



**2017-18
IMPACT REPORT**

**Increasing impact through
innovation and inspiration**



www.yfs2018impactreport.yfs.org.au

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INCREASING IMPACT THROUGH INNOVATION AND INSPIRATION



At YFS we pride ourselves on our continuous improvement. In recent years we have raised the bar, focusing on ideas and innovations that increase our impact. This report outlines some of our achievements from 2017-18.

Our innovations and inspirations in 2017-18 include trials of several new approaches to backing vulnerable people and families. These include our successful Sure Steps family coaching pilot, our Spark employment linking service for public housing tenants, and our role as the first Queensland provider of Functional Family Therapy - Child Welfare, a new way of working with families at risk of child safety intervention.

YFS has a proud history of leadership in Logan, documented in a new timeline on our website. One of our most significant innovations was the development of our information, referral and advice service in 2010. Originally created to improve access to YFS services, YFS Connect has evolved into a crucial hub, providing access to support and information in Logan. Last year, YFS Connect responded to more than 11,000 requests for assistance.

A highlight of the 2017-18 year was the Logan Apology event, commemorating the 10th anniversary of Kevin Rudd's National Apology to the Stolen Generations. YFS was proud to partner with the Healing Foundation to host this event. Logan Elders and community members, elected representatives and school students joined to share stories, songs and messages of reconciliation and hope.

We know we need to measure what matters so we keep our eye on the impacts we are pursuing. In 2017-18 we made great progress to ensure each of our services has a strong design that is based on evidence and links our staff's activity with desired outcomes. Now, we measure our outcomes in all our programs, including a set of over-arching measures to understand our contribution to clients' independence and participation.

In 2017-18 we began working with clients of our disability services to help them transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). We have helped clients apply for access to the scheme, prepare for the planning process and find solutions for their service needs. We look forward to learning more about government support for people with disability or mental health issues who are not eligible for the scheme.

In the coming year, we will continue to innovate and improve. We are committed to improving our ability to recruit and develop great staff, and growing our skills to improve the way we work with people who have experienced trauma, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. And we will continue to work towards effective integrated services that respond to each client's individual strengths, needs, hopes and circumstances.

Cath Bartolo, CEO and Jennifer Le Savéant, YFS Board Chair



A STABLE HOME

A stable home is fundamental to achieve independence and participation. In 2017-18, we helped people find and sustain safe, suitable, affordable homes so they can build successful lives.

5,795

requests for homelessness assistance

Our YFS Connect team continued to respond to homelessness, acting as a de-facto homelessness hub for Logan in the absence of a government-funded service.

The YFS Connect team helps people access crisis accommodation and link with longer term solutions and supports. In 2017-18, YFS Connect staff stabilised or secured housing for more than 200 people and families, using a combination of emergency relief funding and short-term case work.

This quick win approach is in addition to the work of our YFS case managers, who helped more than 200 families and individuals move into stable housing. Homelessness continues to be a significant issue for clients across all YFS services. In 2017-18, people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness ranged from 21% in Youth Link to 95% in our Housing First team.

Staff in all of our case management teams are equipped to respond to homelessness as well as other issues.

Through the Queensland Government's Dignity First Fund, participants at Substation33 developed and built eight mobile phone charging units for Logan people experiencing homelessness. These are now available at places like YFS premises for use by people who are seeking support and services.

2017-18 marked the end of an era for YFS. We relinquished our role as property managers of 24 housing units in Woodridge to focus on our core business of providing support. YFS now only manages 14 crisis accommodation properties associated with our housing support service.



YFS Community Connections clients donated books for children from homeless families

Looking forward in 2018-19

- In 2019 YFS will deliver Rapid Housing training to help staff in other organisations work effectively with people who are facing homelessness.
- YFS will also offer training for young people who are at risk of homelessness.



Innovation and inspiration

In March 2018 we kicked off our Spark program, working with public housing tenants under the Department of Housing's Tenant Engagement Strategy.

Our Spark project worker connects people in Logan public housing with opportunities to work, learn, volunteer or start their own small businesses. In its first three months, Spark inspired 20 people to participate in the community. For example, Noel started by training and volunteering before gaining a job with a flower wholesaler with help from Spark and Substation33.

The Department's Tenant Engagement Strategy aims to support tenants' social, cultural and economic participation in the community. Spark brings this to life by linking tenants with existing employment, entrepreneurship and training initiatives in Logan as well as by providing additional backing to link them with work.



People who sustain stable housing after YFS helps them find a home



Outcomes

In 2017, YFS began surveying clients from our Housing First team to track the long-term impact of our work with people experiencing homelessness. As expected, we have encountered difficulties contacting more than half of the people who we have worked with to secure housing. Of those we could contact, 83% of people reported that their housing was still stable, affordable and appropriate. As well as providing insights into clients' progress after they finish working with us, the survey is an opportunity to offer additional support, especially around the sixth to seventh month mark when leases are up for renewal.



Amy's story

"Without Renae and the Step by Step team, I wouldn't be as strong in myself. They seem to make me stronger and see things in ways that I don't see."

Read the full story on page 20



A DECENT INCOME

Many of our clients are on low incomes, and most experience financial stress. In 2017-18, we enhanced our efforts to help people increase their income through work and to manage their money.

1,483
clients of our financial services

Our financial capability and counselling services worked with 1,483 people in financial distress in 2017-18.

This includes our financial counsellors, Money Smart financial capability workers and our AGL-funded adviser as well as a new financial counsellor funded by the Queensland Government to support Scenic Rim residents affected by Tropical Cyclone Debbie.

Our efforts to back vulnerable people to gain paid work included:

- ParentsNext encouraged almost 500 parents to set work-related goals and take steps to achieve them – 59 parents gained jobs in the year
- we trialled an employment engagement worker for six months to link clients of our case management teams with jobs – we found jobs for 26 disadvantaged jobseekers and linked others with specialised supports and training
- 41 people moved into paid work after volunteering at Substation33
- our RailTrail and Community Campaigns traineeships programs offered paid on-the-job training opportunities to 24 people, with 15 moving to ongoing roles after their traineeships finished
- we kicked off our Spark project for public housing tenants, highlighted in the previous section of this report.

We were very grateful to Maurice Blackburn Lawyers for a \$10,000 donation earmarked for employment-related expenses. These funds have allowed us to help trainees buy work clothing and Spark clients to pay for training they needed to get work.

One of the barriers to work for some people is substance use, in an environment with increasing use of drug testing in workplaces. YFS undertook a small research project in 2017-18, in conjunction with the Alcohol and Drug Foundation to explore ways to reduce harm to young jobseekers from alcohol and drug use. Consultation with young people and stakeholders indicated that activities are more effective than education. The research identified Substation33 as an engaging alternative to drug use for young people, and outlined the potential to make this more purposeful through mentoring.

Looking forward in 2018-19

- We will offer financial counselling and capability services in more locations in Logan.
- We will explore ways for people to work off debts to the State Penalties Enforcement Registry by being involved in YFS services.



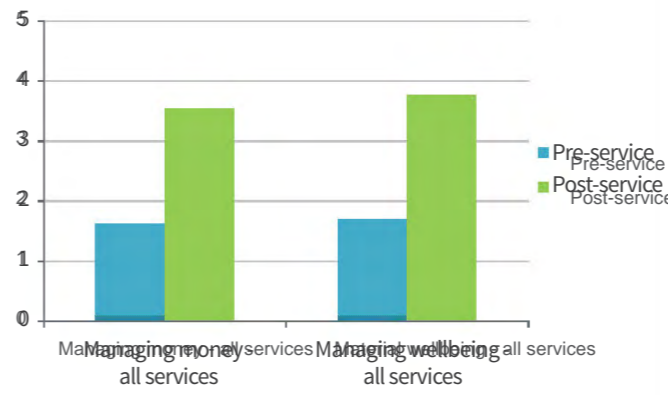
Innovation and inspiration

In August 2017, YFS launched a marketing campaign to reduce the take-up of consumer leases. Leasing furniture and appliances at exorbitant costs is a common issue for clients who seek help from YFS. We worked with advertising agency Rumble to create marketing materials that conveyed the true cost of rent-to-buy arrangements.

Throughout the three-month period, the Done With Debt campaign reached more than 40,000 people through social media, mainstream media and in-person contact by a team of peer educators. The campaign generated referrals for financial counselling and budgeting, and increased awareness of No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) loans as an alternative. Our www.donewithdebt.com.au website continues to provide simple information about alternative ways for people to get the products they need without going into debt.



Financial wellbeing 2017-18 measured on a five point scale



Outcomes

Our services that receive funding from the Federal Department of Social Services track improvement in client's circumstances and achievements. That's how we know our services helped people improve their ability to manage money and their material wellbeing, particularly our financial counselling and capability services.

Our organisational outcomes survey tracks changes in our clients' financial security across all YFS programs. More than half of our clients are in financial stress when they engage with us. We improved our focus on this issue in 2017-18, with 24% of clients improving their ability to pay their bills, compared with 17% the previous year.



Paige's story

"When I told Rachel I got a job, I could see she was so excited for me. That made me feel proud of what I had achieved."

Read the full story on page 21



SAFETY

Some families need help to create safe environments where every member can thrive. In 2017-18 we added two new teams to help families reduce risk for children in their care, and expanded our domestic and family violence prevention work.

750
victims of violence supported

In April 2018, YFS began working with Child Safety officers during investigations into families. Our new Assessment and Service Connect team assists with the assessment of safety in families, and links families with the supports they need to reduce risk for children and provide environments where all family members can flourish. Assessment and Service Connect covers Logan, Redlands and Beaudesert Child Safety regions.

YFS also initiated Queensland's first Functional Family Therapy – Child Welfare team in May 2018, covering the Browns Plains – Beaudesert region to trial an alternative approach. The team works alongside our existing Intensive Family Support service.

Our domestic and family violence work continued to grow in 2017-18. We supported more than 750 victims of violence in the past financial year through our Beaudesert Domestic and Family Violence Service, our Women's Advocates and the Project Hera initiative, which sees a YFS worker co-located with the Queensland Police Service Logan District Domestic and Family Violence Unit to provide information and referrals.

YFS' Responsible Men team increased its number of groups from February 2018 thanks to additional funding

from the Queensland Government. The team worked with more than 600 domestic violence perpetrators in 2017-18 to help them take responsibility for their behaviour and learn more respectful ways of operating in relationships.



YFS works closely with Logan police

Looking forward in 2018-19

- YFS is keen to develop a program for fathers as an offshoot of our Responsible Men program. This proposed domestic and family violence prevention program will harness men's aspirations to be good fathers.
- We are working with Beaucaire to expand domestic and family violence response in the Scenic Rim, an area with very high needs and limited services available for victims and perpetrators of violence.



Innovation and inspiration

We are determined to find better ways to back families to thrive. With Queensland Government support, YFS is trialling new ways of working with families, including a Queensland pilot of Functional Family Therapy – Child Welfare. Our new team of highly qualified family therapists started working with families in May 2018.

Functional Family Therapy – Child Welfare was developed in the United States to help families change their patterns of behaviour so children can be safer. YFS is trialling the model in the Browns Plains – Beaudesert area, alongside our Intensive Family Support program. Both services work with families where child safety concerns have been identified, but use very different methods. This trial will allow us to see what works best for which families.

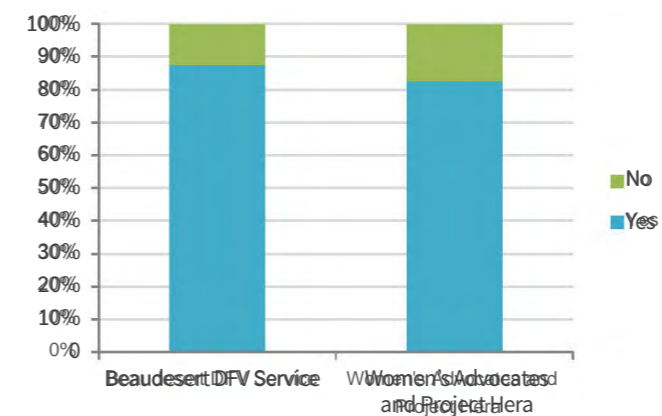


Outcomes

Our services working with domestic and family violence victims report on clients' improvements in safety and their protection from harm. Most clients showed improvements through such interventions as safety plans, relocation, domestic violence orders and home safety modifications.

Our Intensive Family Support service evaluates risk for children in families. On entry to the service in 2017-18, 88% of families were moderate or high risk compared with less than half on exit. Changes in personal and family safety are also assessed by our family focused programs such as Step by Step family support and Sure Steps family coaching, with positive change across clients working with these teams.

Clients who show improvements in safety



Brian's story

"We tell the men that a sign of becoming responsible is when they comply with their domestic violence orders. We treat breaches really seriously."

Read the full story on page 22



Connections with others, and with supports and services, are necessary for participation in community life. In 2017-18, YFS programs continued to generate good outcomes by linking people with local supports and encouraging them to connect with others.

Social isolation, financial stress, youth disengagement and safety issues in the rapidly growing south-western part of Logan have been on the YFS radar for the past five years.

On 4 June 2018, some YFS staff moved to a new office in Jimboomba. Our Intensive Family Support, Beaudesert Domestic Violence and Functional Family Therapy – Child Welfare teams are the first to work from this base.

Substation33 continued to provide opportunities for people to connect with others in a supportive work environment. In recognition of this, Substation33 won the 2017 Logan City Award for People with a Disability at the Breaking Barriers Opening Doors Post-School Disability Expo.

YFS' Community Connections and Social Links services continued to provide learning and participation opportunities for people with disability. We invested in supporting our clients to apply for the NDIS and to prepare for the planning process. As YFS will not offer Community Connections services under the NDIS, we helped eligible clients identify their best options for ongoing support.

Connection with culture is known to be a protective factor for children and young people. Most of our RailTrail trainees identify as Aboriginal, so we linked them with Mununjali Elders to learn about their cultural

history and to experience traditions. For many, it's their first exposure to a welcome to country or smoking ceremony.

Our impact is often underpinned by partnerships with others. During 2017-18 we explored further collaboration opportunities with our Scenic Rim sister organisation Beaucare to meet the needs of this growing region.



Cameron Dick MP celebrated a Hackerspace grant for Substation33

Looking forward in 2018-19

- Our new strategic plan sets out a clear intention to build our relationships and understanding in our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities, Elders and organisations, to contribute to Closing the Gap.
- We will improve our support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, our cultural competence with clients and our links with community.



Innovation and inspiration

Clients of our Beaudesert Domestic and Family Violence service came together for an art therapy group project in March 2018. These women had emerged from crisis and were keen to rebuild their lives. The project brought them together in a safe, nurturing environment so they could express their feelings, experiences and hopes through art.

The aim was to help women share their strength and resilience, and to find inspiration. An art therapist led the creative sessions, while YFS staff organised activities for the participants' children. Some of the artworks that resulted from the project are now decorating the walls of counselling rooms at our Jimboomba office to inspire other women in the same situation.

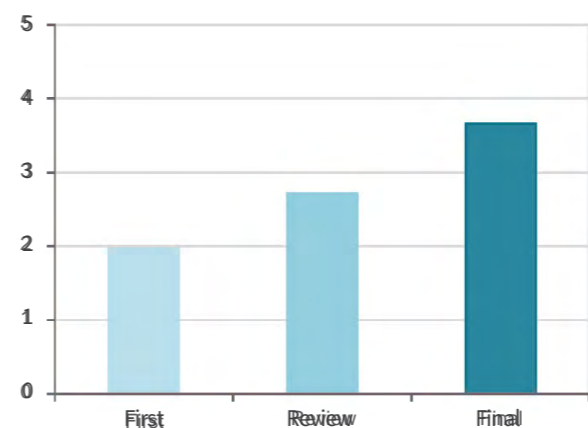


Outcomes

YFS programs have different ways to measure clients' social connections. As shown in the graph, our Sure Steps team for example, asks clients about their sense of belonging. It is encouraging to see improvement in this measure in the early days of this family coaching program. All teams that assess connection to family, community and services noted significant improvements for clients in this area.

Across all programs, we assess clients' social connectedness on entry and exit. In 2017-18 we noted that clients were considerably more likely to have multiple sources of support on exit than on entry (58% compared to 34%), suggesting a stronger support network and deeper social connectedness.

Sure Steps clients' sense of belonging



John and Dylan's story

"Knowing I have something to do each day instead of sitting at home and wasting my life is awesome," Dylan said.
 "Being Aboriginal, it's always great to get out there and get back to the environment," John said.

Read the full story on page 23

SKILLS AND EDUCATION

All YFS teams promote skills development, from financial literacy to work-related training. In 2017-18 we saw good results for parents increasing their parenting and coping skills, and for trainees and volunteers accumulating work experience.

24

Skilling Queenslanders for Work traineeships provided

YFS' electronic waste recycling social enterprise, Substation33, made significant progress in its innovation activities in 2017-18, increasing opportunities for participants to learn skills in a supportive work-experience environment.

New initiatives included the development of solar-powered charging units in conjunction with PowerWells, and water quality testing meters in a partnership with Griffith University. Substation33's flood-warning-sign partnership with Logan City Council continued to grow. All of this means Substation33 can offer participants a pathway of work-related skills, from disassembling waste through to computer programming.

We continued our RailTrail traineeship program in 2017-18, with 16 young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people learning land-management skills on the job, clearing land along the disused Bethania to Beaudesert rail corridor.

YFS' community education efforts help people build financial and legal skills and the knowledge to avoid crises. Our legal pro bono community education is working with legal firms such as Collins Biggers Paisley and Wotton + Kearney. The lawyers have been delivering community legal education to Year 12s about employment, tenancy, contracts and debt.

In May 2018, YFS became a host organisation for a new national trial of a project to support young parents to continue to participate in education and employment. Funded under the Federal Government's Try Test and Learn initiative, the Brave Foundation's Supporting Expectant and Parenting Teens mentor pilot project began working with teenage parents in Logan.

Our Step by Step family support team helped families improve their parenting and life skills. The team developed their knowledge and practices in 2017-18 by participating in a tailored training program and practice framework based on an evaluation of the service.

Looking forward in 2018-19

- As part of developing a whole-of-YFS approach to trauma-informed practice, we are identifying effective ways to back people impacted by trauma to improve their coping and decision-making skills.
- Substation33 will expand by adding a mezzanine level to provide more space for future innovation and skills development.



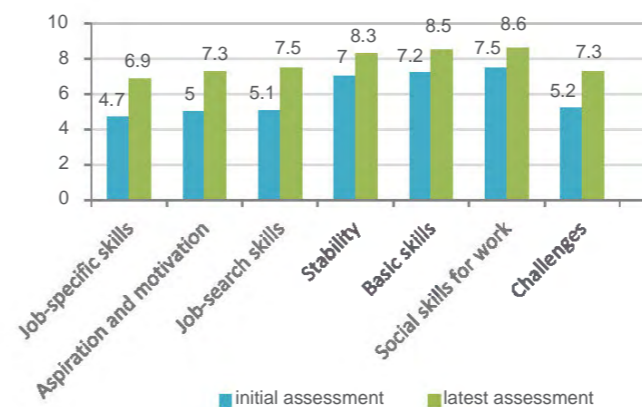
Innovation and inspiration

YFS received funding from the Queensland Government for a traineeship program called Community Campaigns, for women who want to return to work.

In March 2018, eight trainees began working in six Logan community organisations, learning skills in administration, marketing and promotion. During the six-month traineeship, these young women helped their host organisations run campaigns ranging from domestic violence prevention to understanding the new child care subsidy system. They gained nationally recognised qualifications, and helped their host organisations build their profiles. Most trainees have since gained ongoing employment with their host employers or other organisations. The trainees received supervision and support from Substation33 team member Aroha, who started with us as a trainee herself in 2016.



ParentsNext participants' work readiness



Outcomes

The ParentsNext service has a broad scope: helping parents on a parenting payment to improve their work readiness so they can return to work when they are ready. ParentsNext measures participants' skills, broken into job-specific skills, job-search skills, basic skills and social skills. On average, our ParentsNext participants achieved significant change in all skills, particularly job search and job-specific skills.



Natasha's story

"It was such a relief to have someone from YFS come around and have a chat about the struggles I was facing. I realised I was no longer alone."

Read the full story on page 24





In February 2018, YFS was honoured to host the Logan event to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations. While the event was an opportunity to reflect on the tragedies of the past and the challenges of the present day, it was also a chance to express hopes for a better future.

Logan Elders, community members, school children, elected representatives and organisations came together to reaffirm the Apology and to commit to reconciliation.

Our Step by Step team worked with families on practical supports as well as skills and confidence. As a result, parents in that program rated their greatest improvements as feeling good about themselves, feeling part of the community and managing life even when it is stressful.

Our R4Respect youth violence prevention initiative gained national recognition in 2017-18. Our youth ambassadors spoke in Sydney at a national conference on violence against women and their children, and youth ambassadors were appointed as advisors to the Child Safety Commission and White Ribbon Australia.

R4Respect engaged with more than 5,800 young people face-to-face during the year and reached more than 250,000 people through engaging social media posts including the Bad Apple animation series, a women in sport campaign, and promotions targeting young men. A grant from the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women enabled the employment of a core team of young people to coordinate R4Respect activities.

YFS is one of the leaders of the community domestic violence prevention campaign, Not Now Not Ever in Logan. In May 2018 for Domestic and Family Violence Week, YFS coordinated the production of a short video featuring Logan leaders pledging to prevent violence. The ad was played in local cinemas and reached 20,000 people through social media.

Looking forward in 2018-19

- The Australian National Research Organisation into Women's Safety (ANROWS) will work with R4Respect to conduct an impact evaluation into the effectiveness of peer-to-peer education.
- The ANROWS research will identify good ways to engage young people in peer-to-peer education.



Innovation and inspiration

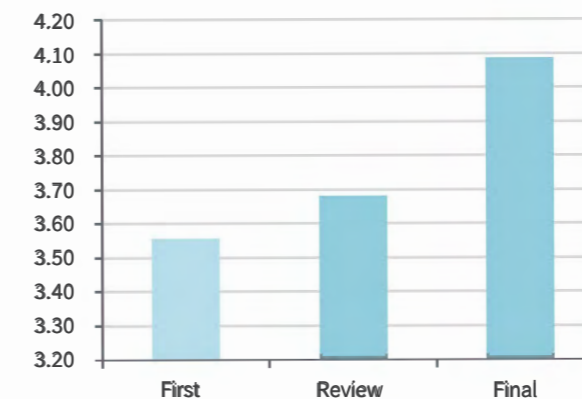
In July 2017, YFS launched Sure Steps, a pilot program of family coaching for families living in public housing, with funding from the Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works and support from Logan Together.

Sure Steps supports families to articulate aspirations for themselves and their children, and then supports them to achieve these goals. A Parenting Research Centre evaluation of the pilot found that participants agreed that our flexible family-driven approach produced positive changes for families and great satisfaction with the program.

The department has agreed to a further two years of funding to further investigate strategies to engage highly vulnerable families and the best ways to respond to issues such as safety concerns while retaining participants' sense of control.



YouthLink clients' belief in their own capacity to make changes



Outcomes

YFS programs measure hope for the future in various ways. For example services funded by the Department of Social Services measure clients' confidence to make their own decisions. In 2017-18, we achieved a 51% improvement in clients' assessment of this after working with us.

Building confidence and skills is a crucial part of our work with clients so they can continue to build independence and participation after they finish working with us. Our YouthLink clients improved in their belief in their capacity to make changes, as shown in the graph.



Cindy's story

"I cannot let my daughter grow up thinking other people get to choose her worth. That's my driving force."

Read the full story on page 25

2017-18 STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS

YFS added to our range of services in 2017-18. We worked with more than

5,000

people in our case management and case work services.

Our statistics from 2017-18 demonstrate ongoing demand.

For example, YFS Connect responded to more than 11,000 requests for assistance, our teams worked with more than 5,000 people, and 634 volunteers gained skills at Substation33.



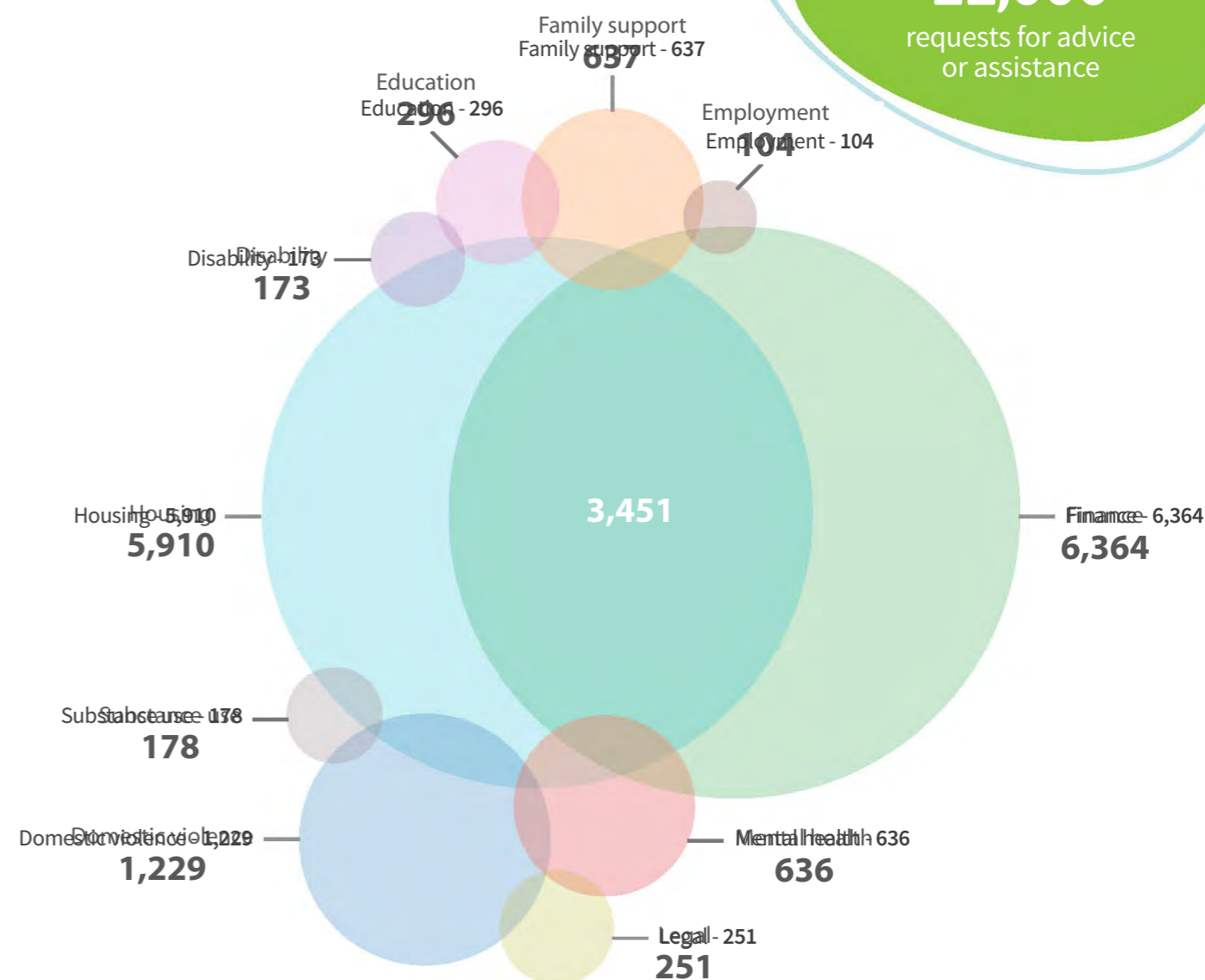
YFS Connect presenting issues

Concerns about financial problems and housing or homelessness continued to be the most significant reasons people contacted us.

As shown below, a significant number of people were concerned about a number of overlapping issues when they made contact, with financial crisis and housing problems commonly co-existing.



CONNECT
More than
11,000
requests for advice or assistance

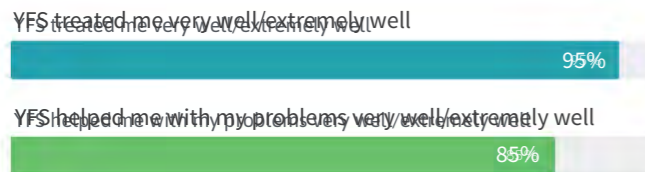


2017-18 STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS

OUR CLIENTS' FEEDBACK

Client satisfaction January to June 2018

We routinely ask our clients for feedback about their experiences with us. In our latest round of surveys in early 2018, 95% of our clients were very positive about how we treated them. Clients were also generally satisfied that we helped them with their problems, with 85% saying we did this "very well" or "extremely well" and 14% "somewhat well". Clients who had worked with us for longest tended to be most positive about our impacts to date.



YFS staff survey with sector benchmarks

YFS staff results

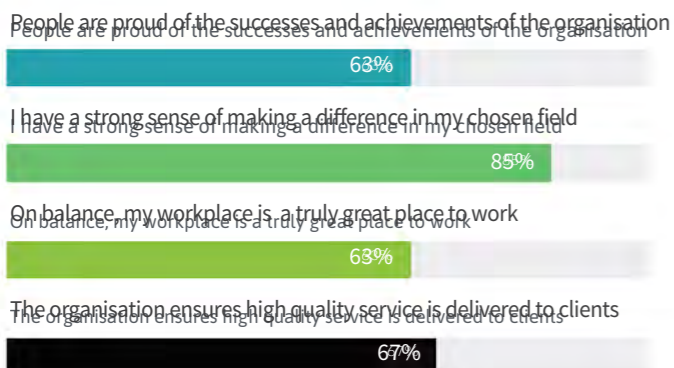


In our latest staff survey by Best Practice Australia New Zealand, 88% of YFS staff participated, generating very positive ratings for YFS as an employer.

The graph shows a sample of measures, benchmarked with averages from the national social and community service sector.



National social and community services sector results

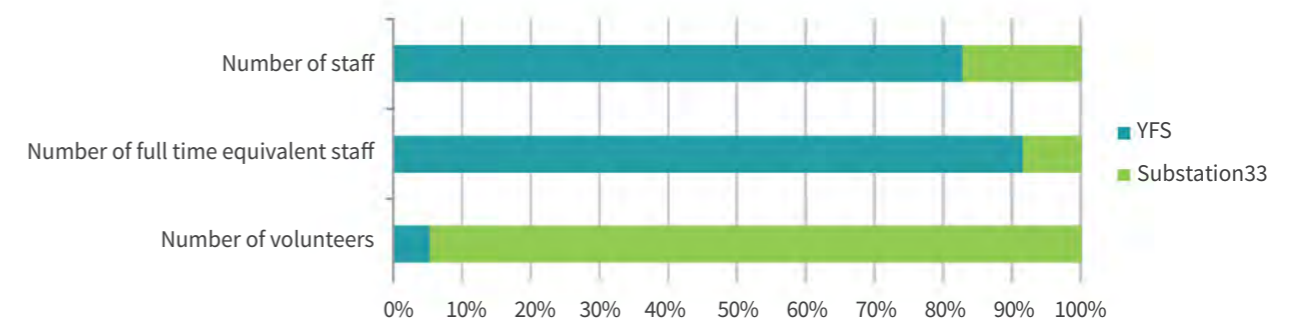


OUR ENTERPRISES



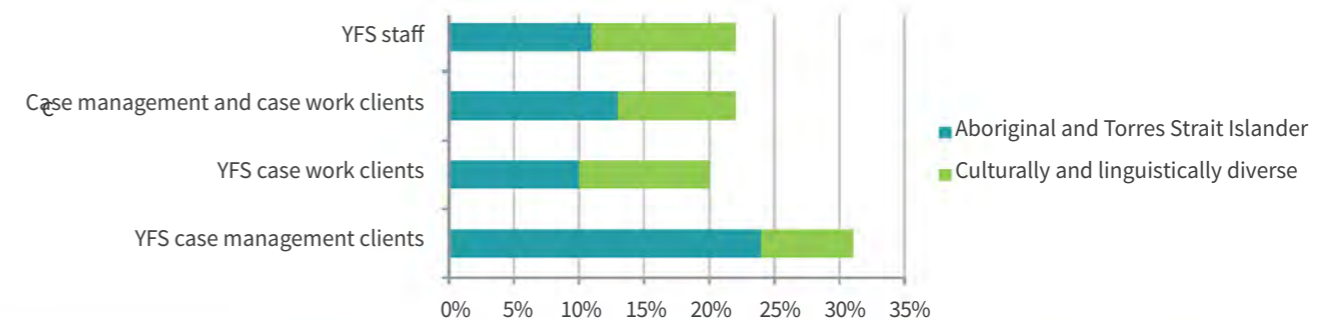
OUR STAFF

In 2017-18, 163 paid workers and 670 volunteers formed the greater YFS team, including Substation33.



OUR DIVERSITY

A significant proportion of YFS clients identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, as do many of our staff. Likewise many of our clients and staff identify as culturally and linguistically diverse.



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

YFS turnover grew by 13.2% in the year ended 30 June 2018 - a very positive result given the highly dynamic and competitive environment in which we operate.



View our complete financial summary:
www.yfs2018impactreport.yfs.org.au/financial-summary/

YFS was successful in obtaining funding for three new programs in 2017-2018 - Scenic Rim Financial Counselling, Assessment and Service Connect and Functional Family Therapy - Child Welfare from the Queensland Government, contributing a total of \$602,851 to our income.

These three new programs will continue to contribute approximately \$1,800,000 to our income in the next financial year. This is important to the organisation's sustainability given YFS will no longer be providing disability services for people eligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme once the scheme's rollout is completed.

YFS received a generous donation of \$100,000 to support our Peer Educator program - R4Respect. Our Social Enterprise had some significant growth with income increasing by 17.8%, largely driven by the development and delivery of flood monitoring signs for local councils.

YFS continues to be in a very strong financial position with our Asset to Liability Ratio at 4.88 times and a Current Ratio of 2.67 times.

Our Capital Expenditure went towards setting up a new Jimboomba office to expand our geographic footprint and enable more clients to access our services. We also added 10 new vehicles to our fleet to support the three new programs and invested in new ICT infrastructure to position us well to continue to provide innovative, high quality services to our community.

INCOME COMPARISON

Income 2018-18	Income 2017-17	Income 2015-16
Old State Government 56.1%	Old State Government 56.2%	Old State Government 57.07%
Australian Government 28.6%	Australian Government 26.38%	Australian Government 25.96%
Interest received 0.9%	Interest received 0.92%	Interest received 1.07%
Rents from housing 2.2%	Rents from housing 2.93%	Rents from housing 3.16%
Fee for service 1.2%	Fee for service 1.43%	Fee for service 1.71%
Other 9.7%	Other 10.75%	Other 9.12%
Work for dole contracts 1.4%	Work for dole contracts 1.38%	Work for dole contracts 1.91%

EXPENDITURE COMPARISON

Expenditure breakdown 2017-18	Expenditure breakdown 2016-17	Expenditure breakdown 2015-16
Client contact 72.9%	Client contact 77.27%	Client contact 77.6%
Client housing and property 5.9%	Client housing and property 7.87%	Client housing and property 8.21%
Corporate and related admin expenses 8.5%	Corporate and related admin expenses 8.42%	Corporate and related admin expenses 8%
Overheads (depreciation and property) 6.4%	Overheads (depreciation and property) 6.43%	Overheads (depreciation and property) 6.18%

Thanks to our supporters, sponsors and funding bodies.

Funding partners 2017-18

- Australian Government Department of Social Services
- Australian Government Department of Jobs and Small Business
- Queensland Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women
- Queensland Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors
- Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works
- Queensland Department of Employment, Small Business and Training
- Queensland Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning
- Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney General and the Commonwealth Community Legal Centres Program
- Queensland Department of Innovation, Tourism Industry Development and the Commonwealth Games
- Logan City Council
- AGL
- Mater Health Services
- Tenants Queensland
- Queensland Community Foundation
- Alcohol and Drug Foundation
- Catholic Religious Australia Queensland - Presentation Sisters
- Maurice Blackburn Lawyers

A STABLE HOME

Amy's story



There's no doubt most parents experience testing times when raising children. Many of us don't think twice turning to our mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, cousins and friends for support. But sometimes, support networks are lacking, which leaves some of us trying to work out what's best, on our own.

Mum of five Amy approached YFS in October last year when life had reached a low point. At the time, she and her partner were raising eight children, four with special needs. She had lost her rental home and was left without anywhere to live.

"At first, I was frantically ringing up the people at YFS who can access the crisis accommodation database, hoping to find emergency accommodation. I was doing that daily until someone put me through to Step by Step," Amy said.

"Renae guided and supported me from the moment I met her. She has been amazing."

Renae works in our Step by Step team. She and her workmates help families set up prosperous futures. Prosperous to us means parents are confident and can manage life's ups and downs, and children are safe, thriving, health and happy.

"I was going through a lot at the time," Amy said. "I started to have conflict with my partner. Eventually, I lost the house that we were renting. At the time I was also the carer for my mum, who was diagnosed with cancer and had heart failure. She was really sick so she was living with me. When I lost the house, I had to find alternative accommodation for her as well."

"I ended up staying with a family member. But it became impossible to live there. For safety reasons, I had to send my two oldest kids to live with their father. With Renae's help, I first found crisis accommodation and then more permanent housing."

Amy always remembers the first thing Renae did for her.

"She asked me how I was," Amy said. "Having that personal connection meant so much. It helped build trust and made me feel wonderful. I loved it. I adore the whole Step by Step team. Renae has that warm, caring side."

Renae backed Amy from day one. Throughout the past year, she has introduced Amy to options that could help her improve her housing, parenting skills, and legal and financial situations.

"Amy has been in charge of her own path forward. All we have done is present her with options," Renae said. "Amy is the one who made the decision to invest in her own parenting.

She was quick to get on top of childcare and school enrolments, safety planning and a lot more."

"She was the one who made applications for short and then long-term private and social housing. Also, Amy was the one who realised some financial management tips might help her out, so we connected her to our financial counsellors. We also did something similar when a family law matter arose and Amy worked with our legal team."

Amy credits Renae and her team mates for helping improve her family's situation.

"Step by Step was absolutely fantastic with what they did for me and how they stood by me," Amy said. "Whenever something came up, I explained what happened to Renae and she guided me, supporting me through every decision that I made."

"Sometimes you get so set in your own ways so that when something comes up like a financial change or a personal issue, you can't always see what's happening to you clearly. Without Renae and the Step by Step team, I wouldn't be as strong in myself. They seem to make me stronger and see things in ways that I don't see."

"They help me realise that if something doesn't work, maybe it's better not to try it again and to come up with another approach. I keep growing with their guidance."

Now that she has built a firmer foundation for her family, Amy would like to invest time becoming a counsellor.

"Everyone says I would be a good counsellor," she said. "I never thought I would, but I can now see that it would be a great thing for me."

Her next aim is to join Bump, a mentoring program for young pregnant and parenting women aged between 13 and 23 years, as a mentor. We know she will make it.

A DECENT INCOME

Paige's story



Paige was lost. Constant abuse by her former partner had eroded her confidence, and her desire to live. At the time she was only in Year 12, but Paige wanted to retreat from life. Even the thought of talking to others was too much for her to bear. The only thing that got her out of bed was her two young kids.

"I felt like my life was falling apart, and I thought that if I talked about it, I would get in trouble," explains Paige. "I was going through domestic violence with my kids' dad. It was really rough for about three months. I was struggling. It was like a volcano that I kept trying to cover up. I really didn't see a future. Push came to shove. I tried to take my life."

Centrelink brought Paige to YFS, specifically our ParentsNext service. ParentsNext helps parents of young children get ready to join the workforce when their kids start school. But when our ParentsNext worker Rachel first met Paige, she quickly realised additional support was required.

"I remember crying because I was trying to talk about what was going on in my life, but I didn't want to share too much," says Paige. "Rachel advised me to go and see Headspace and from there, it got better."

"They helped me out so much. They talked through things with me. They offered me techniques to deal with depression and domestic violence. The tension cleared, I cut some people off. A lot has changed for me since."

Paige has since completed a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care, and has secured paid work as a child care educator with Rosie's Early Learning at Daisy Hill. She is now studying a diploma in the field and when her youngest reaches school age, she plans on enrolling into an early childhood teaching degree.

Paige wants to be a Prep to Year 3 teacher. But before the start of this year, she hadn't even entertained the thought of going to university. "When I told Rachel I got a job, I could see she was so excited for me," she said. "That made me feel proud of what I had achieved and gave me the desire to think about what's next for me. I can never forget the first time I met Rachel."

"She listened to me. She gave me the space to go over where I was, and what I wanted to do with my life. She talked with me about my options. She has always asked me "how are you going?" No one else at other organisations took time out to ask me that. It was all business.

"Her approach made me feel so positive. She made me feel like I could get out of my situation, to do more with my life. She never told that I needed to do this, I needed to do that. There was no pressure.

"She outlined what I could do at every stage. This made it seem easier to handle and easier to achieve. I lacked confidence to pick up the phone and make some appointments, and Rachel stepped in when I needed help.

"She became an extra support person, outside my family and outside of my circle of friends. She offered me unbiased advice to help me get out of my situation."

Paige's ParentsNext case worker Rachel says Paige is a great example of what the program can achieve.

"When Paige connected with ParentsNext she wasn't getting help from anywhere," Rachel said. "We helped her find ways to overcome the barriers that were preventing her from engaging in work or study, and to get the skills she needed to move into work."

SAFETY Brian's story

A specialist YFS team is helping more men than ever before to realise their violent behaviour is harmful, and must be stopped.



Each week, the team of seven behaviour change facilitators in our Responsible Men program works with up to 75 men in group - from people who are homeless to men of wealth - helping them change their beliefs about power and control, and transform their attitudes and behaviours to reduce their chances of reoffending. It's part of an integrated effort that sees YFS working with the courts, Queensland Police, probation officers and child safety officials.

Dr Brian Sullivan PhD is the practice manager of the YFS team. He and his colleagues facilitate five groups a week for 16 weeks.

"There are multiple variables involved in working to help an offender change: there's the police, courts and parole to name a few," Brian said. "Government and non-government, statutory and non-statutory authorities - we all need to work together to hold men accountable and keep women safe."

"Men who do well in the program appear to become less emotionally volatile. Women's advocates have reported that some men are listening more calmly and there are less incidences of verbal abuse. We tell the men that a sign of becoming responsible is when they comply with their domestic violence orders. We treat breaches really seriously."

Brian and his colleagues are identifying weaknesses in the system that's designed to protect women and children, and to hold men accounting for their violent actions.

"If a man drops out of the program or he doesn't show up after he has had an intervention order, there don't seem to be many systemic consequences at the moment," Brian said. "It means the men can get away with it, and the men can read into it that domestic violence isn't taken seriously. And when any of us turn a blind eye, the message to the women is that violence towards them doesn't matter to the community."

"As a system, we have to show that domestic violence does matter, and we have to side with those whose lives aren't safe." Brian, whose PhD from the USA was on the effectiveness of court-mandated programs for domestic violence offenders,

joined YFS in late 2016. Since the start of that year, he and his team have worked with about 360 men. Almost 200 have completed the workshops.

"All the men we work with were once boys with violent fathers or step-fathers," he said. "Respectful male role models when they were growing up were not part of these men's experience generally. Back then, they learned to use violence as a power and control tactic. They witnessed their fathers or step-fathers controlling their mothers to keep them oppressed and under the thumb."

"We reach out to these men so they realise that rather than solving problems, violence hurts and hurts for the long term. The hurting ones are their partners, kids and themselves. It's imperative to hold offenders accountable and to keep the vulnerable safe, away from violent relationships."

YFS also reaches out to the men's partners, offering them a confidential service that focuses on their needs and safety. According to Brian, many men are committing the type of acts that their fathers once perpetrated.

"We try to break through their self-focus so they begin to see how their violence impacts on others," he added.

As part of our outreach, YFS attends Beenleigh Court weekly to provide information to men attending for domestic violence matters. YFS also works with victims of domestic and family violence through our Beaudesert domestic and family violence service and Project Hera, our co-location with the Queensland Police Service high-risk Domestic Violence Unit.

CONNECTIONS John and Dylan's story

The YFS Rail Trail project was the ticket John, 20, and Dylan, 17, needed to turn their lives around. Just six weeks after the pair started the project's conservation and land management traineeship, they've gone from struggling to get out of bed before midday to reporting to work at 7am sharp. And they've never been late.



"Knowing I have something to do each day instead of sitting at home and wasting my life is awesome," Dylan said. "It's keeping me out of trouble. I'm not running amok and being a stooge."

Dylan left school two years ago when he was 15 years of age. He got involved with the wrong crowd and soon ended up in court. He's never had a job, but is looking forward to being employable once he finishes his traineeship.

The Rail Trail project is funded by the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative. It supports people like Dylan and John to develop skills that can help them find and keep jobs.

The trainees are employed by YFS to maintain the Bethania to Beaudesert Rail Trail - an old railway spur line that we are clearing while experts explore its recreational potential. They end up with skills valuable to any workplace and a qualification in conservation and land management.

The project is a bit of a family affair for John. He's the second member of his family to join - his nephew finished the project just before John started. Six weeks into it, and the guys have learned a lot already.

"Being Aboriginal, it's always great to get out there and get back to the environment," John said. "Also, being out there with the boys is always fun."

While they have learned a lot about managing the land, what they've enjoyed most is developing their social skills.

"Team work is the main one because we can't leave one person out there on the trail doing it all," John said. "With that comes communication I guess. We are now pretty good at communicating. It's also teaching me how to spend money better."

Dylan added: "We get paid fortnightly, so I have had to budget more. I can't just go and spend it straight away. We also learned how to pull apart a whipper snipper."

Aside from developing employment and social skills, the project is connecting the trainees, who are mostly Aboriginal, with First Nations culture. The project's manager is Tony Sharp from the YFS social enterprise, Substation 33. He and his team are always working to build Aboriginal links into the project.

"The trainees are now involved in an Aboriginal welcome to country and a smoking ceremony on day two," Tony said. "More often than not, it's the first time they've been involved in a smoking ceremony."

"It was great," John said. "The ceremony protects us from snakes and the like, and lets the ancestors know we are on their land, so they can give us permission."

The Rail Trail team works with Aboriginal organisations such as the Mununjali Housing and Development Company and the Scenic Rim's Indigenous Men's Group. Also, they have strong connections with Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. But sometimes, cultural insights come in the most humble of ways.

"Just last year, a 50-year old emerging Elder joined the project as a trainee," Tony said. "The things he taught me and the guys was amazing. He recognised that some of the gouges out of the big 400-year old trees are there because the ancestors made canoes out of them. Before that, I walked past and I used to think a bulldozer had run into those trees."

Recently, Logan City Council announced its intention to take the project on, which Tony is hoping will further activate the trail's development.

"My hope is for a trail with significant Aboriginal linkages including its proper naming using Aboriginal terminology," Tony said. "I want to see a 43 km wildlife corridor that's safe for animals to travel across and through, peppered with Aboriginal cafes, guides and tourism initiatives."

SKILLS AND EDUCATION

Natasha's story



Single mum Natasha knew something was up with her eldest child, who was 7 years of age, and finding school a challenge. She realised that fleeing a life of domestic and family violence was taking a toll on him and his younger sister, but her gut instinct was telling her something else was going on.

"He was finding it hard to study and I had to pick him up all the time because he couldn't stay at school. He was very difficult to deal with every day. It was affecting his future," Natasha said.

"I knew something had to be done quite quickly about a diagnosis. Without it, he wasn't getting the support he needed at school. At the time, I didn't know anyone in Logan. We had moved up from Ballina, so I had no family or friends. I didn't know where to go for help."

"YFS helped me to communicate with his school so we could get his diagnosis sorted. They helped me out so much, especially when it came to appointments with specialists and the like."

Natasha is a client of our Sure Steps program, which offers family coaching to help parents in social housing to build plans that give their children the best possible start in life.

As soon as they had made contact, the Sure Steps team supported Natasha and her son to attend a paediatric assessment. The results confirmed Natasha's thoughts: Her son is on the autism spectrum and has ADHD.

"It was such a relief to have someone from YFS come around and have a chat about the struggles I was facing. I realised I was no longer alone," Natasha said.

"Having my son properly diagnosed and on the right medication has taken a huge load off my shoulders. He's changed so much. He's staying at school and he is no longer so out of control. Watching him develop some really great friends and seeing them all happy when they come over to our house shows he's really settled in well."

Carolyn is a worker in our Sure Steps program who has been supporting Natasha in recent times.

"While we've provided Natasha with quite a bit of wrap-around support, she has impressed us all by expressing some really great aspirations for herself and her family," Carolyn said.

"She's now aiming to study a Diploma of Nursing so she can get a job in the field and become more financially independent.

"She's also refining her parenting skills and continues to build strong relationships with her children, which involves supporting her children to ensure they gain the chance to live their best lives."

Natasha added: "I also want to help people in my position to change their lives around. I have empathy for what they're going through. My message is that you can come out of domestic violence on the other side, even if you're facing challenges with a child on the autism spectrum."

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Cindy's story



"I cannot let my daughter grow up thinking other people get to choose her worth. That's my driving force," says domestic violence survivor Cindy.

"This man doesn't get to tell us what we're worth. The magistrates don't get to tell us what we're worth. No one does."

"In dead set honesty, this is my apology to my kids. I know it wasn't my fault. And I know there was nothing I could have done to change it. But they're my children. And I'm their mother. And I just want to relieve some of that guilt."

Cindy is talking about the comfort kits that she and her daughter have created. The pair is now working to make the kits available in all Logan police stations with YFS' support through our Spark initiative.

The kits are named 'Lil Bug Love' and they aim to keep children occupied when they find themselves at police stations with a parent escaping domestic violence. The best thing? The children can take the kits home.

Each contains a unique, one-of-a-kind soft toy (a snail), an activity book that also includes blank pages for older children to journal, coloured pencils, an eraser, a sharpener and a set of headphones that children can use to listen to kids' shows if they have access to a device.

It's the type of thing Cindy wished was available to her daughter when she attended the police station with nothing but the clothes on her back, half a tank of petrol and \$12 in her pocket, to tell her horrific domestic violence story. She feels the kit would have distracted her child so she wouldn't have to hear the sordid details all over again.

A couple of years ago, Cindy met a man through her children. "He targeted me. He was stalking me before he had met me, and it was through my children," she said. But within three months, Cindy was trying to get out safely. The police connected her with our domestic violence unit a year into her court action.

"That's when I came to YFS," she said. "I came here when it was really hard for me. I wasn't getting anywhere with court. And I had to do my victim impact statement. I told YFS about

the comfort kits and my plans for them. They encouraged me to do up a rough kit. They then connected me to my Spark worker Deb. She introduced me to people who could help get my idea off the ground. And it's all taken off from there."

Deb coordinates Spark. This YFS initiative backs people in public housing to achieve their goals about work, learning, volunteering and small business.

"Not everyone fits mainstream employment," Deb said. "Spark is an out-of-the-box approach to supporting people in public housing like Cindy to live a great life. When Cindy first came to me, I took time to listen to her story and understand her dreams. I then connected her to people who could help, and I've been backing her all the way to achieve her goals."

"It is really inspiring to see everyday people doing extraordinary things in the world at grassroots level. Cindy is one of those everyday people who is doing just that."

Crowdfunding and other fundraising activities are raising enough money for Cindy to equip every police station in Logan with the comfort kits. People all over Australia have also been inspired to knit and crochet cute little snails to put in the kits.

Her next step is to get the kits into Ipswich police stations. And her dream is to have them in every police station in Queensland.

Cindy said she's open to discussing her situation because she feels society needs to talk about domestic violence more. "Everybody's got to stand up and say, 'What I went through wasn't right. What you did is not acceptable!'"



www.yfs2018impactreport.yfs.org.au



YFS acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are Australia's First Peoples and the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we meet and work.

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