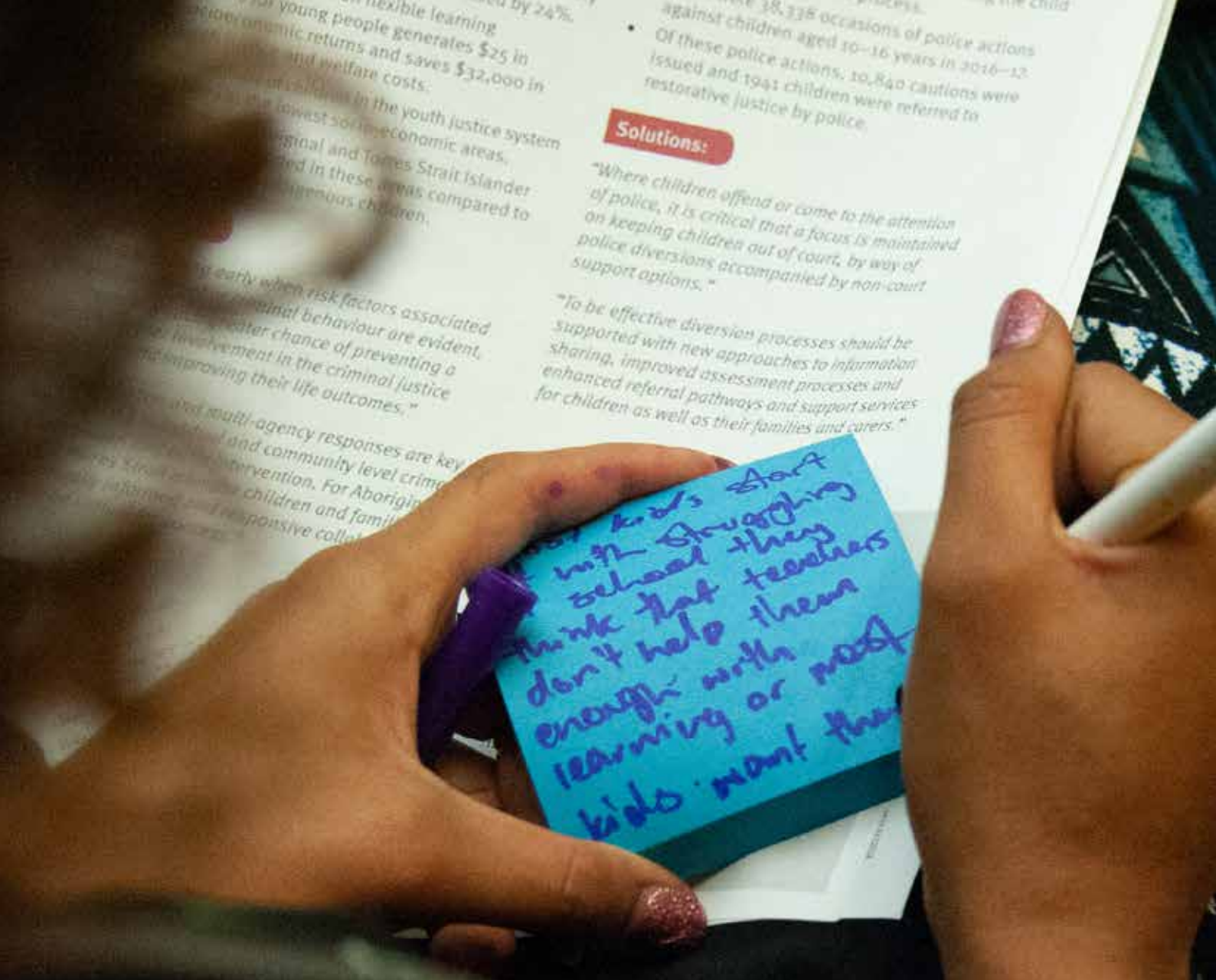




# CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Youth Justice Strategy





“ When they go through the system they come back worse. ”

Woorabinda community forum participant

“ Joining forces rather than having silo responses might be more productive and more efficient as well in supporting young people earlier. ”

Caboolture stakeholder forum participant

“ This is his first time he has been here, it seems to have frightened him. But I don't think it would help him long term. It benefits him in that it keeps him clean and he has no alcohol, but over time he may get comfortable and make new friends. ”

Family member of a 16 year old in detention

# Overview

In June 2018, Bob Atkinson AO, APM, prepared a report for the Honourable Di Farmer MP, Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, outlining key areas of intervention to consider when developing the whole of government Youth Justice Strategy.

There were four pillars that underpinned the report's approach and recommendation. The four pillars include:

1. Intervene early
2. Keep children out of court
3. Keep children out of custody
4. Reduce reoffending

## Who we consulted and why

There were over 60 consultation activities held across Queensland with more than 1800 active participants. We consulted with:

- At risk youth including those with experience of the youth justice system
- Youth in the general public
- Families of youth in the youth justice system
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and respected persons
- Community leaders
- Experts from industry, universities and community organisations
- Non-government organisations
- Staff who work within the Department (primarily with experience of youth justice)
- Community and organisations who provided submissions
- Legal and justice stakeholders
- Government agency partners
- Advocacy organisations, and
- The general public.

The purpose of consultation was to inform key stakeholders and the community about the identified recommendations outlined in the Atkinson Report on Youth Justice and to facilitate genuine feedback to inform the Youth Justice Strategy.

Of particular importance to the strategy was the feedback of young people in the youth justice system, or at risk of entering it, and their families. We spoke with 91 young people and members of their families. Their thoughts, ideas and experiences have been vital to the strategy.

## How we consulted

The 60 consultation activities ranged from face-to-face workshops, forums, personal interviews, surveys, polls, email submissions and meetings. Local consultancy, Rowland, facilitated the eight community and expert forums across Queensland and the department coordinated the remaining 52 consultation activities.

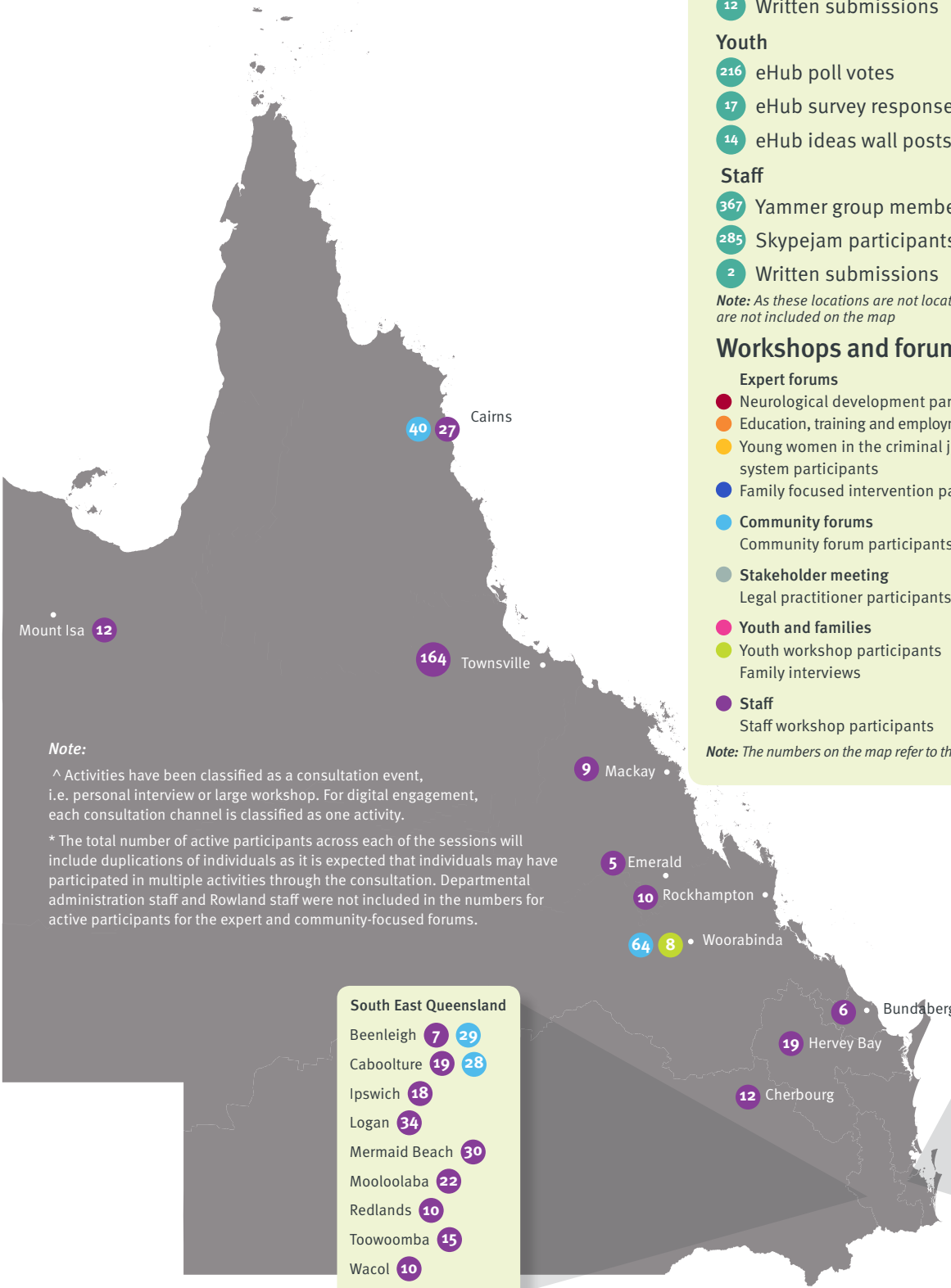
This summary provides an insight into what we heard, where we went and who we spoke with during our consultation. The feedback from all activities and participants has informed the development of the Youth Justice Strategy.

**“ We need to be working in partnership. It's very important. No one agency can do it by themselves. We need to have a really collaborative capacity for real partnerships. ”**

**Cairns stakeholder forum participant**

Over 60 consultation activities<sup>^</sup>

Over 1800 active participants across the activities\*



**Note:**

<sup>^</sup> Activities have been classified as a consultation event, i.e. personal interview or large workshop. For digital engagement, each consultation channel is classified as one activity.

\* The total number of active participants across each of the sessions will include duplications of individuals as it is expected that individuals may have participated in multiple activities through the consultation. Departmental administration staff and Rowland staff were not included in the numbers for active participants for the expert and community-focused forums.

**Digital engagement**

**General public**

- 69 Survey responses
- 12 Written submissions

**Youth**

- 216 eHub poll votes
- 17 eHub survey responses
- 14 eHub ideas wall posts

**Staff**

- 367 Yammer group members
- 285 Skypejam participants
- 2 Written submissions

*Note: As these locations are not location specific they are not included on the map*

**Workshops and forums**

**Expert forums**

- Neurological development participants
- Education, training and employment participants
- Young women in the criminal justice system participants
- Family focused intervention participants

**Community forums**

Community forum participants

**Stakeholder meeting**

Legal practitioner participants

**Youth and families**

Youth workshop participants  
Family interviews

**Staff**

Staff workshop participants

*Note: The numbers on the map refer to the participant numbers*



## Pillar ①.

Who is the kids fav. teacher

- When should we be jumping in &
- What do we need to look out for?

ASAP

"Student Aid"

Better relationship with child

## What we heard

### Intervene early

- Health and wellbeing of children in their first 1000 days needs to be prioritised
- Support parents during their child's growth and development
- Collaboration between organisations that provides individualised case management
- Support school staff to identify risk factors
- Identify early signs and adverse life events such as significant loss, family violence, drug addiction and truancy
- Intervention should begin when signs of problems emerge and before behavioural issues emerge
- Address health, mental health, disability and substance abuse
- Families need multiple support networks
- Consider community-based, community designed and community-led interventions
- Child-centred approaches that include engagement of young people, whole-of-family support and inclusion of young people in mainstream activities
- Improve support in school, mental health matters, building and maintaining relationships
- Consider more flexible education options

### Keep children out of courts

- Focus on restorative measures rather than punitive
- Reasonable and proportionate action-based consequences for offending
- Collaborate with the community to assist and resolve issues presented by young people outside the formal criminal justice system
- Consider additional or enhanced diversionary options:
  - › Increased training for police officers to improve knowledge about trauma and culture, and use of diversions and cautions for young people
  - › For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, an Elder or culturally relevant support person to work in conjunction with police
- Peer-led support programs
- Young offenders are often victims of crime or trauma themselves so responses need to acknowledge and respond to this
- Positive behaviour needs to be acknowledged and rewarded
- There is a link between education and non-offending futures
- Raise the age of criminal responsibility to reduce young offenders' involvement in the system

“ If we have good early intervention we don't have to worry about the rest. Prevention is better than a cure.”

Woorabinda community forum participant

## What we have heard

### Keep children out of custody

- Detention should only be used for dangerous and serious offenders who are a risk to the community
- Detention centres were viewed as a catalyst for reoffending
- Challenging home environments mean detention is not a deterrent for some young people
- Community-based accommodation and support while on bail is preferable to remand in custody
- Lengthy court delays and restrictive bail conditions can set young people up to fail
- Court delays can be disruptive and stigmatising, leading to further disengagement and isolation
- Suggested alternatives to custody included healing and cultural activities on country, community housing, therapeutic rehabilitation and support, community-based alternatives to detention for younger children
- Assess and address health, mental health, disability and substance abuse issues when potential issues are identified at arrest and at court

### Reduce reoffending

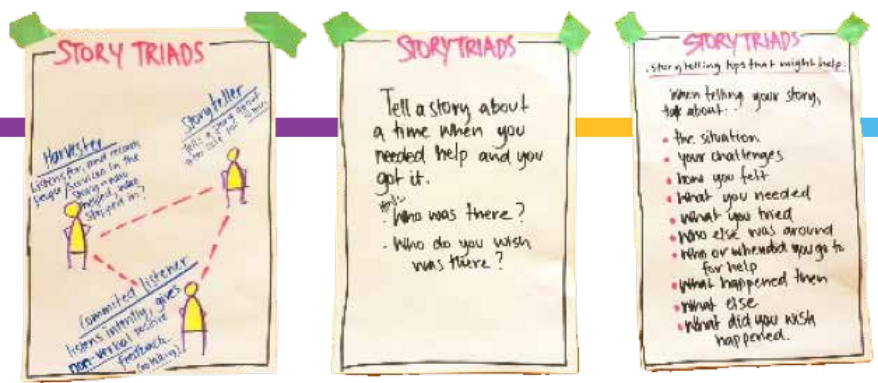
- Boredom and lack of engagement in community and pro-social activities was a consistent theme and was seen as an issue post-detention
- Importance of supportive, reliable relationships with people who understand
- Flexible, individualised, long-term support programs need to continue after a young person has left supervision
- Support for the family during a young person's transition from detention back to the community
- Use Elders and respected persons to empower, encourage and support young people
- Information-sharing between agencies was seen as essential for young offenders to receive coordinated support to reduce reoffending
- Young people said access to vocational training to allow them a role in the community, and employment following detention is important
- Providing youth with skills to get jobs and life-skills
- Review current vocational training practices to open referral pathways for future employment



## Taking Action

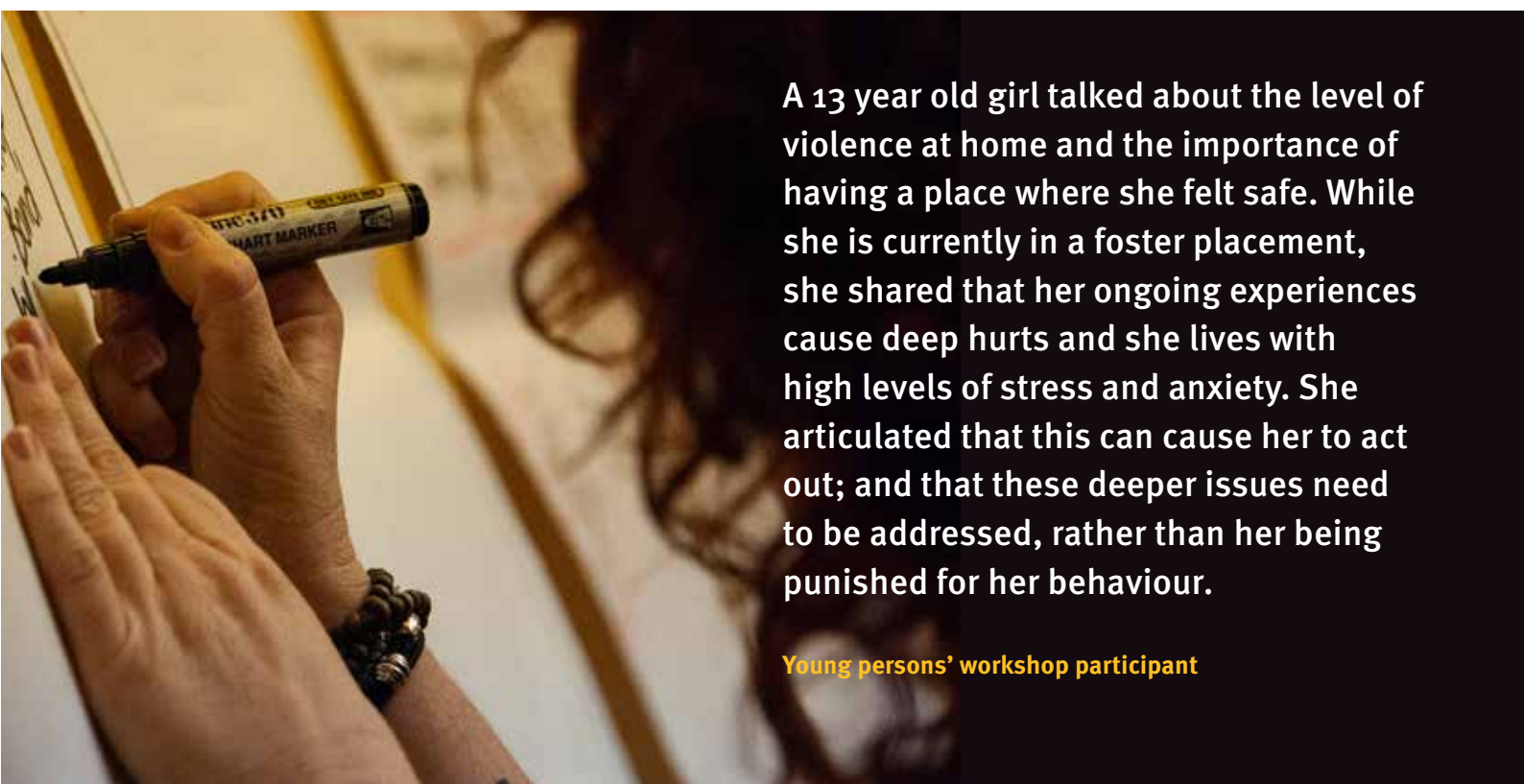
“ Children appearing before the courts are often the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalised — immediate advice, assessment and assistance to address their needs is therefore crucial.”

Get Involved online survey respondent



## Young people's views

- Young people saw their personal and family circumstances as a contributor to their offending but also recognised they had the ability to work towards a positive future
- Consequences and punishments should relate to the crime – they should make sense. For example, if damage is done to cars, spend time cleaning and maintaining cars which can also build skills and self-worth
- Young people talked about the stress and experiences of daily life and their feeling of loneliness and isolation – they feel like they don't belong anywhere and turn to their negative peer group as a support network
- Exclusion from school, drug use and not having a safe home contribute to offending
- Many felt they were a burden to the education system and when excluded this added to their feelings of isolation
- Young people said that not achieving at school led to non-attendance, boredom, offending and ultimately detention
- Young people want mentors they can trust, who they can identify with and who can support them in a range of circumstances – personal relationships where the mentor understood them had made a difference
- Young people need support at a time that suits their life rather than times that suit service providers



A 13 year old girl talked about the level of violence at home and the importance of having a place where she felt safe. While she is currently in a foster placement, she shared that her ongoing experiences cause deep hurts and she lives with high levels of stress and anxiety. She articulated that this can cause her to act out; and that these deeper issues need to be addressed, rather than her being punished for her behaviour.

**Young persons' workshop participant**

# Other things we heard

In addition to discussion about the four pillars, other key themes and voices emerged during the consultation. No matter who we spoke with or heard from, collaboration was a topic consistently raised. We knew the voices, experiences and opinions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and young people would be an important part of the consultation, and this was a sentiment echoed by many other consultation participants.

## Collaboration

- Collaborative, cross-sector child-focused approaches with service co-ordination from a single point
- Early targeted and individualised responses so connections are responsive to needs
- Collaboration with families is required to find solutions that work
- Community, schools, families, Government and NGOs who share an interest in the wellbeing of young people work together to own and contribute to agreed outcomes
- A regional funding approach would support collaboration with flexibility to address needs noting the benefits of regional collaboration in Logan Together
- Competitive mind-sets must be avoided
- Community solutions to young offending developed **with** communities, not **for** communities
- Poor information sharing is a significant barrier to collaboration and best-practice service delivery
- Review information-sharing protocols and shift focus from permitting it to encouraging it
- Young people said that while privacy is important, they would much prefer that information be shared across all services so that action could be taken to properly support them
- Information sharing would reduce the impost on young people and families in managing their interactions with multiple agencies

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strengths

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups need to be part of the development and ownership of community solutions and responses
- Elders have an important role to play in guiding and mentoring children and young people and also in advising and participating in culturally appropriate justice responses in their communities
- Children and young people need to recognise culture and learn from their families and Elders to remain attached to their culture
- Respected community members such as Elders and mentors should be included in decision-making where possible
- Cultural healing and restoring cultural identity is important
- Solutions informed by culture and respecting cultural individuality
- Essential to empower and support Elders to play a prominent role in working to divert and reintegrate young people
- Cultural competency is an important consideration that needs ongoing review, and rather than looking at culture as an add-on, it must be integrated into solutions to form the heart and soul of the approach

“ The community needs to have the voice, the involvement and the control.”

Woorabinda community forum participant