Youth Justice Reform Select Committee inquiry into youth justice reform in Queensland

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selectability
mental wellbeing and suicide prevention

Evidence-based submission to address youth crime

YOUTH INTERVENTION BIKESHEDS

Funding request

Dear Ms Sandy Bolton,

During a deputation at Community Cabinet in Townsville on 29 October 2023 an informal proposal was presented to the Department of Youth Justice to fund the ongoing operations of selectability's Youth Intervention BikeShed (Youth BikeShed) program. As a follow up to those discussions and for your review and consideration, we present to you a copy of our formal proposal recently sent to the Department of Youth Justice.

Our Youth BikeShed program currently operates in Cairns, Mount Isa, and Rockhampton. We are asking for recurrent annual funding of $2.2M to maintain these youth intervention operations in Cairns, Mount Isa, and Rockhampton and a further $170K recurrent annual funding at each location to implement our Victims of Crime program.

The current Commonwealth funding to deliver the successful Youth BikeSheds in Cairns, Mount Isa and Rockhampton will expire on 30 April 2024 with no opportunity for further funding past this date.

Without further funding our *Youth Bikesheds* will close by 30 April 2024 and our regional communities will be negatively impacted. As described in the attached evaluation report, 93% of young people interviewed who have participated in the program reported that their home circumstances had markedly improved and that there are meaningful activities offered. All participants reported that their involvement in the *Youth BikeShed* changed their afternoon and early evening routine. A high proportion of young people encountered on the streets at night by the *Department of Youth Justice* funded *Fire Project* outreach service attended the program within two weeks. Teachers surveyed reported that school attendance among their disengaged students had substantially increased, with strong improvement in prosocial attitudes and behaviours of the pupils while at school. Further, the local *Youth Justice Service Centre* continues to run a number of programs for young people on orders at the Cairns *Youth Bikeshed* site, with these scheduled programs increasing in frequency since mid-2023.

Separate to the above, and also discussed at Community Cabinet in Townsville, we are seeking funding to develop and deliver a 24/7 Youth Intervention BikeShed in Townsville. Our proposed model aligns with the findings of the Townsville Youth Justice Program Model: Stakeholder Consultation Outcomes report (Queensland Council of Social Services, January 2024).

Our proposal specifically responds to recommendations regarding after-hours services, transport, education, and builds on selectability's history of working in partnership and delivering integrated care.

Importantly, more than 80 agencies and community members recommended a 24/7 youth hub for Townsville. We are asking for recurrent annual funding of $1.9M to deliver a 24/7 model for Townsville, and an additional $170K to implement our Victims of Crime program in Townsville.

Funding request – Youth Intervention BikeSheds

Evidence of how our intervention reinforces strategic **reforms to the youth justice system**, including **supporting victims of crime**, is attached (Attachment 1: Summary of regional efficacy). **Evidence of** *the* **effectiveness** of our Youth BikeSheds is also attached (Attachment 2: Evaluation Report).

Our intervention program provides a safe space for vulnerable young people; increases engagement in education; and enhances wellbeing and resilience. **Young people also report** the program has a positive impact on home relationships and peer associations.

The attachments also demonstrate how the **scalable innovation** of selectability's Youth BikeSheds address the complex and multifaceted issues that contribute to youth offending and victimisation, including those identified by the Premier and you in the recently announced Putting Queensland Kids First strategy. Our history in **stakeholder collaboration** is further evidenced by our partnership with Earlville Shopping Town and the Cairns Youth Justice Service Centre.

selectability has a demonstrated ability to develop, implement and operationalise complex, holistic evidence-based programs in regional, rural, and remote Queensland communities. Our practice involves therapeutic services, counselling, family support, skill building of young offenders, and reengagement in the education system.

selectability is one of the rare Queensland organisations with a skilled workforce who have a clinical and mental health and wellbeing focus, and experience in delivering interventions for young offenders, including support programs for victims of crime.

In August 2021 the Queensland Police Service Deputy Commissioner Mr Mark Wheeler and selectability launched a tailored mental wellbeing support program for Victims of Crime in Townsville, which was the first of its kind in the state. We have a long-term vision and strategy for preventing youth crime and supporting young people.

In summary, we are asking for recurrent annual funding of $2.8M to continue our *Youth Intervention BikeSheds* **(inclusive of a Victims of Crime program) in Cairns, Mount Isa and Rockhampton, and recurrent annual funding of $2.06M to launch a 24/7** *Youth Intervention Bikeshed* **including a Victims of Crime program in Townsville. The countdown is on with only 10 weeks remaining until we will sadly have to close the doors to our existing Youth Bikesheds. We greatly appreciate your sincere consideration of this proposal and support to obtain urgent future funding. We are available to meet at any time to discuss in more detail.**

Yours sincerely,

Debra Burden BBus FIML FAICD

Chief Executive Officer

Sandra Moore BSc, GradDipMgt, MBA, GAICD, FIML

General Manager - Child Safety and Youth Justice

Attachment 1: Summary of Regional Efficacy.

Attachment 2: Independent External Evaluation Report by Dr Shane Boris Pointing.

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YOUTH INTERVENTION BIKESHEDS

Attachment 1: Summary of regional efficacy

Overview

The selectability Youth Intervention BikeSheds (Youth BikeSheds) operate in three regional Queensland communities that face complex and interrelated challenges and require targeted intervention and support; selectability is currently providing this. We are seeking to expand the program to a 24/7 model in Townsville.

The evaluation report (Attachment 2: Evaluation of selectability Cairns Youth Intervention BikeShed), shows the value and impact selectability's Youth BikeShed program delivers by targeting holistic interventions to communities to reduce offending and crime victimisation, and increase social capital, school engagement and social and emotional wellbeing. selectability Youth BikeSheds do this. Ongoing funding and additional resourcing will accelerate these outcomes. **Without further funding our *Youth Bikesheds* will close by 30 April 2024 and our regional communities will be negatively impacted.**

It is well established that early intervention programs, targeting both specific locations and at-risk individuals have the most impact for young people[1,2,3], communities, and funders.

Further, recent Queensland research[4] builds on the intersectionality of place-based disadvantage, service delivery and client needs.

These findings support our holistic approach and provide a roadmap for selectability's unique position to move systemic levers, both statewide and in regional and remote place-based systems.

You can find more information on our Youth BikeSheds HERE

Interrelated need addressed by our holistic approach.

Cairns, Rockhampton, Mount Isa, and Townsville:

- Are each in the top 10% of Queensland communities in terms of chronic offenders who live in these locations and are in the top 5% of such regional communities[1]. On average, each chronic offender costs between $246,872 and $348,121 (2022 dollars), by the time they turn twenty-six. This estimate excludes most mental and physical health costs – costs which selectability's approach also addresses.
- Suffer significant crime victimisation.
- Have a high proportion of juvenile offenders, particularly of the cohort targeted by the selectability Youth BikeShed program.
- Have a significant number and proportion of young people developmentally at risk or vulnerable in all social, emotional, language and communication domains[7]. In the four communities targeted by the Youth BikeShed program, this ranges between 24% and 32% of young people, depending on the domain assessed.

Further, in each of these communities the number and proportion of young people approaching the age of criminal responsibility and who are developmentally vulnerable or at risk is trending upward.

selectability also have an established Well Man program with resources available for young men such as our '26 Steps to Manhood' program and resources.

So is the number and proportion of vulnerable and highly vulnerable young people who have recently passed this age. Funding selectability's innovative and scalable Youth BikeShed program will help mitigate this trend.

Below we outline how the Youth BikeShed program addresses the strategic directions and actions detailed in the:

- Parliamentary Youth Justice Reform Select Committee,
- Youth Justice Strategic Plan,
- Putting Queensland Kids First strategy,
- Yarning for Change; Listen to my Voice (Queensland Family and Child Commission), and
- New Ways for our Families (Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak).

Evidence of *selectability's Youth BikeSheds'* effectiveness.

Attachment Two is an independent evaluation of the methods and results from the Cairns Youth Intervention BikeShed and the outcomes for the young people participating in the activities:

1. more than 1,000 individual young people have accessed the Cairns Youth Intervention BikeShed programs since inception in April 2023. Of these approximately 75% are First Nations peoples, and 55% are boys,
2. participants report that.
    a) the activities provide effective diversion support. Importantly, the perceived safety of the Youth BikeShed space and the provision of food is highly ranked,
    b) a meaningful improvement in their ability to deal with home circumstances, and improvements in peer associations and contacts with police,
    c) some young people explicitly linked engagement in the programs with improved self-esteem and self-efficacy,
3. the Cairns Youth Intervention BikeShed is a platform for collaboration and integration of other services such as Black Chicks Talking and the Barbershop Program by the Fresh Start Academy. This is the second local Cairns Youth Justice Service Centre program that commenced in the Youth BikeShed space on 19 January 2024, building on the existing boys program. Importantly, the majority of young people engaged at night on the streets by the Department of Youth Justice funded Fire Project attend the Youth BikeShed within two weeks. A major stakeholder, Earlville Shopping Town management provide bikes and other resources to the Youth BikeShed on a monthly basis,
4. selectability runs education programs in conjunction with local Cairns schools and teachers who refer disengaged students to the Youth BikeShed report substantially improved school attendance, attitudes, and behaviour at school,
5. the program has the ability to enhance protective factors and reduce risk factors as identified in the Youth Justice Short Term Outcome assessment tool, and the Case Management Inventory framework. Evidence indicates the Youth BikeShed is a platform to foster positive life trajectories.

How *selectability's Youth Intervention BikeSheds* address the need for youth justice reform and victim support.

The Youth BikeShed program provides early intervention, prevention, and diversion, as well as increased engagement in education. Activities were designed with content supported by Queensland Health, focused on mental health and social capital.

The Youth Justice Strategy and the Putting Queensland Kids First strategy prioritise the health, education, safety, and wellbeing of children and young people in vulnerable families. We engage children and young people with early or low-level offending into education and training and support them to address their behaviours. This has been shown to reduce offending, crime, and victimisation.

We **intervene early** to **keep children out of court** and **improve life trajectories**. We **involve and empower young people**, and selectability has a proven history in **collaborating and integrating with other services and businesses**.

There is overwhelming evidence this prevents downstream costs associated with the criminal justice and health system responses. Our proposed outcomes framework measures improvement in core skills and criminogenic needs, and quantifies short, medium, and long-term systemic, place-based cost savings.

The following pages cite place-based need and the targeted response provided in each regional city.

Cairns

Cairns is ranked second in Queensland in research[1] assessing the total cost of crime committed by chronic offenders, with an estimated total cost in 2022 dollars of $11,673,469: 60% of this estimated cost is attributed to the criminal justice system. The method used to calculate this cost[1] significantly underestimates the costs of these individuals to the Cairns mental and physical health systems. The holistic approach of selectability Youth BikeSheds works with young offenders and those at-risk to address these issues. Further, the above cost also drastically underestimates the costs to victims of crime, particularly intangible costs, such as pain, suffering, and reduced quality of life[9]. The annual funding being sought by selectability for the ongoing operations of the Cairns Youth BikeShed includes operational resources to directly serve victims of crime.

Table 1 below shows the required annual funding.

Cairns Youth BikeShed	$$$
Direct Costs	$440K
Indirect Costs	$200K
Management Fee	$115K
Total Cairns Youth BikeShed Annual Funding Required	$755K
Cairns Victim of Crime Program	$170K
Cairns Grand Total Annual Funding Required	$925K

As previously noted, selectability target our Youth BikeSheds according to local needs in each community.

Figure 1 below shows the location of the Cairns program superimposed onto a map of youth-related offences[t1] committed between 31/10/23 and 30/1/24[10]. The top right corner of the map is the Cairns Central Business District.

The selectability Youth BikeShed is located at 502 Mulgrave Road, across the road from Earlville Shopping Town and on the boundary of Cairns West and Cairns South, areas with a high proportion of marginalised young people.

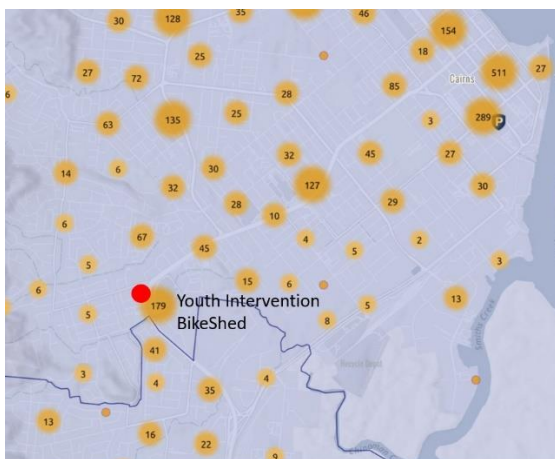Figure 1: How the location of the Youth BikeShed responds to recent offending - Cairns

Figure 2: Time and day of offences – Cairns, below shows the temporal pattern of these offences. The Youth BikeShed, including the Fire Project operate largely during these times and days.

Figure 3 below shows that the number of children attaining the age of criminal responsibility in Cairns by the end of this year (2024), who are developmentally at risk or vulnerable[7] continues to rise.

These domains contribute to successful life trajectories and align with trauma-informed resilience principles. Problems in these areas have been linked with early onset offending[2,3].

Our Youth BikeSheds address a number of these areas.

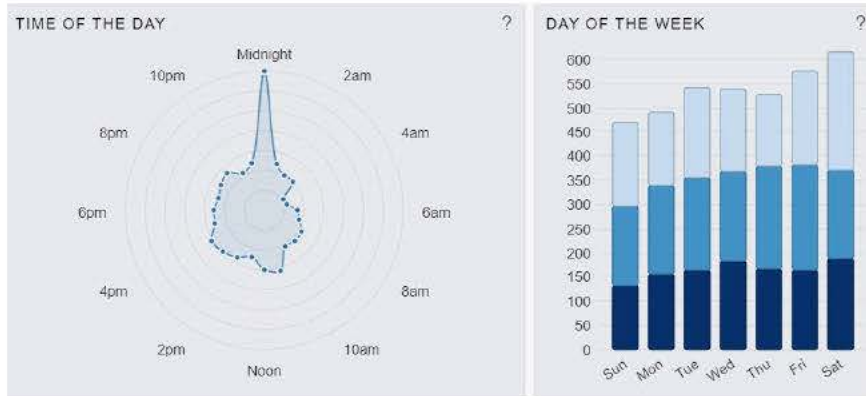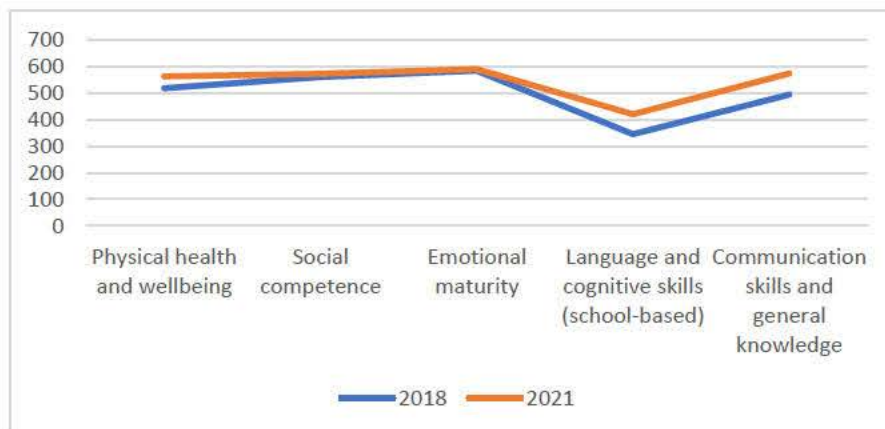Figure 2: Time and day of offences - Cairns

Figure 3: Trends in the numbers of Cairns children developmentally at-risk or vulnerable: 2018 to 2021.

Finally, selectability has a demonstrated history in successfully servicing victims of crime, as part of our holistic approach.

Figure 4 below shows that local police in Cairns refer people to our therapeutic services (highlighted in green), including victim support (in red).

Rockhampton

Rockhampton has the sixteenth highest assessed cost of crime in Queensland committed by chronic offenders[1]. The costing methodology caveats noted above for Cairns also apply to Rockhampton.

The selectability Youth BikeShed currently operates in Rockhampton city, which according to the Australian Early Development Census[7], has a higher proportion of children who are developmentally at risk or vulnerable in one or more domains than the Queensland or national average. Social competence, emotional maturity, language, and communication skills are crucial for children's readiness to learn, their academic achievement, and their future outcomes [2,3].

Table 2: Annual funding required for the Rockhampton Youth BikeShed.

Rockhampton Youth BikeShed	$$$
Direct Costs	$440K
Indirect Costs	$200K
Management Fee	$115K
Total Rockhampton Youth BikeShed Annual Funding Required	**$755K**
Rockhampton Victim of Crime Program	$170K
Rockhampton Grand Total Annual Funding Required	**$925K**

Figure 5 below shows the location of the Rockhampton Youth BikeShed, 31 William Street, superimposed onto a map of youth-related offences[11] committed between 31/10/23 and 30/1/24[10].

The map shows the offences of robbery, other offences against the person, unlawful entry, other property damage, and unlawful use of a motor vehicle.

The maps do not separate out offences committed by people under the age of eighteen. Research indicates however, that young people often commit these types of offences early in their offending career[12].

Figure 5: How the location of the Youth BikeShed responds to recent offending – Rockhampton.
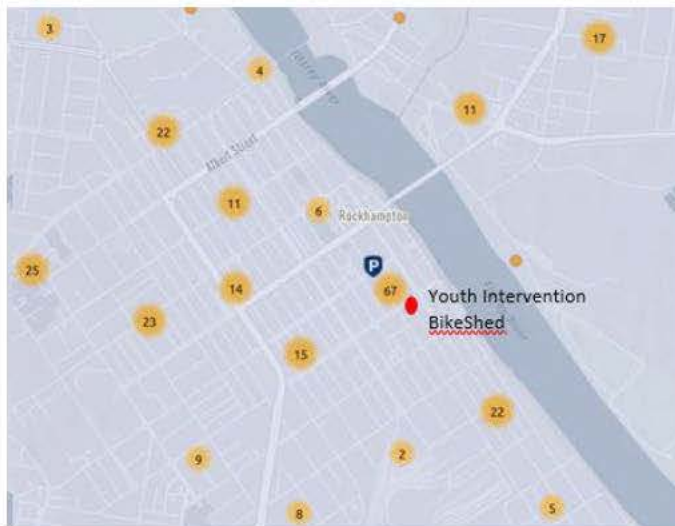

Figure 6: Time and day of offences – Rockhampton, on the following page displays publicised police statistics relating to the time of day and day of the week these crimes are committed. Further down on page 6, the trends in the number and percentage of children assessed as developmentally vulnerable or at-risk are also displayed. Our holistic approach will help arrest the underlying causes of these inter-related risk issues.

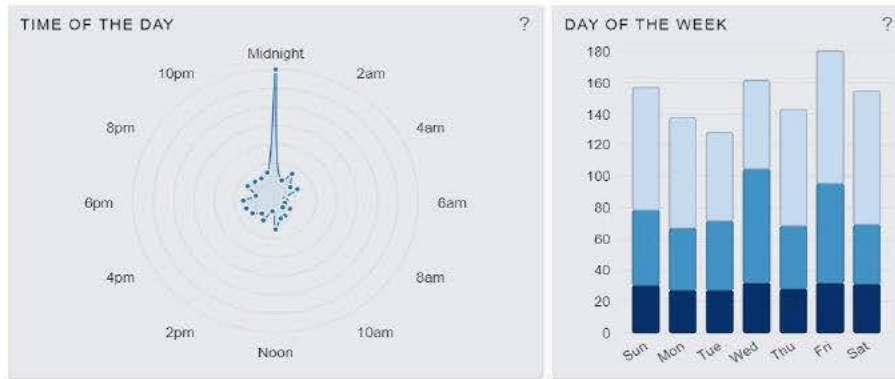Figure 6: Time and day of offences – Rockhampton

Figure 7: Trends in the numbers of Rockhampton children developmentally at-risk or vulnerable: 2018 to 2021.
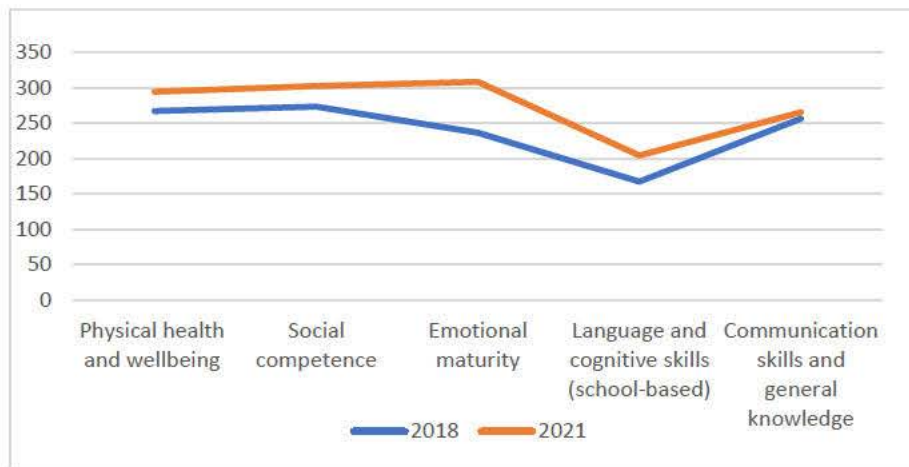

Table 3: Percentage rise in children developmentally at risk or vulnerable – Rockhampton

	Physical health and wellbeing	Social competence	Emotional maturity	Language and cognitive skills (school-based)	Communication skills and general knowledge
2018	31.3	32.0	27.6	19.6	30.0
2021	35.4	36.3	37.1	24.5	31.9

Finally, selectability has a demonstrated history in successfully servicing victims of crime, as part of our holistic approach. Incorporating this program into the Rockhampton Youth BikeShed will strengthen our integrated crime prevention response.

What the young people said:

"I come to the BikeShed so whenever I break my bike I can fix it myself."
Malakai, grade 10

"We get to learn how to fix the bikes .. And we get fed here. It's a really good place to go."
Jacob, grade 8

Mount Isa

Mount Isa has the seventh highest assessed cost of crime committed by chronic offenders in Queensland1, with an estimated total cost in 2022 dollars of approximately $6,597,980.

Table 4: Annual funding required for the Mount Isa Youth BikeShed.

Mount Isa Youth BikeShed	$$$
Direct Costs	$440K
Indirect Costs	$200K
Management Fee	$115K
Total Mount Isa Youth BikeShed Annual Funding Required	$755K
Mount Isa Victim of Crime Program	$170K
Mount Isa Grand Total Annual Funding Required	$925K

Figure 8 below shows the location of the selectability Youth BikeShed, 27 Miles Street, superimposed on a heat map of offences known to be committed by young offenders.

The times and days of the week when most offences are committed in Mount Isa are shown in Figure 9.

Figure 8: How the location of the Youth BikeShed responds to recent offending – Mount Isa.
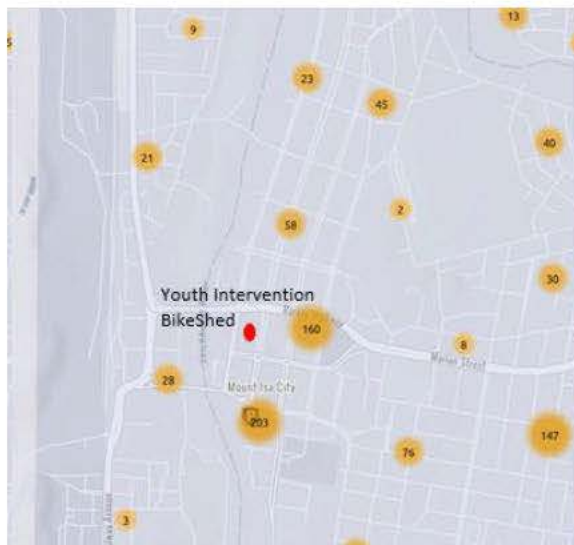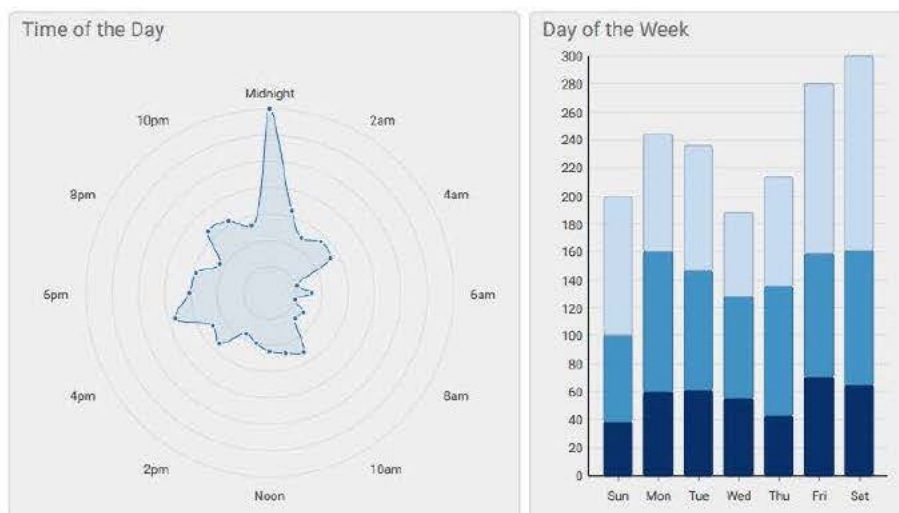

Figure 9: Time and day of offences – Mount Isa.

We emphasise that our Youth BikeSheds are designed to operate at these times. While the Mount Isa activities are not run around midnight at present, the temporal map shows that a significant proportion of crimes occur between 4-9pm. Young people interviewed for the Cairns evaluation noted the diversionary effect of the activities, as well as the importance of the safe space.

Figure 10 and Table 5 below describe the trend in some underlying risk factors among young people in Mount Isa. Our programs address a number of these and can be expected to have benefits in these areas.

Figure 10: Trends in the numbers of Mount Isa children developmentally at-risk or vulnerable: 2018 to 2021
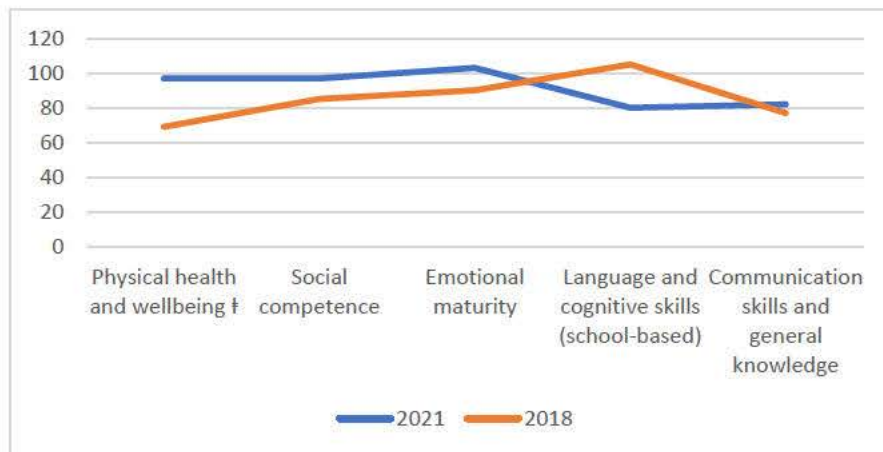

Tabel 5: Trends in the percentage of Mount Isa children developmentally at-risk or vulnerable: 2018 to 2021

Year	Physical health and wellbeing	Social competence	Emotional maturity	Language and cognitive skills (school-based)	Communication skills and general knowledge
2018	21.0%	25.9%	27.4%	32.0%	23.5%
2021	28.8%	28.8%	30.6%	23.7%	24.3%

With our demonstrated history in successfully servicing victims of crime through tailored mental health and wellbeing support, the Rockhampton Youth BikeShed will reinforce our integrated early intervention and prevention effectiveness.

What the young people say:

"I come here to learn how to fix the bikes to help other people"
Tyrhys, grade 8

"The best part of the BikeShed is fixing the bikes ... and getting to hang out"
Thomas, grade 10

Townsville: proposed new 24/7 Youth Intervention BIkeShed

In response to recent community consultations, and prolonged need selectability proposes the establishment and ongoing operations of a twenty-four hour, seven days a week Youth BikeShed in Townsville. This model extends on our current activities and meets identified complex needs for young people in Townsville. Accordingly, the annual operational budget required is higher than for the other sites.

Table 6: Annual funding required for the new Townsville 24/7 Youth BikeShed.

Townsville Youth BikeShed	$$$
Direct Costs	$1.4M
Indirect Costs	$210K
Management Fee	$280K
Total Townsville Youth BikeShed Annual Funding Required	**$1.89M**
Townsville Victim of Crime Program	$170K
Townsville Grand Total Annual Funding Required	**$2.06M**

Townsville has the third highest cost of crime committed by chronic offenders in Queensland[1]. The estimated annual cost of this crime is $8,257,780 (2022 dollars [8]), with a significant proportion concentrated in the suburbs of Aitkenvale, Cranbrook, Heatley, and Vincent.

This crime burden is supported by the Queensland Council of Social Services (QCOSS) youth justice program model consultation in Townsville in January 2024, which identified these suburbs as the best location for a new program. Other findings from this QCOSS consultation directly support selectability's Youth BikeShed model.

We note that in addition to **"a clear preference for a 24/7 purpose-built youth hub In Townsville"**, the document also emphasises outreach teams. QCOSS consultations recommend the following:

- the target group is 8- to 17-year-olds,
- young people require an appropriate and safe place, with a comfortable environment that offers food, places to rest and wi-fi,
- activities should be co-designed with young people,
- outreach teams should be provided,
- the space should provide engaging activities to divert young people from environments where youth offending anti-social problematic behaviour is likely occur,
- these engagement activities should be outside traditional office hours,
- referrals to complementary services should be made from the space,
- the importance of links with local shopping centres,
- the importance of integration and referral between existing services,
- provision of transport.

As demonstrated in the evaluation report (Attachment 2), the Cairns selectability Youth Intervention BikeShed currently delivers each of these requirements. Earlville Shopping Town management provide bicycles and other monthly in-kind support to the Youth BikeShed. The Fire Project engages through outreach with young people and selectability has a unique history delivering integrated mental health and wellbeing support for young people. selecatability has a team of over twenty Support Coordinators based in Townsville who are professional case managers focussed on consumers to complimentary services.

Figure 11 shows the trends in the numbers of children in Townsville who are developmentally vulnerable or at risk in domains that protect against negative life trajectories, including criminal involvement. According to the Australian Early Developmental Census, there are approximately 1,210 Townsville 11-year-olds who are developmentally vulnerable or at-risk. Importantly, 38.8%, approximately 470, of these live in the suburbs of Aitkenvale, Cranbrook, and the Heatley area. Of these young people, 57 were assessed as at-risk on two or more domains.
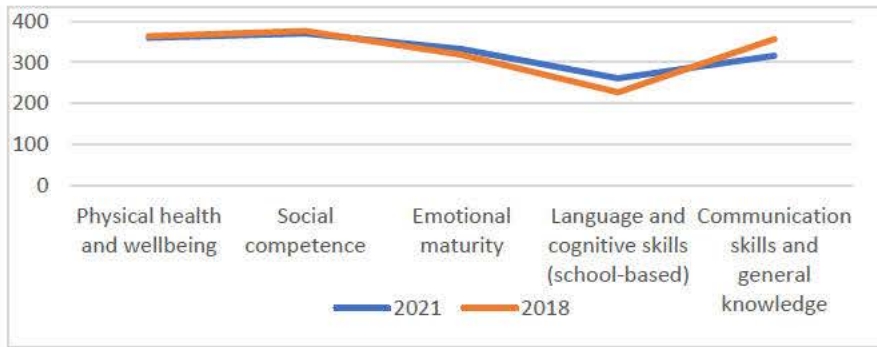
Figure 11: Trends in the numbers of Townsville children at or near the age of criminal responsibility who are developmentally at-risk or vulnerable: 2018 to 2021.

There has been little to no improvement in the percentage of Townsville children assessed as on-track in most of these protective domains since 2009, although the percentage of children with higher cognitive skills showed significant improvement between 2009 and 2015. This has reversed in the last two surveys. This suggests a new approach, building on previous successes and integrating effective local models will produce positive outcomes. A 24/7 selectability Youth Intervention BikeShed will provide this.

Table 7: Trends in the percentage of Townsville children developmentally at-risk or vulnerable: 2018 to 2021

	Physical health and wellbeing	Social competence	Emotional maturity	Language and cognitive skills (school-based)	Communication skills and general knowledge
2018	13.6	14.0	10.2	10.4	11.6
2021	15.9	13.2	12.2	10.0	12.0

Finally, Figure 12 below describes selectability's proven history of integrated support for QPS referrals in Townsville. Between 1 January and 31 December 2022, selectability provided counselling to 165 individuals referred by police. The average turnaround time was 2.18 days with twenty-eight individuals were assessed by the QPS as high need referrals. The victim support model will be a crucial part of the Townsville 24/7 Youth Intervention Bike Shed.

Figure 12: Townsville QPS referrals to selectability therapeutic services, 2022.

References

[1] The monetary cost of offender trajectories: Findings from Queensland (Australia). (2014). Allard, T., Stewart, A., Smith, C., et. al. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology. 47: pages 81-101.

[2] Working Together, Changing the Story: Youth Justice Strategy 2019 – 2023. Queensland Government.

[3] Putting Queensland Kids First strategy. (2023). Queensland Government.

[4] Mapping the service system that supports children and families in the context of place-based-disadvantage: Potential leverage points for intervention. (2023). Stuart, J., Krahe, M., Branch, S., et. al. Wellbeing, Space and Society. 5: pages 10023 – 10038.

[5] Yarning for Change; Listen to my Voice. (2022). Queensland Family and Child Commission).

[6] New Ways for our Families: Designing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practice framework and system responses to address the impacts of domestic and family violence on children and young people. (2022). Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak.

[7] Australian Early Developmental Census. (AEDC), (www.aedc.gov.au/data-explorer/?id=184530) [accessed 28/1/24].

[8] Reserve Bank of Australia inflation calculator. (www.rba.gov.au/calculator/annualDecimal.html) [accessed 30/1/24].

[9] Victim Assist Queensland. (www.qld.gov.au/law/crime-and-police/victims-and-witnesses-of-crime/victim-financial-assistance). [accessed 27/1/24].

[10] Queensland Police Crime Maps. (qps-ocm.s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/index.html)   [accessed 30/1/24].

[11] Different crime types and moral reasoning development in young offenders compared with non-offender controls. (2007). Chen, C., and Howitt, D. Psychology, Crime & Law. 13(4), 405-416.

[12] New frontiers in criminal careers research, 2000–2011: A state-of-the-art review. (2011). DeLisi, M., & Piquero, A. Journal of criminal justice, 39(4), 289-301.

2024

Evaluation of *selectability's* Cairns *Youth Intervention BikeShed*

Dr Shane Boris Pointing

Fractal Cairns Science

1/1/2024

Fractal Cairns SP

Fractal Cairns Science acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, waters and energy of the Gimuy-walubarra yidi region. We work for reconciliation and recognise leaders of the region past, present and future.

Fractal Cairns SP

Contents

Introduction

Following a meeting with the Minister for Youth Justice at Townsville Community Cabinet on 29 October 2023, *selectability* engaged *Fractal Cairns Science*, a research company with extensive experience in place-based, integrated community crime prevention, youth justice, adolescent mental health and related programs. *Fractal Cairns Science* is headed by Dr Shane Boris Pointing, who has a PhD in realist evaluation and worked for the *Queensland Police Service*, the *Youth Justice Department* and *Queensland Health*. This report describes the approach and methods used, presents the findings of the evaluation of the Cairns *Youth Intervention BikeShed* program, and suggests recommendations to enhance the service.

Executive Summary

Background

The *selectability Youth Intervention BikeSheds* are an early intervention crime prevention program that operates in the regional communities of Cairns, Rockhampton and Mount Isa. Each program is located in regional communities with a significant number and proportion of young people assessed as either developmentally vulnerable or at-risk, and which bear a high cost of crime committed by chronic repeat offenders, who often commence offending early in life. Each *selectability Youth Intervention BikeShed* has been operating for between 10 and 12 months, and emphasise diversion programs into prosocial activities in a safe space, engagement with stable adult role models to improve underlying protective factors, improved social capital, and increased engagement in education. This evaluation focuses on the Cairns *Youth Intervention BikeShed* due to timeframes and resourcing.

Methods

Desktop research, qualitative and limited quantitative methods were used within the realist evaluation approach (see page 10 below). Participant statistics collected by the program facilitators (adult mentors), between April and December 2023 were analysed. Activity logs for the *Fire Project* night-time street outreach program and associated street-based recreational activities over a period of five months were examined. Outcomes for young people were assessed by interviews conducted by the program facilitators with participants and by electronic survey of school teachers who referred students. The outcome domains were drawn from specific research literature and reports to the *Youth Justice Department* (see page 9 below). Young people were also asked to draw their routine activities before and after engagement at the *Youth Intervention BikeShed.*

The cyclone alert and flooding in Cairns immediately prior to Christmas, plus Christmas leave hampered the initial research plan regarding deeper engagement with external stakeholders, although consultations were held with management at Earlville Shopping Town, the manager of the *Fire Project*.

Results

The key findings and recommendations are listed below. Overall, the *Youth Intervention BikeShed* is well used. In Cairns, more than 1,000 individual young people have accessed Shed programs since inception in April 2023. Of these, approximately 75% are First Nations people, and 55% are boys. *Figure 1: How young people engage with the Cairns Youth Intervention BikeShed,* on page 12 below, describes how Youth Justice clients, school students and drop-in participants become involved with the programs and activities. Observations on the effectiveness of each stage as well

as possible enhancements at each juncture are described on pages 13 and 14, and summarised in the *Findings* and *Recommendations* sections on pages 6 to 8*.*

The local *Youth Justice Service Centre* ran a number of programs at the space in the second half of 2023; these are continuing in 2024. Five schools, predominately from Cairns South and Cairns West, referred disengaged students to the program, with most schools doing so more than once; these are also resuming in 2024. There is a high conversion rate of young people encountered on the streets at night by the Fire Project, and referred to the *Youth Intervention BikeShed* attending activities there within two weeks (although the numbers able to be identified were small).

The *theory of change* centres around pro-social diversion and the protective benefits of engagement with adult mentors: it is suggested the theory of change be further articulated and refined. The *Youth Intervention BikeShed* enhances protective factors and reduces risk factors (as identified in the *Youth Justice Short Term Outcome* assessment tool, and the *Case Management Inventory* framework).

Participant interviews found effective diversion outcomes, with participants reporting a meaningful improvement in their ability to deal with home circumstances, and slight improvements in peer associations and contacts with police. Working with the adult mentors (program facilitators), was ranked as most valuable by the young people, with some participants explicitly linking engagement in the programs with improved self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Importantly, the perceived safety of the space and the provision of food is highly ranked by young people. School teachers, who refer disengaged students, report substantially improved school attendance, attitudes and behavior at school, and peer associations for almost all students attending the program. Results should be viewed with caution due to the small number of participants assessed. Data on drug use, carriage of weapons and use of systemic mental and physical health services was insufficient to produce findings.

The evaluation framework could be significantly strengthened; *selectability* is making progress on this. It is recommended that participant outcomes, organisational processes including an analysis of selectability's place in the local service network, and the establishment of an agreed cost-effectiveness method be incorporated into this framework. The synergies afforded by selectability's therapeutic footprint could be significantly enhanced, with resultant benefits to young people and possibly their families. The systemic benefits of linking young people engaged with the *Youth Intervention BikeShed* to *selectability's* other therapeutic services, including experience in delivering victims of crime counselling, affords a unique opportunity. Research evidence suggests systemic cost-benefits for the communities in which the *Youth Intervention BikeSheds* operate. The evaluation suggests this can be significantly enhanced.

Findings and Recommendations

A total of 16 young people, all boys, were interviewed. Outcomes for a further fourteen students from two Cairns schools, both in Cairns South, were assessed by their teachers, whom had referred the pupils as a re-engagement program. The findings and recommendations are elaborated in more detail in the Results section on pages 11 to 21. They have been organised to reflect the *Youth Justice Strategy, 2019 – 2023: Working Together, Changing the Story*, and the current work of the *Youth Justice Reform Select Committee.* It is worth noting that the *Youth Intervention BikeShed* approach also support the directions outlined in the consultation draft of the *Putting Queensland Kids First* strategy.

Key Findings:

1. Although the sample size is limited, and there was no ability to conduct baseline/follow-up measurement, there is robust evidence of the effectiveness of *selectability's Youth BikeSheds* in outcomes for the young people involved*.*
2. Evaluation processes could be strengthened. A clearer evidence-based *theory of change* could be articulated and refined. It is feasible to conduct baseline measures using the *Youth Justice Short Term Assessment Tool* upon engagement of the young person, and follow-up assessments ought to be conducted.
3. There is strong evidence of ongoing stakeholder collaboration, including that the space is used by the local Youth Justice Service Centre to conduct programs. It also seems that activities within the broader activity program are founded on consultation with young people.
4. The *Youth Intervention BikeShed* program is innovative, and operates across a number of regional communities with high levels of need. The program appears responsive to local contexts. With a refined model, there is potential to   the scale the program, leveraging selectability's unique statewide footprint and therapeutic, holistic approach.
5. *Educational Re-engagement and prosocial improvements*
   a. The early intervention program was implemented in two Cairns schools, *Bentley Park College* and *White Rock State School*, both in Cairns South. Students were selected based on high levels of disengagement, and social-emotional issues resulting in some anti-social behaviour and attitudes noted while at school.
   b. Both schools reported notable improvements in several key areas of student engagement and well-being. The most significant and consistent improvement observed across both schools was in school attendance, indicating that the program effectively motivated students to attend school far more regularly. This is a crucial finding, as regular school attendance is linked to better academic performance and social integration.
   c. In addition to improved attendance, there were pronounced enhancements in students' attitudes towards school and learning. Behavioural improvements were also reported, indicating a reduction in anti-social behavior and attitudes previously noted among participating students, suggesting the program contributed not only to individual pupils, but also to a more positive school environment.

      d.   Involvement in the *Youth Intervention BikeShed* appeared to foster better peer associations, with many students improving their social networks and interactions with peers. This is particularly important for students previously identified with social-emotional issues, as positive peer relationships can significantly impact emotional well-being and academic success.

6.   *Afternoon & Evening Groups (diversionary drop-in and youth justice)*

      a.   There is some evidence of enhanced social capital and success in shifting toward protective peer groups. The program's focus on community engagement and social skills development has been pivotal in this achievement.

      b.   In some cases, the program has positively influenced family dynamics and home interactions.

      c.   The provision of constructive and supervised leisure and recreational activities has offered participants healthy alternatives to antisocial behavior. These activities have not only provided avenues for skill development and personal growth but have also reduced the time spent in potentially harmful environments.

      d.   Diversionary Outcomes: The program has successfully diverted young people from the places where anti-social or criminal activity occurs, during the daylight and early evening hours.

      e.   High Engagement Rates: Notably, the program has achieved high attendance and engagement rates, especially among young people referred by the *Fire Project,* the night-time street outreach service. This success underscores the program's ability to connect with and retain hard-to-reach youth populations.

      f.   The provision of transport for young people by *selectability* is crucial to the success of the program.

7.   Community Partnerships: The program's collaboration with the management of the local shopping centre has opened new avenues for community engagement and support. This partnership has facilitated the provision of physical and in-kind resources for youth activities, including bicycles, and contributed to the program's visibility and accessibility.

Recommendations:

1.   *Enhance Program Design and Delivery, and Strengthen Evaluation Processes:*

      a.   Develop and articulate a clear, evidence-based theory of change for the program. Refine the program model to ensure it is responsive to the local contexts of the various regional communities it serves. Expand training of facilitators and participants in trauma-informed resilience information.

      b.   Consider re-establishing selectability's successful police referral process for victims of crime in Cairns, Rockhampton, Mount Isa and Townsville.

      c.   Continue to innovate and explore new strategies and activities that can further engage young people and address their specific needs; explore how to leverage selectability's therapeutic and counselling services, and disability support services to better assist young people and potentially their families.

      d.   Include findings from the recent *Yarning for Change* report from the *Queensland Family and Child Commission*, and the frameworks for First Nations children affected

by domestic and family violence published by the *Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak*.

e. Strengthen the evaluation framework. Implement baseline assessments such as the *Youth Justice Short Term Assessment Tool* upon a young person's engagement with the program, followed by systematic follow-up assessments to measure progress and outcomes more accurately.

f. Pursue appropriate integrated data sharing across service network Explore place-based attributable incident cost saving at a systemic scale in order to quantify benefits of the program.

2. *Potentially Scale the Program to Expand Engagement and Integration Strategies:*

   a. Build on the success in improving school attendance and engagement by developing targeted strategies to support educational re-engagement for students with high levels of disengagement and social-emotional issues.

   b. Continue to work closely with schools to integrate the program's activities with school-based interventions and support systems, enhancing the overall impact on students' academic and social outcomes.

   c. Leverage *selectability's* statewide footprint and holistic approach to explore opportunities for scaling the program to other regions with high levels of need.

   d. Seek additional funding and partnerships to support the expansion and replication of the program's successful components in new communities.

   e. *Foster Positive Peer Associations and Social Capital:*

   f. Continue to focus on activities that promote positive peer interactions and social skills development, leveraging the program's success in shifting participants toward protective peer groups.

   g. Explore the potential to expand opportunities to involve participants in community service or group projects that can further enhance their social capital and sense of community belonging.

3. *Community Engagement and Integration:*

   a. Expand efforts to engage families of participants, potentially through family-oriented events or workshops, to reinforce positive changes in family dynamics and home interactions.

   b. Strengthen and expand community partnerships, such as those with local businesses and service centres, to secure additional resources and support for the program.

4. *Enhance Diversionary and Recreational Activities:*

   a. Continue to provide a diverse range of constructive, supervised leisure and recreational activities that offer healthy alternatives to antisocial behavior.

   b. Ensure the provision of transport for participants to increase accessibility and participation in the program's activities.

5. *Increase Visibility and Accessibility:*

   a. Purposefully utilize existing partnerships and network membership, to enhance the program's visibility and accessibility within the community.

   b. Build on the communication strategy to raise awareness about the program's activities and successes, engaging a broader audience and potential supporters.

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Background

The *selectability Youth Intervention BikeSheds* are an early intervention crime prevention program that operates in the regional communities of Cairns, Rockhampton and Mount Isa. Internal documentation records the program began with a mental health and social capital focus, with content supported by *Queensland Health*, and funding provided by the Commonwealth Government. Clients serviced by the *Youth Intervention BikeSheds* are young people on Youth Justice orders, and those at risk of offending, particularly young people engaged on the streets at night by *selectability's Fire Program*, and disengaged students from schools in Cairns South and Cairns West. Participants are primarily aged between 8 and 16.

The evaluation focused on the Cairns *Youth Intervention BikeShed.* The evaluation scope was informed by:

- the Report on Youth Justice (Atkinson, 2018), specifically the *Four Pillar* priorities outlined in that report,
- the *Youth Justice Strategy, 2019 – 2023: Working Together, Changing the Story*,
- the *Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory* (Hoge & Andrews, 2011), as a measure of change in individual risk and protective factors for young people's offending,
- the work of the *Youth Justice Reform Select Committee*, specifically the focus on victims of crime,
- the *Queensland Plan* (particularly the five Foundation Areas described in *Education, Community, Regions, Health and Well-being,* and *People*),
- the *Youth Justice Short Term Outcomes* (DYJESB&T, 2023),
- the criminological evidence base,
- *Closing the Gap* targets, and
- the consultation draft of the *Putting Queensland Kids First* strategy.

These Queensland Government documents, and specific Queensland criminological and community-based crime prevention research defined the parameters of the evaluation; the extent of the evaluation was bounded by time and resource constraints. The initial research question was: How do the *selectability Youth Intervention BikeSheds* address underlying protective and risk factors in young people to prevent the onset or continuation of offending behaviour? There is extensive evidence over a number of decades that better outcomes and stronger life trajectories for young Queenslanders centre are integrated across the domains of health, wellbeing, development, education, employment, housing, safety, connection and empowerment. The reports and strategies listed above note the need for holistic investment and partnering for integrated, place-based delivery. This report provides a starting point to understand what works for who in the *Youth Intervention BikeSheds*, and why.

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Methods

A *Realist Evaluation* approach (Pawson & Tilley, 1997), was used. Realist evaluation is endorsed by *Queensland Treasury* (QGSO, 2020), and the *Australian Institute of Criminology* (Morgan & Homel, 2013), for evaluating social and crime prevention programs. The approach is particularly useful to understand the effectiveness of "theories of change" in different contexts. These contexts may be, for example, sex or gender, developmental age, impact of neurological disability, family dynamics or geographical settings. The approach is complexity consistent (Westhorp, 2012), and contexts can be defined at varying scales.

Desktop Research

Participant statistics collected by the program facilitators (adult mentors), between April and December 2023 were analysed. Activity logs for the *Fire Project* night-time street outreach program and associated street-based recreational activities over a period of five months were examined. These were cross-referenced where possible with participant interviews to identify attendance at the *Youth Intervention BikeShed* following referral by *Fire Project* workers. Particular attention was also paid to mentions of security staff and Centre Management at *Earlville Shopping Town* due to its proximity to the *Youth Intervention BikeShed.*

Participant Interviews

One on one interviews were conducted by the program facilitators (adult mentors) in a separate meeting room. Participants were selected both by convenience (afternoon drop-in), and through their attendance in Youth Justice program where possible. All participants were assessed as being able to give informed consent to the interview using the *Gillick Competency* standard, which is used by Queensland Health to assess patient's ability to provide informed consent (QH, 2022). The young people were asked a series of questions across domains relating to the *Youth Justice Short Term Assessment Tool* (DYJESB&T, 2023), and the *Case Management Inventory* [CMI], (Hoge & Andrews, 2011), metrics. The young people were also asked to draw their routine activities, both before and after their involvement in the *Youth Intervention BikeShed.* A satellite image map from Google maps of the relevant suburbs in Cairns was provided for them to do this. There was also space provided to comment or elaborate on any changes in their routine activities as a result of their engagement with the program. A timeline was also provided and participants were asked if they would feel comfortable in nominating general times when they used other relevant services in the past two years. There relevant services were emergency department presentations, hospital admission, court appearances, police contact, youth justice orders or detention. Fractal Cairns PLAICT® model assigns dollar costs to these incidents of service use to estimate place-based systemic cost, and savings resulting from program engagement.

School Re-engagement and Pro-social Attitudes and Behaviour

An electronic survey form was mailed to *student re-engagement* teachers at *Bentley Park College* and *White Rock State School.* Teachers at each school were asked to assess improvements in the young people they referred following their involvement in the *selectability Youth Intervention*

BikeShed. The teachers measured this using a Likert scale of 1-5, across domains of the *Case Management Inventory* (CMI) metrics, including:

- school attendance,
- attitudes,
- peer associations,

- behavior at school, and
- interest/actions regarding employment.

No baseline data was available, so the teacher was asked by the Program Facilitator to rate any observed change in the students attending the program (where 1= no change, 5= high change). The teacher rated six students (reidentified as: a1, b1, c1… f1). The tables and graphs below display the data through two different lenses: by *Case Management Inventory* factor, and by student. The teachers were also asked about their referral criteria and how they had chosen the pupils who were referred. There was also a free text field for further comment.

Stakeholder Collaboration

Management at *Earlville Shopping Town* were visited and communication was conducted by email and text. The retail manager visited the *BikeShed* and met with program coordinators.

Results

Indicative theory of change

Skills building activities with a stable, positive adult role model, particularly a youth worker, has been shown to be one of the most effective interventions for at-risk young people (Farrington & Welsh, 2003). Additionally, drop-in diversionary programs have been found to reduce rates of youth offending, and address early intervention and prevention.

Collaboration: the place-based network, consultation & engagement with young people

In Cairns, more than 1,000 individual young people have accessed Shed programs since inception in April 2023. Of these, approximately 75% are First Nations people, and 55% are boys. On the next page, *Figure 1: How young people engage with the Cairns Youth Intervention BikeShed*, describes how Youth Justice clients, school students and drop-in participants become involved with programs and activities. Observations on the effectiveness of each stage as well as possible enhancements at each juncture are summarised in *Table 1: Possible enhancements at points of engagement.*

Figure 1: How young people engage with the Cairns Youth Intervention BikeShed
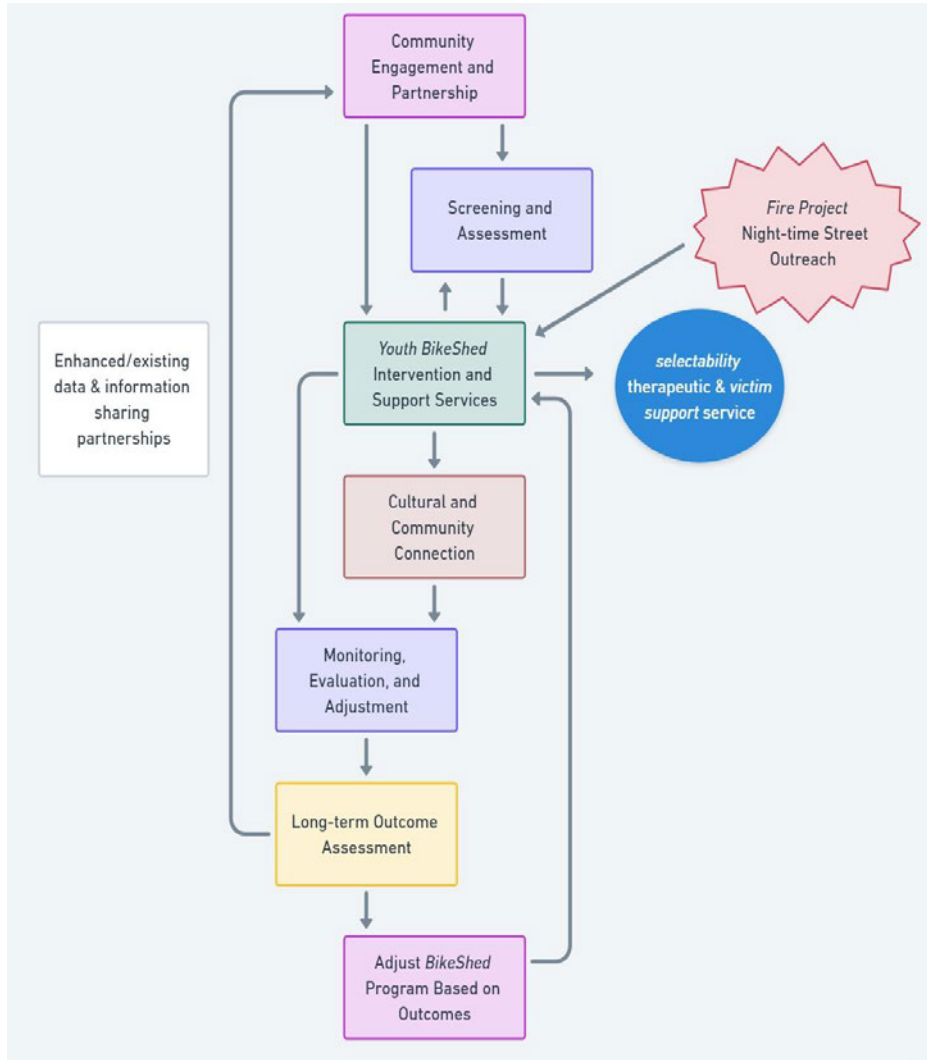
Pages 14 to 20 below describe the outcomes for young people who participate in the Cairns *Youth Intervention BikeShed.* As previously noted, the number of young people assessed is small in the current evaluation and result should be treated with caution. One of the benefits of realist evaluation is that the approach assists in the separation of different program aspects into outcome factors, theoretical mechanisms of change, and contextual aspects that influence outcomes when the same mechanisms of change are implemented. *Figure 1* above, and *Table 1* below show different aspects of clusters of contexts, mechanism and outcomes in a way that identifies clear actions that could enhance the system.

Table 1: Possible enhancements at points of engagement

Point of engagement	Suggested actions
Community engagement & partnership	Strengthen and expand community partnerships, such as those with local businesses and service centres, to secure additional resources and support for the program.
Screening & assessment	Implement baseline assessments using tools such as the *Youth Justice Short Term Assessment Tool* upon a young person's engagement with the program, followed by systematic follow-up assessments to measure progress and outcomes more accurately.
Therapeutic & victim support	Continue to innovate and explore new strategies and activities that can further engage young people and address their specific needs.
	Specifically, explore how to leverage *selectability's* therapeutic and counselling services, as well as disability support services to better assist young people and potentially their families.
Intervention and support services within the *Youth Intervention Bikeshed*	Develop a clear evidence-based theory of change for the program; refine it ensuring responsiveness to various regional communities' local contexts.
	Expand training of facilitators and participants in trauma-informed resilience information.
Cultural and community connection	Include findings from the recent *Yarning for Change* report from the *Queensland Family and Child Commission*, and the frameworks for First Nations children affected by domestic and family violence published by the *Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak*.
Monitoring and evaluation	f. Pursue appropriate integrated data sharing across service network Explore place-based attributable incident cost saving at a systemic scale in order to quantify benefits of the program.
Fire Project	Continue street-based, night-time outreach engagement.
Integrated data sharing across service network	Pursue appropriate integrated data sharing across service network. Explore place-based, cost saving at a systemic scale in order to quantify economic benefits of the program.

As detailed below, the outcomes for young people show improvement in a number of protective domains, and a reduction in risk factors. The theoretical basis of the *Youth Intervention BikeSheds* support the early intervention and prevention features of the *Youth Justice Strategy, 2019 – 2023*, and the *Putting Queensland Kids First* strategy. Positive changes were found in domains related to the *Case Management Inventory* and the *Youth Justice Short Term Outcomes*.

Outcomes for young people

Afternoon and Evening Programs

A total of sixteen young males were interviewed by the program facilitators regarding the outcomes of their involvement in the program, although as of 19/1/24, the *Black Chicks Talking* program is being run by the *Youth Justice Service Centre* at the space. Nearly all young people attending programs and activities at the Shed are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders.

Best thing about the shed

The educational programs and adult mentors are reported as joint most valued by almost all the young people attending the afternoon programs. The safe environment, food availability and recreational activities were jointly rated as fourth most valued, and the opportunity to see friends was rated as sixth most appreciated.

Peer Group

Overall a change in peer group was reported by the majority of participants, with 25% reporting a significant change in their associations (4 or 5 out of 5). This is worth exploring further to ascertain whether the change is viewed as beneficial, and whether it is limited to time at the program, or continues on in other contexts.

Afternoon activities

This question (including drawing on the map) was designed to ascertain any change in the young peoples' routine activities in the afternoon and evening. While every participant reported that involvement in the *Youth Intervention BikeShed* changed their afternoon and early evening routine, usually getting them out of their home or away from "mate's place", details were lacking. The map of routine activities captured almost no useful information. To the author this suggests a need for a review of the method and the question framing, and perhaps the need for a deeper relationship between the program facilitators and the young persons; as does the response to the question regarding drug use.

Drug use

No participant reported any change in drug use, and no participants reported ever having used any illicit substances (Alcohol, Yarndi, Cigarettes, Sniffing, Vaping, Ice, or other).

Carrying knives.

Similarly to the *drug use* response, it seems young people were reticent to share any information regarding their carrying of knives. Again, this suggests that changes need to be made to the methodology in any future evaluations. The Manager and program coordinators felt their

relationships with the participants were sufficiently evolved to get mostly honest responses on these difficult questions, but the result suggest otherwise.

Home circumstances

A majority of participants who responded to this question (15 out of 16), reported that there was significant improvement in their home circumstances, particularly *less stress at home*, since they started coming to the program: the average improvement was rated 4 out of 5 by program participants. This is worthy of further exploration.

Police contact and reported health and legal issues

The young people generally stated they have had little if any contact with the police, either through conversation or being asked about something specific. Similarly, almost none of the young people reported any use of the health service, nor any legal issues in the previous two years.

In summary, interviews with sixteen young males highlighted the program's positive impact, particularly noting the value of educational programs and adult mentorship. These elements, along with the safe environment, food availability, and recreational activities, were highly appreciated by the predominantly Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander participants. A notable outcome was the change in peer groups reported by the majority, with a quarter of the participants indicating significant shifts in their social associations, suggesting potential positive changes in social dynamics.

However, the program's influence on altering routine activities in the afternoon and evening, as well as on drug use and the carrying of knives, was less clear. The lack of reported contact with police and health or legal issues among the young people further may suggest an influence of the program on their engagement with risky behaviours and the justice system, but more likely reflects amendments needed to the evaluation methodology, and possibly the need for deeper relationships to be formed between participants and the adult mentors. There are a range of complex clusters of reasons for these lack of findings in the literature. Despite these challenges, a significant improvement in home circumstances was reported by most participants, underscoring the program's potential to positively impact participants' broader lives.

Student Re-engagement

Fourteen students from two Cairns schools participated in the program. Eight young people from the *Steps Program* at *Bentley Park College*, and six children from *White Rock State School* (WRSS) attend the program. Both schools are located in Cairns South. Due to the small sample size, we should be cautious in drawing conclusions.

Students were chosen by each school for participation in the *Youth Bike Shed* program based on high levels of disengagement, and social-emotional issues resulting in some anti-social behaviour and attitudes noted while at school. The WRSS teacher also noting pupils' self-confidence and social skills would benefit.

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School attendance had the highest increase across both school cohorts, with improvements in the other domains varying school to school. One school noted benefits in self-confidence and social skills. For both schools, was teachers reported employment was not relevant due to pupils' ages (between 8 and 10 years old).

For *White Rock State School* (WRSS) students, school attendance improved significantly (4.7/5), attitudes and behavior in class showed good progress (3.7/5), and peer associations improved. Regarding these friendship networks, one young person made no changes to peer associations (although this young person was rated to have improved 5/5 in all other domains). One other student was found to have minimal change in peer associations. The other four young people at WRSS were assessed by the teacher to have improved their peer network by an average of 4.75 out of 5.

Similarly, for *Bentley Park College Step Program* students, school attendance showed the most improvement (3.9/5), followed by better attitudes (3.8/5), behavior improvement (3.5/5), and peer associations (3.4/5).

All individual students were reported to show improvement, with specific students showing notable progress across multiple metrics. Overall the teacher at WRSS rated the Bike Shed program as more effective than did the Bentley Park teacher. The reasons for this are unclear as yet. It may be due to the rater (teacher), the students' baseline, or some other reason.

At Bentley Park, three of eight students were rated as having significant improvement across all domains (4.25/5 or higher), two were assessed as making medium progress, and improvements in three children were rated as 3/5 or below. At WRSS, improvements in all six student were rated as 3/5 or higher, with two assessed as showing significant improvement, three being rated as showing progress across all measured CMI domains of between 3.5/5 or 3.8/5), and one showing medium progress (3/5).

Bentley Park College Step Program students

No baseline data was available, so the teacher was asked by the Program Facilitator to rate any observed change in the students attending the program (where 1= no change, 5= high change). The teacher rated eight students (reidentified as a, b, c… h). The tables and graphs below display the data through two different lenses: by *Case Management Inventory* factor, and by student. For all students the teacher reported that "Mentions of getting a job", was not applicable. This metric has been excluded from the table and graphs.

Table 2 below shows the average change across all of the students in four of the *Case Management Inventory* metrics which were measured. School attendance had the most improvement, followed by attitudes, then peer associations, with behaviour at school also showing some improvement. *Figure 2* below provides a visual representation.

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Table 2: Average observed change at Bentley Park by Case Management Inventory factor

Case Management metric	Average Improvement
Peer associations	3.375
School attendance	3.875
Behaviour	3.5
Attitudes	3.75

Figure 2: Change in students by Case Management Inventory factor.

Improvement in Bentley Park Step Program students as assessed by the teacher
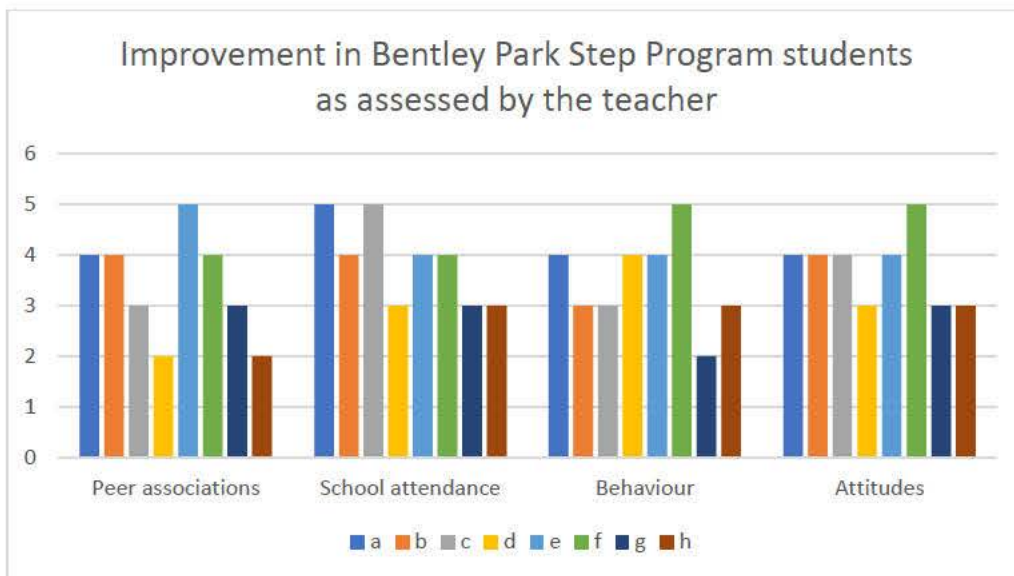
For each individual student, student f showed the most improvement across all metrics, followed by students a and e. Students b and c showed some improvement across all areas, while students d, g and h showed minimal improvement. Student e showed the most improvement of all young people in their peer associations at school, with Students a, b and f also showing improvement in their friendship network. Student f also showed marked improvement in their behaviour at school and their attitude.
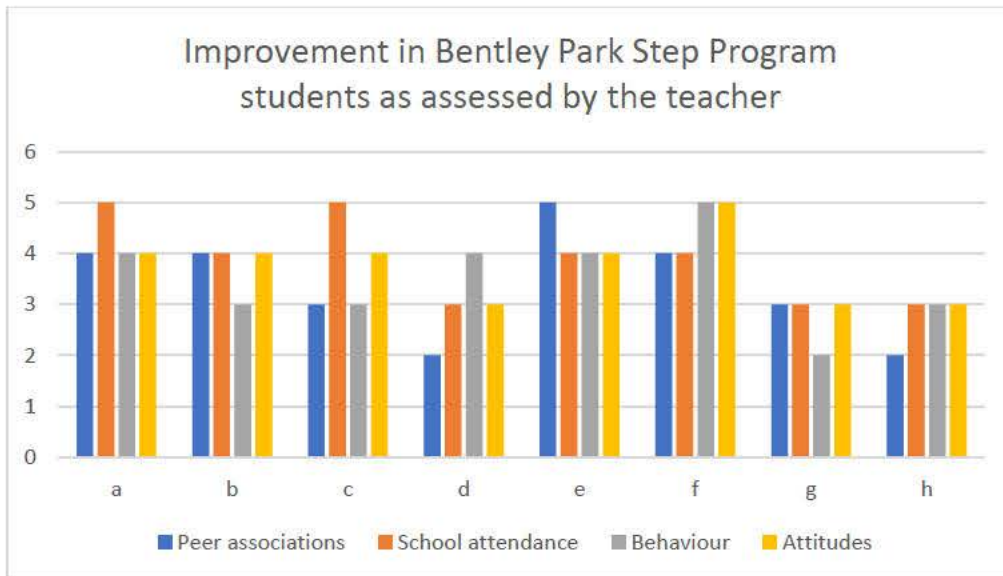
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Table 3: Average observed change per student Bentley Park

Student	Average change (out of 5)
a	4.25
b	3.75
c	3.75
d	3.0
e	4.25
f	4.5
g	2.75
h	2.75

Students A and C showed the most improvement of the group in their school attendance, followed by Students B, E and F. Students G and H showed little improvement in school attendance, in line with their minimal progress across all factors. Interestingly, Student D's behaviour was assessed to have improved while their peer associations may have slightly regressed.

Figure 3: Change in Case Management Inventory factor by student

Improvement in Bentley Park Step Program students as assessed by the teacher

Legend: Peer associations, School attendance, Behaviour, Attitudes

White Rock State School students

This section is an analysis of improvements for students from *White Rock State School* (WRSS) following their involvement in the selectability *Youth Bike Shed* program. The school stated that students in the years 3-5 cohort, known to be experiencing social-emotional issues, were selected for involvement in the program. The teacher noted their informal *theory of change* that hands-on

skill development would build pupils' self-confidence, and that their social interaction with each other and the adults running the course would have a positive effect on the young people.

For all students the teacher reported that "Mentions of getting a job", was not applicable. This metric has been excluded from the table and graphs.

Table 4 below shows the average change across all of the students in four of the *Case Management Inventory* (CMI) metrics which were measured. School attendance had the most improvement, followed by attitudes and behaviour at school, with peer associations also showing some improvement. *Figure 4* provides a visual representation.

Table 4: Average observed change by Case Management Inventory factor, WRSS.

Case Management metric	Average Improvement
Peer associations	3.2
School attendance	4.7
Behaviour	3.7
Attitudes	3.7

School attendance was the most improved CMI metric resulting from the young people's involvement in the *Youth Bike Shed* program, with four out of six pupils being scoring the highest possible improvement. Behaviour at school and attitudes in class also noticeably benefited, with three students scoring either the highest or second highest rating in each of these domains. In their teacher's view, peer associations, was the CMI domain least improved by involvement in the Youth Bike Shed program, but this average rating was affected by one specific case (see below; student 1c).

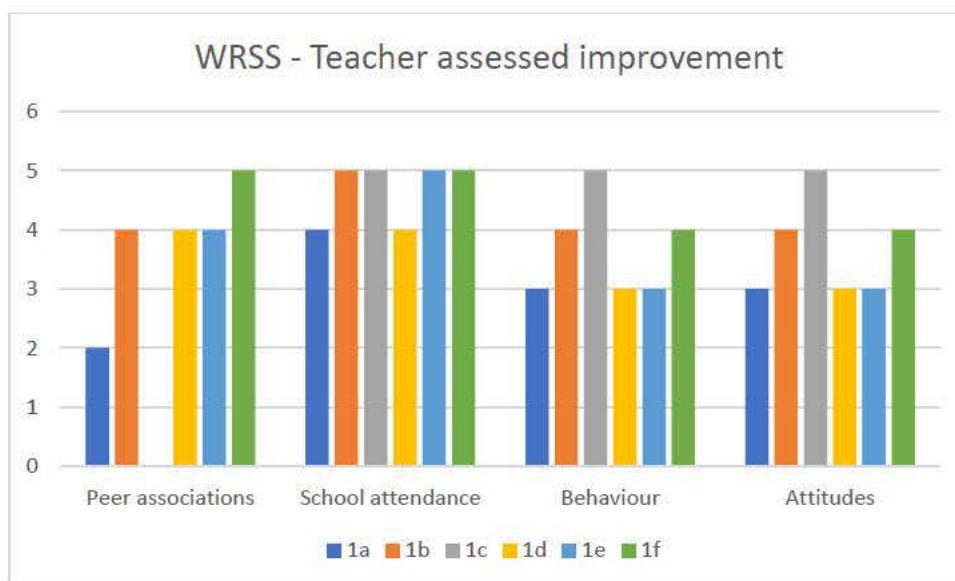*Figure 4: Change in WRSS students by Case Management Inventory factor.*
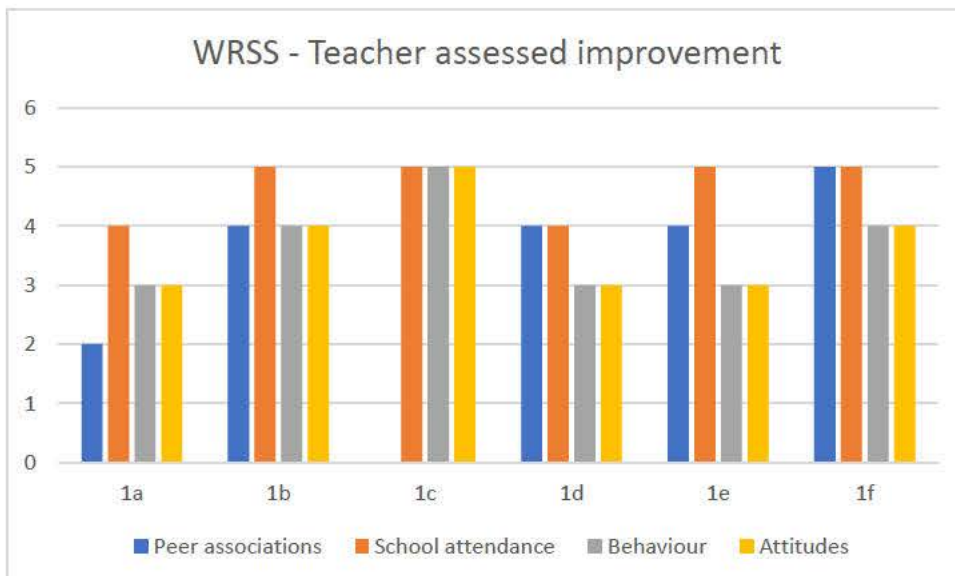
As shown in *Table 5*, and described visually in *Figure 5* below, in their teacher's view all individual students showed improvement resulting from their participation in the *Youth Intervention BikeShed* program. One student was found to have no change to peer associations (student 1c), with another student (1a), found to have minimal change in this area. The other four young people were assessed by the teacher to have improved their peer network by an average of 4.75 out of 5. The teacher observed that student 1f changed their entire friendship group, increased school attendance by the maximum measurement, and markedly improved their behaviour and attitudes at school. This young person showed the most improvement across all measured CMI metrics, closely followed by student 1b. Student 1b showed the maximum possible improvement in school attendance, and scored very highly on improvements in peer associations, behaviour and attitudes.

Table 5: Average observed change per student

Student	Average change (out of 5)
1a	3.0
1b	4.25
1c	3.75
1d	3.5
1e	3.75
1f	4.5

Students 1c, 1d and 1e all showed significant improvement across multiple CMI domains. Interestingly student 1c was not observed to have changed their friendship networks at all, but all other relevant CMI domains showed maximum improvement.

Figure 5: Change in Case Management Inventory factor by student.

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For *White Rock State School* (WRSS) students, school attendance improved significantly (4.7/5), attitudes and behavior in class showed good progress (3.7/5), and peer associations improved. Regarding these friendship networks, one young person made no changes to peer associations (although this young person was rated to have improved 5/5 in all other domains). One other student was found to have minimal change in peer associations. The other four young people at WRSS were assessed by the teacher to have improved their peer network by an average of 4.75 out of 5.

Similarly, for *Bentley Park College Step Program* students, school attendance showed the most improvement (3.9/5), followed by better attitudes (3.8/5), behavior improvement (3.5/5), and peer associations (3.4/5).

All individual students were reported to show improvement, with specific students showing notable progress across multiple metrics. Overall, the teacher at WRSS rated the Bike Shed program as more effective than did the Bentley Park teacher. The reasons for this are unclear as yet. It may be due to the rater (teacher), the students' baseline, or some other reason.

At Bentley Park, three of eight students were rated as having significant improvement across all domains (4.25/5 or higher), two were assessed as making medium progress, and improvements in three children were rated as 3/5 or below. At WRSS, improvements in all six student were rated as 3/5 or higher, with two assessed as showing significant improvement, three being rated as showing progress across all measured CMI domains of between 3.5/5 or 3.8/5), and one showing medium progress (3/5).

Conclusion

The evaluation focused on the Cairns Youth Intervention BikeShed, using desktop research, participant interviews, school surveys and stakeholder consultations. This evaluation of the *selectability Youth Intervention BikeShed* program, though limited, has shown benefits of the early intervention crime prevention program that operates in Cairns, Rockhampton and Mount Isa. These benefits can be enhanced.

The program recognises that the early years are the most critical periods of our lives as they set the foundation for cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development all of which have major impacts on health and wellbeing during childhood and extending into adulthood (Heckman, 2007). The program also acknowledges that children growing up in disadvantaged neighbourhoods face multiple challenges that affect their outcomes compared to those living in more advantaged neighbourhoods (Minh et al., 2017; Stuart, Krahe et. al, 2023). The program aims to address underlying protective and risk factors in young people to prevent the onset or continuation of offending behaviour, by providing educational, recreational and therapeutic activities in a safe space with adult mentors.

This report found that the program had positive outcomes for the young people involved, such as improved school attendance and engagement, better peer associations and social skills, reduced anti-social behaviour and attitudes, and enhanced home circumstances. The program also achieved high attendance and engagement rates, especially among young people referred by the Fire Project,

the night-time street outreach service. The program's collaboration with the local shopping centre and the *Youth Justice Service Centre* is also highlighted as a strength. Some areas for improvement have also been identified, such as developing a clear theory of change, implementing baseline and follow-up assessments, exploring opportunities to leverage selectability's therapeutic and counselling services, expanding the program to other regions with high levels of need and gaining a better understanding of the program's place in the local service system, with resultant improvements to referrals and data and information sharing.

This report makes several recommendations based on the findings, such as strengthening and expanding community partnerships, enhancing the already effective diversionary and recreational activities, continuing to foster positive peer associations and social capital (based on a refined theory of change), increasing visibility of the *Youth Intervention BikeShed* and continuing to make it even more accessible, and incorporating recent cultural safety research conducted by the extended service network.

The *Youth Intervention BikeSheds* are a promising and innovative approach to support young people at risk of offending, and that it supported the directions outlined in the *Youth Justice Strategy, 2019 – 2023*, and the *Putting Queensland Kids First* strategy. The evaluation also emphasised the need for systems thinking when seeking to create positive sustainable change, considering the dynamic and interconnected nature of systems that comprise the social world and how they impact outcomes (Best and Holmes, 2010). While selectability has a proven track record in this area, the program could benefit from a more holistic and collaborative approach that involves multiple stakeholders and sectors in addressing the complex and multifaceted issues of place-based disadvantage.

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