, a family information personal details form, and a FIT together checklist. The contextual data was utilised to develop appropriate interventions to assist families to achieve specific goals. The table below summarises the data collection tools and the content.

FAMILY	DATA COLLECTION TOOL	DATA TOOL HEADINGS
1	<i>Family Profile</i>	Parent details, cultural identity, legal status, children's details, calls for service, current concerns/situation, education synopsis, family interests
	<i>Family Information and Consent Form</i>	Parent Details, Cultural Identity, Legal Status, Children details, FIT Together Checklist, Family details including physical health, mental health, medical issues and an assessment of the person determining whether they are <i>stuck, accepting help, believing, learning or self-reliant</i> , a description of family connections and peer and friendship networks, any safety concerns working with the family, notes/comments, Family consent, worker agency agreement
	<i>Family Initial Survey</i>	Participant details, Family details which include responses to questions about wellbeing, physical disruption, emotional problems, number of conflicts or disagreements, number of times family did something nice together, number of compliments among family members, number of social outings, amount of stress in the family, the amount of time physical health or emotional problems interfered with social activities, Family Consent, Worker Agency Agreement
	<i>Consent Form: FIT Together Activities for Families</i>	Participant's name, date of birth and gender, participation, agreement and consent
	<i>Letter of Participation</i>	Highlighted milestones achieved to date.
2	<i>Family Information and Consent Form</i>	Parent details, cultural identity, legal status, children's details, FIT Together Checklist, Family Details, services family is involved with, living situation, financial resources, health, risk factors, participation agreement, Participation Agreement and

		Consent, Family Consent, Worker Agency Agreement
3	Family Profile	Parent details, cultural identity, legal status, children details, Supporting Agency Contacts, Survey questions and results, current concerns/situation, background information, incident summary, client instructions, family interests (nil recorded), Education synopsis
4	No Available Documentation	
5	FIT Together Project Referral	Parent details, ethnicity, language, religion, arrival date in Australia, Family members, cultural background, parental capacity, housing/accommodation, information on each child
6	Family Profile	Parent details, cultural identity, legal status, children's details, Calls for service, Synopsis including agency Workers Safety, housing/accommodation, education, cultural background, parental capacity, Children's wellbeing, Family interests (nil recorded)
	Fit Together Project Referral	Same information as above under differing proforma headings
7	Family Profile	Parent details, cultural identity, legal status, children's details, calls for service, current concerns/situation, education synopsis, family interests, family goals, family project
	Family Information	Parent details, cultural identity, legal status, children's details, FIT Together checklist, services the person is involved with, living situation, financial resources, health, risk factors, participation agreement and consent form, family consent and worker agency agreement
	Family Initial Survey	Participant details, Family details which include responses to questions about wellbeing, physical disruption, emotional problems, number of conflicts or disagreements, number of

		times family did something nice together, no of compliments among family members, number of social outings, amount of stress in the family, the amount of time physical health or emotional problems interfered with social activities, Family Consent, Worker Agency Agreement
8	No Documentation	

For those families accepted into the FIT Together project, information gathering occurs. A Family Initial Survey (FIS) is undertaken and family members' details, synopsis of current concerns or situation, education synopsis, Family Information and Consent Form and family interests are collated to build a Family Profile. The Family Profile is shared with the family's contracted service provider.

The FIS asks for views about the family's health. The survey includes such items as a general rating of the family's current health and wellbeing, activities the family may undertake during a typical day and how the family's current wellbeing limits involvement in the activities, whether or not the family has had difficulties with regular daily activities as a result of physical disruption over the past month and whether or not the family has had difficulties with regular daily activities as a result of emotional problems over the past month. Further items required responses around occasions of family conflict, family members complimenting each other, number of occasions the family participated in a physical activity together and the frequency the family has done something nice together. Over the past month, the degree to which stress interfered with the family and the amount of time the family's physical health or emotional challenges have interfered with social activities were rated on a five-point scale.

Details of family members including date of birth, cultural identity and status with child safety and/ the youth justice system (if applicable) and calls for service were documented, and a synopsis of current concerns / situation outlined.

The Family Information and Consent Form was used by Cairns Safer Streets to prepare information relating to any supports currently in place for the family. Families consent for their personal information to be disclosed for the purpose of improving current circumstances, understanding they can withdraw their consent in writing or verbally at any time. The Worker Agency Agreement acknowledged the FIT Together project had been explained to the family and that relevant family information was disclosed.

An analysis of the available documentation reveals a lack of consistency in the types of data collected from the families and a variance in the forms used to collect the data. The variance of documentation collected on each family ranges from two families who have no available documentation to one family who had information collected through four data collection tools. Four of the project's eight families have a family profile. However, the headings of the profile and information sought differed from family to family. For example, one family profile included survey results and client instructions while another family had no survey results or client instructions but had information on family goals and

family projects. The content entered under the heading Client Instructions were case notes of a family visit and did not refer to instructions. In another scenario, one family had stated project goals. However, the goals were single words that were not measurable or defined. Of the four families with profiles, two families had content entered against their interests as a family. Of the eight families, one had a profile heading of Parental Capacity. However, the heading was undefined, and it is unclear how the content written under this heading related to capacity.

Two families completed an initial survey. As part of the survey. They signed a written consent form to participate in the project. Two families had a FIT Together Project Referral. One family completed a *FIT Together Checklist*, and another family completed a similar checklist within the Family Profile. Two families completed differing versions of the Family information and Consent Form. One family completed a form that collected information on the family's mental health, physical health, medical needs, and an assessment of the family. The assessment used unclear terms such as, "*stuck, accepting help, believing, learning or self-reliant*". The second family completed a different version of the Family Information and Consent Form. This form was the same as the Family Information Form, the only difference being the title.

It can be argued that there is a repetition of data collected on several forms. For example, an analysis of data contained under the Family Profile, FIT Together Project Referral and Family Initial Survey all require participant/parent details, family details and information on cultural identity. The Family Initial Survey and the Family Information and Consent Form both required a signed Worker Agency Agreement. In another case one family had a Family Information form and another a Family Information and Consent Form which collect identical information.

A detailed analysis of the documentation collected on each of the families indicates a high level of diversity among the Families in the FIT Together project in terms of family structure, ethnicity, language, number of children, age range of participants, level of education, employment status, and their current concerns or situation. Family structures include sole parents, stepfamilies, same sex partners, heterosexual partners, unmarried partners, and married partners. The families were diverse in their place of birth and ethnicity. Three families, one Aboriginal and two Caucasian, originated from Cairns. Two families arrived in Australia from refugee camps in Africa where they lived for 9 and 12 years respectively and one arrived from Myanmar. For one family, the available anecdotal information was that the parents were biracial and for two families, there was no background information. One family arrived in Australia on a United Nations ID Card and two families arrived on a visa subclass 200. Three of the families in FIT Together spoke English as a first and only language. By comparison, three of the families spoke a dialect of Swahili, and the parents had little or no English. One family spoke Burmese, Arakanese, Thai, Malay, and requires an interpreter when communicating with English speakers. The size of the families ranged from two to eight children. The parents who commenced the FIT Together project ranged from 26 to 56 years old, and the combined thirty-two children and young people in FIT Together were aged between 3 and 21 years old. Of the compulsory school aged children, three had an ADHD diagnosis, one an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis, and one had a mental health plan.

Among the families, there was a range of documented concerns and situations. One concern shared by several families, was the sense of limited family and community connectedness. Five families never participated in social activities as a family and as a result felt alienated from the community. Two families cited an escalation in tensions and conflict among family members resulting in family stress as an inhibitor to social activities. One family felt judged because of the illegal behaviour of one of its members and preferred not to connect with the community. Another family struggled to function as a family unit and did not have the resources to access activities beyond the home. A single parent with a serious medical condition was medically and financially unable to accompany the children on social outings. For two families, COVID-19 impacted their resettlement project which in turn negatively impacted their connection to community.

Five families raised concerns about their accommodation. One family was in a cycle of eviction and living with relatives. Another lived in a high set home with a large yard and, due to a medical condition, had difficulty accessing the house and struggled to maintain the yard. One family lived in a caravan park in dense living conditions. By comparison, another family lived in overcrowded conditions while another family was at risk of homelessness due to a repeated inability to pay the rent on time.

## **12.5 Education**

At the initial interview, some parents volunteered information about their educational background. Eight parents had no formal schooling, one parent completed 3 years of formal schooling, and several completed the compulsory years of schooling. One parent had no formal schooling but valued education as a pathway for his children's future in Australia. Two parents from the same family attended their children's school regularly to watch events and participate in parent teacher oral reporting with an interpreter.

With regard to the education of the children, there was some background information provided in the documentation under the heading education synopsis. An education synopsis based on Education Queensland's OneSchool data system was provided for all family members enrolled in a state school. The personalised learning data described characteristics such as level of adjustment, learning difficulties, disengagement from learning, school refusal and behaviour. Within each characteristic was a focus area, for example, curriculum, learning environment, social/emotional wellbeing and health and personal care. Each focus area explained the impact and described the adjustment/strategies/skill development for intervention.

## **12.6 School Challenges**

Two, two year old children attended FIT Together. One was in day care two full days per week and the other ceased day-care when an older sibling commenced Prep. The child did not engage in community playgroups or with peers. Twenty-three children and young people in the FIT Together project attended school. Eleven were in the primary sector and twelve in the secondary sector. They were enrolled in state schools in the Cairns West suburbs and all except two children stated they were happy at school.

Despite being happy to attend school twenty-one of the entire cohort experienced a range of challenges. One primary aged student found that learning the English language

was a barrier and had difficulty paying attention. The student had a poor working memory and found handwriting a difficult task due to undeveloped fine motor skills.

Another student had an attendance rate significantly below the minimum standard (85%) for Education Queensland, and his absenteeism was unexplained. The student had an intellectual impairment and was supported by a personalised learning support plan with substantial adjustments. The student experienced difficulty with social and emotional regulation leading to a number of behaviour incidents. These incidents included disruptions in class, physical misconduct, misconduct involving an object and verbal abuse.

A second student had an attendance rate significantly below the minimum standard for Education Queensland and most absences were unexplained. The student was happy when at school, abided by the school's behaviour code and applied himself to the curriculum.

One student became the oldest sibling to attend primary school when an older brother moved to secondary school. The student felt pressure from the expectation to care for her younger sibling who had commenced prep.

Over half the students attending primary school were referred to home tutoring. Parents were unable to assist with homework tasks due to their English language competency and / or their own absence of formal education.

Finally, one prep age student cried for long periods of time throughout the school day because he missed his mother. The student had limited opportunity to be involved in under 5 years (age appropriate) activities due to COVID-19.

Over half of the students who attended secondary school participated in the school based EALD project. All students benefited from additional intensive support to improve their English comprehension and were referred for home tutoring support. One student could not write his name and was at risk of falling into a cycle of welfare dependency.

Another student had a history of disengagement from school due to learning difficulties and behaviour challenges. Another had a history of infrequent school attendance, non-compliance with school routines and a refusal to participate in class. One female who was very close to her older sibling, stated that her older sibling looked out for her at school and would not attend school if her older sibling was not attending.

One student was older than his peers, and presented with personal and emotional wellbeing needs. The student felt burdened by his siblings when they were struggling and responded by distancing himself from the family and increasing time spent with peers in the community.

Five of the students did not participate in extracurricular activities because of their home location. One student with a primary school suspension history related to angry physical outbursts, had difficulty interacting with peers and accessing new places.

The female students assumed responsibility for the care of young siblings and domestic chores such as cooking and cleaning.

## 12.7 Employment

Three parents in the FIT Together project were in paid employment. One worked night shifts as a baker while the other worked away from home as a fruit picker. Two parents were actively seeking employment however their English language proficiency was a perceived barrier, as they required an interpreter. The male parent was told in a job interview that he would have to be proficient in English to obtain employment as a builder. He stated:

*They know I had experience in building but now I have to wait until I get better at speaking English before I have a chance”.*

*The length of formal schooling is not a determinant of employment. Some parents had no formal schooling and some who had completed formal schooling work in paid employment. Conversely, some with no formal schooling, and some who had completed their formal schooling were unemployed.*

## 12.8 Services Involved

Background information on the involvement of other services was available for six of the eight families. Five of these families had interactions with Child Safety at the time of their involvement in the FIT Together project. It is unclear if the orders were for one child or all children in the family. It is also unclear if the orders were current. Child Safety received a notification for one family that was referred on and actioned through another organisation. One families' involvement with child safety included referral to the Evolve Therapeutic Services. Of the families involved with child safety, one had all the children removed from the family and within 2 months, the children returned to their parents on probation.

One family received a service from Act for Kids, an organisation delivering therapeutic and support services to children and families who had experienced or were at risk of harm. This was due to a history of disagreements between the parents and concerns for the safety of the children when one parent looked after them for long periods of time.

Four of the six families received a service from Centacare. Centacare provided tele support to one family during COVID-19. It provided a service to a family with a child in the Humanitarian Settlement activity. Centacare facilitated a COVID-19 wellbeing activity of peer support attended by one parent. One family used Centacare services for everyday needs. This included accessing health and other services, understanding obligations to pay invoices on time, understanding COVID-19 restrictions and overcoming language barriers. Centacare brokered the services of a Refugee Health Nurse for one family.

During COVID-19, one family received tele support from the Cairns African Association. The Cairns African Association also provided in house homework support and assistance with correspondence from school. One of the providers observed:

*They're getting letters from school and the parents and students have little to no idea how to read them. I remember I came here once and there was going to be a school outing and the kids had a piece of paper. The parents weren't sure when the outing was and what to do with the paper. I read the paper to the students and parents and explained it had to be signed before anyone could attend the outing.*



Youth workers from the Cairns African Association were facilitating a resilience activity with a male secondary school aged student.

No families had children or young people on Youth Justice orders. However, one family was known to Queensland Police Services. Four families accessed interpreter services to navigate the community in addition to relying on younger family members who spoke English.

## **12.9 Interventions**

Contracts were offered to four organisations to deliver FIT Together activities to eight families. There was no rationale in the documentation as to why specific providers were chosen to support each of the eight families. Harbrow Mentoring was contracted to work with three families while, the Cairns African Association aided two families. Dee's Department, Grooming and Self Care supported two families, and Phoenix Sport and Culture Club worked with one family. Anecdotal information derived from members of the Cairns African Association highlighted that this organisation was chosen to work with African families due to common language and cultural knowledge. However, a non-African organisation was selected to work with an African family also. Dee's Department, Grooming and Self Care was contracted to work with families because of the provider's, "emotional warmth and good communication skills". However, there is no anecdotal or written documentation that explains why Harbrow Mentoring and Phoenix Sport and Culture were contracted to the families they worked with.

One family entered the FIT Together project in 2020 and was recorded as being in the project for six months. Within one month of being in the project, suspension of the FIT Together activity delivery for the family occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic and concerns for the parent's health. The project never resumed. It is unknown why the FIT Together project ceased for two families who entered the project in 2021 and remained for 10 months and five months respectively. A further two families entered the FIT Together project in 2021 and remained in the project for one month. One family made the decision to discontinue their involvement in the project. The second family did not commence FIT Together activities as the provider assigned to work with the family ceased employment. It is unknown if there were attempts to assign another provider to work with the family. Another family entered the project in 2021 and remained for 13 months. The provider of the FIT Together activities gave feedback that "the family has progressively responded positively in the project" and the decision was made to cease delivery. In 2022, one family commenced FIT Together and remained in the project for two months until the inaugural funding ended.

The only way of determining the effectiveness of an intervention is to measure its outcomes in relation to the aims or intent of the intervention. To achieve this requires consistency in recording data over time based on several reliable data collection tools. An analysis of the documentation available shows an overall lack of consistency in recording key data about the contexts of the eight families. Except for two cases, the overall problem persists in attempting to extrapolate data about the aims of each of the interventions, the rationale as to why providers were selected to work with families and a lack of data about the outcomes of each intervention. Generally, this is because there are large gaps in the recording of data as the intervention proceeded and in some cases, no notes or records

were available about why some of the interventions suddenly ceased. There are numerous examples that underline the gaps in data collection. One family who worked with a provider for ten months had interventions recorded as project updates, which are found in the Family Profile. The updates take the form of short paragraphs written over 4 months with entries ranging from 1 per month to 8 per month. It is unclear the interventions and outcomes for 6 of the 10 months. One family in the project for 11 months has a report from the provider that contains a six-sentence paragraph with five photographs.

In another example, there is no data in the form of reports from the providers for two of the families. The only existing data is based on anecdotal conversations with Cairns Safer Streets while in another situation the only discernible data is in the form of one email consisting of six undated dot points from a provider who was employed to work with a family for 2 hours per week over thirteen months. For both families, there are no provider reports. The most comprehensive and complete records exist in relation to two families where extensive provider notes are entered on the FIT Together journal notes proforma under family activities and contacts. These complement the detailed provider updates that enhanced insights into interactions with the family and comments on the types of activity and outcomes.

Despite the stated limitations, an account of the perceived types of interventions and outcomes for each family group is outlined in the next section. These accounts can only be partial as it is based on what was available to the evaluation team and includes data from an analysis of journal notes or updates from providers, anecdotal information based on conversations with Cairns Safer Streets as well as members of the African Association and teachers. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted by the evaluation team with three of the families.

There is evidence to suggest that some of the interventions impacted positively on the family members. For one of the first families in the FIT project, the child's school assisted the mother by suggesting she make contact with the coordinator of the project. The coordinator worked with the family to develop a plan to address the major issues affecting the functionality of the family unit. Part of the plan consisted of a therapeutic questionnaire that the coordinator worked through with the family allowing them to jointly identify the major issues that were affecting the successful functioning of the family. The immediate issue identified in the plan was to find the family stable accommodation. With the assistance of the representative from the Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW) the family was relocated to a three-bedroom home.

Family members also agreed that identifying strategies for re-establishing communication among the family was paramount. In addition, there was acknowledgement that past emotional challenges had reduced the opportunities for the family to engage in positive structured activities together. The discussion then turned to the identification of initiatives where the family could regain connections with their community through their involvement in pro social activities with others. During these sessions, one parent stated that the coordinator could; *“see I was depressed and stuff about the kids not doing things on weekends, and I was sitting home all the time not doing stuff, and the kids became little electronic people”*

The culmination of this process resulted in the coordinator working with a service provider and partners who could assist the family to achieve the aims of the plan. A Cairns mentoring provider agreed to meet with the family to discuss a strategy for re-connecting them through enjoyable activities in the local community. The provider succeeded in identifying the major barriers such as a lack of money to purchase fuel, which prevented the family from socialising. The provider suggested a trial whereby a fishing and picnic activity would be organised every Saturday. This included the provision of transport to and from the venue. After a few weeks, the father of the children also started to attend. This aided in further social connectedness between the children and their father. At the same time the family was contacted by the Maraway in Cairns West. Staff at the Maraway assisted the family to access services such as computing, writing resumes, gaining access to the school bus project, and assisting the mother to gain her long term goal of passing her learner driver test. Additionally, the Maraway assisted the youngest son to set up a small recycling business at the hub.

There was evidence that the Family Intervention Trial was successful in addressing some of the major barriers that negatively impact this family. As part of the initial plan, the mother kept a daily journal to plan activities and document some of the positive changes that occurred in terms of increased communication and interactions among the family members. The mother observed that her sons were beginning to share some of the household chores such as sweeping the floors and clearing the dishes after a meal without prompting. Additionally, the family was now less withdrawn and more engaged with each other due to an increase in family social outings and interactions with community agencies such as the Maraway. The mother stated that her participation in the intervention had broadened her awareness of community organisations and she now knew to whom she could turn if she required assistance. She also observed that her self-esteem and confidence had increased particularly after she had successfully passed her drivers' test, which now allows her the independence to undertake daily tasks such as transporting her children to school. Her elation in passing the drivers' test is evident when she stated, *"Knowing that I passed it was like this huge load was lifted off my shoulders. I was so wrapped. It was like this little girl in me came out. I just jumped for joy. I was literally like I passed it, I passed it, Yay!"*

The family's increased engagement with other agencies benefited other members of the family also. The second son joined the SPAYC recreational activities in a nearby park, which increased his network of friends and connectivity with other adults who conducted the project. The youngest son was supported by the Maraway to set up a family recycling activity which was aimed at reinforcing positive values associated with responsibility and accountability.

The mother was able to identify the period when she felt that she no longer required the support of the FIT project. She spoke about her increased resilience and confidence in being able to better deal with challenging events in her life and recalls the day that she informed the coordinator that she felt the family was at a point where they could move on without the day to day support of the project.

*I said you know we're in a good spot now. Is there another family you need to work with that are worse off than us?" In a moment of reflection, she acknowledged that the family could require some assistance at times but she*

*now felt confident that she knew who she could turn to if she felt she needed assistance. "I said go; I'll call you if I need you. That's exactly how it is now. It's just I'll give him a call and let him know I'm still here - I'm still alive, I'm still doing good."*

Another family was assisted for 13 months receiving tele support during the period of COVID-19 restrictions. This support was described as welfare check-ins. The provider assisted a parent to attend a community organisation project around healthy relationships. A child in the family participated in physical activities with a provider and his two daughters. There is no evidence which documents the regularity or duration of the activities. Walks along the Cairns Esplanade, games of tag, bike riding, tennis, hoola hooping, soccer and minor ball games are some of the activities undertaken. The father described the graduated forms of intervention by the provider as, *"The way he explained is that first he learned what kind of sports she was interested in. Then he approached step by step. Then he made her play with his kids."*

The provider reported that over the 13 month intervention period, the child had grown in confidence to build relationships in the community. The activities were communicated by the provider in English, and the child's conversational English improved from not speaking in English to being able to count, name body parts, call the names of players and give directions such as pass the ball. Her father reported that a direct outcome of the intervention was that she talks a lot now and that her network of friends has expanded to the point whereby she started receiving invitations to other children's birthday parties. The family's social networks have also expanded through interactions with the parents of other children. For example, the family successfully hosted a children's birthday party at their home, *"Yes, we really enjoyed the party. She sang happy birthday when she invited her friends here"*.

The provider reported the child's engagement in terms of eager, keen, and an increased ability to listen. Over time in the project, the mother joined the activities with her child and the provider commented, *"there was even that bonding relationship by having fun together"*.

It appears that the intervention has produced some positive outcomes for the family and has assisted them with gaining confidence and a future orientation in terms of a life in Australia. The father commented, *"My education is very, very limited, but I don't want my kids to become like this... I'm the father ... they don't need to worry about money. I want them to be very, very educated persons."*

During the 10 months in the FIT Together project, two interventions were identified for one African family from brief case notes supplied by the provider. The first intervention involved the mother of the family attending a two day parenting workshop organised by the Cairns African Association. However, there is scant information available in terms of whether the project assisted the parent in becoming a more effective parent. There is a comment from the provider stating that the mother was happy because she met some new ladies. The other identifiable intervention involved the provider assisting the family to find a larger house. Brief provider notes state that the outcomes of this intervention involved, *"This month was very hectic as the family is very busy looking for a house. I taught them how to*

search the web for houses. We then applied for a few viewings and then we learned how to upload the documents on the phone and send out housing applications”.

The family was successful in finding a larger house and the provider physically helped them move to their new location. The other stated outcome of the intervention was contained in a statement which posits that the family benefited from an increase in life skills such as self-help, initiative, asking for help and communication. However, there is no documentary evidence of these purported increases in life skills attainment and how they were achieved.

An African family consisting of seven children and two parents had provider support through three females from the Cairns African Association. The data about the types of interventions and possible outcomes was obtained through a semi-structured interview with the African Association members in the presence of the mother of the family. The providers were asked how they were chosen to support the family through the coordinator of the FIT project. It appears that their initial involvement with the FIT Together project was around concerns about the parent's inability to liaise with the school about their children's educational needs:

*Why did we choose this family to work with? Well, because part of it – one was education. Because when you have a family where the mum is not – needs that support. That educative support. And the kids don't get to go and do anything because, you know, the leader to take them is the mum, basically. So if that leader is not empowered to be able to take them or allow them to go to these places, because one, it's new, but yet you need someone to lead you out there and that was our role.*

It appears that over time the providers also took over other roles to support the family. For example, one of the young males sustained a serious knee injury that required transport assistance from the provider group:

*Yeah. So then when that family was coming to our project and when we got involved and they started telling us some of the issues and when we heard about the boys knee we thought this is a family that needs much more help. Because the doctor was far away and then she wouldn't know what to do because the father is away. So then this is where we come into play where if the father is away, we fill that gap for the family.*

On other occasions, the providers supported the young children of the family with opportunities to socially connect with other children through participation in sporting activities. On several afternoons a week, the association members transported the children to join SPAYC activities.

*Well, the way the [FIT] projects work is that the African Association, there's many of us. There's the dance crew, which is at Trinity Bay. There's the sporting crew. There's all that. But with some families, it's difficult for their children to participate in these things. So, then some of them are too young, and if you have six, seven, eight, then it's more difficult. So, then we come into where we would come to their houses. We use the hour for walks. So normally I have the*

*kids get their bike and then we go around the neighbourhood. Other times we take the older ones to Space and Place projects in the parks of Cairns West.*

While these initiatives assisted the family in the short term, there is no documented evidence to suggest there were any long term benefits to the family.

One provider had regular weekday contact with a family with activities ranging from 2 to 4 hours per week. The provider assisted the family by having a presence in the children's school. In addition, the provider attempted to engage the parents by initiating contact with community organisations to strengthen the functioning of the family unit. Most of the data is derived from comprehensive journal notes with considered, self-reflective comments by the provider. The provider took an active role in the children's formal education. In addition to transporting the children to and from school most days, the provider spent half a day in the classroom, assisting one of the children with class activities. The provider highlighted the positive benefits of working with the child in an art class, *"I walked in with her to the art class introduced myself to the teacher...The child was extremely well mannered in class and worked with confidence during the activity"*. In other situations, the provider assisted in regulation of a child's behaviours. One reflexive journal entry states that a source of bad behaviour from one of the children may relate to her desire to gain more attention from her mother, *"I can clearly see that the child wants more attention from her mother and seeking a close relationship with her mother which is why she is acting up"*. Two afternoons per week, the provider transports the children to a SPAYC activity as described in the journal entry that states, *"The parents are happy for them to attend SPAYC. This will be great for the kids to join in the project"*. With the permission of the parents, the provider also met with the school's guidance officer and a deputy principal regarding the children's academic progress and talked regularly with the children's teachers when delivering the children to their classrooms. *"I suggested that I could take the kids to school on Wednesday so that I could talk to the guidance officer and talk about the children's grades"*.

In an additional role, the provider attempted to engage the parents with services within the wider community. The provider contacted relevant organisations and services that could provide support to the family. For example, there were plans to take the parents to the Maraway to meet the manager and discuss what supports were available for the family, *"I asked the parents if they knew about the services provided by the Maraway and how they provide support for disadvantaged families and of the frozen foods they give to families"*

On occasions, the provider organised for bread and other food items to be sent home from school with the children. A pamphlet with information on desexing and immunisation subsidies for pets was also sourced by the provider and given to the parents.

Social activities, that were designed to strengthen family unity through shared experiences, were initiated by the provider. These included locating information about an upcoming church BBQ close to the home and details about the end of school term Cairns Safer Streets supersession. The provider also offered to organise an afternoon of activities for neighbourhood families to give the children an opportunity to play with other children. Throughout the course of this intervention, the provider found time to listen to the parents about communication difficulties and behavioural concerns about their children. Some

strategies were offered to the parents on how to manage their children's behaviours. The outcomes of this intervention were unclear as the overall goals were stated as single words, which gave limited insight into the intended goals of the project.

For one family, the only data collected was in journal notes constructed by the provider. There are no stated goals in the journal notes but there are several tenuous outcomes based in the subjective views of the provider. It appears that the intervention centred on supporting a single mother and her family through interventions aimed at improving the family's functional day to day activities such as shopping, finding medical support options, locating transport options, and improving communication among family members. The first challenge involved assisting the family to find alternative forms of transport for a young family member so she could attend school. The provider contacted Centrelink who agreed to assist with transporting the young person to school. This in turn reduced stress on the mother as contained in this field note, *"They were happy to tell me that Centrelink will be organising someone to pick up the young child through one of their services. This was a huge relief for the mother and less stress on her and the family"*.

The second stated intervention consisted of the provider taking the eldest daughter on a shopping trip to the local market to provide her with a lesson in selecting fruit and vegetables in the most cost-effective way. The outcome of the visit was a perceived newfound confidence in the daughter who now felt empowered to shop for the family and reduce the stress on her mother who has limited physical mobility. During the same day, the provider assisted the daughter to buy prescription medicine for her mother, *"she can now bargain shop and make better purchases at the markets... she learnt about prescription medication and that this medication cannot be purchased over the counter"*.

The third intervention involved the provider transporting and accompanying the mother on a hospital visit followed by a visit to the local internet provider. An outcome of this activity included the mother feeling better about having attended her appointment and feeling comfortable in confiding with the provider about her health issues, *"She felt comfortable opening up and talking to me about her health concerns and was able to think about some solutions by obtaining help from her family"*

The journal notes concluded on a positive note by observing that the family was functioning more effectively and that the children were taking on more responsibility at home in terms of household chores. This appears to have reduced some of the stress on the mother of the family as a sole parent.

Finally, one family who spent 6 months in the project received support from the Department of Housing representative on Cairns Safer Streets. The family relocated to a low set fully secured unit near the children's school. Due to an absence of documentation, it is unknown if any FIT Together activities occurred. For another family, there are no records of intervention or reported outcomes. Therefore, it is unknown if they commenced FIT.

## **12.10 Evaluation Highlights**

1. There is evidence interventions with two families improved their functionality as a family unit and social connectivity to the community in the short term.
2. Two families were successfully assisted in finding alternative accommodation.

### **12.11 Continuous Improvement**

1. Consider membership of the project team to avoid potential conflicts of interest.
2. Develop and document a rationale for allocating a provider to a family.
3. Document the FIT Together referral process including why families are referred and the decision-making around their acceptance into the project.
4. Develop and consistently implement a plan that articulates what data is collected, how it is collected, when it is collected, including post project, and by whom.
5. Review and refine data collection tools to minimise duplication of information.
6. Co-develop measurable goals prior to the commencement of the intervention, to measure the short-term and long term impact of interventions.
7. Develop consistency of practice and clear expectations regarding the providers' reports to Cairns Safer Streets.
8. Build the capability of providers to report family interventions aligned to the family's goals.
9. Ensure all relevant documentation, agreements and consents are completed prior to the commencement of the family intervention



### 13. Summary and Conclusions

This chapter of the report provides a broad summary and conclusions about the SPAYC+PLACE program based on an analysis of the individual projects in the preceding chapters. The summary and conclusions directly relate to the five aims outlined in the evaluation framework in chapter five of the report. The aims of the evaluation were:

- to identify if there was an increased sense of social connectedness and wellbeing among project participants.
- to gain the perceptions of coordinators, service providers and partners in terms of the program's success for engaging the participants and enhancing their physical and psychological wellbeing.
- to analyse the levels of engagement and participation among the participants within and across the suite of projects.
- to elicit whether an individual's involvement in the various activities led to increased levels of commitment, attachment and prosocial behaviours while addressing crime and recidivism.
- to ascertain whether families have experienced an increased sense of cohesion, social connectivity, and wellbeing due to their engagement with the projects.

A response to each of the five evaluation aims is detailed in the remainder of this chapter based on the analysis of the data collected over the duration of the evaluation.

#### **To identify if there was an increased sense of social connectedness and wellbeing among program participants.**

One of the positive outcomes of the SPAYC+PLACE program is that young people gained an increased sense of social connectivity through interactions with other youth and that participation in the various projects promoted a sense of increased wellbeing among the cohort. Data derived from several research instruments including the survey, non-participant observations and individual interviews supports this assertion. This resonates with previous studies cited in the research literature, which reported that increased social connectivity reduced the likelihood of individual's becoming alienated. Social connectivity assists young people to obtain a sense of belonging as well as companionship with other youth through participating in group activities (Hoy, Nicholson, and Brown, 2015).

There is strong evidence to suggest that many young people experienced an increase in self-esteem and pro social values due to the positive relationships they established with the facilitators and providers who planned and conducted the activities. Young people reported being more focused on their academic work due to their participation in the program. This was confirmed during interviews with some parents. Young people and parents also reported an increase in communication between parents and siblings, which positively contributed to the overall functionality of the family. The case of an intervention within the FIT project by one provider who worked with a family for nearly one year to restore communication and enhance the relationships among family members, is one example of increased social connectedness among participants due to their participation

in the program. Data obtained from parents also highlighted that their children's self-esteem increased as they gained fitness and that participation in some activities increased young people's self-discipline. Parents describe this in terms of eating healthy foods, following daily routines, and keeping regular sleep patterns. In turn, this had positive effects on retaining family harmony and reducing conflict between parents and children. The karate activity in the SPAYC project is an example of increased self-discipline among the participants by gaining control over their responses and emotions. This resulted in greater harmony among family members.

Participation in sports and recreational activities had the added advantage of extending the social networks of individuals through experiences that took place outside the three Cairns West suburbs. Interviews with SPAYC Cadets reported that exposure to role models from various professional organisations as well as experiences with volunteering assisted them in creating new social networks. This in turn increased opportunities to new educational and career pathways. The experiences of volunteering also saw some youth continue to "give back" to their communities through altruistic work such as assisting disadvantaged youth and volunteering with not-for-profit organisations.

**To gain the perceptions of coordinators, service providers and partners in terms of the program's success for engaging the participants and enhancing their physical and psychological wellbeing.**

Of the 323 consultations undertaken over the two-year evaluation, 67 semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of the Cairns Safer Streets working group, providers, facilitators, and partner organisations who supported the SPAYC+PLACE program. Additional data was obtained from informal anecdotal conversations and unobtrusive observations of activities. There was a shared perception that most young people enjoyed participating in the activities and that the program was inclusive in terms of the provision of a range of diverse activities. These were offered across several venues across the school year, including school holiday periods. Activities were also offered online during the brief period of lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic. It could also be argued that the SPAYC+PLACE program engaged young people from low socio-economic backgrounds who otherwise would not be able to access organised sporting or recreational activities due to the high costs associated with fees, sports apparel, and availability of transport to venues.

The inclusive nature of the SPAYC+PLACE program also served as a mechanism for creating a better understanding among the culturally diverse groups in the three Cairns West suburbs. The experiences of young African females who participated in the soccer competition in the Parks to Clubs project is a good example of how participation in sport serves to empower young females by overcoming defined gender roles based on their parents traditional cultural and religious beliefs (Truskewycz et. al, 2022). The shared experiences through dance and movement activities among elders and younger people across several multi-cultural groups in the Our SPAYC project is another example of the program's potential for creating a better understanding and enhancing racial tolerance among the diverse cultural groups in Cairns West.

While enjoyment in the activities was perceived as a desirable outcome, there was a shared observation that participation in sporting activities provided opportunities for

providers and facilitators to reinforce pro social values such as self-discipline and resilience with the young participants. Providers and facilitators stressed that in addition to coaching young people in the skills associated with the sporting or recreational activities, there were opportunities to mentor and provide advice to young people about issues that were affecting their personal lives. There were numerous accounts where providers and facilitators mentored young people and intervened at critical junctures in their lives to divert them from potentially entering the juvenile justice system or disengaging from education. Narratives drawn from the interview data contain numerous examples where interventions by providers, facilitators and volunteers were instrumental in supporting at risk youth who lived in precarious home environments and highlights the positive effects of mentoring that occurred across the spectrum of the program. However, while most people saw themselves as providing some form of mentoring ranging from brief one on one conversations to formal activities with larger groups, providers and facilitators may benefit from formalised training as suggested by Smink (1999: 25). Smink saw the benefits of offering a range of training sessions to providers whereby the coordinators present; "the program goals and objectives, institutional policies and procedures, mentor requirements, resources available and general program operating procedures to new recruits before they start working with young people".

The data indicates that younger facilitators require additional assistance and mentoring from more experienced providers and coordinators. During the evaluation, there are several documented incidents where facilitators failed to engage the whole group of participants. This was due to instances of inappropriate behaviour that threatened to derail the entire activity. Facilitators could also benefit from additional assistance in managing large groups of youth in heavily subscribed activities such as soccer in SPAYC.

Capturing participation data in a similar way would assist in recording accurate levels of engagement across all activities. It was observed that there were various methods employed to capture attendance data such as on mobile phones or via checklists and that attendance was often recorded at different times by providers and facilitators. There are concerns that the accuracy of the attendance data was compromised due to inconsistency around the recording late arrivals and in some cases failing to capture young people who left before the activity had concluded.

It is also important to recognise the role of volunteers who provided resources and forms of in-kind support across all of the activities. There are many examples of individuals who paid for resources out of their own funds or spent additional time in ensuring that young people felt included and were able to participate with their peers across an array of activities. Interview data highlighted many examples whereby volunteers donated sporting attire, transported young people to and from venues, provided young people with food and in some cases gave them the opportunities to undertake part-time work as facilitators in some of the SPAYC activities.

### **To analyse the levels of engagement and participation among the participants within and across the suite of projects.**

A detailed analysis of available participation rates for each project is contained in chapters seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven and twelve of this report. An overview of the available data provided to the evaluation team indicates that there has been an increase

in participation rates and engagement in most of the SPAYC+PLACE activities from 2019 until July 2022. The biggest increase in participation rates occurred in the SPAYC project between 2019 and the end of term two in 2022. Of young people, 100% graduated from the four intakes of SPAYC Cadets within the same period, and over one hundred youth participated in Parks to Clubs.

Participation in activities was further fostered by the creation of pathways between activities. For example, there were numerous reports of youth who had participated in SPAYC activities and then transitioned to Parks to Clubs and in other scenarios there were young people who completed SPAYC+ and graduated from SPAYC Cadets. Several graduates from SPAYC Cadets made successful transitions into traineeships, further study, or employment due to their successful completion of the six month project. By comparison, activities such as dance in Our SPAYC, provided pathways to build confidence among migrant women who had not previously been free to enjoy interactive opportunities with other women. Exposure to sporting activities in Parks to Clubs resulted in some young people gaining selection into representative teams in codes such as hockey, soccer, netball, and rugby league.

**To elicit whether an individual's involvement in the various projects and activities has led to increased levels of commitment, attachment and pro social behaviours while addressing crime and recidivism.**

There is evidence that the SPAYC+PLACE activities led to increased levels of commitment and attachment among young people due to the high participation rates recorded across most of the projects. Interview data, survey data, and recorded observations indicate that many young people attended activity sessions regularly while high numbers of youth attended multiple activities during the week. Many young people benefited from the mentoring experiences facilitated by the providers. There is evidence that positive mentoring experiences resulted in some young people adopting social connectedness behaviours at school in terms of self-regulating their behaviour to avoid conflict with other students. The adoption of pro social behaviours reduced the likelihood of these students receiving a disciplinary absence and/or disengaging from education.

Data collected from a small sample of primary school students gave an indication that participation in the SPAYC activities may have positive personal and educational outcomes for young people. An analysis of education data showed a positive correlation between participation in sporting activities and an increase in scores relating to student's personal and social capabilities. These capabilities include recognising and regulating emotions, developing empathy for others, and understanding relationships, establishing, and building positive relationships, making responsible decisions, working effectively in teams, handling challenging situations constructively and developing leadership skills. A larger sample of students across all schools in the Cairns West area would provide a stronger evidence base supporting the assertion that participation in the program results in higher personal and social capability outcomes.

Projects such as SPAYC+ utilised an intervention framework to support families and individuals who were at risk of educational disengagement and/or entering the juvenile justice system. However, there are no recorded outcomes as to the actual numbers of youth who were successfully diverted into pro social pathways because of their

participation in this project. By comparison, the major aim of the FIT project was to provide targeted interventions with families who required support and assistance. There is evidence to suggest that two families out of a total of eight families had successful outcomes due to targeted interventions facilitated by providers. While there is evidence that some of the projects provided successful interventions to assist young people and families there is no available data which indicates that the SPAYC+PLACE program addressed crime or recidivism among young people. This concurs with studies conducted by Bailey (2005) and Morris et al. (2003) who found little evidence to directly link sporting activity to a reduction in crime. However, they stressed that sport and outdoor activities can contribute to an increase in personal development and psychological wellbeing among youth. This is also supported by Carmichael whose literature review conducted in 2008 stated; "it is unrealistic to claim that organised youth sport *alone* can reduce the levels of youth crime in society" (p. 2, emphasis added). This is due to the fact that youth involvement in crime is "complex and multidimensional". (2008, p. 2)

**To ascertain whether families have experienced an increased sense of cohesion, social connectivity, and wellbeing due to their engagement within the program.**

There is some evidence from the data to indicate that families experienced a sense of increased cohesion, social connectivity, and wellbeing due to their engagement in the SPAYC+PLACE program. The documented successful interventions of two of the families in the FIT project are examples where family social connectedness and wellbeing were enhanced while the Our SPAYC project provided opportunities for members of diverse migrant communities to participate in a range of physical activities in a safe environment. Perhaps the most observable forms of community connectivity occurred during the end of term supersessions. These events were well attended by parents and community members who observed the young people participating in several sporting activities. Data obtained through the "one -minute grabs" during the supersession events indicated that parents supported the program because their children enjoyed the activities and felt safer while participating. A strong sense of community connectedness was also fostered during celebrations that acknowledged the success of participants who successfully completed projects. Graduation ceremonies for young people who completed the SPAYC Cadet project were strongly supported by family members and Cairns Safer Streets members to acknowledge the achievements of the young graduates.

Interviews with some of the providers identified concerns about a lack of parental involvement and participation in terms of transporting young people to training venues and volunteering at the sporting venues. Some codes have pro-actively taken steps to encourage more parents to become involved in their children's activities. Soccer now has more African parents attending games, and has successfully engaged some parents to take on coaching and refereeing roles. By comparison, hockey has engaged more Indigenous parents by holding community events at the club on important occasions such as NAIDOC week. It has also been suggested that parental engagement could be further fostered by using other types of community events and adopting other forms of communication to market and increase community awareness about the program.

## 14. References

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