

Making a difference with young people in the juvenile justice system:

New research & its program and policy implications

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Overview

- Some trends in juvenile justice
- New research in SW Sydney
- Pacific communities in Australia & Pacific culture
- Key findings
- Strengths to build on
- Systemic challenges
- Promising responses: Pasifika Support Services
- Recommendations



Some trends in juvenile justice

- ~ 6,000 YP under JJ supervision on any given day (Aus, 06-07)
- ~ 13,000 YP pa spent time under supervision
- ↑ in daily average no of YP incarcerated
 - 590 in 2003-04, 696 in 2006-07
- ↓ trend in no of YP on community-based supervision
- NSW: 2007 - 08 juvenile remand pop ↑ 32% & remand costs ↑ 29%
- NSW DJJ expenditure 2007-8: \$160 m
 - Youth justice conferencing: \$6.3 m
 - Community based services: \$50m
 - Custodial services: \$103.3 m



New research

- MA runs 3 progs (YOSP) in SW Sydney w/ YP 10-17 yrs in contact w/ criminal justice system
- Research in 2007-08:
 - Survey w/ 100 YOSP clients, 50 from PI background
 - Interviews w/ 9 YOSP clients & staff from orgs who work w/ them
- Aims:
 - Build understanding of social factors that lead to & entrench marginalisation of YP in contact w/ justice system
 - Enhance understanding of experiences of PI YP & identify ways to better support them
 - Review YOSP case management & service model/s

Pacific communities in Australia & Pacific culture

- Regions of Polynesia, Melanesia & Micronesia
- Inc Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Cook Islands & Indigenous people of NZ
- < 1% of total Aus pop
- 32% of Aust's Pacific community live in Sydney
- 19,000 live in SW Sydney = 2.3% of pop of that region
- Egalitarian / collective culture premised on importance of community & role of:
 - Family
 - Spirituality
 - Food
 - Sport
 - Visual and Performing Arts



Key findings

Responsibility to family and broader Pacific Community

- Pacific families larger living in more crowded circumstances
- Higher numbers of PI in public housing
- Higher no. of sibling care
- Higher no. of parents in employment
- Limited access to Centrelink benefits due to lack of citizenship, ID & knowledge
- Implications with SDRO may occur

Table 2: Comparison of family characteristics

Family characteristics and living arrangements	Pacific	Non-Pacific
	% (n=49)	% (n=51)
Living with both parents	51	18
Living with non-family member (who is primary carer)	10	8
Living in public housing	82	67
Household of six or more people	65	25
Living in dwelling with three bedrooms	69	71
Three or more siblings	84	59
Young person has high level of care for sibling/s	63	10
Mother in employment*	43	38
Father in employment*	66	31
Access to privately owned car	6	6
6-15 minute walk to public transport	49	41
30+ minute walk to public transport	49	45
Outstanding fine with the State Debt Recovery Office	64	54
Young person does not access Centrelink benefits	69	41
Young person is eligible for but does not access Centrelink benefits	37	14

* This figure is based on known cases only.



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Key findings

Atypical patterns of offending

Table 3: Offence characteristics

Offence characteristics	Pacific % (n=49)	Non-Pacific % (n=51)
First offence committed by the age of 14	40	75
Commenced offending between the age of 15-18	60	25
Current or previous offence/s indictable	50	35
Prior history of 5 or more offences	20	53

- Pacific youth offend for 1st time later in adolescence, w/ higher possibility of offence being serious indictable
- History of offending less crowded, however, susceptibility to spend longer time in custody, have a recorded conviction and disrupt education and employment
- Offending parallels with desire to obtain \$ or goods



Key findings

Substance use and aggression

Table 4: Substance use and aggression

Substance use and aggression	Pacific % (n=49)	Non-Pacific % (n=51)
Consumption of alcohol and other drugs (AOD) on a daily basis	32	74
Consumption of AOD 3 times per week	30	16
Consumption of AOD on the weekend and/or a social occasion	38	10
Alcohol is substance of choice	55	10
Mothers with current/previous history of harmful AOD use	43	53
Fathers with current/previous history of harmful AOD use	53	77
Mothers with current/previous history of harmful alcohol use*	71	26
Fathers with current/previous history of harmful alcohol use*	86	41
Negative expression of anger towards peers	63	59
Negative expression of anger towards family	59	70
Negative expression of anger towards members of the community	57	69
Mothers with a history of violence in the home	47	29
Fathers with a history of violence in the home	89	71

* Figure is a proportion of those who have a current or previous history of harmful AOD use.

- PI youth tend to consume alcohol as primary substance of choice
- Usage paired w/ Pacific social norms
- PI parents higher rate of harmful alcohol use
- PI youth more violent in community than in home towards parents (more towards siblings)
- PI parents - higher rate of violence in home



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Key findings

Education

- PI youth - higher retention through middle years
- Both groups have issues with numeracy & literacy
- Learning difficulties evident but not assisted (PI)
- Discipline through suspension & expulsions
- Low levels of education for parents
- PI family & care commitments may deter consistent attendance or → limited employment aspirations

Table 5: Educational outcomes

Educational outcomes	Pacific % (n=49)	Non-Pacific % (n=51)
Achieved year 10 or above	49	10
Literacy and/or numeracy skills equivalent to primary school students	45	41
Diagnosed learning difficulty	41	35
Diagnosed behaviour issue	30	39
Has previously accessed special education	4	35
Received school suspensions	66	43
Expulsions	28	55
No longer enrolled in education or training	72	100
Mother – highest level of educational attainment Year 9 or below	81	94
Father – highest level of educational attainment Year 9 or below	89	100



Strengths to build on

- PI cohort portray significant strengths around family attachment, & affiliation with ethnic culture
- Retention in school higher as first offences committed at later stage of adolescence
- AOD usage more around peer association & socialisation rather than dependence & social isolation



Systemic challenges

- **Financial stressors**

- Lack of access to Centrelink due to citizenship status
- → inability to automatically access jobseeker assistance
- Participation predominately in low skilled labour force

- **Legal frustrations**

- Lack of parental support
- Issues in bail conditions

- **Education**

- Learning difficulties not addressed
- Limited parental engagement



Promising responses: Pasifika Support Services

- Works w/ Pacific YP at risk of ongoing involvement in anti-social, risk-taking & criminal behaviour. 'Early in the pathway'
- Aims:
 - Prevent/↓ YP's involvement in crime
 - Strengthen YP's wellbeing & resilience
 - Re-engage YP on education & employment pathways
 - ↑ capacity of YP's families & communities to support YP to +ve pathways
 - ↑ capacity of agencies to work effectively w/ client group
- Multi -systemic approach engaging YP, family & peers in developing +ve pathways across 13 life goal domains
- Individual, community & organisational capacity building through training & group work programs



Promising responses: PSS cnt'd

- Case management approach:
 - Holistic approach working in all life domains (eg ed, health, family)
 - Community based workers & leaders with PI background & those who'd worked in community inform service dev & delivery
 - Focus on building cultural competency & capacity of those who play sig role in participants' lives (peers, family, teachers, community workers & staff in criminal justice system)
 - Flexible & culturally relevant progs & service delivery that enables young offenders & their families to understand & fulfil requirements of institutions such as justice & education



Promising responses: PSS cnt'd

- Most common supports provided: educational assistance, anger management, family mediation, AOD education
- Reconnects YP to educ, supports them to find work, educates them re health & wellbeing, supports them to ↓AOD, dev strategies to deal with anger & enhance personal & social skills, financial literacy, access to ID docs, welfare benefits, parents supported to access employment, other services



Promising responses: PSS cont'd

- Independent evaluation
 - Offending data for 23 PI YP who participated in PSS was collected in July 2007 & shows that in 6 months prior to their referral they were charged w/ total of 24 offences, 14 serious.
 - 65% of YP w/ 12 month follow on period haven't reoffended.
 - Other outcomes: in areas of family support, AOD, personal & social skills
 - Cost effective: \$3,000 per case (3 – 6 months)



Promising responses: PSS cont'd

Project has demonstrated that by intervening with at risk YP from Pacific backgrounds it is possible to break the cycle of re-offending and achieve positive social, employment & education outcomes...it is meeting a recognised need and an integrated model of service linking an intervention service with police as the main referral agency is appropriate. The project has been successful because it is well managed, has generally effective referral systems in place, stable and qualified staff from similar backgrounds to its clients and is providing clients with culturally appropriate support...The service has developed effective partnerships with the police and TAFE and is well networked with other agencies, youth groups & organisations, both those with a Pacific focus & for the broader community. These links have allowed the service to contribute to other agencies' awareness of issues for the Pacific community, expanded the opportunities available for their clients & for Pacific youth in the broader community.

(ARDT external evaluation)



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Recommendations

- Set targets & commit to ↓ no. YP in detention
- Develop coordinated, whole of govt & whole of community strategy to support achievement of these targets
- Build on models such as PSS, shown to be effective
- Invest in community & educational sectors to enhance capacity to identify signs of disengagement & take early action



Recommendations

- Recognise non-linear path to desistance & focus on broad range of outcomes related to underlying causes of social disengagement
- \$ programs sufficiently to enable providers to explore unique circumstances of their clients & provide differentiated responses
- \$ research into minority populations overrepresented in youth justice system to develop appropriate preventative responses



Stories from participants of Pasifika

