

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

**Submission No:** 208  
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**Publication:** Making the submission and your name public  
**Attachments:** See attachment  
**Submitter Comments:**



*“One bite at a time”*

T2A young people stepping towards life’s goals.

*A partnership between Family Focus & Eat Real*

**Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Youth Justice Reform Committee. Whilst this submission is not focused on the issue directly, it offers an insight into the opportunity to help with long term prevention and empowerment of our youth, particularly of the cohort in our statutory care system who, unfortunately can find themselves also in our Youth Justice system. We hope you will read about our idea to promote a program which does not focus on expectations or time frames or ‘box ticking’ but which comes from a trauma informed framework and a deeper understanding of this cohort before they begin to enter our justice system.**

Having worked in the area of child protection and family welfare for 20 years it has become apparent that a significant area of need is for youth transitioning to independence. For many of this cohort, with a history of early developmental trauma and neuro developmental deficits, expectations of commencing a transition plan from age 15 (as per National Standards) is very challenging. In Queensland, from July 2023, support ‘post care’ was extended from 18-21 years offering adult care leavers ‘*Extended Post Care Support*’ to ensure young people were offered both practical and financial support to live and thrive independently.

Young people with early developmental trauma and poor attachments can impact upon many aspects of their ability to form trust, learn new things, hold attention. The outlook for this cohort without a trauma informed practise approach so that basic skills for independence can be practised and fostered at their pace, in safe environments, may be a further increase in the disadvantages they may already face. These include limited access to further and higher education, training and employment ([Furey & Harris-Evans, 2021](#)) early pregnancy and parenting ([Shpiegel et al., 2021](#)); involvement in offending and the youth justice system ([van Breda, 2020](#)); substance use and abuse, poor mental health and long-term reliance on crisis intervention services ([Stein, 2021](#)). Another persistent concern is that they struggle to attain stable and affordable housing, and often exit directly from care into homelessness ([Courtney et al , 2020](#), [Strahl et al., 2020](#)).

Most importantly for this cohort is the capacity to make or earn their own money. Seemingly an achievable goal and one which most young people view as the ‘key to individual independence’ but one which is fraught with expectations and fear. Transition to, and post-care experiences and supports have an impact on employment outcomes for this group. The attainment of stable post-care accommodation is a key prerequisite for pursuing career opportunities, however, many care leavers experience housing instability or outright homelessness. This reflects the high mobility of many young people while in care, the unplanned and unprepared nature of many departures from state care, the absence of sufficient life skills required to

live independently, and the lack of an option to “return home” if the initial independent living arrangements do not work out. The ‘puzzle’ seems so big and putting it together requires many pieces fitting together.

The CREATE Foundation, who represent the voices of children and young people with an ‘out of home care experience’ released their latest study in 2020 titled *‘Transitioning to Adulthood from Out of Home Care: Independence or Interdependence?’* And surveyed over 300 young people 18-25 about key life areas post care. *When young peoples health and social networks are limited, or if they do not have access to the right supports or mentors to develop independent living skills, they may struggle physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially.* Further they documented *‘each leaving care experience is unique and influenced by how supported a young person feels during their journey to independence. As transition must begin at 15 years old, this process can have major consequences for a young person’s future because it may impact their employment, education, housing relationships and both mental and physical outcomes.* In CREATE’S report, respondents reported that whilst health, accommodation, setting up a home and education were covered well in leaving care plans, young people *wanted more practical support* for example mentoring, where direct assistance could be provided. Whilst young people were looking forward to leaving care and have more freedom and control over their own lives, 40% of the surveyed youth were *‘sad’ about the loss of support* when exiting care leaving them with feelings of *abandonment, loneliness and uncertainty.*

Turning 18 is a milestone most teenagers are eager to reach and celebrate as a stepping stone from their youth to the next phase of their lives, however for a lot of young people transitioning from care, is fraught with fear and the unknown. *‘As a 21 year old when I reflect on my transition process I often find that the support I received was really beneficial, however I also think that my life skills weren’t as developed as one would hope they would be when embarking on independent living. I wasn’t shown or taught how to budget, clean, cook or look for housing. But I was given a fridge, washing machine, driving lessons and clothing allowances. But when I reflect I’m not sure how those items that were purchased were meant to help when I didn’t know how to find a place to live or how to wash or clean those items. Whilst at 17 and a half I thought it was great to own these items, I also don’t think it was thought through by my worker about what was actually going to be in my best interests’.* \*\* Angela 21, QLD

CREATE’S report highlights a common theme young people have fed back around ‘leaving care planning’ and the importance of *including YP in decisions and choices based on their personal goals.* For a young person’s plan to be accurate and useful for their life after care, and for consideration to be made to the huge expectations that may be placed on as young as 15 year olds to ‘look to the future’. The ‘top three’ goals young people in CREATE’S study wanted were:

1. Get a job
2. Continue with their education
3. Set up their own home

In addition, care leavers often lack the social support networks typically utilised by young people as they transition from child welfare dependence to adult independence. For example, most young people participate in casual or holiday work experiences, and are likely to access career opportunities through family, extended family, family friends and religious, sporting or cultural associations. In contrast, care leavers may not have access to any of these or may have left or moved from family based care (foster care) to residential care services, self-placed with family or sleeping rough.

The definition of independence is : *the state of wanting or being able to do things for yourself and make your own decisions, without help or influence from other people.* The individual skills required in all areas of independence are endless and providing opportunities to ‘sample society’ and practise what may seem small and simple tasks, allows young adults time and support to gradually reach medium to long term goals such as:

- Living on their own or with others
- Managing money
- Health and hygiene
- Getting themselves around
- Feeding themselves
- Asking for help
- Finding employment
- Booking appointments

In a study analysis documented in by the *Children and Youth Services Review Vol 149* in June 2023, 34 young people aged 10-25 with a lived experience of transition from care were interviewed. The majority of young people reported they *did not have the independent living skills needed to transition to independence*. Further, the participants identified that the development of these skills *needed to occur gradually and incrementally, not in the last months before leaving care*.

Participants explained.....

*'I didn't really know how to cook anything, I didn't know cooking safety, like oil and water and fire do not mix – little things like that, like you've got to cook chicken the whole way through or you get sick, you've got to clean stuff. You know what I mean? Things like that which people just kind of go, "Oh yeah, common sense" but it's not common sense for us and we're not taught that'. (V2)*

*'Being in residential care, at least when I was in there, you're not allowed to cook unless you're one of a few specific clients that are deemed mature enough and old enough. By the time that I got to that age and maturity level, there were locks on all drawers, there were locks on the bedroom doors, the cupboards, to get outside which is a clear violation. Like you could not open the front door without a key. You couldn't open the back door, the side door... If there was someone there that would, even three months beforehand be like running through just how to make a sandwich or how to cook chicken properly and just assess where my levels of skills were around stuff. We weren't allowed to do our own laundry. We couldn't get into the laundry'. (V1)*

So how can we deliver the skills to this cohort in a way which encompasses many life skills, hands on approach and offer a longer term program so that we allow more time and care and apply less pressure hurried approaches.

Locally, Family Focus has achieved some success in working in this space in partnership with other providers and organisations in an attempt to deliver a hands on skills approach to independent skills under a trauma informed lens. (*read Nadia's story*) Partnering with local businesses ensures that services and businesses are working together to deliver a program specific to the needs and capabilities of this cohort and further, ultimately producing outcomes which contribute to our wider local community.

### ***Nadia's Story (name changed for privacy reasons)***

*Transition to Adulthood (T2A)* goals identified in Nadia's case plan were for '*independent living skills*' and '*preparing for the workforce*'. Family Focus had worked with Nadia on and off since she was 9 years old and was currently supporting her as part of her NDIS goals of '*capacity building*' and '*community engagement*' as she headed towards leaving care age . The case study below is a reality for this young woman, but the profile is not unfamiliar or unusual to those working in this area.

### ***A little about Nadia.....***

- Nadia is an Aboriginal young women who entered the care system at 3 years old, she was diagnosed with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder following a challenging start to her early education. Impacting her learning and attention span, Nadia attended Special Education units at her schools.
- Nadia was separated from her siblings.
- Nadia disengaged from school aged 14.
- Nadia 'bounced' through a number of foster care placements, and, as she got older, was placed in residential care.
- Nadia had been approved for a NDIS package and was awaiting a SIL's (Supported Independent Living) package to align with her T2A plan.
- Nadia wanted a 'job' and felt pressure of meeting employment requirements to continue to receive her Centrelink Youth Allowance.

After grabbing a bite to eat one day at the Eat Real kitchen, Family Focus explored the idea of Nadia coming once per week to 'help out' in the kitchen. Mostly this could provide a 'regular' activity where she had the opportunity to try something new and build a routine into her week. The overall goal to 'build capacity' to engage in and learn basic kitchen skills and grow confidence.

Family Focus began to frequent the Eat Real premises with Nadia, supporting her to stay as long as she felt she could manage. Some weeks, this was for 20 minutes, to connect with the Eat Real team, have something to eat then leave.

- Nadia felt challenged with new environments, people, and feelings of embarrassment/ shame and shyness.
- Nadia suffered high anxiety associated with not feeling safe and paranoia about others she was wary of.
- Nadia was always on guard. Scanning for threats.
- Slowly over time, Nadia stayed at Eat Real for longer periods. Forming trust takes time but familiar welcoming faces, small achievable tasks and undue pressure helped her stay longer.
- Nadia was not made a fuss of, more so she was treated like everyone else. She didn't want to 'stand out'.
- Routine and repetition (particularly pertinent for YP with intellectual challenges and childhood trauma) assisted Nadia to become familiar with the kitchen environment, the diverse group of staff/volunteers and 'knowing what to do'. Eat Real was predictable.
- Anxiety still crept in each week, but Nadia was able to manage once she relaxed and saw familiar faces. Family Focus was constantly in the 'wings' if required but gradually stepped aside.

Over time, Nadia learned her way around a commercial coffee machine, could temper milk to froth up a cappuccino like a pro whipping up flat whites or cappuccinos easily. Sometimes Nadia was asked to make a coffee order for 'real' customers. This was scary, but she managed it well.

### **Initial Outcomes:**

- Existing support staff (Family Focus) were able to co-regulate with Nadia and assist in calming her anxiety to be able to physically attend and engage in the early phase.
- Nadia learnt to use a commercial coffee machine (among other tasks)
- Nadia was trusted with varied tasks and given small manageable responsibilities which helped to build self confidence and practise at repetition.

- Nadia made meals at Eat Real for her grandmother who had a special diet, requiring her to think and plan. Family Focus supported her to return to her community to deliver them. This single task fostered her sense of contribution to family and feeling proud when family received and thanked her.
- Nadia learned about healthy cooking and the benefits of eating well.
- Nadia made morning tea packs at Eat Real and Family Focus supported her to return to visit, re-connect and deliver to past teachers at her old school. She was welcomed by teachers who had not seen her for a long time.
- Nadia was tasked with making the Eat Real 'morning tea special' of apple strudel and coffee deal which Family Focus assisted her to serve to hungry customers who thanked her.

After many months, Nadia was having a 'rough time'. She stopped going to the Eat Real Kitchen for some months but kept engaging with Family Focus. One day, a worker from Family Focus took Nadia to visit Eat Real again for a meal. Shame and anxiety returned, and Nadia was not sure she could see anyone from the kitchen. With support, Nadia agreed to 'pop in'. Eat Real was waiting with welcoming arms. Nadia was asked to make her own coffee using the commercial coffee machine. Nadia had not forgotten how to temper milk and picked up where she left off, making herself a flat white.

*Eat Real represented for Nadia a connection, more than learning barista or cooking skills.*

*Family Focus represented for Nadia safety, trust and guidance, more than a weekly support session.*

### **Ongoing Outcomes:**

- Confidence and self-esteem was built, belief she was 'worth it'.
- Nadia began to regulate her own emotions when she became tired, stressed or frustrated which saw a reduction in swearing which increased her capacity to cope and communicate her needs more articulately.
- Nadia formed relationships (connection) with key adults whom she learned to trust.
- Nadia met and practised communication and interaction with other supportive adults & young people of varied abilities and diverse backgrounds.
- Nadia felt supported by professionals at Eat Real and Family Focus & mentored by caring females.
- Nadia responded to the routine and repetition she learned until she no longer needed any prompting.
- Nadia reconnected with family and community through delivery of gifted food, she made herself.

**During the period of 18 months engaging with Family Focus and Eat Real, Nadia's confidence grew and she was open to trying other new things such as :**

- Starting her PREP L with the aim to obtain her learners licence.
- Re-visiting other places and people whom she may have disconnected from, such as the equine therapy horse park. Horses were very happy to see Nadia as were the staff.
- Being invited out to dinner with the Eat Real team which she attended with support of a carer.
- Learning some Aslan signs from one of the Eat Real team, who is profoundly deaf and works full time for Eat Real.
- Trying her hand at baking a birthday cake for her Nana and travelling to community to deliver it.
- Celebrating her 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> birthdays at Eat Real with cake and presents!
- Experimenting with new food and flavours she may not have had the chance to try before.
- Interacting with others comfortably. Relaxed enough to have a laugh.
- Interacting with members of the Eat Real team and learning about their own stories of life's challenges like herself.
- Helping with Eat Real's large catering jobs. Going on the 'delivery run' with staff.

- Delivering dignity bags to a local Indigenous girls school with Family Focus, as part of the *Share the Dignity* annual Xmas drive.
- Learning to kick box at the local martial arts gym with one of the Eat Real team.

### Overall learning's:

1. Trust is at the basis of any relationship with T2A young people if they are going to transition in a positive and productive way from care.
2. Flexibility and patience to engage at where the young person is, when and where they want to be. This requires a non-judgemental approach from all partners.
3. Person centred, whether that be connection to culture, family or areas of interest.
4. Experiencing success, whether that be a skill developed, pride in achievement or a social connection.
5. Partnering with a business that can provide a focus on reality and not just through a welfare lens.

Nadia and her story with Eat Real and Family Focus is an example of persistence and patience required with young people who cannot be 'hurried' or thrown into independence. With a focus on learning skills across all areas to be able to one day use and practise in every day life and in the workforce, Nadia and others like her, can achieve, and may just be able to transition with less of a bumpy negative experience than other care leavers who may find themselves at this time of their journey.



**'One Bite at a Time'**



### The program basics

#### Target Group -

- Youth aged 15-18 years identified within *Transition to Adulthood* plan
- Females only
- Disengaged from school or formal education
- May be involved with Youth Justice
- May be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- May be NDIS participants or awaiting an NDIS support package.

#### What –

- 12 month program designed to teach basic cooking skills. (whilst providing the opportunity to learn and practise many skills for life)

- Weekly 3 hour sessions in the *Eat Real* Kitchen
- Cooking skills including planning, prepping and cooking food
- Small groups of 2-4 young people (ratio may be increased over time)

#### How –

- Young people will be supported to meet and attend the *Eat Real* Kitchen weekly.
- Young people will be offered the opportunity to return to the kitchen each week at the same time/day.
- *Family Focus* will provide therapeutic support to ensure young people attend willingly, safely, feel comfortable and meet their individual goals.
- Family Focus, together with the YP existing youth service or family member/support person will ensure each YP is transported to and from the kitchen.
- YP will have the opportunity to take away what they prepare/cook each week.
- Eat Real will provide each YP with an Eat Real t shirt and kitchen ‘tool kit’ to use or share where ever they live.

### Why this target group?



#### Appendix 1: How the program meets this target group?

##### *Lack of Primary*

##### *Attachment vs Circle of Safety.*

- Early developmental trauma impacts this cohorts ability to form attachments and trust. This program allows for the time the young person needs to get to know staff and engage comfortably.
- The program seeks to offer predictable, consistent relationships and patience, tolerance, and empathy, whilst validating and understanding fears, creating a sense of safety for the young women who attend.
- All female support team offers a level of safety and mentoring to girls who may not have a consistent reliable adult already in their support circle.
- Feeling comfortable in the physical space is vital. The program will be run in a discrete, quiet location which offering a level of physical safety and in-exposure, which will, in turn help to calm any anxiety, hyper vigilance, feelings of anticipation.
- Participants who may be leaving chaotic, unpredictable or unhygienic environments will be supported to attend in a calm, predictable, supportive and nurturing environment.

##### *Social Emotional well being and mental health*

- Young people often feel shame or overwhelming anxiety in community or social settings where they may feel unsafe or intimidated, particularly in groups.
- This program is designed to begin with 2-3 young women initially, then potentially increase in size.
- By ensuring the group size is limited, young people have the opportunity to socially engage with peers in a non-confrontational or threatening way.
- Experienced program staff who can respond to emotional dis-regulation



and assist in co-regulating with the young person.

- Allowing space for creativity, input, and feelings of ownership.
- Small achievable tasks without undue pressure mean young people can feel pride and build self confidence.
- Pro-social behaviour has been shown to boost a number of mental states including life satisfaction, well-being, and psychological flourishing.

### *Living Skills*

- Young people's Transition to Adult (T2A) goals may seem difficult to reach with little time before they transition from the care system.
- Young people may be in residential models of care or already self-placing in the community may have less opportunity, or appropriate environment conducive to learn and practise cooking skills.
- Young people over 16 receiving the Centrelink Youth Allowance often struggle to manage money and do not know how to spend within their means. This program will incorporate simple budgeting, planning, list making, cost effective choices and help to 'slow down' impulse spending and takeaways.
- This program incorporates many life skills - a) getting along b) patience c) turn taking d) focusing on doing single tasks well e) lengthening attention span f) listening to others opinions g) following steps h) working together

### *Family and Cultural Connections*

- Young people who have lived experience in the care system through most of their life, may still find themselves at the end of their care journey feeling dis-connected to community or family. Sharing food and cultural cooking, traditions and memories, is vital to cultural heritage and identity.
- Young people will have the opportunity to sharing what they learn and share food they have cooked themselves
- Using food as a means to connect with one's culture provides a sense of identify and belonging.
- Incorporating cultural foods and techniques offers young people opportunities to to learn from elders, connect with cultural heritage and stories of the past.

### *Skills for the Workforce*

- For many young people who are dis-engaged from formal education/training, obtaining a 'certificate' may seem far out of reach. This can also be due to anxiety in large groups or formal settings, attendance % or assessment 'pass or fail' pressure. This program aims to encourage attendance and participation with the understanding that this may be the hardest part, and allowing time to build relationships, trust and comfort ability with the participant first.
- This program offers a pathway to the 'next step' towards possible study, accredited training courses, paid employment or work experience by increasing their skills for work at their own pace.
- Those young people with job search and 'activity' requirements to receive Centrelink allowances, will be able to use the program to update hours required.
- Build capacity and skills which could lead to employment opportunities in their future.

- Learning to take direction and be on time.
- Belonging to a regular group allows young people to experience what team work is, or can be, as well as inclusiveness, collaboration, responsibility and mate ship.
- Young people will learn about safe work practises, health and hygiene practises, food handling which can be practised and encouraged through routine and repetition. These are valuable skills for future work experience or employment.

### **Partnering Together –**

*Family Focus* is a local Cairns boutique private practise offering services to young people and families in the child protection system through family intervention, supported family time, youth outreach and mentoring.

*Eat Real* is a local Cairns meal and catering business. Eat Real has a reputation for teaching/mentoring young people and adults of all abilities in their kitchen through work experience opportunities as well as generously feeding the disadvantaged in our community.

Family Focus & Eat Real will deliver the program once a week together. Combining their knowledge and expertise in the areas of trauma informed care, child welfare, disability, social inclusion, nutrition, catering, food and youth.

Positive female role models are an important focus of this program. Through offering the program to young women of all cultures, we can aim to -

- Promote a culturally inclusive all female ‘mini team’.
- Support and foster peer relationships between younger and older girls. (like a sister hood of sorts)
- Help to nurture and improve social inclusion.
- Offer an all-female space where young women are free to be themselves, discuss topics they want and feel comfortable sharing.
- Provide a trusting space to girls to ‘speak up’ and ‘speak out’.
- Use developmentally appropriate teaching methods.
- Provide a nurturing, calm, protective approach by female leaders.
- Focus on small groups who can practise communication skills, interaction, and language outside of social media influences or distractions.
- Nurture new friendships to create a support group for young people ‘outside’ of the program.
- Invite Elders to attend sessions and impart their skills and knowledge around such things as traditional bush tucker foods/medicines etc.

### **Referral and Recruitment -**

Each young person identified for the program may be referred in a number of ways –

- They may will be identified within their Care Team, Child Safety officer, or Case Plan (T2A plan)
- They may be already referred to a *transition or post care* support service who identify the need for a specific program.
- They may be also involved with Youth Justice, and referred through a bail or reporting requirement as a means to deter or reduce offending behaviour.

- The young person themselves have an interest in cooking, food preparation or a longer term goal in hospitality.
- The young person may have a desire to return to re connect with family, community and their culture by offering to prepare meals they have learned to make themselves.

Family Focus and Eat Real will work with referring agencies, organisations, and the young person to determine their suitability to join the program based on their own personal goals, risks, any conflict between participants, so to ensure the best possible experience for all.

**Staff Ratio: 3: up to 6 females**

- One senior family support practitioner
- One youth mentor
- One head cook / kitchen co-coordinator

Over time, all participants will be supported to complete their Food Handlers Certificate required by the QLD Government food standards. Through this they will learn:

1. Food Standards, Laws and Local Government
2. Food safety programs and the Law
3. Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP)
4. Personal Hygiene & Handwashing
5. Receiving Stock
6. Storing Stock
7. Preparing and Processing food, Danger Zone, Contamination and Hazardous Foods
8. Serving Food
9. Displaying Food
10. Disposing of Food, Cleaning your Environment
11. Identify and report issues.
12. Procedure Examples

**How is the program measured?**

Young people and their families will have the opportunity to provide feedback about the program and their own individual goals, needs and engagement in a way which is strength’s based, goal focused and presented in a variety of forms.



**Appendix 2: Feedback and staying on track.**

STAGE:

WHAT & HOW?:

*Referral and intake stage*

Data will be documented on participants age, location, level of independent skills, personal goals and interests.

Consent forms for privacy, transporting, health and safety, sharing photos/progress.

Personal goals, adaptive living checklist and mission statement developed with participants.

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|--|--|
| <i>Attendance and follow up support</i>  | <p>Weekly check in ahead of each session (phone call or home visit if required)<br/> Contact with YP support service, family or safe person if required.<br/> Weekly attendance record including reason's for nonattendance so that barriers to engagement or non commitment can be tracked and additional support offered.</p> <p>Weekly 'how did we do today' scaling for participants to identify personal or practical goals for that week in order to highlight/celebrate their participation or something they have learned.</p> <p>Pre and post session anxiety check. 333 rule.</p>  |
| <i>Program progress and reporting</i>    | <p>8 week program progress reports including feedback from attendees in the form of scales, cards and pictorial questionnaires.</p> <p>Tick and flick feedback sheets 'Growing Well' series (designed for teens and young people with literacy deficits)</p> <p>Speech and language resources such as 'Mindful Talk' and 'Teen Check In' cards will assist to generate questions and conversations about the young persons view or measure of their own progress.</p> <p>Option for young people to make/ star in short videos and take photos to share/express how the program is for them and share them with the group provides a platform for 'visibility' to their peers and family</p> |
| <i>Service delivery and partnerships</i> | <p>Collaboration with Gov and Non Gov organisations, youth services and community members through the referral process, initial phase and progress reporting will ensure the program is constantly being evaluated and measured on the needs and goals of the cohort.</p>  |
| <i>Post program and final report</i>     | <p>A collection of all of the data, progress, evaluation, and assessment of the program will inform a final report.</p> <p>Post program support and follow up with all participants, regardless of the duration of their engagement will serve to ensure each young person has achieved a personal goal or goals linked to independence and or future employment opportunities.</p>  |



**Capability to deliver the program and governance arrangements to support delivery.**

Weekly sessions will occur at the Eat Real Kitchen, situated within a local football club (club is closed to the public during business hours ) and surrounded by football fields. The location serves as a discrete, quiet, unassuming place which offers young people the safety of 'not standing out too much'.

Upon commencement of the program, young people will be asked to and encouraged to contribute to a mission statement and formulate a dispute resolution statement as a collective. This will serve to ensure that the young people attending the program have ownership of the agreance in place should conflict arise and a clear understanding of the expectations of working together and respecting each other should they disagree or 'have a bad day'.

*Eat Real* – Elsa Lim trained disability worker, teachers’ aide, and qualified cook. Business owner for 10 years in healthy meals and catering, offering ‘Up Skill’ programs for young people with a disability learn skills for life and the workforce. *Eat Real* is an independently operated local Cairns family business, which has been providing opportunities for young people and the community through food for many years (all self funded) *Eat Real* has been able to offer local high schools (private and public) opportunities for work experience placements, young people with learning and physical disabilities have also frequented the kitchen with support workers to build capacity.

*Family Focus* – Sam Stitt holds a Diploma of Early Childhood Education, Grad Cert Child Welfare Practise, Grad Cert Developmental Trauma and a trained Life Story Therapist. Private practise for 10 years and experience in the welfare sector for 20 years working in partnership with Gov and non Gov organisations to support young people and families in the child protection system.

Connecting with community Elders of varied cultures to consult them on ways to prepare and cook cultural food, and further, invite them into the program to share their knowledge and teach skills would offer further mentoring, connection to culture, mother figures and role models to young women.

Seeking feedback and collaboration from external referring services to ensure young people are informed and supported to attend the program and encouraged to have a voice about their own goals and hopes. Consulting and promoting has begun with local youth services such as YETI, Youth Link and CREATE and Government services such as Youth Justice and Child Safety to identify young people who may benefit from the program. Feedback is similar in response to the high need of this cohort to be serviced as they transition and further into early adulthood and that the current capacity of services such as ‘*Next Step Plus*’ and more recently ‘*Extended Post Care Support*’ cannot meet the need, nor have the time and space for targeted programs for independence such as ‘*One Bite At A Time*’.

### **So what happened to Nadia?.....**

Nadia did not enter the Youth Justice system. She was supported to move into her own unit, is now 19 and supported by an NDIS provider. She plays an active role in her community, and has connections with her culture and family.

**Thank you** for reading about our program idea. We hope to secure funding to run this in the near future. For any questions or enquires please contact Family Focus director, Sam Stitt.



***Family Intervention, Supported Family Time, Life Story Therapy, Youth Outreach & Mentoring***

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