



## To Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the NT

### The case for Prevention as a strategy for addressing Indigenous Detention

This is a submission from CAYLUS, a federally funded anti-petrol sniffing program that has operated in Central Australia since 2002. We are a division of Tangentyere Council, with a steering committee made up of local stakeholders from the region (the NT south of Tennant Creek). CAYLUS applies a community development model to reducing youth substance misuse. More information about CAYLUS is at [www.caylus.org.au/](http://www.caylus.org.au/)

Our work has had success, with the recent Menzies Report indicating a sustained reduction in sniffing in our region of 87.9%<sup>1</sup>. This success was achieved through adopting a two pronged prevention strategy, being Opal fuel as a supply reduction strategy and diversionary youth development programs as a demand reduction strategy.

CAYLUS has been developing youth programs since 2002 as a way of addressing the underlying issues behind substance abuse in remote communities. When CAYLUS started in 2002, there were three youth programs operating across the 20 communities in our region. With the support of local government, NT and federal funding, there are now 20. However, this funding is patchy, often made up of many different grants with different purposes, and in most cases, not ongoing. It is also unfairly distributed, with some communities being well funded and others having minimal funding available, making the support available to youth determined more by geography and history rather than a clear policy to resource this very vulnerable group.

International evidence indicates youth services provide the following positive outcomes,

- increased school attendance
- improved child and maternal health
- better child nutrition
- reduced prevalence of youth substance misuse
- reduced levels of crime
- better uptake of employment opportunities by young people
- local support and coordination for visiting child and family services
- faster and coordinated response to emerging local child welfare issues
- better family and community involvement in child and youth services
- emergency and crisis support for young people and families
- practical support for emerging young community leaders

A full exploration of this evidence<sup>2</sup> is at the following location on the CAYLUS website :  
<http://caylus.squarespace.com/caylusresources/YouthDevelopmentInCentralAus.docx>

---

<sup>1</sup> Monitoring trends in the prevalence of petrol sniffing in selected Australian Aboriginal communities 2011 – 2014 : Final Report, Menzies School of Health Research, Darwin, February 2016, d'Abbs P and Shaw G p6

<sup>2</sup> W Muller, A Strength-Based Approach to Building Resiliency in Youth, Families and Community (2005); W Hammond, Nurturing Resiliency in Youth and Community, Canada (2005); A Kalil, Family Resilience and Good Child Outcomes: An Overview of the Research Literature (2003); Youth Mentoring Network, Building connections for youth mentoring in Aotearoa New Zealand.

As well as these well documented positive effects, one of the main reasons we support youth programs in remote communities is that youth can feel like the state does not have their interests at heart if inadequate services are provided for them. This can create resentment that can express itself in anti-social behaviours, which can result in adverse contact with the law and imprisonment.

Many well-intentioned actions in the youth space can be characterised as “sticks” rather than “carrots”. These include mandatory detention, penalising parents for non attendance at school and suspension of Centrelink payments due to non-attendance at training programs. Youth programs are “carrots” and we note that there is no problem getting young people to voluntarily attend youth programs in our region. These programs provide a space where youth are comfortable and safe. They are places where resources are available if the youth can abide by simple rules relating to sharing, co-operation and mutual respect. They are places where the youth see Indigenous youth workers working on the programs, providing local role models doing achievable activities that benefit their home communities. Unlike schools, these places are not environments where young people can be shamed by failure. They are also places where various services can meet and connect to youth.

We hope the Commission will recommend that

- federal and NT funding be provided so that all Indigenous youth have access to a well resourced youth program in their home community
- youth development services be recognised as essential services when it comes to reducing the over representation of Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system.

Privacy

Blair McFarland  
CAYLUS Operations Manager

Privacy

Tristan Ray  
CAYLUS Project and Policy Manager

---

Bamblett, Muriel., Harrison, Jane. and Lewis, Peter. (2010). Proving Culture and Voice Works: Towards Creating the Evidence Base for Resilient Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children in Australia, *International Journal of Child and Family Welfare*, Vol. 13, Number 1-2, March-June 2010, 98-113. SR Zubrick, SR Silburn, DM Lawrence, FG Mitrou, RB Dalby, EM Blair, J Griffin, H Milroy, JA De Maio, A Cox, & J Li, loc. cit. 2005 The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey, Vol. 2 p.596 Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage 2011 Key Indicators, Productivity Commission, Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, Australian Government, Melbourne

UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund) 2004, Sport, Recreation and Play United Nations Children’s Fund Division of Communication, New York, August.

Fereday, J., MacDougall, C., Spizzo, M., Darbyshire, P. and Schiller, W. 2009, “‘There’s nothing I can’t do — I just put my mind to anything and I can do it’”: A qualitative analysis of how children with chronic disease and their parents account for and manage physical activity’, *BMC Pediatrics*, vol. 9, no. 1, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2636806/?tool=pubmed> (accessed 5 November 2010).

9 Zubrick, S.R., Silburn, S.R., Lawrence, D.M., Mitrou, F.G., Dalby, R.B., Blair, E.M., Griffin, J., Milroy, H., De Maio, J.A., Cox, A. and Li, J. 2005, The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey: The Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Aboriginal Children and Young People, Curtin University of Technology and Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, Perth.

10 Street, G., James, R. and Cutt, H. 2007, ‘The relationship between organised physical recreation and mental health’, *Health Promotion Journal Australia*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 236–239.

ACF (Administration for Children and Families) 2002, Early Head Start Benefits Children and Families: Research Brief, ACF, United States Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C.

Bush, L., McHale, J., Vinden, P., Richer, D., Shaw, D. and Smith, B. 2001, ‘Functions of sport for urban middle school children’, paper presented at the American Psychological Association’s 109th Annual Conference, San Francisco, California, 25 August.

Barber, B.L., Eccles, J.S. and Stone, M.R. 2001, ‘Whatever happened to the jock, the brain, and the Princess: Young adult pathways linked to adolescent activity involvement and social identity’, *Journal of Adolescent Research*, vol. 16, no. 5, September.

Carinduff, S. 2001, Sport and Recreation for Indigenous Youth in the Northern Territory, Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health and the Australian Sports Commission.

[caylus@caylus.org.au](mailto:caylus@caylus.org.au)

08 89 514 236