

# THE COMMUNITY YOUTH CENTRE PROGRAMME IN N.S.W.

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The assistance of John Howard, Senior Counsellor, Stanmore Community Youth Centre, in the compilation of the statistics is gratefully appreciated.

## COMMUNITY YOUTH CENTRE — GENERAL

On 23 May 1977 New South Wales first Community Youth Centre became officially operational. Its "open for business" tag was the culmination of many years work and a great deal of last-minute frustration as several major building industry strikes delayed the renovations to the newly acquired centre.

The Community Youth Centre is situated in a quiet suburban street and is inconspicuous for its neighbours.

The Community Youth Centre provides the New South Wales Department of Y.A.C.S. with an alternative programme for young offenders committed by Magistrates to training schools. Under Section 53(i)(d) of the Child Welfare Act a child or young person can be granted leave from a committal order to return home or to an acceptable living situation and attend a Youth Project Centre (Community Youth Centre) as directed.

The programme allows these young people to return to their accepted surroundings while receiving supervision counselling and assistance from the counsellors at the Centre.

On a recommendation of a Magistrate, District Officer, Psychologist, Shelter Manager, Training School Superintendent, a parent or even the young person themselves, the young person is interviewed by a Counsellor for the Centre and a placement or leave discussed with him.

The stipulations made prior to granting of leave are a willingness to participate in the programme and an acceptable living situation in which to reside.

The Centre is staffed by a Senior Counsellor, Specialist Counsellor, four Youth Counsellors and a receptionist typist. It is open from 9.00 am to 10.00 pm Monday to Thursday and 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Friday and Saturday. Emergency accommodation of limited duration is available if the young person's accommodation breaks down.

## COMMUNITY YOUTH CENTRE — STANMORE

The Community Youth Centre programme in New South Wales was established to provide a community alternative to residential training for boys who Children's Courts considered needed committal. Prior to the commencement of the Community Youth Centre programme on 23 May 77, the only departmental alternative was to decide which of the appropriate training schools the young person would be sent to. Now the Department can grant a young person leave from his committal and place him back home, or in another satisfactory living situation, with attendance at the Community Youth Centre as required.

The Centre has a staff of seven (one Senior Counsellor, one Specialist Youth Counsellor, four Youth Counsellors and a receptionist/typist). The counsellors have tertiary qualifications in the Social/Behavioural Sciences (Social Work and Psychology) and a real concern for and interest in young people in trouble.

The **goal** of the Centre is to attempt to reduce the inability of the young offenders on the programme to cope with environment demands, and their own needs, in socially

approved ways. Hopefully, this goal can be achieved through encouraging and promoting a pattern of growth and development in the following areas:

- (a) peer relations
- (b) family relations
- (c) values
- (d) self-esteem
- (e) ability to live within the law
- (f) job skills/adjustment to schooling
- (g) attitude towards authority
- (h) acceptance of responsibility for behaviour
- (i) ability to communicate feelings
- (j) social skills
- (k) leisure time

To meet these **objectives**, a variety of approaches, techniques, and theoretical perspectives is employed. Group work is a major mode of working, as is individual work. Family work, structured and informal recreational activities, social skills presentations and acquisition sessions, together with community service activities, are also engaged in. Drama exercises, relaxation training, communication exercises, information giving, gestalt techniques, and the making of contracts for specific changes in behaviour have been used.

The emphasis of the **programme** is on such things as: self-exploration; self-understanding and acceptance, development and acquisition of appropriate social skills (especially those associated with effective and satisfying interpersonal relationships, gaining and maintaining employment, sexuality, etc.); acceptance of responsibility for behaviour; use of leisure time; exploration and practising of alternative modes of coping behaviour; independent functioning; behavioural stability, and an overall reduction in delinquent orientation and anti-social activities.

There is an ongoing **evaluation** component built into the programme, and, currently, the Jesness Inventory is being administered on admission (and later near discharge) to gain some idea of attitudinal changes (cognitive ones); a Social Competency assessment is given on admission (and near discharge) to examine changes in social skills; and a behaviour checklist is being used to look at changes, reflected in overt behaviour, that may have taken place in such things as self-esteem, communication skills, peer relationships, overt emotional stability, etc. The Interpersonal Maturity level classification system is being examined as to its relevance and usefulness.

A suitable measure to examine changes in family dynamics is being sought. Also, demographic data is being kept so that a series of analyses may be made at an appropriate stage in the development of the programme.

Currently, the **criteria for admission** are fairly broad. Boys and girls must be between 14 and 18 years of age; be committed to an institution (generally or definite), have an acceptable living situation (with family or approved friends, hostel, boarding house etc. This can be arranged by the centre, if a boy meets the other requirements and does not have his family or other situation to go directly to); live within

approximately 15 kilometres of the Centre; and, most importantly, have willingness to be fully involved in the programme.

**Recommendations** may come from: Magistrates; District Officers; Court Clinics; Shelter or Training School Managers/Superintendents; Shelter Psychologists; or, in certain cases, the young person themselves. So far recommendations have come from all of the above resources, with Magistrates, District Officers and Shelter Psychologists making the most referrals.

After referral centre staff assess the young person in the Shelter or Training School, submit a report and, if leave is granted, assume supervision of the case. At this stage consultation should have taken place with District Officers, the family, and Psychologist.

**Exclusions** would normally consist of those boys who: had been severely damaged by prolonged periods of institutional care; were mentally or physically severely ill-equipped to participate effectively in the programme; those whose crimes have generated community distaste and where either they or the community could be disadvantaged by placing them on the programme; and those whose behaviour is potentially quite violent and who are aggressively unmotivated to change.

The Community Youth Centre is not interested in just taking low-risk referrals. It is felt that it is more appropriate to meet current needs than to develop a programme into which only highly selected boys could enter. Consequently as can be seen in the statistical survey of current admissions, boys accepted range from first offenders, though previously committed boys, to those who have experienced most of the department's residential facilities (including Endeavour House), and who are on long-term committals (18 months). The latter cases are ones where it is felt that further residential training would be inappropriate and where the likelihood of further offending is high, without intensive support whilst readjusting to community living. The main criterion for such admissions is a fear of not making it, coupled with some personal resources and a willingness to be fully involved in the programme. This would exclude those with long histories of deprivation, institutionalisation and delinquency who have few, if any, resources left that can be worked with.

Since the commencement of the Community Youth Centre programme, there have been 205 boys and 6 girls admitted. The following is a survey of the first 200 male admissions. A survey of female admissions will be completed when numbers increase to make any generalisation meaningful.

The first 200 boys admitted came from the following **District Office** areas. There has been a trend towards taking boys from a wider area of Sydney — especially the West and South West suburbs.

District Office	N.S.W.		
Sydney Metropolitan	Number	Country	Number
Sydney	22	Armidale	2
Burwood	18	Wollongong	2
Hurstville	16	Narrabri	1
Stanmore	16	Gosford	1
Kingsford	16	Bathurst	1
Ryde	14	Wellington	1
Bankstown	13	Wagga	1
Leichhardt	12	Orange	1
Chatswood	10	Taree	1
Fairfield	9	Wallsend	1
Liverpool	8	Deniliquin	1
Dee Why	7	Moree	1
Parramatta	7		
Blacktown	5	<b>Interstate</b>	

Mt Druitt	4		
Penrith	2	Queensland	1
Campbelltown	2	Canberra	1
Sutherland	1	Victoria	1
Specialist Section	1		

Accommodation found near the Centre for interstate and country boys.

The average age of the boys has remained fairly constant over time and is 16 years and 8 months.

Age	Number	Percent
14	6	3.0
15	37	18.5
16	74	37.0
17	79	39.5
18	4	2.0

The range was 14 years 5 months to 18 years.

The intelligence quotients of the boys range from 70-135 (mid point of the R.P.M. (38) non verbal test) and the average I.Q. is 100.01.

I.Q. Range	Number	Percent
70- 79	13	6.5
80- 89	25	12.5
90- 99	56	28.0
100-109	61	30.5
110-119	30	15.0
120-129 +	15	7.5

The **family status** of the boys show 51% coming from intact, but not necessarily functional or stable marriages. There were 13% from families where the death of a parent had occurred, and 33% from families split by separation or divorce. 3% of boys could not trace their families and there were 10 State Wards admitted and 5 ex-wards.

	Number	Percent
<b>Family Intact</b>	102	51
<b>Family Split By:</b>		
<b>Death:</b>		
Single fathers	8	
Single mothers	10	
Mother remarried or defacto	5	
Father remarried or defacto	3	
<b>Separation or Divorce:</b>		
Single father	9	
Single mother	29	
Mother remarried or defacto	23	
Father remarried or defacto	5	
<b>Family could not be traced:</b>	6	3

Living situation — on admission	Number	Percent
With parent(s)	148	74.0
With friends, etc.	8	4.0
Boarding House	17	8.5
Hostel	18	9.0
Grandparents/Relatives	9	4.5

Over time, it became clear that some boys were living in very destructive family units. These boys (about 10%) were shifted out where possible, and it is anticipated that this trend will continue. It is not Centre policy to attempt intervention in family systems where the boy is over 16 years and the family entrenched in its pathology. The Centre attempts to extract the boy from such units and assist him towards independent

living, although finding suitable accommodation continues to be a difficulty. Some left home temporarily, returning when the situation "cooled down".

The **offences/complaints** for which the boys were committed were as follows: (each offence for each boy was counted as a separate offence, thus the total is greater than 200).

Property	Number	Percent
Steal Motor Vehicle	144	
Steal Motor Cycle	3	
Carried in Stolen Motor Vehicle	2	
Driving Offences	63	
<b>Total Motor Vehicle Offences</b>	212	32.1
Steal	115	
Break, Enter with Intent	175	
Receive	6	
Possess Property Stolen Outside State	1	
Goods in Custody	14	
<b>Total</b>	342	51.8
Arson/Malicious Set Fire	8	
Malicious Damage	13	
<b>Total</b>	21	3.2
<b>Total Property Offences:</b>	575	87.1%
<b>Person:</b>		
Armed Holdup	1	
Armed Assault and Rob	3	
Assault	4	
Assault and Rob	5	
Indecent Assault	2	
Carnal Knowledge	1	
<b>Total Person:</b>	16	2.4%
<b>Complaints:</b>		
Uncontrollable	3	
Abscond	17	
Breach of Probation	8	
Neglect (E.M.D., I.M.S.)	2	
<b>Total Complaints:</b>	30	4.5%
<b>Other:</b>		
Obscene Exposure	4	
Forge and Utter	13	
Resist Arrest	7	
Unseemly Words	1	
Supply Prohibited Substance	1	
Trespass	5	
Possess Indian Hemp	4	
Possess Cutting Implement	3	
Self Administration	1	
<b>Total Other:</b>	39	5.9%
<b>Total: All Offences:</b>	660	100.0%

The **average number of offences per boy** on committal was 3.3.

Most boys were not charged with drug offences, but many have a history of drug abuse (mainly heroin, amphetamines, sedatives/hypnotics, alcohol and marijuana).

Of the first 200, 16.5% had severe alcohol abuse problems and 8.5% had been involved in moderate to heavy hard drug abuse (mainly heroin) that had led to physical addiction in some cases resulting in withdrawals of varying degrees of severity. Another 7% had experienced difficulties with other drugs. This does not include those who had experimentally used marijuana or were frequent users with the drug having no readily apparent negative impact on their lives.

There were 9.5% of boys who had been actively involved in male prostitution. This does not include those who had experienced some form of adolescent homosexual experience, but only those actually engaged in prostitution. This group tended to be made up of many of those also involved in regular hard drug abuse, alcohol and the "Kings Cross Scene".

The majority of boys (94%) had had **previous court appearances** resulting in periods of probation, fines, suspended committals, and in some cases, committals to Institutions.

Previous Court Appearances	Number
0	12
1	34
2	37
3	44
4	16
5	20
6	10
7	9
8	7
9	4
10	3
11	3
17	1

The average per boy for previous court appearances was 3.8.

On the first 200, 42% had been previously committed (in some cases (46) more than once). This represents a progressive increase, over time, of boys with previous residential training experience. The average per boy for previous committals was 0.93.

Previous Committals	Number
0	116
1	38
2	23
3	9
4	6
5	4
6	1
7	2
10	1

The **education level** of the boys was as follows:

	Number	Percent
<b>Still at School on Admission</b>	18	9
Year 9	7	
Year 10	11	
<b>Left School:</b>	182	91
Left in Year 11	2	
Left after gaining School Certificate	26	
Left mid Year 10	24	
Left end Year 9	5	
Left mid Year 9	57	

Left end Year 8	15
Left mid Year 8	51
Left mid Year 7	2

There were, consequently, 76% of the boys admitted without School Certificates, with another 9% hopefully gaining theirs whilst on the programme or in the near future.

Of the boys who had left school (182) 154 (or 84.6%) of them were **unemployed** prior to committal.

The majority of boys (71.5%) were Australian and the **ethnic backgrounds** are as follows: (i.e. country where born or born soon after arrival in Australia of parents).

	Number
Australian (12 part-Aboriginals)	143
United Kingdom	26
Italy	5
Yugoslavia	8
Turkey	2
Lebanon	2
Netherlands	2
Greece	2
Portugal	1
Hungary	1
New Zealand	1
Fiji	1
Brazil	1
France	1
U.S.A.	1
Germany	1
Ecuador	1
Austria	1

The boys were admitted from:

Shelter/Remand Centres	Number	Percent
M.B.S.	64	30.5
Yasmar	24	12.0
Minda	21	10.5
Taldree	8	4.0
Keelong	1	0.5
	115	57.5

#### Training Schools

Mt Penang (4 from Endeavour House via McCabe Cottage and 51 ordinary)	55	27.5
Endeavour House — Direct	12	6.0
Yawarra	8	4.0
Daruk	8	4.0
Tallimba	2	1.0
	85	42.5

The majority of **referrals** were from Magistrates, District Officers and Shelter Psychologists.

The average **length of stay** on the programme is about 24 weeks at the moment, with a range from 6 (re-entry cases from training schools) to 43 weeks (a boy who refused discharge until he felt he was ready).

The overall picture that emerges is of a 16½ year old boy of average intelligence committing property offences, after being on probation or suspended committal nearly four times before and having about a one in two chance of being previously committed to an Institution. He is under-educated, given his intelligence level, and usually comes from a suburb fairly near the Centre and a family necessarily functional. He is usually unemployed.

The average **Jesness Inventory profile** on admission (N = 199, 1 boy did not complete inventory) is as follows:

Scale	T Score
Social Maladjustment	64.95
Value Orientation	55.7
Immaturity	55.3
Autism	55.8
Alienation	55.4
Manifest	54.3
Withdrawal	55.7
Social Anxiety	52.4
Repression	51.97
Denial	45.7
Asocial Index	67.99

Jesness data and other variables are currently being coded for a computer analysis. Pre-test and re-test scores on the Jesness will be compared to assess changes and test scores and background variables will be analysed to ascertain their inter-relatedness and their relationship, either independently or in combination, to on-programme offending and post-programme offending. This analysis should be completed in the next few months and will be circularised then.

#### Recidivism

Of the 200 first male admissions, 35.5% have been back before the courts whilst on the programme. Of these, 17 were charged with offences of equal and 13 greater seriousness to the ones for which they were committed. The others were charged with less serious offences (71.8% of those re-charged were charged with less serious offences).

Of those re-charged, 70.4% had previously experienced residential care and of this group, 42% re-offended at the same, or greater, level of seriousness. Of the first committals, 42.9% re-offended at an equal or more serious level. Thus, the percentage re-offending at all levels of seriousness in both groups is equal.

The influence of the previously committed boys does not seem to have been evident as only 19.4% of first committals re-offended whilst on the programme.

Post-programme offending figures are being collected, but this task is presenting some minor difficulties at the moment as many boys are 18 when discharged and so do not reappear in Children's Courts. Tentative figures show about 20% recharged after discharge (this figure is for those discharged and not revoked, so that those who offended on the programme, but were not revoked, are counted). Less than half of these were sentenced to gaol or training schools. Therefore it seems that a small percentage of discharged boys are getting back into trouble, and, of those who do, less than half are committing offences serious enough to lead to further custodial care. Whilst this conclusion is tentative due to difficulties with follow-up of later offending, there has been a fair degree of continued contact with the courts, the Probation and Parole Service and discharged boys themselves to lead us to feel that the figure is fairly accurate.

#### Revocation

Thirty-four (17%) boys had their leave permanently revoked, 32 (16%) for re-offending when it was felt that return to the programme was pointless. The other two failed to attend as required. 2% of boys had their leave temporarily revoked, mostly for re-offending where it was felt that return to the programme was in the boy's best interest, after a brief period of detention. Boys not revoked for re-offending have usually been fined, with Magistrates making specific recommendations that leave be continued.

## General:

The programme has been marked by a general enthusiasm of staff to maintain a flexible programme within a given legislative framework. It has been exciting as an "observer" to watch reactions to situations that have arisen in the past two years and to discover the important issues in the lives of the young people who have attended.

A second Centre will shortly be opened at St Marys in Sydney's Western Suburbs.

The Community Youth Centre has provided a positive, practical and economical programme for young offenders in New South Wales.

For many young people it has offered the support, encouragement and guidance they sought but had never before experienced, in simply coping with their frustrations of life and in developing a lifestyle that they felt comfortable with and found satisfactory.

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# CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

## Resolution No. 1

No person in custody should be disadvantaged before conviction in the light of the presumption of innocence. All persons in custody before conviction should be eligible for special benefits under the Social Services Act regardless of marital status, dependants or commitments.

MOVED: New South Wales Branch

**CARRIED**

## Resolution No. 2

That the Council encourage, and where possible assist in, the establishment of National and State Planning Bodies for Crime Prevention, which should co-ordinate the views of Government planners and administrators together with those of people working with Statutory Bodies and Voluntary Agencies.

MOVED: J.S.H. Tooth. SECONDED: P. Donnelly

**CARRIED**

## Resolution No. 3

That this Council continue to encourage education authorities to allow instruction on the criminal justice system in all schools at both Primary and Secondary levels.

MOVED: A.J. Restuccia. SECONDED: H.M. North

**CARRIED**

## Resolution No. 4

We recommend that:

1. Further education be made available to teachers with a concern for developing in students skills in communication and personal relationships;
2. More individual attention and counselling should be made available to children at risk;
3. Post-graduate training be offered to specially selected teachers and guidance branch staff in interpersonal relationships (for social and emotional development).

MOVED: A. Blashki. SECONDED: P. Hewitt

**CARRIED**

## Resolution No. 5

### LONG-TERM CRIME REDUCTION PROGRAMME — MOVING SOCIETY TOWARD CHANGE AND JUSTICE FOR ALL

The State Education and Social Service Departments should encourage school children at high school level to participate directly in social contact and assistance to the elderly and underprivileged in society. Each school would have its own projects as an ongoing social exercise, and the following strategy is suggested.

1. Social workers should be directed to investigate the requirements in any residential area in which a high school is situated.

2. Individuals in need should be introduced to organised groups of children willing to visit and help.
3. The children should be age selected to ensure continuity of service to those being helped.
4. Volunteer groups could move into other areas so selected to help if required. This will encourage social mixing and possibly community cohesion and improve mutual understanding.
5. Any cost incurred in the implementation of this scheme and the necessary transport subsidisation to permit the visits could be offset in a cost benefit analysis by the anticipated long-term benefits to society in that youth and the disadvantaged and aged will meet and learn mutual respect. Increased social awareness of youth potential contribution to society could result also in a greater tolerance of youth by those adults active in the community and be instrumental in changing society so there will be justice for all in the future. The Youth of today are the Adults of tomorrow.

MOVED: J.M. Harwin. SECONDED: Judge L.K. Newman  
**CARRIED**

## Resolution No. 6

### URBAN PLANNING TO REDUCE CRIME

State and Territory planning authorities should be urged to investigate and implement the construction of new housing concepts such as cluster housing, patio and atrium housing to reduce housing costs and increase the availability to the community of potentially crime resistant housing development.

In addition, the housing authorities should be encouraged to develop positive planning methods based on the concepts of "Defensible Space" adjusted to the Australian scene, so that increased casual surveillance opportunities over communal areas could result in the reduction of crime and vandalism in the existing and potential urban environments. In socially disadvantaged areas positive State assistance should be provided for the construction of community facilities required in areas as the result of local demands.

In future housing developments all disciplines related to crime reduction and social welfare should be consulted at the initial planning stages and throughout the period of development.

MOVED: J.M. Harwin. SECONDED: Judge L.K. Newman  
**CARRIED**

## Resolution No. 6A

### CRIME REDUCTION AND SOCIAL WELFARE PLANNING

The respective State and Territory Governments should be encouraged to amend their existing legislation that controls land subdivision and development to enable the following provisions:

1. The setting aside of land sited where selected by the respective planning commissioners in conjunction with the developing owners as most suitable for local authority requirements.
2. The land can be retained by the local authority and developed as a communal park until its use is decided by the community involved.
3. The purpose is to have land available suitably sited for community requirements such as old age cottages, welfare organisations etc. where minimum disruption of the community will result within development.
4. Where no land is provided in any new development then the land development should be taxed by a capital endowment on the selling price of each lot of say 2½% to enable the local authority to have the funds to develop land when chosen and required.
5. State Governments should be encouraged to assist finan-

cially those local authorities in the development of these special sites for community advantage and the anticipated improvement in social conditions which could result in the reduction of the incidence of crime and deviance in the community.

MOVED: J.M. Harwin. SECONDED: Judge L.K. Newman  
**CARRIED**

#### Resolution No. 7

That the Australian Crime Prevention Council, as a matter of some urgency, make representation to Federal and State Ministers who are responsible for — Education, Welfare, Police, Probation and Parole, Psychiatric Services, and any other services that encompass support guidance etc. to the community.

1. That the practice of recruiting people who have not had at least two years work experience in an area not associated with the "helping or controlling" professions; or if recruited on leaving school, that at the completion of their training they be seconded to a work situation totally unrelated to their chosen vocation for two years.
2. That after working for seven years in the "helping or controlling" professions they be seconded to duties totally unrelated to those in which they have been working, for a period of at least six months and that this be repeated every seven years thereafter.

MOVED: G.T. Cuddihy. SECONDED: M.K. Rook **CARRIED**  
(This resolution is to be supported by submission or draft correspondence from Mr G.T. Cuddihy prior to being actioned.)

#### Resolution No. 8

With a view to mass media coverage of crime prevention — I move that this Council approach Editors of suitable journals of wide publication seeking the publication of an article written by a suitably skilled person representing the Council, to cover the role of the police and the community in crime prevention, seeking their support in asking readers to contribute letters of happenings relevant to crime prevention (a sample of which from one experience is attached).

MOVED: D.I. Thompson, S.A. SECONDED: G.E. Carter, S.A.  
**CARRIED**

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Chairman and members of the Conference Planning Committee would like to extend their sincere thanks to the many people who have assisted on both a private basis and as members of Government Departments. We would also like to thank the Jaycees for their assistance with our student speakers and the following Departments for their support and material assistance:

Attorney-General's Department  
Education Department  
Mental Health Services Commission  
Police Department  
Prisons Department  
Premier's Department

Also thank you to Ansett Airlines, and to Hertz for their financial support.

Finally our special thanks to Mrs Carol Bonney and Ms Joy Gough for their invaluable assistance in the preparation and typing of the material in these proceedings.

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