

2015 NSW Election Agenda





Created by Karla Donaldson & Anthony Lark
Designed by Jeremiasz Siczko (www.jeremiaszsiczko.com)

Contact person:

Eamon Waterford

Director – Policy & Advocacy
Youth Action

Suite 403, 64-76 Kippax St, Surry Hills, 2010

Phone: (02) 8218 9815, **Fax:** (02) 8569 2071

Email: eamon@youthaction.org.au

Website: www.youthaction.org.au

About Us

Youth Action is the peak organisation representing young people and youth services in NSW. Youth Action works towards a society where all young people are supported, engaged and valued. To achieve this, it is the role of Youth Action to:

- 1 Respond to social and political agendas relating to young people and the youth services sector
- 2 Provide proactive leadership and advocacy and shape the agenda on issues affecting young people and youth services
- 3 Collaborate on issues that affect young people and youth workers
- 4 Promote a positive profile in the media and the community of young people and youth services
- 5 Build capacity for young people to speak out and take action on issues that affect them
- 6 Enhance the capacity of the youth services sector to provide high quality services
- 7 Ensure Youth Action's organisational development, efficiency, effectiveness and good governance.

Contents

4	Introduction: Early Intervention - Better and Cheaper
6	Prevention & Early Intervention Services
8	Housing
10	Domestic & Family Violence
12	Mental Health
14	Apprenticeships and Traineeships
16	Justice Reinvestment
18	School Suspension
20	Supportive Schools
22	Alcohol and Other Drugs

Introduction: Early Intervention- Better and Cheaper

Jon Brew - Chairperson

Youth Action is committed to advocating for change for young people in NSW. We have identified nine issues we believe contain the right changes for improving the lives of young people.

Each of these issues forms a part of our overall campaign to change the community's perception of social support and have a conversation about the value of early intervention.

We know, from countless pieces of research and from local and international evidence, that early intervention services work better than services that only address crises and also cost significantly less.

This positive cost-benefit provides not only a sound economic argument for greater investment in this space, but also a moral imperative that we do better in supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged young people. Of course, this investment must not come at the expense of universal and preventative services – we must redirect more of our energy from services that only engage after a young person has experienced abuse, homelessness, or a serious mental health episode into services that promote healthy family relationships, prevent homelessness and promote positive mental health and wellbeing.

Over 2014, Youth Action will campaign on these nine issues to encourage the NSW State Government to commit to investing in early intervention programs and services that will have a real positive impact on the lives of young people in NSW.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jon Brew'. The signature is stylized with a large loop at the end.

Recommendations:

Prevention & Early Intervention Services:

Commit to increase the Child, Youth and Family Support program budget by \$52 million.

Housing:

Commit to improving housing affordability for young people.

Domestic & Family Violence:

Respond to the findings of the Youth Action & White Ribbon Foundation's research on youth attitudes to violence.

Mental Health:

Fund training for rural youth workers to enable them to identify and work with young people on Mental Health issues, and to assist them to better understanding referral pathways.

Apprenticeships and Traineeships:

Funding for the expansion of the Sydney Alliance Working Start program - which links disadvantaged young people into local apprenticeships.

Justice Reinvestment:

Fund a pilot of Justice Reinvestment in Bourke.

School Suspension:

Commit to an independent review of School Suspension and Discipline Policy and Practice within the first 100 days of forming government

Supportive Schools:

Increase youth workers in schools through the Student Support Officer programs and through better linkages between schools and youth services.

Alcohol and Other Drugs:

Develop comprehensive alcohol education programs for young people aged 15-17.

Prevention & Early Intervention Services

Recommendation:

Commit to increase the Child, Youth and Family Support program budget by \$52 million.

The Issue:

On June 30th 2013 there were 18,300 children and young people in Out-of-Home Care in NSW¹, more than double the number in 2003². Young people who experience neglectful and abusive parenting, especially in the early years of life, exhibit lower levels of educational attainment, are at elevated risk of suffering a mental illness, and are more likely to become unemployed and/or involved in crime³. These outcomes place extensive long-term financial strain on governments. This is in addition to the \$773 million spent each year in NSW providing Out-of-Home-Care to children and young people who cannot remain at home⁴. To reduce the vast economic, social and individual costs associated with abuse and neglect, the NSW Government must act to improve preventative and early intervention services for young people who are at risk of being harmed at home.

What the NSW Government can do:

Research tells us that quality prevention and early-intervention programs are more successful and are more sound long-term investments than programs that aim to repair damage or intervene after crises¹⁰.

In NSW, we already have a fantastic Child, Youth and Family Support Program, with youth services run by NGOs delivering expert, effective early intervention programs. Currently this program receives \$52 Million in funding. But these services are stretched, and double overall funding to this program will improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people exponentially. This increase in funding is vital to a more robust care and protection system, but critically, this increase must not come at the expense of other preventative or early intervention services.

Key Facts:

- 64,450 children and young people were identified as being at risk of significant harm at home between June 2012 and June 2013⁵.
- From 1 February to 31 December 2012 CYFS programs were provided to 54,882 people participating in the CYFS programs including children, young people, young adults and parents/carers. 54% of these were aged 12-17⁶.
- Neglect and maltreatment have devastating effects on the cognitive, emotional and behavioural development of children and young people⁷.
- Treating the damage caused to children and young people by abuse or maltreatment is complex, expensive and is only effective in a limited number of cases⁸.
- Early-intervention/prevention programs operate to limit and prevent maltreatment of children by developing parenting skills in young families.
- Research by the Washington Institute of Public Policy indicates that early-intervention/prevention programs can return more than \$12 for each \$1 invested⁹.

1. Department of Family and Community Services 2013, Annual Report 2012-13, accessed on 11th February 2014, <http://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/file/0010/279037/3005_FACS_AR_2012-13_WEB_FACS_R.pdf>, pg. 25.
2. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2009, Child Protection in Australia 2007-08, accessed on 11th February 2014, <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=6442455316>>, pg. 57.
3. Hunter, C 2014, Effects of child abuse and neglect for children and

adolescents, Australian Institute of Family Studies, accessed on 3rd March 2014, <<http://www.aifs.gov.au/cfca/pubs/factsheets/a146141/index.html>>
4. Department of Family and Community Services 2013, Annual Report 2012-13, accessed on 13th February 2014, <http://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/file/0010/279037/3005_FACS_AR_2012-13_WEB_FACS_R.pdf>, pg. 19.
5. Ibid., pg. 25.
6. Family & Community Services 2014, Community Services Child Youth and



‘Societies with equity in health, learning and behavior tend to be societies that have good caring and supportive social environments for families with young children’

(F. Mustard, 2008)¹¹

Research by the Washington Institute of Public Policy indicates that early-intervention/prevention programs can return more than \$12 for each \$1 invested¹.

\$1 invested



\$12 return



Family Support (CYFS) Final Evaluation Report, pg. 3.
7. Hildyard, K & Wolfe, D 2002, ‘Child neglect: developmental issues and outcomes’, Child Abuse & Neglect, 26(6-7), pg.679-695.
8. Nair, L 2013, The Economic Costs of child abuse and neglect, Australian Institute of Family Studies, accessed on 2nd March, 2014, <<http://www.aifs.gov.au/cfca/pubs/factsheets/a142118/>>
9. Washington State Institute for Public Policy, accessed on 12th February 2014,

<<http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost?topicId=3>>.
10. MacLeod & Nelson, 2000; Samut, 2011; Washington State Institute for Public Policy, ‘Benefit Cost Results’, accessed on 15th February 2014, <<http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost?topicId=3>>, accessed 12/2/2014.
11. Mustard, F 2008, ‘Free market capitalism, social accountability and equity in early human (child) development’, Paediatrics & Child Health, 13(10), pg 839-842.

Housing

Recommendation:

Commit to improving housing affordability for young people.

The Issue:

Adequate and affordable housing is vital to a person's mental, physical, social and financial wellbeing. Australia has one of the least affordable housing markets in the world.¹² NSW has more young people experiencing homelessness than any other state. We must prevent homelessness and provide safe, stable and affordable housing if we are committed to supporting young people to achieve positive outcomes. Buying a house in NSW is becoming increasingly out of reach for all young people. We must take action on this issue today rather than in ten years when we face an even more desperate housing crisis.

What the NSW Government can do:

The NSW Government can phase out Stamp Duty for a more equitable Land Tax. They can commit to investing in researching alternative options, such as shared equity and other schemes appropriate for young people who are first homeowners. Further, the government should commit to targets on Social and affordable housing.

Youth Action will be working to support young people to develop their own campaign on housing affordability in 2014, and encourage the NSW Government to make housing more affordable.

Key Facts:

- Young people are particularly at risk of entering the cycle of homelessness¹³. 40% of people experiencing homelessness are under 25.
- The ABS reported that on census night 2011 there were at least 21,000 young people who were homeless¹⁴.
- The average first home loan has gone from three times the average annual income in 1996 to six times the average annual income in 2010¹⁵.
- Demand for housing is expected to increase into the future. There were around 7.8 million Australian households in 2006, with a 49% increase to 11.6 million expected by 2031¹⁶.
- As of June 30th 2013, there were 57,451 applicants on the wait list for social housing¹⁷.

12. AMP 2011, The Great Australian Dream: Just a Dream?, accessed on 24th February 2014, <http://media.corporate-ir.net/media_files/IROL/21/219073/AMP_NATSEM_Income_and_Wealth_Report_29_The_Great_Australian_Dream2.pdf>, pg.9.

13. Australian Census Analytic Program 2006, Counting the Homeless Australia, accessed on 17th February 2014, <<http://www.homelessnessnsw.org.au/>

uploads/50463/ufiles/Counting_the_homeless/Counting_the_Homeless_Australia_2006.pdf>, pg.viii.

14. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011, Estimating Homelessness, accessed on 28th February 2014, <<http://abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/2049.0Main%20Features>>.

15. Phillips, B. (2011), The Great Australian Dream – Just a Dream? AMP.NATSEM



What young people tell us:

Just in general, real estate in Australia is ridiculously overpriced



I have - for the last two years - pretty much lived out of a backpack and a four-wheel drive.



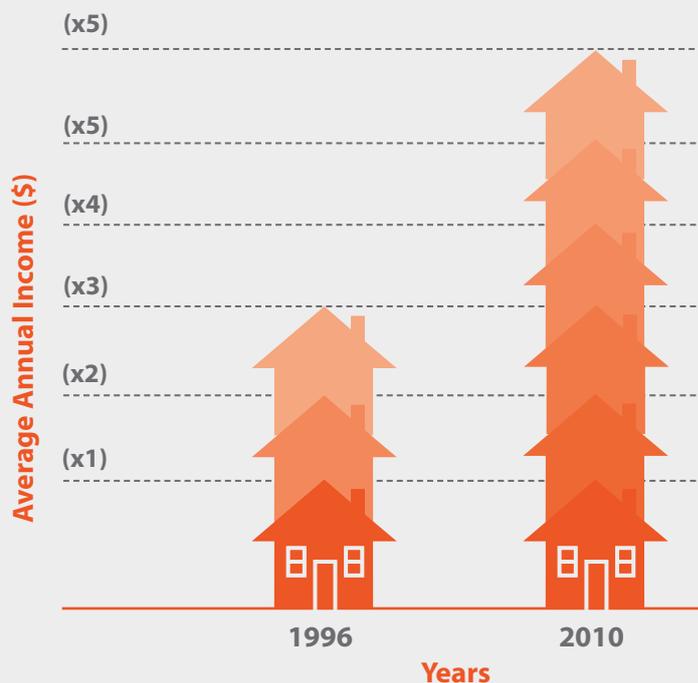
"To afford a decent house, with the kind of jobs we have... you really gotta move so far away you spend your life in traffic."



"Affordable housing of a reasonable standard is crucial to a country and its people. Without it, people are impoverished, families and communities eroded, jobs lost, the economy weakened and the environment damaged"¹⁸.

Julian Disney

The average first home loan has gone from three times the average annual income in 1996 to six times the average annual income in 2010.



Ref: Phillips, B. (2011), The Great Australian Dream – Just a Dream? AMP. NATSEM Income and Wealth Report, Issue 29, July, AMP Sydney

Income and Wealth Report, Issue 29, July, AMP Sydney
16. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2013, Housing assistance in Australia, accessed on 14th February 2014, <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129545051>>, pg.5.
17. Goward, P MP 2013, Waiting list transparency drives results, NSW Government, accessed on 15th February 2014.

18. Disney, J 2008, Affordable Housing, Future Leaders, accessed on 20th February 2014, <http://www.futureleaders.com.au/book_chapters/pdf/Issues_Time/Julian_Disney.pdf>, pg. 94.

Domestic & Family Violence

Recommendation:

Respond to the findings of the Youth Action & White Ribbon Foundation's research on youth attitudes to violence.

The Issue:

Domestic & family violence and intimate partner violence are the most common forms of violence against women. Its impacts have an individual and social cost, which are disproportionately borne by women and young people¹⁹, and there is also a cost to the Australian economy, estimated at billions of dollars every year²⁰. Violence in domestic settings is most common in communities where violence-supportive attitudes are prevalent²¹. Attitudes towards violence also impact how victims and communities respond to violence, and are closely linked to inter-generational cycles of violence²². Accordingly, domestic violence is increasingly being understood as a function of community beliefs, rather than a consequence of individual pathology²³. In order to break cycles of violence and reduce the harmful impacts violence has, community attitudes towards it must be addressed.

What the NSW Government can do:

The NSW Government must take greater action to change attitudes towards violence in the community. In order to achieve this, attitude formation in young people must be targeted. This requires educating young people about the types of violence, the impacts of violence, and how to respond to violence. School based education programs on violence have shown strong results in improving knowledge, attitudes and behavioural intention of adolescents, relating to violence³⁰.

There has not been national research into young people's attitudes to domestic and family violence since 1999. In partnership with the White Ribbon Foundation, Youth Action is conducting the most comprehensive survey of attitudes in a generation. Given that attitudes shape behaviours, such as likelihood of perpetrating or reporting violent acts, it is vital we understand these attitudes.³¹

Key Facts:

- Young people between 15-24 are most likely to be victims of assault²⁴.
- 42% of young Indigenous people surveyed by the Crime Research Centre reported having witnessed Domestic violence between caregivers. This compared to 23% of young people overall²⁵.
- Approximately one third of adolescents experience some type of violence from an intimate partner, with an estimated 12% experiencing physical violence²⁶.
- People with lower socio-economic status, children with single parents, women and Indigenous Australians are more likely to experience Domestic Violence²⁷.
- Exposure to domestic violence is a risk factor for homelessness, mental health problems and juvenile offending²⁸. It is also linked to inter-generational transmission of violence²⁹.

19. Access Economics 2004, The Cost of Domestic Violence to the Australian Economy: Part 1, accessed on 20th February 2014, <http://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/cost_of_dv_to_australian_economy_i_1.pdf>, pg. vii.

20. Ibid.,

21. Flood, M & Pease, B 2009, 'Factors influencing attitudes to violence against women', Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, Vol. 10:2, pg. 125.

22. Ibid., pg. 125-131.

23. Indermaur, D, Atkinson, L & Blagg, H 1988, Working with Adolescents to Prevent Domestic Violence: rural town model, Crime Research Centre, accessed on 14th February 2014, <<http://www.crimeprevention.gov.au/Publications/>

FamilyViolence/Documents/DomesticViolenceSummary.pdf>, pg. 14.

24. Australian Institute of Criminology 2012, Australian Crimes Facts & Figures 2012, accessed on 18th February 2014, accessed on 21st <http://www.aic.gov.au/media_library/publications/facts/2012/facts12.pdf>, pg. 19.

25. Crime Research Centre study, as reported in Indermeur, D 2001, 'Young Australians and Domestic Violence', Trends and Issues in Crime and Justice, Australian Institute of Criminology, No. 195, pg 2

26. Halpern, C., Oslak, S., Young M et al., 2000, 'Partner Violence Among Adolescents in Opposite-Sex Romantic Relationships: findings from the national longitudinal study of adolescent health, American Journal of Public Health, 91(10), pg.1682.



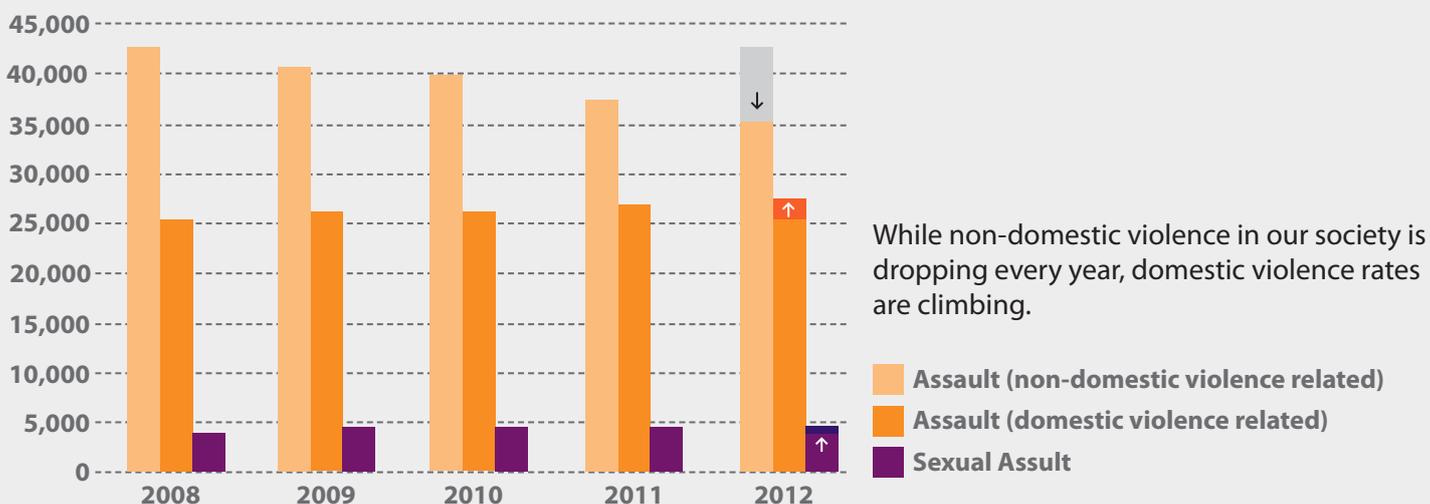
What young people tell us:

"I strongly disagree with Domestic Violence as it results in a negative environment for children and teens. This environment may affect the kids attitude, personality, and their education."



Youth Workers in NSW, when asked by Youth Action in our Youth Policy Survey, identified Domestic Family Violence and Intimate Relationship Violence as one of the top 3 issues of importance when working with young people.

Number of Incidents of Domestic/Non-Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in NSW between 2008-2012



27. Australian Institute of Criminology 2009, Key Issues in Domestic Violence, accessed on 20th February 2014, <http://www.aic.gov.au/documents/5/6/E/%7B56E09295-AF88-4998-A083-B7CCD925B540%7Drip07_001.pdf>.

28. Australian Institute of Criminology 2005, Risk Factors for Early Initiation into Crime: exploring the DUCO juvenile offenders sample, accessed on 20th February 2014, <http://www.ocsar.sa.gov.au/docs/other_publications/papers/TM.pdf>; Australian Institute of Criminology 2009, Key Issues in Domestic Violence, accessed on 18th February 2014, <http://www.aic.gov.au/documents/5/6/E/%7B56E09295-AF88-4998-A083-B7CCD925B540%7Drip07_001.pdf>.

29. Black, D., Sussman, S & Unger, J 2009, 'A further look at intergenerational

Transmission of Violence: Witnessing interpersonal violence in Emerging Adulthood', Journal of Interpersonal Violence, Vol 25(6): pg1022-1042.

30. Indermaur, 1998, pg. 31.

31. Gracia, E & Herrero, H 2006, 'Public Attitudes Toward Reporting Partner Violence Against Women and Reporting Behaviour', Journal of Marriage and Family, 68, pg.766; Flood & Pease, 2009, pg. 125.

Mental Health

Recommendation:

Fund training for rural youth workers to enable them to identify and work with young people on Mental Health issues, and to assist them to better understanding referral pathways.

The Issue:

Poor mental health accounts for the highest burden of disease among young people, comprising nearly 50% of the burden of disease in 16-24 year olds³². Early intervention where young people are experiencing mental health problems can limit negative outcomes such as the onset of chronic mental illness and suicide³³. However, the early identification of mental health problems is impeded by the reluctance of young people to seek help when experiencing mental health difficulties³⁴. Reluctance to seek help is particularly problematic in rural areas, where more substantial social barriers to help seeking exist, and access to support services is poor. These difficulties must be addressed in order to better support young people experiencing mental health problems.

What the NSW Government can do:

Youth workers frequently come into contact with young people with mental health problems and they are particularly important points of contact for disadvantaged young people who are at greater risk of experiencing mental health problems. Further, young people are more likely to seek support for mental health problems from youth workers, school counsellors and general practitioners, than other formal sources⁴². Developing youth workers' skills and knowledge in relation to mental health issues will enable them to identify and assist young people with mental health problems. This training would allow youth workers to become conduits, helping young people access specialised mental health services where required⁴³. Providing this training is critical in rural settings where social barriers and limited access to services prevent young people from receiving the support they need.

Key Facts:

- 26% of young people aged 16-24 experienced at least one mental disorder in the preceding 12 months, according to an ABS survey in 2007³⁵.
- Half of all chronic mental health problems appear by 14 years of age, and three quarters by 24 years of age³⁶.
- In 2011, suicide accounted for 27.8% of male deaths for those between 15-24 years of age³⁷. Research further indicates that 22-38% of young people have had suicidal thoughts at some point in their lives³⁸.
- Those with mental illness are far more likely than those without to have lower school attainment, end up homeless, or become involved with the criminal justice system³⁹.
- 77% of young people between 16 and 24 years with a 1-year or longer mental disorder failed to access health services within the previous year.⁴⁰
- Research has indicated that young people in metropolitan areas are 2 times more likely to seek out professional help for a mental disorder than those in rural and remote areas⁴¹.

32. AIHW 2011, Young Australians: their health and wellbeing 2011, accessed 8th February 2014, <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=10737419259>>, pg. 25.

33. Patel et al., 2007, 'Mental health of young people: a global public health challenge', *The Lancet*, v. 369, 9569, p. 1302-1313.

34. AIHW 2012, Young Australians: their health and wellbeing 2011, pg. 26.

35. ABS 2008, National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing 2007: Summary

of Results, accessed 9th February 2014, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4326.0>>.

36. Kessler et al., 2005, 'Lifetime Prevalence and Age-of-onset Distributions of DSM-IV Disorders in the National Co morbidity Survey Replication', *Archives of General Psychiatry*, Vol. 62(6), pg. 593-602.

37. ABS 2011, Causes of Death Australia, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3303.02011?OpenDocument>>.



What young people tell us:

Q. If you were feeling depressed, who would you go to?

"I would go right to my best friend. No idea who else I could talk to – I don't really know what services are around"

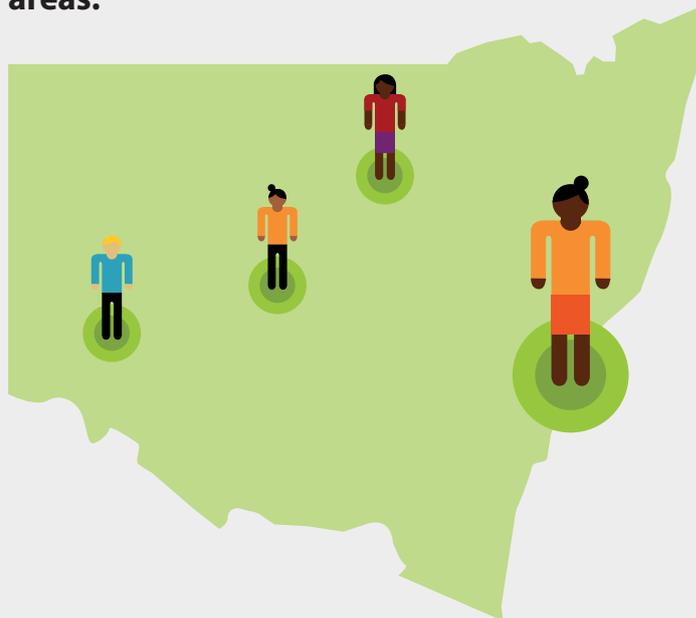


"Probably the counselling service at uni, but... they're really hard to get in to, so I'd probably talk to my parents"



40% of Youth Sector workers surveyed by Youth Action identified Mental Health as an area of unmet need, where young people sought help and the worker was unable to provide support.

Research has indicated that young people in metropolitan areas are 2 times more likely to seek out professional help for a mental disorder than those in rural and remote areas.



38. Nock et al., 2008, 'Suicide and suicidal behavior', *Epidemiological Reviews*, 30(1), p.143.
39. ABS 2011, *Perspectives on Education and Training: Social Inclusion*, accessed 8th February 2014, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4250.0.55.001Main+Features52009>>
40. AIHW 2011, *Young Australians: their health and wellbeing 2011*, p. 26.
41. Caldwell, J., Jorm, A & Dear, K 2004, *Suicide & Mental Health in rural, remote*

and metropolitan areas in Australia, *Medical Journal of Australia*, vol. 181(7), pg.10.
42. Rickwood, D., Deane, F & Wilson, C 2007, *When and how do young people seek professional help for mental health problems?*, *Medical Journal of Australia*, vol. 187(7), pg.35.
43. *Ibid.*,

Apprenticeships and Traineeships

Recommendation:

Funding for the expansion of the Sydney Alliance Working Start program - which links disadvantaged young people into local apprenticeships.

The Issue:

Young people from low-socioeconomic backgrounds are at significant risk of facing long-term unemployment, health and social problems in their life⁴⁴. Creating jobs for disadvantaged young people is frequently identified as a key measure for achieving greater social inclusion⁴⁵. However, numerous social barriers can prevent young people experiencing disadvantage from maintaining employment once they have gained it⁴⁶. This means that job opportunities for young people experiencing disadvantage must be matched with support, both in the community and in the workplace, to enable long-term job retention. The Working Start Pilot, run by The Sydney Alliance in Glebe, is creating meaningful local employment opportunities for young people from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. These opportunities are combined with social support within the community and workplace to give the worker the best chance at seeing long-term success.

What the NSW Government can do:

The NSW Government should support the expansion of Sydney Alliance's Working Start program. This program has brought together a range of organisations, youth services, businesses and training services to create sustainable employment pathways for young people. Their model operates by providing networks of support and workplace preparation for young people in need, with support continuing after they have been placed in an apprenticeship in their local community. So far several young people have successfully commenced apprenticeships with Mirvac's Harold Park Development. Additional funding for the Working Start program can assist the expansion of this successful community led program.

Key Facts:

- In 2011, 41% of young people from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds in Australia were not fully engaged in work or study after leaving school⁴⁷.
- Approximately 45% of apprentices discontinue or fail to complete their apprenticeship, costing the NSW Government over \$180 million in 2010⁴⁸.
- Social barriers often prevent disadvantaged individuals from completing training or retaining employment⁴⁹.
- The youth unemployment rate sits at 11.8% in NSW, twice as high as the general rate.⁵⁰

44. Kieselbach, T 2003, 'Long-Term Unemployment Among Young People: The Risk of Social Exclusion', *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 32(1-2), pg. 74; Singh-Manoux A et al., 2004, 'Socioeconomic Trajectories across the life course and health outcomes in midlife: evidence for the accumulation hypothesis?', *International Journal of Epidemiology*, Vol. 33(5), pg. 1072-1079.
45. ACTU Congress 2009, *A Fair Society: Social Inclusion and Workforce Participation Policy*, accessed on 9th February 2014, < <http://www.actu.org.au/Images/Dynamic/attachments/6562/Social%20Inclusion%20-%20final.pdf>>,

p. 1-4.

46. Perkins, A & Nelms, L 2004, *Assisting the Most Disadvantaged Job Seekers, Brotherhood of St Lawrence*, accessed on 18th February 2014, <http://www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/PerkinsNelms_disadvantaged_jobseekers_CofFEEpaper.pdf>, pg.1-4.

47. COAG Reform Council 21012, *Education in Australia 2012: Five years of performance*, accessed on 9th February 2014, <<http://www.coagreformcouncil.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/Education%20in%20Australia%202012%2C%20>



What young people tell us:

Q. Are apprenticeships and traineeships an attractive career path?

"No – it's not something I see myself doing – I'd rather go to uni. Although I don't know what I'll do there!"



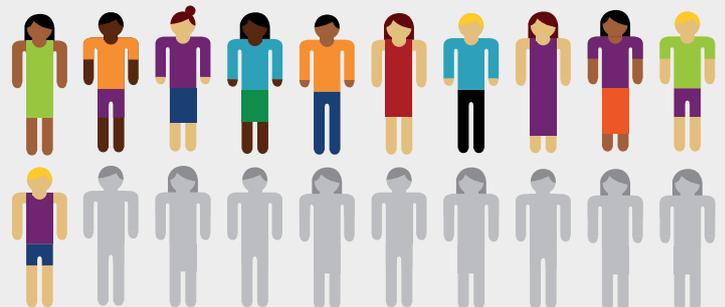
"It's definitely worth sticking with it, 'cause, in the end, you may not enjoy what you are doing at the time, but... you may be able to take it somewhere"



"When you talk to young people, the big issue in employment isn't simply getting a job. It's keeping a job. Too frequently in the first 6-12 months of employment something comes up – a personal issue or crisis – the young person doesn't turn up to work. The employer assumes they are unreliable or not interested. The job disappears. In communities where there isn't generational experience with employment, this pattern can be frequently repeated. Shifting long term unemployment requires breaking this pattern."

**Amanda Tattersall,
Director - Sydney Alliance**

Approximately 45% of apprentices discontinue or fail to complete their apprenticeship, costing the NSW Government over \$180 million in 2010.



Five%20years%20of%20performance.pdf>, pg. 65.

48. NSW Board of Vocational Education & Training 2011, A fair deal: Apprentices and their employers in NSW Integrated Research Report, accessed on 17th February 2014, <<http://www.bvet.nsw.gov.au/pdf/afairdealfinalreport.pdf>> pg. 26;

49. Perkins, A & Nelms, L 2004, Assisting the Most Disadvantaged Job Seekers, Brotherhood of St Lawrence, accessed on 18th February 2014, <http://www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/PerkinsNelms_disadvantaged_jobseekers_CofFEEpaper.pdf>.

50. Brotherhood of St. Lawrence 2014, Youth Unemployment Maps, accessed on 3rd March 2014, <http://www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/MyChanceOurFuture_AppendixA_maps_Feb2014.pdf>

Justice Reinvestment

Recommendation:

Fund a pilot of Justice Reinvestment in Bourke.

The Issue:

Detaining one young person in juvenile detention costs \$650 a day, or \$240,000 per year. Despite this cost, detaining young people does not reduce their likelihood of reoffending. Half the juvenile justice population in NSW is Indigenous. There is a clear need to reduce the economic burden of large prison populations by preventing young people from becoming involved in the prison system.⁵¹

Justice Reinvestment for Aboriginal Young People is a campaign to invest in young indigenous people at risk of becoming involved with the criminal justice system. Funds are diverted from building prisons to investing in resources for local communities including programs, services and activities. By implementing early intervention strategies through a holistic approach we can minimize the percentage of Aboriginal young people that are entering the prison system. Addressing the multi layered causes of crime by supporting Justice Reinvestment will shift focus from offending to prevention, proving cost effective for government, the individual and the community.

What the NSW Government can do:

The first step for the NSW Government is to fund a pilot of Justice Reinvestment in Bourke and support the implementation of early intervention programs and services in the community. The Justice Reinvestment for Aboriginal Young People campaign is already developing collective impact tools and processes for Bourke as a pilot and it is crucial that this is backed by funding to deliver the services that will prevent Aboriginal young people from entering the criminal justice system.

Key Facts:

- In NSW Aboriginal young people make up about 3% of the general population, but over half of the juvenile detention population.⁵²
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incarceration rates are 15 times higher than for non-Indigenous prisoners.⁵³
- Over three quarters (77%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners had been imprisoned previously.⁵⁴

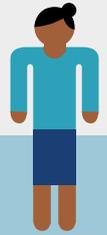
51. JustReinvest NSW 2014, Main messages, accessed on 6th February 2014, <http://justicereinvestmentnow.net.au/wp-content/themes/justicereinvestment_new/downloads/media_sheet.pdf>.

52. JustReinvest NSW 2014, The Facts, accessed 6th on February 2014, <<http://justicereinvestmentnow.net.au/about-the-campaign/>>.

53. ABS 2013, Prisoners in Australia: Imprisonment rates, accessed on 3rd February 2014,

<<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4517.0~2013~Main%20Features~Imprisonment%20Rates~32>>.

54. ABS 2013, Prisoners in Australia: Prior Imprisonment, accessed on 6th



“It won’t be long before our prisons are too full because the government missed the opportunity to spend money at the front end of the system rather than further down the line when offending has already taken place”.

Mick Gooda, Human Rights Commission⁵⁵

In NSW Aboriginal young people make up about 3% of the general population, but over half of the juvenile detention population.



February 2014, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4517.0~2013~Main%20Features~Prior%20Imprisonment~36>>. 55. Gooda, M 2010, Justice Reinvestment: a new solution to the problem of Indigenous over-representation in the criminal justice system, Australian Human Rights Commission, accessed on 12th February 2014, <<https://www>.

[humanrights.gov.au/news/speeches/justice-reinvestment-new-solution-problem-indigenous-over-representation-criminal](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/speeches/justice-reinvestment-new-solution-problem-indigenous-over-representation-criminal)>.

School Suspension

Recommendation:

Commit to an independent review of School Suspension and Discipline Policy and Practice within the first 100 days of forming government

The Issue:

The NSW School Suspension and Discipline policy does not effectively take into account the circumstances of a student's life – and in many situations only further entrenches disadvantage rather than changing behaviour.

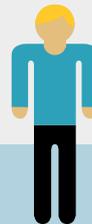
Young people in NSW are being suspended unreasonably and this is impacting on school retention, particularly of disadvantaged students. The current school suspension policy is not adequately addressing the issue of suspension within schools and must be reviewed. Youth Action surveyed youth workers and young people across NSW and found that the system is both unwieldy and unfair, with many schools unable to deal with behavioural issues in any method other than suspension, despite the negative impacts this has on student learning.

What the NSW Government can do:

The NSW Government should conduct an independent review for the current policies around school suspension within the first 100 days of forming government, and have this consistent across NSW public schools. Research into alternatives around suspensions, including behaviour contracts, anger management training and mentoring programmes must be included in this review process. To support this review holistically, funding should be allocated to early intervention services, such as counsellors and youth workers, to collaborate with schools and parents to ensure all parties understand the policies associated with school suspensions. Groups most at risk of being suspended include Aboriginal young people and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Acknowledging this and reviewing the suspension with these groups in mind will assist the NSW Government in creating a fair school suspension system.

Key Facts:

- In 2012 there were 18,186 students that were suspended, with the average length of long suspensions being 11.8 days.⁵⁶
- 8 out of 10 students surveyed about school suspensions discussed how this impacted negatively on their family.⁵⁷
- 51% of youth workers surveyed said they felt ill-equipped to support young people who had been suspended due to lack of understanding around suspension policies⁵⁸.
- There are currently less than half the recommended number of school counsellors in NSW. They are significantly stretched, with an average allocation of 1 counsellor per 1,030 students, far short of the recommended 1 per 500 students⁵⁹.



What young people tell us:

Q. Do you think there are better alternatives for punishment?

My school has time out that was, like, one step below suspension



...he got suspended for not going to school, so I think they need to find a better way. That just gave him more reason not to go to school!

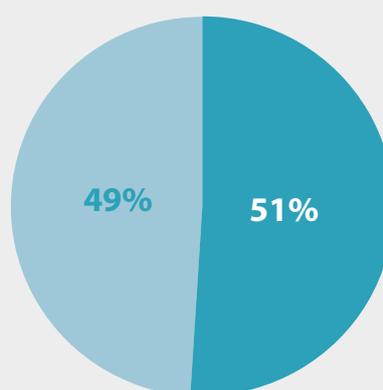


“Often young people for whatever reason, eg. Homeless or family homelessness, current family violence; go to school unprepared, they may be out of uniform or not have their school books etc with them and seem to be singled out and often this attended leads to a suspension. I have also observed that young people are suspended for truanting, which seems like an oxy-moron”

NSW Youth Worker

51% of youth workers surveyed said they felt ill-equipped to support young people who had been suspended due to lack of understanding around suspension policies⁶⁰

Youth workers



Felt ill-equipped to support suspended young people

56. NSW Department of Education & Communities 2012, Suspension and Expulsions, accessed on 24th February 2014, <<https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/about-us/statistics-and-research/key-statistics-and-reports/long-suspension-expulsions-2012.pdf>>, pg.1.

57. Beauchamp, T 2012, 'Addressing high rates of school suspension', Uniting Care, pg7.

58. Youth Action 2012, School Suspension Policy Paper, pg. 4.

59. NSW Department of Education and Communities, The school counselling workforce in NSW government schools, accessed on 13th February 2014, <<https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/about-us/statistics-and-research/public-reviews-and-enquiries/school-counselling-services-review/paper1-tscwings.pdf>>, pg.6.

60. Youth Action 2012, School Suspension Policy Paper, pg. 4.

Supportive Schools

Recommendation:

Increase youth workers in schools through the Student Support Officer programs and through better linkages between schools and youth services.

The Issue:

Schools, as the primary contact between young people and the social support system, are key to early intervention on issues arising for young people. Many schools have limited capacity to help students facing serious problems. These students often suffer from marginalisation, lower school completion rates and consequently have poorer socio-economic outcomes⁶¹. Youth workers can provide personal support for young people in need, as well as connect them to the services within the community they require⁶². Youth workers often provide an approachable source of support for young people, due to the confidentiality, informality and flexibility of their approach. Creating better links between youth workers and NSW schools will help more young people receive the support they need, both within and outside of school, when they need it.

What the NSW Government can do:

Already, the NSW Government is piloting the Student Support Officer program, and this program should be expanded. Providing additional support to build links between existing youth services and local schools will also help.

The NSW government should expand support for programs that place youth workers in schools. Programs that place youth workers in schools have displayed a range of positive outcomes. Provision of youth workers in Queensland has led to students receiving more social support within schools, connected young people with appropriate community services, and improved relationships between schools and marginalised students among other successes⁶⁸. Having Youth workers on staff at Sevenoaks Senior College in Western Australia has had similar benefits for students, as well as increasing attendance and retention of at-risk students⁶⁹. Further, in NSW, the Shellharbour Youth Services Program has enabled early intervention for young people at risk of harm, especially those at risk of leaving school early⁷⁰. Increasing the number of youth workers in NSW schools will provide better support and lead to better outcomes for students in need.

Key Facts:

- Greater social support in schools leads to better educational outcomes⁶³.
- Student counsellors often have competing duties and are subject to large student to counsellor ratios, inhibiting their capacity to support students⁶⁴.
- Youth workers in schools can provide a range of services to young people in need as well as linking young people to services in the community as required⁶⁵.
- In 2006, 7,800 young people in Queensland chose to access assistance or referral through a Youth Support Coordinator [Youth Worker] within a school or TAFE⁶⁶.
- Placing social workers in schools has improved academic performance by improving attendance, increasing academic engagement and decreasing dropout rates of at-risk students⁶⁷.



What young people tell us:

Q. If you could get more money for your school, what would you ask for?

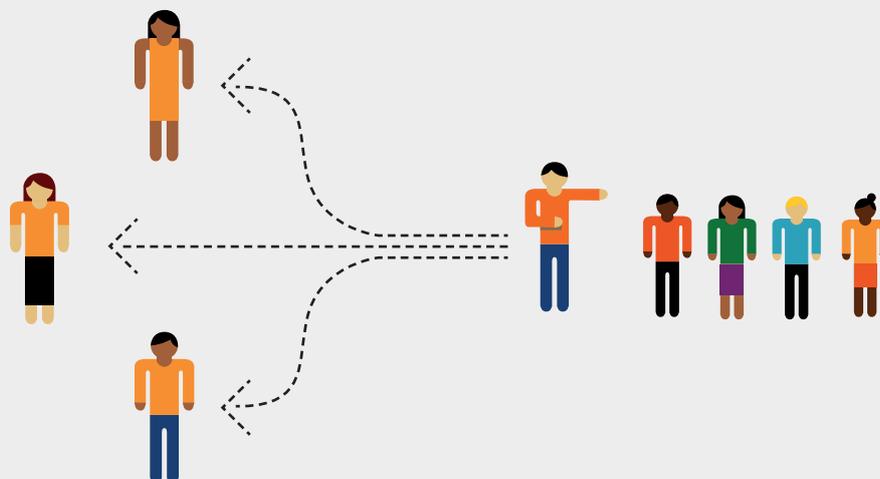
"I think more school counsellors. There's always a big line, and if you go to them, you have to make an appointment – sometimes you have to wait a few days"



"The value of Youth Service Coordinators being employed and connected outside of the school, but working within the school, is that the schools are first to know about young people's distress but are least able to help them"

Mark Buckland, YSC Hub Coordinator ⁷¹

Youth workers in schools can provide a range of services to young people in need as well as linking young people to services in the community as required.



61. Suhyun, S & Jungyo S 2007, 'Risk Factors and Levels of Risk for High School Dropouts', *Professional School Counselling*, 10(3), pg. 297-306; Freudenberg, N 2007, 'Reframing School Dropout as a Public Health Issue', *Preventing Chronic Disease*, 4(4), pg 1-11.

62. Taylor, F 2010, *Partnerships in the Youth Sector*, Australian Youth Research Centre, accessed on 3rd February 2014, <<http://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/What-Works-PYS.pdf>>.

63. Lee, F et al., 1999, *Social Support*, Academic Press, and *Student Achievement: A view from the middle grades in Chicago*, Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research, accessed on 5th February 2014, <<https://ccsr.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/p0e01.pdf>>, pg.16.

64. The Public Schools Principles Forum August 2006, NSW School Counselling Service, accessed on 11th February 2014, <www.pspf.com.au/info/livedocuments/4_692_249.doc>; Culbreth, J 2005, 'Role Stress Among

Practicing School Counsellors', *Counsellor Education & Supervision*, Vol. 45, pg.85.

65. Taylor, 2010.

66. *Ibid.*, pg. 64

67. URBIS 2011, *The Psychological and Emotional Wellbeing Needs of Children and Young People: Models of Effective Practice in Educational Settings*, accessed 5th February 2014, <<https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/about-us/statistics-and-research/public-reviews-and-enquiries/school-counselling-services-review/models-of-effective-practice.pdf>>

68. Taylor, 2010.

69. *Ibid.*, pg. 71-72.

70. *Ibid.*, pg. 78.

71. *Ibid.*, pg. 64.

Alcohol and Other Drugs

Recommendation:

Develop comprehensive alcohol education programs for young people aged 15-17.

The Issue:

It is clear that waiting until young people are 18 to educate them on safe drinking behaviours is not working. Similarly, a 'no-tolerance' approach to underage drinking is not stopping underage young people from engaging in risky drinking. Binge drinking by those aged between 14 and 18 is directly linked to poor mental, physical, and social outcomes. The World Health Organisation identifies that education about alcohol needs to go beyond providing information about the risks of harmful use of alcohol to be effective⁷². Current studies support this claim and have been conducted around harm minimization programs for school students (SHAHRP). Results showed that in a follow up 8 months later, levels of alcohol consumption were 31.4% lower compared to students who did not partake in the program.⁷³ After 20 months students who were involved in this program were also less likely to consume to risky levels.⁷⁴ Consequently there is a need to develop programs that more effectively engage with young people and focus on minimising the negative outcomes associated with alcohol and drug use. School based intervention programs that target 14-18 year olds can specifically reduce risky alcohol and drug behaviours, and are cost-effective investments for governments.

What the NSW Government can do:

It is essential that NSW Government create or increase access to existing AOD (Alcohol and Other Drugs) education programs specifically for student's aged 15-17. In order to formulate and structure these programs, research must be conducted around what young people already know about alcohol and other drugs to identify what additional information they need. These early intervention programs need to be run at schools as part of the curriculum and must be given appropriate funding. Involving a local youth service in designing and running AOD programs will establish opportunities for a holistic approach to young people and AOD issues. Evaluation measures of these programs must then be implemented to comprehensively assess the use of early intervention AOD programs for the 15-17 year age group.

Key Facts:

- The ABS found in 2007 that the average age of first consuming alcohol was 15 years for males.⁷⁵
- 55 per cent of males and 30 per cent of females 15–17 years, usually consume 5 or more standard drinks when they drink ⁷⁶.
- Male and female teenagers aged 15–19 years had the highest hospitalisation rates for acute intoxication from alcohol among all age groups⁷⁷
- The National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2010 reported that 80.5% of young people aged 14 years or older had consumed a full serve of alcohol⁷⁸.
- The proportion of people aged 14 years or older that had used an illicit drug in the last 12 months increased from 13.4% in 2007 to 14.7% in 2010⁷⁹.



What young people tell us:

Q. What does safe drinking look like to you?

"In an environment and with people that feel safe, somewhere, you know – whether that's out at a club with your friends or just somewhere where you aren't putting yourself at risk..."



"Knowing who you can call if someone gets sick – like a parent who won't get mad."



Q. Who would you talk with about drug and alcohol related problems?

"I'd look for someone who actually specialised in this area, hey? Like a counsellor or someone like that."



"The message for those under 18 years of age is quite clear - "not drinking is the safest option"... a clear message but not a particularly helpful one when a sizeable proportion of that group... do choose to drink at some time or another."

Paul Dillon, DARTA⁸⁰

55 per cent of males and 30 per cent of females 15–17 years, usually consume 5 or more standard drinks when they drink.

30% of males aged 15-17



55% of males aged 15-17



72. World Health Organization 2010, Global Strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol, accessed on 7th February 2014, <http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/alcstratenglishfinal.pdf?ua=1>, pg. 31.

73. McBride, N et al., 2004, 'Harm minimization in school drug education: final results of the School Health and Alcohol Harm Reduction Project (SHAHRP)', *Addiction*, pg.283, accessed 20th February 2014.

74. McBride op.cit., pg. 284.

75. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2009, Risk taking by young people, accessed on 18th February 2014, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Chapter5002008>.

76. Australian Government: Office for Youth 2009, State of Australia's young

people, accessed on 20th February 2014, <https://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/media/SPRCFile/41_Report_YoungPeopleReport.pdf>, pg.105.

77. Muir, op.cit., pg.1.

78. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2010, National Drug Strategy Household Survey report, accessed on 7th February 2014 <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=10737421314>>, pg.46.

79. AIHW, op.cit., pg.85.

80. P Dillon, 'Risk', 'risky drinking' and young people: What does it all mean?; in *Doing Drugs with Paul Dillon*, August 2013, accessed on 18th February 2014, <<http://doingdrugs-darta.blogspot.com.au/2013/08/risk-risky-drinking-and-young-people.html>>.

