



Evaluation of the City of Darebin's Y-Ute program

Social Inclusion and Diversity Branch
October 2009

Introduction

The City of Darebin's Youth Services has a long history of supporting young people in Darebin and offers a range of services including: drop in youth centres, homework support, leadership and training programs, social and recreational programs, youth advocacy and coordination, youth development programs, the Decibels music program, the African Access Project and the Y-Ute outreach program.

The Darebin Youth Outreach and Activities Project, affectionately known as the Y-Ute Crew was developed in response to a council audit in 2006 which identified residents', local service providers' and other key agencies' concerns of young people's anti-social and at-risk behaviour. Following the audit, a youth outreach program was piloted by Darebin's Youth Services which formulated the concept and approach of the Y-Ute program. In October 2007 the program was funded for three years through the Commonwealth National Community Crime Prevention Program (NCCPP).

The Y-Ute program has developed and grown to become an integral and unique part of Darebin's youth work with a pivotal role of outreach to at-risk young people as well as building bridges in the community between young people and local communities.

In its second year of operation the program is participating in a formal evaluation conducted by the City of Darebin's Social Inclusion and Diversity Unit to learn from and report on the progress of the program to date, and to meet the evaluation requirements of the funding body.

This report presents the results of the evaluation which captures the development, processes, challenges and impact of the Y-Ute program on the targeted audience and the Darebin community.

The evaluation is also timely for Council and their considerations of the future of the program beyond the current funding timelines. Darebin has significant levels of intergenerational and current disadvantage culminating in significant levels of poverty, unemployment, households experiencing housing stress and significant school drop out rates, - evidence for potential high levels of youth disorder and feelings of hopelessness.

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1. Executive Summary

“Reducing disengagement and promoting engagement is important for young people now and in the future. When young people are alienated or disengaged from activities and institutions which provide the opportunities to develop skills and experience positive relationships, they are at greater risk of poor health, mental health difficulties and social problems.”

Preventing Youth Disengagement and Promoting Engagement Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth – August 2008

The Y-Ute program was developed as a part of the City of Darebin's youth services response to meet the needs of young people who had come to the attention of the community through their anti-social behaviour and who were not engaged in the youths services or youth activities offered through council and other services.

The young people who are the target group of the program are from some of Darebin's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods where many families experience a difficult home environment, unemployment, poverty, disengagement, domestic violence, a negative social environment and issues with the law. The young people expressed their own situation as “nothing to do, nowhere to go.”

A program to address these issues ultimately needed to engage these young people and provide a community building approach rather than a reform approach to addressing their needs. The Y-Ute program model was developed over time applying an integrated approach involving the target group, affected neighbourhoods and key agencies and services. The program continues to have an open culture of continuous improvement and development giving the program significant capacity to evolve and include the target audience, as well as capacity to respond to arising issues and circumstances.

The evaluation results clearly report overwhelming support for the Y-Ute program and its work with young people as well as evidence of the ongoing need for such services that address disadvantage and build opportunities for creating more inclusive and safe communities for all.



The program has been successful in engaging the targeted young people through providing activities of interest and by developing and portraying a ‘service’ type and style that is appealing and “cool” to belong to. The ability of the Y-Ute staff to understand, engage, inform, and relate to the young people was very highly regarded and valued by all participants in the evaluation as well as their ability to advocate and represent young people in various settings.

"The Y-Ute staff are very committed. They have an understanding of the issues and what's behind a problem – know what is causing the problem/issues with the kids and are therefore able to provide solutions."

East Reservoir resident and community group representative

The program was also highly successful in providing and/or facilitating a number of opportunities for young people to become involved and engaged in their local community. The evaluation identified over 25 community events in the past year where young people actively participated in the program or the event through or alongside the Y-Ute crew. Requests for the Y-Ute crew to participate in community events has steadily increased as their reputation for their capacity to bring young people into whole-of-community events is becoming well known.

"The Y-Ute crew have come along to at least 10 of our community events. They arrive with the ute, organise sports, activities, PA system, music. They always are a really good presence."

Neighbourhood Renewal Program

"The Ute program helps to promote intergenerational, families, all-ages events. They try and break down the negative perceptions of young people. The Y-Ute are very much involved in that process."

Service provider, Reservoir

A number and range of leadership opportunities for the targeted young people have been provided through the Y-Ute program and again this was reported as a highly successful and valued part of the program. Benefits reported included the establishment of a pathway for consultation between young people and council/services/community, the increasing capacity of young people to participate in decision making processes, and the value-added contribution of the young people in consultations. The impact and empowerment for the Y-Ute participants is summarised by this comment below relating to their involvement in the skate park consultation.

"We are making a skate park ..it makes me feel good."



As an outreach service the program has been able to extensively outreach to young people in the Darebin community. Visiting between 15-35 'hot spots' (such as at railway stations, parks) and reaching up to 150 young people per night, the Y-Ute crew are able to check on the young people, offer them advice and information, make a referral if required, and generally have a presence in these areas. The Y-Ute crew also use the outreach visits to inform the young people of the Y-Ute activity sessions and have had a number of young people coming to the activity sessions from this contact.

The presence of the Y-Ute crew at these 'hot spots' and their ability to facilitate communication between young people and other concerned parties has on a number of occasions managed to disperse a situation prior to it escalating into potential violence. The flexibility of the service includes using a mobile ute as transport which gives the program the capacity to respond immediately to requests to visit new hot spots. The Y-Ute crew also use the outreach knowledge to inform council and others of potential hot spots feeding into councils and police community safety work.

The extensive 'reach' of the program is clearly illustrated by the range of services and communities who have come into contact with the program. The Y-Ute plays a pivotal role between young people, youth services, council, and other services such as the police.



Substantial benefits and gains were reported by all service providers in the evaluation who had had contact with the program and a number of successful working relationships and partnerships have been formed both within and outside council. Benefits from these relationships and partnerships included learning from the Y-Ute crew about working with young people, breaking down the barriers of communication with young people, and providing better service responses to young people. These points in particular were made by people working for council and the local police.

"Y-Ute program successfully bridge between young people and the police early intervention program through information to the young kids and referral."

Police

"The Y-Ute program supported the Emergency Management Response Group after a fatal incident with a young person. A large portion of councils' response involved the Y-Ute staff who were on-site and brought information into and out of council and provided service and support at the crucial time – they were the most effective part of the engagement."

Council staff

One focus of the program funding was to improve community perceptions of young people and community safety. Police crime statistics do report a decline in crime in Darebin over the past few years, however any direct relationship between reducing crime and the Y-Ute program cannot be substantiated. Participants in the evaluation however provided anecdotal information on the impact that the program had on crime and safety including feelings of improved community safety and security in neighbourhoods.

"The kids that continue to be engaged in the Y-Ute program are the ones that don't come under the police attention."

Youth Police Unit Darebin

"The Y-Ute program kept the kids off the streets and made it feel safer. Before the program the elderly were living in fear – they were too scared to go outside in their own neighbourhood. Since the Y-Ute has been around the elderly feel much more secure. If they know the ute is around they will go out."

East Preston resident and community group representative

The evaluation of the Y-Ute program concludes far reaching achievements and success factors for the target group, communities and service providers involved. The model, the staff skills, the provision of opportunities for young people and the reform and preventative approach are all investments resulting in shaping a more positive future for these young people.

In particular the Y-Ute capacity to promote a sense of belonging and meaningful connections with the young people and between the young people and the wider community has reduced feelings of exclusion and disengagement and promoted community relationships, cohesion and inclusion.

The current level of funding for the program is very limited and allows only a part-time program with considerable "in-kind" provision from the City of Darebin.

The evaluation report identifies some challenges for the program and includes recommendations for the continuation of the program and considerations to improve the sustainability of the Y-Ute program.



2. Snapshot of young people in Darebin

At the 2006 census:

- 22,670 young people aged between 10-25 years lived in Darebin accounting for 17.6% of the total Darebin population.
 - 26.4% of the young people population were 10-14 years, 29.7% were 15-19 years and 43.7% were 20-24 year olds.
 - Darebin has the largest metropolitan Indigenous population. In 2006, 323 young people stated they were of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background. This accounts for 31% of the Indigenous population in Darebin. (A further 1,730 did not state their Indigenous status).
 - 8,183 young people spoke a language other than English (LOTE) at home.
 - 2,875 young people were recent arrivals having arrived in Australia since the year 2000.
 - 5,819 students attended a secondary school.
 - Darebin is the 5th most disadvantaged municipality in the metropolitan area as reported by the SEIFA index of disadvantage. East Preston and East Reservoir, two areas of Darebin which are specifically targeted by the Y-Ute program, are ranked under the "most disadvantaged" category.
- Research clearly demonstrates links between disadvantage, anti-social behaviour and crime. June 2008 police data on assaults in the Melbourne CBD identified Reservoir as the top postcode for charges laid over the assaults.
 - Darebin has been identified as one of the highest areas of youth disengagement in metropolitan Melbourne with 9-13% of 20-24 year olds not in education or employment. (2006). Local knowledge reports that this ratio increases in the most disadvantaged areas of the municipality.
 - In December 2008, Darebin was ranked along with 5 other municipalities in metropolitan Melbourne as having the highest (5.5% -8.2%) unemployment rate per population

3. Y-Ute aims and objectives

3.1 Aims

The Darebin Y-Ute Outreach and Activities Project provides an after-hours outreach and activities service to at-risk young people in East Preston and East Reservoir. It focuses on enhancing community safety for all residents and provides opportunities for young people to become active members in their local communities.

In particular the Y-Ute project aims to engage marginalised, at-risk young people from 11 to 18 years in the City of Darebin with special emphasis on the East Preston and East Reservoir area.

3.2 Objectives

1. Engage the community in activities aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour among at risk young people aged 11 to 18 years within the City of Darebin.
2. Reduce anti-social behaviour among at-risk young people in the City of Darebin by providing an after-hours outreach service and an after-hours activity program.
3. Provide after-hours information and referral for young people who are at-risk and congregating in public spaces.

3.3 Outcomes

The stated outcomes for the objectives as outlined in the Y-Ute program service agreement are:

Outcomes for Objective 1:

- Community engaged in activities aimed to reduce anti-social behaviour among target group
- Increased awareness of services, agencies and activities for young people in the local area
- Increased referrals of young people to services
- Reduction in reports of anti-social behaviour to council and police from residents from East Preston and East Reservoir

- Increased awareness of the Y-Ute project among the project reference group
- Improved inter-agency cooperation and coordination

Outcomes for Objective 2&3

- Reduction in anti-social behaviours among at-risk young people in the City of Darebin
- Positive feedback from young people accessing the outreach service regarding the effectiveness of the initiative
- Improved communication with agencies regarding local youth issues
- Increased number of young people accessing services
- Increased participation of young people in positive recreational activities
- including activities run during the after-hours program
- Increased youth engagement in the community via leadership programs
- Improved community perceptions of young people
- Improved perceptions of community safety
- Increased range of programs and activities targeting young people
- Improved relationships between police and youth in targeted areas

4. Y-Ute evaluation overview

4.1 Aim of the evaluation

The 18 month Y-Ute evaluation aims to explore and evaluate the activities, processes and outcomes of the Y-Ute program and to report on:

- the audience the program reached including the target group, their families and relevant service providers/ networks
 - ways the program benefited the target audience
 - opportunities (eg leadership) the program provided for participants
 - what worked well and why,
 - what could be improved, and
 - main challenges of the program for the future.
- The 18 month evaluation report will complement the information given in the program's ' six monthly progress reports' provided to the NCCPP which give detail on activities and progress against performance indicators and milestones.

4.2 Key Data sources

Key data sources for the evaluation include;

- Interviews with Y-Ute staff and Youth Services Coordinator
- Interviews/survey/focus group with young people involved in the program
- Interviews with a small number of stakeholders (eg reference group members, police, youth workers)
- Observation and informal discussions with participants at outreach activity sites
- Y-Ute client data
- Y-Ute progress reports to date
- Y-Ute reference group records
- Crime /other relevant safety statistics (dependent on availability and relevance to small area)

4.3 Timeframe

The Y-Ute evaluation will commence in May and will be completed by November 30th 2009 for inclusion in the Y-Ute 5th progress report to the NCCPP.

4.4 Key personnel

The evaluation will be undertaken by the City of Darebin Social Inclusion and Diversity Unit.

A small reference group consisting of members from the Y-Ute program, Youth Services, and the Health and Safety Committee acted in an advisory capacity for the evaluation design.

4.5 Anticipated Outcome

The evaluation report will provide the Y-Ute program with a deeper understanding of the participants and the impact of the program on the participants as well as meeting the evaluation requirements specified in the funding agreement. A written report on the findings of the evaluation will be produced and presented to Darebin Youth Services.

5. Development of the Y-Ute program

“A number of inter-connected structural and individual factors such as poverty, exposure to violence, social isolation and lack of positive relationships with adults link disengagement with offending behaviour, gang membership, alcohol and drug use, mental illness and suicide. Conversely, social networks and structures that support diversity can provide support, influence and provide opportunities for engagement, thus facilitating links to others that promote a sense of belonging and meaningful connections, fostering social inclusion and reducing disengagement.”

Preventing Youth Disengagement and Promoting Engagement Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth – August 2008

The idea for developing a youth outreach service was initially instigated because of a number of complaints and representations to Council from residents and services in Darebin concerning the anti-social behaviour of young people in the streets and in public spaces. The concerns were about kids as young as 8 years old through to 18 year olds from neighbourhoods which are considered economically and socially disadvantaged.

A 2006 Council community safety audit in the East Preston area with local residents, local service providers and other key stakeholders identified a number of behaviours of young people that were of concern, including intimidation, harassment, swearing, excessive hooliganism, loitering and hanging around in groups on the street.

The audit also reported on “a small minority of marginalised young people with complex needs being exposed to multiple risk factors who are not engaging with existing services. Identified elements fitted into the below categories:

- difficult home environment/ neighbourhood
- previous experiences of youth services, police, truancy, courts
- traditionally don't engage with programs/ structure
- undertake “at risk” behaviours
- inequality and inequity of their social, environmental and health status
- negative peer groups/ social environment-gangs
- high level of anti-social behaviour in the area including assault, intimidation, threats, vandalism, arson”.¹

Council's youth services were also aware of young people who were not engaged in activities and services offered through council's youth services who continued to relate that there was “nothing to do and nowhere to go”.

A program to address these issues ultimately needed to engage these young people and provide a community building approach rather than a reform approach to addressing their needs.

A pilot Y-Ute project was implemented to respond to the above issues. The Pilot program ran for seven weeks and informed the development of the current Y-Ute outreach program. valued by all participants in the evaluation as well as their ability to advocate and represent young people in various settings.

¹ Tacey, E. Progress report of the Kirby Street Community Initiated Safety Audit. Darebin City Council, March 2006.

The outreach program model and the idea of a ute evolved out of research on youth outreach models, identification of young people issues, discussions and input from Council, community, service providers and the target group, and through trial and error.

The program model was developed over time and continues to have an open culture of continuous improvement and development. This approach gives the program significant capacity to involve and include the target audience in developing programs and activities and to respond to arising issues and circumstances.

A donated ute was repaired and refurbished through an employment support initiative (mechanics) program which then became the ute used in the program.

The Darebin Community Safety Committees, Neighbourhood Renewal Community Safety Action Group, Health and Wellbeing Action group, the Preston Progress Association have been instrumental in guiding the projects initiatives and providing forums to critique and inform the development and delivery of safety initiatives.

Key principles developed to inform the model included;

• the need to provide a range of services with a particular focus on recreation activities in the East Preston and East Reservoir area. Activities offered would be;

- **Affordable** – free or a nominal cost may be charged on certain activities, but it would not be a barrier to participation,
- **Locally Based** – to build a sense of neighbourhood, and encourage positive ownership of parks and open spaces,
- **Challenging and Inclusive** – to encourage participation by all, and
- **Youth Lead and Managed** – to create a youth development and participation approach.

• **an after-hours mobile outreach service offered needs to;**

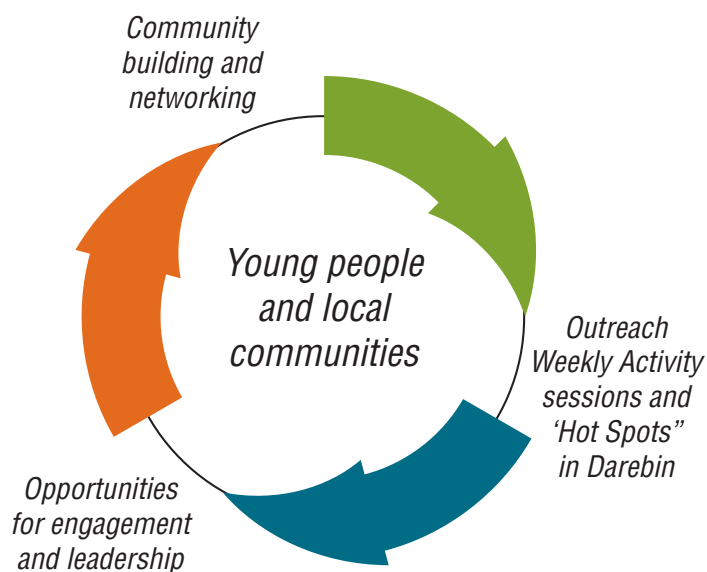
- be staffed by qualified youth workers, be mobile and operate from an identifiable vehicle, for example, the ute,
- identify potential groups of young people with “nothing to do/nowhere to go”,
- develop a regular visiting roster of “hot spots” that are identified by the
- community /police schools and young people themselves,
- follow the “hot spots” as they change areas over the period of the project,
- provide young people with information and referral into local agencies and programs,
- identify and raise issues of concern by the young people and the local
- community with the police, decision makers and government departments,
- document the outcomes of the evenings’ work via written reports and
- regular debriefings with the project coordinator, and
- provide regular monthly contact and issue reports to the managingbody.

Key development milestones included:

- Forging a recognisable and an acceptable brand for the program.
- Understanding the area – densities of disadvantage and areas to target.
- Identifying usable space for recreation purposes.
- Trialling ways of engaging young people.
- Establishing the parameters of the outreach and relationship with other services, activities in the area.
- Building relationships and networks with young people.
- Building relationships and networks with services and community.
- Developing relevant communication and advertising mechanisms to inform the target audience of the program.

6. Y-Ute model overview

The Y-Ute program has developed a range of supports and activities to achieve the program's aims and objectives. The following diagram outlines the program's structure and core activities undertaken through the program.



Approach

Proactive – Engage – Responsive

Support – Advocacy – Information – Referral – Consultation – Negotiation – Networking

Resources Staff

The Y-Ute program staff are funded for:

- Y-Ute crew project officer/manager 16 hours per week (12 hours operational, 4 hours administrative) Appointed 2008
- Casuals- Total of 12 hours In-kind support from City of Darebin includes management, supervision, training, on call youth services staff .

Resources Equipment

Ute owned and maintained by Darebin Sound system
Tangible resources include: bike maintenance gear and art, sporting, bike, circus, media and construction equipment. Other resources include, met cards, pool passes, water bottles, and phone cards. In kind resources include access to Darebin vehicles,(eg community bus), festival equipment such as marquees, BBQ's, and office & office equipment and support.

Accountability

- Reports to the Co-ordinator of Youth Services
- Reports to a reference group -the Darebin Local Safety Committee which includes membership from Council, Police, Fire brigade, Vicroads, RMIT, La Trobe University, Connex and Austin Health.
- Provides bi-annual progress reports to the funding body.

The Y-Ute program records include Activity Summary sheets, Activity permission forms, Outreach Log sheets, Outreach referral documentation

Advertising the program includes:

Monthly updates on Darebin's website, text messages, project flyers, business cards and through information distributed through Darebin youth services and educational institutions.

7. Evaluation findings

A total of thirty-nine people participated in the evaluation of the Y-Ute program.

Conversations were held with:

- twenty-two young people who had participated in the program
- eight people from neighbourhood community groups/ committee members

Interviews were held with:

- two Y-Ute program staff
- one City of Darebin Youth Services Staff
- four City of Darebin staff from across Council departments
- three local service providers such as the police, community health centre, and neighbourhood renewal program.

The evaluation findings are presented below under four main themes.

7.1 What the Y-Ute program delivers

- > Outreach
- > Leadership and engagement opportunities
- > Community building

7.2 The Impact of the Y-Ute program

- > Impact for participants
- > Impact for community
- > Impact for council
- > Impact for service providers
- > Impact on crime prevention and safety

7.3 Key success factors of the Y-Ute program

7.4 Key challenges of the Y-Ute program

7.1 What the Y-Ute program delivers

What the Y-Ute program delivers has been captured through the evaluation interviews and conversations as well as 3 bi-annual progress reports to the funding body. The progress reports detail milestone progress and achievement of performance indicators against program objectives.

7.1.1 Deliverables- Outreach.

The Program was successful in establishing a suitable venue in the two key target areas to hold the activities which included indoor and out door space to accommodate the range of activities offered. A summary of the ongoing regular activities are provided below.

Weekly Activity sessions

East Reservoir Tues 3-7pm

East Preston Thurs 4-8pm (Until Aug 09)

Reservoir Thurs 4-8pm (since August 09)

Activities include:

~ Basketball ~ Soccer ~ Bike maintenance ~ Table tennis ~ Skateboarding ~ Bike riding

~ Art workshops ~ Cooking workshops ~ Music sessions ~ Fitness sessions ~ Excursions ~ Billiards (East Preston)

Program involves :

~ Youth Support Information ~ Referral Youth advocacy ~ Mentoring ~ Relationship building

The activity session includes providing meals and participants often sit down and eat together.

Meals and snack food are freshly prepared at the site, exposing the participants to a range of food types and cooking experiences.

Utilising the ute as an identifiable support service, the program identifies and visits "hot spots" in Darebin. The service has clear boundaries for its role and relationship between other outreach services such as the police and alcohol and drug outreach services.

"Hot Spots" in Darebin Saturday evening 4-8pm and responding to callout requests

Program involves :

~ Information ~ Referral ~ Negotiation ~ Advocacy ~ Driving around Darebin visiting "hot spots".

~ Responding to calls/requests to visit specific "hot spots". ~ Discussing issues/concerns and providing information and referral to young people gathered in the "hot spots". ~ Networking/engagement between outreach services and community

7.1.2 Deliverables – Leadership and engagement opportunities

Implementing a youth lead and managed approach, the Y-Ute program provides and /or facilitates a number of opportunities for young people to become involved and engaged in their local community. The following table presents the range of opportunities and engagement activities that the Y-Ute program has facilitated and been involved in.

Y-Ute activities integrated into community events throughout the year.

Events participated in include:

- ~ Police Youth Day Koorie Justice Day
- ~ Neighbourhood Renewal Health Festival
- ~ Northcote Skateboard Competition
- ~ Darebin Kite Festival
- ~ Preston Police Open Day
- ~ Mental Health
- ~ Festival
- ~ Freeza Youth Music Event
- ~ Bike Safety Festival
- ~ Finding my Place Local Youth Tours
- ~ Mayors Event
- ~ North Western Leagues Skateboard and BMX Series
- ~ Joy FM radio interview
- ~ Neighbourhood Renewal BBQ
- ~ Youth services end of year party

An annual holiday camp provides experiences and activities that the target audience would rarely or never get an opportunity to participate in.

3 day holiday camp

Activities and opportunities include:

- ~ Camp activities such as surfing, horse riding, hiking
- ~ Opportunities to participate as a member of a group
- ~ Leadership development opportunities through camp activities program development and planning
- ~ Building resilience in young people

With the Y-Ute program's relationships with young people, and with their reputation in the community, the program has been able to facilitate and support young people to participate in consultations and decision making processes affecting their life and interests.

Consultations with young people

Consultations involved:

- ~ Skate park consultation design
- ~ Neighbourhood Renewal Youth Strategy
- ~ Community youth survey
- ~ Alcohol restricted zones consultation
- ~ Open space play space strategy
- ~ Decibels (music program) review

7.1.3 Deliverables – Community Building

The program aimed to assist young people access services through, building trust and relationships, disseminating information on services in appealing and acceptable ways, referrals to appropriate services and working with service providers to enhance their understanding of responsiveness to young people.

Referral and access to services

Program includes:

- ~ Identifying service barriers for young people
- ~ Strengthening communication between service providers
- ~ Promotion of services and information
Promoting service access to young people
- ~ Developing a services network folder
- ~ Access to bicycles for transport to assist young people getting to services
- ~ Advocacy
- ~ Referral
- ~ Networking

Developing and maintaining interagency involvement and partnerships was reported as an outstanding component of the Y-Ute program. The program became the facilitator of communication and relationships between young people and other organisations as well as a resource within the community and services arena working in partnership with a number of organisations.

Developing and maintaining interagency involvement and partnerships

Involved:

- ~ Networking ~ Program planning ~ Establishing partnerships and determining program parameters

Internal to council the Y-Ute program developed working relationships with:

- ~ Communications ~ Community Safety ~ Events ~ Leisure services ~ Neighbourhood Renewal ~ Buildings services ~ Youth services

Y-Ute program developed networks and working relationships with:

- ~ Darebin City Council
- ~ Victoria Police
- ~ RMIT University
- ~ Darebin Community Health Centre
- ~ Reservoir Community Correctional Services
- ~ Metropolitan Fire Brigade
- ~ Connex
- ~ Vic Roads
- ~ Migrant Resource Centre
- ~ Office of Housing
- ~ Preston and Reservoir Trader's Association
- ~ La Trobe University

The Y-Ute program with an inclusive approach developed a number of activities to facilitate the contribution that young people make to their local neighbourhood. In particular the Y-Ute program was instrumental in building community strength and recovery following the tragic events involving the death of two of Darebin's young people.

The Y-Ute staff through their relationships with the young people and services such as the police and council, were able to bridge the discussions between the affected parties to develop strategies to move forward and prevent further detrimental consequences.

Community building, strengthening and community recovery

Involves:

Facilitation of communication between young people and community, mainstream services/organisations

Development of strategies including;

~ Bike maintenance program ~ Neighbourhood Renewal Youth Strategy ~ Northcote skate park recovery plan ~ Sudanese Community Recovery Plan

7.2 The impact of the Y-Ute program

The impact of the Y-Ute program has been captured in the evaluation interviews and conversations and is supported by documented evidence from progress reports, Y-Ute client records and Y-Ute committee reports.

Participants in the evaluation overwhelmingly reported a range of positive outcomes and impacts from the program for young people, council staff, service providers and the wider community.

The following lists the Y-Ute program objectives met by the Y-Ute outreach activities

- ✓ Reduction in anti-social behaviour among at-risk young people in Darebin
- ✓ Increased participation of young people in positive recreational activities including activities run during the after-hours activity program
- ✓ Increased range of programs and activities targeting young people
- ✓ Increased awareness of services, agencies and activities for young people in the local area
- ✓ Positive feedback from young people accessing the outreach
- ✓ Increased number of young people accessing services
- ✓ Increased referrals of young people to services
- ✓ Improved community perceptions of young people
- ✓ Improved perceptions of community safety
- ✓ Reduction in reports of anti-social behaviour to council and police from residents from East Preston and East Reservoir
- ✓ Improved inter-agency cooperation and coordination
- ✓ Improved communication with agencies and young people regarding local youth issues
- ✓ Improved relationships between police and youth in targeted areas
- ✓ Community engaged in activities aimed to reduce anti-social behaviour among the target group
- ✓ Increased youth engagement in the community via community leadership programs

7.2.1 Impact for young people

Activities

There was unanimous agreement on the effectiveness of the Y-Ute program in engaging young people and, in particular, the target audience of young people who have been considered as difficult to engage. The ongoing attendance of young people at the two weekly activities sessions demonstrates ongoing interest from young people in the activities offered and the program continues to draw first timers as well as regular attenders.

The young people also find the activities provided as appealing describing them as fun, cool, interesting, not the same thing all the time and helpful in learning new things (such as fixing my bike). The young people described the Y-Ute staff as cool and fair and said they looked forward to the activities and the staff made it a great place to hang around.

Comments by young people on the activity sessions included:

"We have a lot of fun here. What I like about it is that you meet new people, play pool, mend my bike and eat."

"This is like my second house."

"I would be in the street if it wasn't for this. There is nothing else to do, my parents tell me to get out of home and then I get into trouble mucking up."

"Young people often are not motivated to do anything. The Y-ute program has been able to motivate the young people."

Service provider Reservoir

"The kids attending the Y-Ute program now also attend the camps, plaza youth centre, northland youth centre, hip hop classes and decibels music centre. None (of the kids) would have done any of this before Y-Ute."

Council staff

Tuesday activity sessions

- > Average participants per session : 17
- > Participants per session (summer) : up to 35
- > Regular participants : 95%
- > Age groups of participants –
 - 80%- 13 to 19 year old
 - 15%- 5 to 12 year olds
 - 5%-19 years plus

Backgrounds - Australian born and overseas born young people including people with Indigenous, Sudanese, African, Italian, Arabic, Lebanese, South Sudanese, Macedonian and Russian backgrounds.

Thursday activity sessions (East Preston)

- > Average participants per session : 11
- > Participants per session : up to 22
- > Regular participants : 55%
- > Age groups of participants –
 - 80% -12-16 years
 - 20% - 18 years plus

Backgrounds – Australian born and overseas born young people. Approximately 80% are Indigenous young people.

Thursday night session (East Reservoir commenced Sept 09)

- > Attenders in the first three months – 22
- > Age groups of participants –
 - 80% - 16-25 years
 - 20%- 11-16 years

Backgrounds – Australian born and overseas born including young people from Africa, Sudan and Iraq.

“Hot spots”

The Y-Ute crew are receiving an increasing number of requests from service providers

and or businesses to visit their area. The main issues are safety and prevention of potential vandalism and injury to young people.

“It takes along time for young people to build up trust and relationships. In the last six months the young people are only starting to trust us enough to ask about services.”

Y-Ute staff

“I would like to thank the Y-Ute crew for all their work at the railway stations and making our station staff feeling safe.”

Connex

Hot spot visits

Records kept by the Y-Ute program report:

- > Number of hot spot visits per night : 15-35
- > Number of young people seen at hot spots : up to 150 per night
- > Background of young people – Males and females from a diverse range of backgrounds including Australian and overseas born
- > Referrals include referral to homeless services, drug & alcohol services, health services and youth services

Annual camp

The annual camp provides experiences and access to activities to young people that have never experienced a camp environment and the opportunities it provides.

“At the camps you get to seriously challenge the kid’s behaviours and assumptions as you get to apply ‘the model’ over a few days, not just as an activity. It is very effective and you see the growth in self esteem and confidence.”

Y-Ute staff

Leadership and engagement opportunities

The Y-Ute program was effective in facilitating opportunities for the targeted young people to participate in leadership and engagement opportunities. The staff were successful at instigating and creating opportunities for youth to be included and have strengthened the pathways for young people to participate in consultations, and engagement opportunities.

Comments by young people on their involvement in the skate park consultation and development include:

“We are making a skate park ..it makes me feel good.”

7.2.2 Impact for Community

Overwhelmingly participants in the evaluation reported improved relationships between young people and their community. Positive reports of youth participation in community events such as a street party, a community BBQ, a community festival etc. was attributed to the ability of the Y-Ute staff to facilitate the bridge between the young people and the community event and that the crew were able to provide activities that interested the youth. The requests for Y-Ute attendance at street parties and community events has steadily increased.

"The Y-Ute crew have come along to at least 10 of our community events. They arrive with the ute, organise sports, activities, PA system, music. They are always a really good presence." Neighbourhood Renewal Program The Y-Ute program was reported as being 'well known' from residents in the local communities targeted by the program, East Preston and East Reservoir. As well as attending community events, the ute is easily identifiable which has increased the awareness of the program in the community.

"The Y-Ute program kept the kids off the streets and made it feel safer. Before the program the elderly were living in fear – they were too scared to go outside in their own neighbourhood. Since the Y-Ute has been around the elderly feel much more secure. If they know the ute is around they will go out."

East Preston resident and community group representative

"The Y-Ute program helps to promote intergenerational, family and, all-ages events. They try and break down the negative perceptions of young people. The Y-Ute are very much involved in that process."

Service provider Reservoir

"The program is really well known, respected, received and applauded from community members."

Neighbourhood Renewal Program

7.2.3 Impact for Council

The Y-Ute program has been reported as a positive role of council in addressing young people's issues and related community concerns. For example,

"Council and police were able to follow up on 'youth drinking' in a particular area as they found out about this from the outreach of the Y-Ute program."

The program has assisted in council-to-young people's relationships and communications, and facilitated the engagement of young people in council business.

As a council service the program has enhanced council's capacity in working with young people and provided some good practice examples for council to continue to work with young people in Darebin.

"Y-Ute gives council a profile in the youth area and great collaboration across council."

"The Y-Ute program supported the Emergency Management Response Group after a fatal incident with a young person. A large portion of council's response involved the Y-Ute staff who were on-site and brought information into and out Evaluation of the City of Darebin's Y-Ute Program November 2009 24 of council, provided service and support at the crucial time – they were the most effective part of the engagement."

Council staff

"The youth involvement in the development of a skateboard park demonstrates the role the Y-Ute program had with council. Through Y-Ute the kids were presented a model and consulted, then the kids got a petition together and made models. The kids took this information to a council meeting."

Council staff

7.2.4 Impact for other services

The reach of the Y-Ute program has been illustrated throughout this report demonstrating the pivotal role the program has within outreach services, youth services and community building. Substantial benefits and gains were reported by all service providers in the evaluation who had had contact with the program.

"They work with us not against us."

Police

"Police pick up good ways of working with and communicating with youth from the Y-Ute staff."

Police

"Y-Ute program successfully bridge between young people and the police early intervention program through information to the young kids and referral."

Police

Agencies participating in the evaluation reported on the successful working relationships and partnerships that had been formed with the Y-Ute program and the effectiveness of this approach. An example of this collaboration is illustrated in the following scenarios.

"The police received reports of anti-social behaviour that we were not able to identify. We put the word out to the Y-Ute to work with these youth and talk to the kids about what is correct behaviour – as the Y-Ute crew have the relationship with the kids."

Police

"We are increasingly contacted by Connex staff. Recently where there were large groups of young people hanging around a railway station we were able to come to the site, talk to the young kids, talk with the railway staff and assist in dissipating any potential problems."

Y-Ute Outreach staff

Agencies in particular related the role that the Y-Ute crew took in emergency situations.

In the Sudanese youth fatality, Y-Ute played an enormous role in keeping the youth together. It would not have been as peaceful without them. If it wasn't for City of Darebin's strong focus on this it would not have turned out well."

Police

7.2.5 Impact on crime prevention and safety

The Police crime statistics do report a decline in crime in Darebin over the past few years however any direct relationship between reducing crime and the Y-Ute program cannot be substantiated. Participants in the evaluation however provided anecdotal information on the impact that the program had on crime and safety.

"The kids that continue to be engaged in the Y-Ute program are the ones that don't come under the police attention."

Youth Police Unit Darebin

"Helped kids have bikes up to safety standards and wear safety helmets."

Police

"The Y-Ute program and staff take their crime prevention role seriously- they take the safety and security of the kids responsibly."

Police

"We talk to the kids about what it is like to have criminal record and what sort of life they would lead if they have a criminal record. We provide them with information to think constructively about what they are doing/ choosing to do."

Y-Ute staff

"Parents and residents value the investment in young people. They see it as keeping young people away from crime – the Y-Ute is a mechanism to achieve this goal."

Council staff

The Y-Ute program also participates in and provides information to Councils Community Safety Branch and Darebin's Community Safety Committee on areas they have identified as unsafe and in need of a safety audit.

7.3 Key success features of the Y-Ute program

Key success factors identified by the evaluation include:

Staff skills

The quality of the staff, their specialist skills, their commitment and dedication to their work and the program, and their ability to relate to young people as well as to all-of-community, all-of-services.

Outreach model

The service goes out to where the young people are, it is visible in the community and it responds to identified needs.

Flexibility of service and multi-locational

Capacity to be flexible in their services both in terms of what is delivered and where it is delivered. The program can be delivered at either dedicated areas/venues or from a mobile/transportable venue (the ute).

Engagement of young people

The capacity of the service to engage young people, provide positive relationships, pitch the activities to young people's interests and develop a brand (the Y-Ute) that relates to and is accepted by the target audience.

Partnerships with other organisations/ services

The ability to work in a strategic youth advocacy and support role as well as in a service delivery role with an extensive range of services and organisations. This involves a clear understanding of the boundaries of the Y-Ute program and its relationships to other service providers.

Empowering young people

A culture of engaging and involving the target audience in all stages and aspects of the program development and design including continuous evaluation of activities offered through the program by the target audience and leadership opportunities for young people.

Council support

Enthusiasm and commitment to the Y-Ute program from Darebin's Youth Services and the in-kind support provided by council to make the program viable.

Planning

Specific planning includes youth services planning, a 'Y-Ute Crew Marketing Strategy 2007 - 10' and each activity involves a planning process incorporating safety audits, teaching program, required clothing & equipment considerations.

Follow on responses

Capacity to identify the target group's needs and advocate for follow-on responses including the adjustment of existing services and/or the development of appropriate/creative service responses to meet the needs of the target group.

7.4 Key challenges of the Y-Ute program

Some of the key challenges for the Y-Ute program reported by participants in the evaluation included:

Resources pressure

The program funding currently provides a part-time outreach service operating 12 hours per week, targeting two specific areas and hot spots in Darebin. As the Y-Ute program is becoming better known, the demand for their services to meet the needs of young people in Darebin and to participate in community events, is growing. Resources for the current service delivery are currently stretched and significant in-kind staff hours and council resources are contributed to maintain the current program.

Developing relationships and partnerships

Relationship building between both the young people involved in the program and other organisations and services take time which provides challenges for a program that is funded to operate for only 12 hours per week in the community.

Administration and accountability

Current funding level allows for a total of 4 hours for all administration tasks including client records, planning, progress reports to funding bodies, training, and staff team building.

Outreach – Hot spots reporting

Developing an adequate client recording system of young people and their issues to report on the hot spot visits has been challenging. Challenges include difficulty of collecting some data of the visit with acceptability/appropriateness of collecting data, time available, having a form that can be filled out on the journey, and the usefulness of the data.

Long term funding options

The current funds from the NCCPP are due to expire at the end of 2010. The current funding levels are stretched and sustainability of the program in the long term at current funding levels would be a constant juggle with in-kind contributions.

Staffing

Providing an after hours outreach program, both in terms of staffing and risk, are challenges. Being able to provide a large enough pool of staff with the necessary qualifications to maintain and sustain the Saturday night outreach component of the program is a challenge that will need to be addressed for the long term future of the program. Staff burn out and the attractiveness of casual/part-time employment can also be issues.

Safety/ risk

With any outreach service the risk and safety of staff is of paramount importance but needs to be balanced to enable the project/staff to undertake the work.

The program has procedures and processes in place to address potential risk that the Y-Ute staff may face particularly on the Saturday night outreach service. Hand in hand with this are the skills, judgements and discretion applied by the outreach staff in undertaking their work. Current arrangement includes the manager of Youth Services being on call every Saturday night.

Hard to reach target group

The challenges of working with people who are marginalised or disengaged from their community are well known including identifying, understanding, engaging and responding. Getting the message out with minimal resources about the Y-Ute program to young people and their families who are not connected with services and or their local communities is an ongoing challenge.

Gender imbalance

The Y-Ute program primarily attracts young boys with relatively few girls participating in the activities program. The challenge is to understand the gender imbalance, what the needs/issues of young women in Darebin are and what could be the most appropriate response to meeting these needs considering both the Y-Ute program and/or other current/ new programs.

Expectation to transition/integrate target group into mainstream services

The target group for the Y-Ute program are young people who do not access or are not utilising mainstream young people services. A major challenge for the program is developing services to meet this target group's needs. However, the long term outcome for young people attending the program is not clear. Questions include whether there is an expectation that the Y-Ute program will aim to transition the young people involved in the program into other mainstream youth services, if so, how and when. If this is not the expectation then what is the capacity of the Y-Ute program to continue to work with these young people as a specialist service?

A recent example of the closure of the East Preston Tuesday night activity session which ceased when a nearby youth centre was opened illustrates the challenge for the program and Darebin youth services. Young kids from the Y-Ute program were introduced to the new youth centre with the expectation that they would be able to access this centre and benefit from a more extensive program and facilities. Difficulties in transition have included, the Y-Ute kids did not want their own activity sessions to end, they were apprehensive at going to a youth centre where their previous experiences have included inappropriate behaviour, being banned, not feeling welcome, and not having the close relationship with staff as they had developed through the Y-Ute crew. Additional difficulties included the location of the new centre within a large shopping centre, an area where some of the Y-Ute kids have been banned.

The expectation/plan of the need for the program to aim at transitioning their target group into the mainstream services is currently not clear and is almost a contradiction to the Y-Ute program outcomes.

9. Recommendations

1. The City of Darebin actively work towards securing funding to expand and continue the work undertaken with young people in Darebin through the Y-Ute program.
2. Ongoing funding of the Y-Ute Program include an expansion to the staffing allocation, expand the number of outreach and administrative hours allocated to the program and ensure adequate resources to purchase/maintain a ute vehicle.
3. Darebin Youth Services consider the feasibility of developing a fee-for-service charge (when appropriate) to contribute towards the cost of the participation of the Y-Ute program in community festivities and events.
4. City of Darebin's Youth Services increase the current pool of available staff to work in the Y-Ute Program. Current Y-Ute staff to act as mentors and trainers in specialist youth outreach.
5. The Band level for the Y-Ute staff positions (currently at Band 5) to be reviewed to reflect the qualifications, risk, responsibilities and independent working conditions of the Y-Ute staff.
6. The City of Darebin to undertake exploratory research to identify what is already in place for young women in Darebin and to report on vulnerable young women in Darebin and possible service responses.
7. The current system of managing the risk factor associated with the Saturday night outreach work to be strengthened by:
 - developing a wider pool of managers(or equivalent) to be rostered for on call, and
 - establishing a process for ensuring quicker police response and back up if needed by registering intended locations each Saturday prior to setting out with the Section Sergeant on duty.
8. The City of Darebin seek opportunities to present the Y-Ute model as a good practice model of youth outreach and youth work undertaken by a local government.
9. The role and or expectation of the Y-Ute program in transitioning young people from the program into mainstream youth services is discussed and clarified. The City of Darebin and other relevant stakeholders are to be involved in exploring and discussing opportunities and corresponding practice to assist the transitioning of young people from the program into mainstream services if this is a direction of the Y-Ute program.
10. The City of Darebin include and create opportunities to promote the Y-Ute program in relevant campaigns, advertising material and in promotional kits.

The Y-Ute graffiti day at the East Reservoir site



Council

- > Emergency response
- > Health & Safety
- > Parks
- > Arts & culture
- > Local laws
- > Buildings
- > Communications
- > Recreation and Leisure
- > Social inclusion & diversity

Council Youth Services

- > Skate Park Programs
- > Youth summit
- > Decibels
- > Schools outreach
- > Hip hop program
- > Northland Youth Centre

Community groups

- > Jika Jika Community House
- > Reservoir Neighbourhood House
- > Reservoir Traders Assoc.
- > Walker Street flats
- > Newton Street Resident Assoc
- > East Reservoir renewal
- > Street Parties
- > Community Festivals

Police

- > Safety committee
- > Hot spots
- > AF Zones
- > Proactive team
- > After hours patrol

Local Youth sector

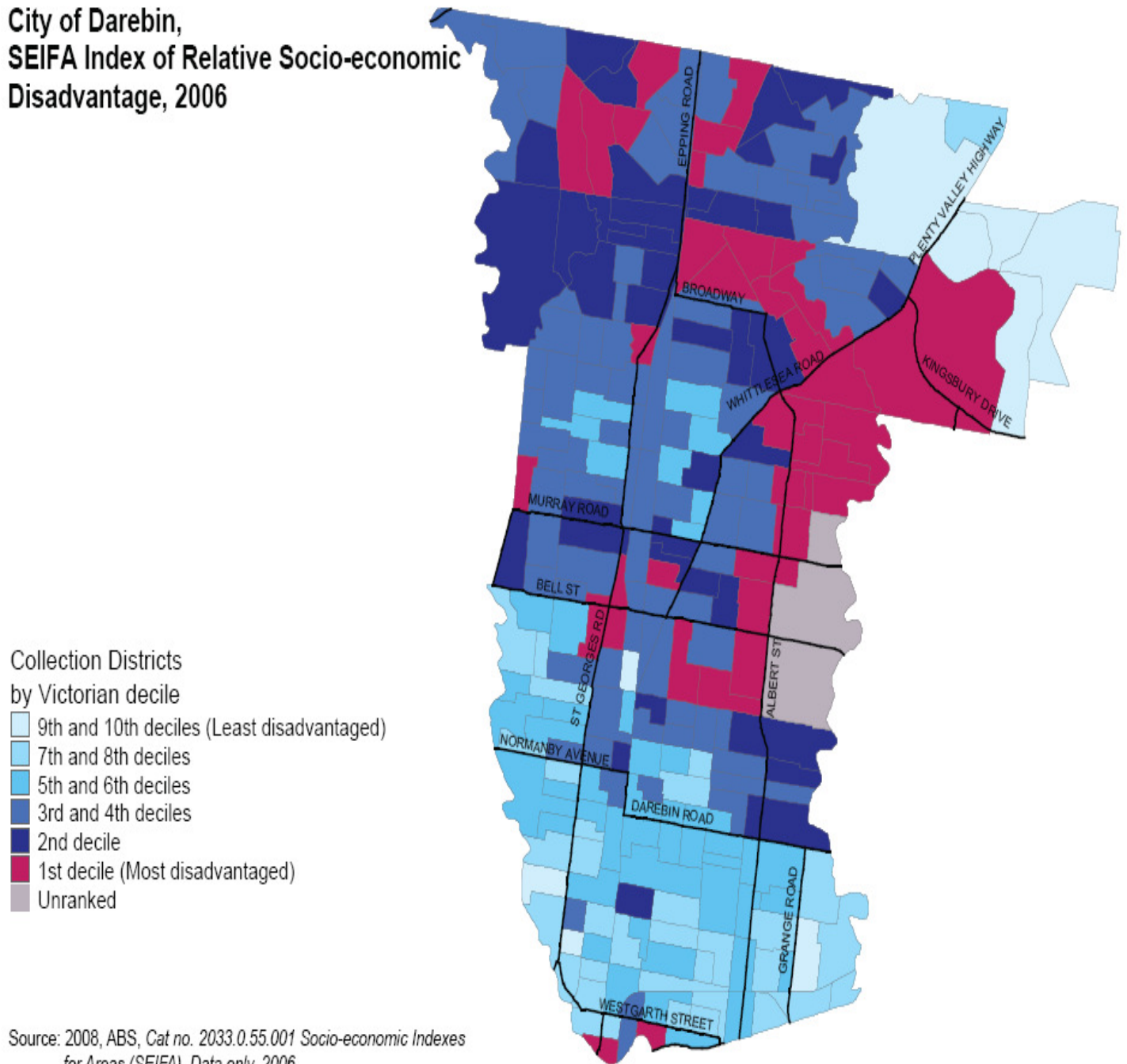
- > Sliding door cafe
- > Other councils
- > Darebin CHC
- > PRACE
- > YSAS
- > African resource centre

Young people

- > Street level activities
- > Camps
- > Outreach
- > Excursions
- > Music
- > Information and referral
- > Neighbourhood focus
- > Activities
- > Skate ramp design & construction

Attachment 1:

City of Darebin, SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage, 2006



Source: 2008, ABS, Cat no. 2033.0.55.001 Socio-economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Data only, 2006

Attachment 2

Y-Ute Evaluation instruments

Y-ute/ Youth services staff survey

Name Role/position

Length of time in position Date

Questions to explore in interviews

1. What has been your involvement with the Y-ute program?
2. What was involved in setting up and maintaining the Y-ute program?
Discuss structures, reference group, equipment, staffing, identifying target group, identifying local hot spots, identifying activities, developing information packs
3. What networks/partnerships have been developed with/by Y-ute and other areas of council?
Discuss formal and informal structures/partnerships
What are these? What worked well? What were the challenges? What could be improved?
4. What local/regional networks/partnerships have been developed with/by the Y-ute program?
(external to council)
Discuss formal and informal structures/partnerships
What are these and their purpose? What worked well and why? What were the challenges and why?
What could be improved?
5. What are the main activities undertaken with young people through the Yute program (Activity evenings, Community events, Outreach, Development of opportunity initiatives, promotion, Service access, Hotspots)
What are these and their purpose? What worked well and why? What were the challenges and why?
6. Who has the program reached and how?
7. What impact/s has the Y-ute program had on your target group?
Discuss the way in which the lives of the target group have changed as a result of Y-ute program
8. What impact/s has the Y-ute program had on the local community?
Perceptions?, reduction in local crime?, increase in communities perceptions of safety?
9. What demands (needs) from your target group were not able to be met through the program?
What? How were these dealt with?
10. What improvements to local infrastructure/ facilities/community would improve the lives of the target group?

Y-ute/ key stakeholders survey

Name

Role Agency

Questions to explore in interviews

1. Do you know of the Y-ute program?
2. Have you been involved in the Y-ute program and how?
3. What do you see as the main achievements of the Y-ute program?
4. What do you see as the main challenges of the Y-ute program?
5. What impact do you think the Y-ute program has had on;
 - The young people involved in the program
 - The local community
 - Local crime prevention
 - Other services and access to these services by young people
 - Community perceptions of safety
 - Other
6. What improvements to local infrastructure/facilities/community would improve the lives of the target group?
Y-Ute – target group survey/discussions
Tell me about the Y-ute program
 - Explore why they attend
 - What they like
 - What they don't like
 - What would make it better
 - Is it different from other programs they have been involved in – How? why?
 - Has coming to Y-ute changed anything for them, - Where they go? Who they hang out with? Knowing where to go to if they need help or support? What do your parents/family think about you coming to Y-ute? Do they know about

