



Strengthening Parents Project

Final Report

Funded under the National Illicit Drug Strategy
Community Partnerships Initiative of the Australian
Government Department of Health and Ageing

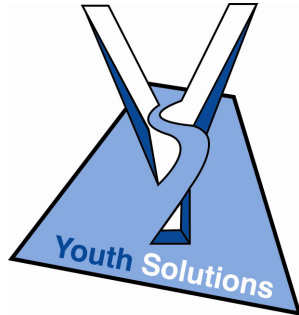
Notation

As the coordinator of the project, Youth Solutions is solely responsible for the content of, and views expressed in this report and all material associated with this project.

Please note that every endeavour has been made by Youth Solutions to ensure the accuracy of information provided within this report. Positions and organisations referred to in this report were correct at the time of their participation in this project.

Foreword

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Acknowledgements

Youth Solutions would like to thank the *Strengthening Parents Advisory Group*, which consisted of the following people:

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Sarah Wilson	Manager, Camden Community Connections
Nicole Williams	Community Project Officer, Camden Council
Janelle Ghazi	Drug and Alcohol Awareness Program, South West Youth Services, Mission Australia
Sharon Moyle	Parent Representative
Lyndal Kircher	Youth Caseworker, The Drum Youth Resource Centre, Uniting Care Burnside
Louise Croker	Community Projects Officer, Wollondilly Shire Council
Jack Morris	Pastor, Macarthur Worship Centre
Geraldine Dean	Communications Project Officer, Youth Solutions
Debbie Roberts	Acting Chief Executive Officer, Youth Solutions

Executive Summary

The *Strengthening Parents Project* involved linking parents, community members, services and ultimately young people. As a result of the needs assessment undertaken at the early stages of the project, the projects drug focus was alcohol, however the project also addressed other youth drug related issues.

Parents/carers (parents) of young people 12-17 years living in the Camden and Wollondilly local government areas were the primary target group of this project with a secondary target group being parents in surrounding localities.

The project aimed to build on existing parental networks, eg through schools, churches, community services, which would increase the likelihood of sustainable and repeatable outcomes.

A Project Advisory Group was formed with representatives from a broad range of local services and stakeholders, including parents. The Project Advisory Group assisted with the promotion and development of the project, focus testing campaign promotional material, dissemination of promotional material as well as evaluation of the project.

The Project Advisory Group also ensured partnerships were formed at the local level and increased the level of awareness of local services.

The *Strengthening Parents Project* involved a range of strategies which aimed to increase parents' capacity to effectively deal with the issue of youth drug use.

These strategies included:

- a comprehensive needs assessment that determined Camden/Wollondilly issues of drug related concern for both parents and young people
- the development of a key message around parenting and youth drug use: *Alcohol – is your teenager safe? Don't leave it to chance*
- the development and distribution of promotional material to support the key messages of the campaign
- the development and implementation of a multi-media campaign designed to support the key messages of the campaign
- utilisation of volunteer parents who assisted with the development of the campaign message, dissemination of resources and project evaluation

- the review, promotion and dissemination of existing relevant parental resources (eg Youth Solutions' Parent Information Booklet, Planning Parties Fact File)
- the engagement of a consultant to undertake formal evaluation of the project's processes and outcomes

This report will detail activity undertaken in relation to each of the aforementioned strategies, challenges experienced and recommendations for future initiatives.

Project Objectives

1. Well coordinated project
2. An increase in the knowledge of alcohol and other drug issues by parents/carers in the Wollondilly/Camden region
3. An increase in knowledge of AOD services by parents/carers
4. Increase the opportunity for parents to discuss alcohol and other drug issues with their children and other parents
5. Increased awareness and implementation of parenting strategies to prevent and reduce alcohol and other drug related harms among young people
6. Increased access to relevant information

Activities undertaken

Needs Assessment

Micromex Research was engaged as the consultant to develop, collate and analyse surveys. Two surveys were developed; one targeting parents/carers and the other targeting young people aged 12-17years (attached)

Surveys were disseminated via:

- Project Advisory Group member networks
- Youth Solutions business and community networks
- Community Information Stall held on a Saturday morning at Macarthur Square Shopping Centre. The information stall not only allowed promotion of the *Strengthening Parents Project*, but dissemination of alcohol and other drug information, referrals and the dissemination of surveys
- On-line via Youth Solutions website

Parent Survey	Young people survey
<p>Survey Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying and prioritising alcohol and other drug related issues of importance • Assessing local requirements • Assisting in the development of training programs and potential initiatives • Assisting with the development of appropriate Youth Solutions resources 	<p>Survey Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying and prioritising alcohol and other drug related issues of importance • Assessing local requirements • Assisting in the development of training programs and potential initiatives • Assisting with the development of appropriate Youth Solutions resources
<p>Survey completion</p> <p>A total of 159 surveys were self completed by respondents on a paper hard copy or accessed via the Youth Solutions website.</p> <p>A sample size of 159 responses provided a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 7.2% at 95% confidence.</p>	<p>Survey completion</p> <p>A total of 350 surveys were self completed by youth either on a paper hard copy or accessed via the Youth Solutions' website.</p> <p>A sample size of 350 responses provided a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 5.2% at 95% confidence.</p>
<p>Key findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 1 in 5 respondents considered that they have little or no knowledge of alcohol consumption issues amongst teenagers • Almost unanimously, respondents stated that they are comfortable discussing alcohol and drug consumption issues with their children • Respondents are concerned about 	<p>Key findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% of respondents think they are knowledgeable about drug and alcohol consumption issues amongst teenagers • Respondents expressed considerable interest in knowing more about the short term effects of drugs and alcohol • More than 74% of respondents felt comfortable discussing alcohol and drug consumption issues with

<p>a broad variety of drugs, with alcohol, ice and ecstasy usage of most concern</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compared with the 2005 research conducted by Youth Solutions respondents are significantly less concerned with marijuana/cannabis usage • The fact that drugs are too easily attained was the main reason for concern • A significant percentage of respondents (9%) underestimate the legal age for supplying alcohol to their own children • The Macarthur Advertiser is the most widely read local newspaper (67%) followed by the Macarthur Chronicle (58%) • C91.3fm was the most popular radio station amongst respondents, with 30% reporting they listened to it regularly • Television is by far the most popular medium for accessing information regarding alcohol/drug issues. This is followed by newspapers and the Internet 	<p>their parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents were concerned with a wide variety of drugs, with alcohol and ice of most concern • The main reason for high concern with alcohol was the common usage among their peers • Of some concern is the number of young people who believed it was acceptable for someone to give them alcohol (53%) and cigarettes (45%) while they are under the age of 18 • The Macarthur Advertiser (38%) and the Macarthur Chronicle (28%) were the most widely read newspapers, whilst 36% did not read any newspapers • Information regarding alcohol and drug issues was most commonly received from school, friends/peers and television • Respondents also felt that school and television were the most effective ways to educate young people regarding these issues • Friends/peers and family were overwhelmingly the highest source of support for personal issues among the respondents
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The valuable information obtained via the two surveys informed various components of the *Strengthening Parents Project* including content of the Education Session for parent volunteers, content for Creative Design Workshop, multi-media component of Project and resource development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Source funding to repeat community surveys in order to track community attitude and knowledge with regards to youth drug issues
- ❖ Utilise community research to further inform activities relating to youth drug issues for Youth Solutions and other relevant community organisations

Volunteer Parents

Volunteer parents were involved in the project in a number of ways including:

- representation on the Project Advisory Group
- the promotion and development of the project
- assistance in recruiting participants to attend the Education Session/Creative Workshop
- focus testing campaign promotional material including key message *Alcohol – Is your teenager safe? Don't leave it to chance*
- dissemination of promotional material
- evaluation of the project

Parent volunteers from the *Strengthening Parents Project* have been invited and encouraged to join Youth Solutions volunteer database in order to maximise community involvement in alcohol and other drug initiatives within the local community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Nurture relationship with volunteer parents to encourage involvement in future opportunities
- ❖ Identify future opportunities for volunteer parent involvement
- ❖ Continue to link volunteer parents into Youth Solutions volunteer database to maintain relationship
- ❖ Maintain and improve Youth Solutions website as means of communication with parents

Development of the key message: *Alcohol – Is your teenager safe? Don't leave it to chance*



The facilitation of an alcohol and other drug Education Session and a Creative Workshop was planned in order to guide the development of the key message and subsequent multi-media campaign for the Project (workshop program attached). Whilst every effort was made to recruit parent volunteers to attend

the Education Session/Creative Workshop (workshop invitation attached), it was an unfortunate outcome that insufficient expressions of interest were received in order to run the workshop.

As a result, an abridged version of the Education Session/Creative Workshop was facilitated with the Promotions Design Team which included representatives from the Project Advisory Group, Youth Solutions, Graphic Designer and Creative Writer from radio station C91.3fm. What resulted was the key message: *Alcohol – is your teenager safe? Don't leave it to chance* and campaign graphic incorporating young people, alcohol and a roulette style game show wheel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Timing of the Creative Workshop – the workshop was planned for a Saturday which may have impacted on the number of parents expressing interest to be involved. Parent responsibilities are wide and varied, with weekends being very busy for many with sporting and other commitments of children. Consider utilising existing parental commitments eg link with P&C meeting times, Sport registration days etc.
- ❖ The workshop was scheduled very close to the Easter long-weekend (8 March, less than two weeks prior to Easter). This may also have impacted on potential attendees. It is suggested to avoid such busy times in the year.

Media Campaign

A localised multi-media campaign was designed and implemented to target parents in the Camden and Wollondilly local government areas during April and May 2008.

- Print Media (advertisement attached)

Full colour quarter page advertisements were placed in both local newspapers (Macarthur Advertiser and Macarthur Chronicle) for two consecutive weeks (29 & 30 April 2008 and 6 & 7 May 2008).

Macarthur Advertiser circulation 45,000

Macarthur Chronicle circulation 77,264 (Readership 113,000)

Reach – 244,528

- Radio Advertisements (sound files attached)

A total of 220 thirty-second commercials were aired on local radio station C91.3fm over the campaign roll out period 25 April – 9 May 2008.

Reach – 140,000

- Youth Solutions Newsletter (attached)

Each edition is distributed to 1,000+ individuals, community services, schools and businesses across Macarthur and beyond. The April 2008 edition of *Solutions* featured an article on the *Strengthening Parents Project*.

It is noteworthy to add that the July 2007 and September 2007 editions of *Solutions* also featured articles on the *Strengthening Parents Project*.

Reach – 1,000+

- Youth Solutions Website

Youth Solutions website is promoted broadly throughout Youth Solutions core activities and was a key reference in all marketing aspects of the *Strengthening Parents Project*.

1225 hits during the month of April

1420 hits during the month of May

Reach (averaged over two months of campaign roll-out) – 1322

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Continue to utilise multi-media approach to campaign activities where funding allows
- ❖ Nurture relationship with media to encourage future support of initiatives
- ❖ Maintain an improve Youth Solutions website as means of communication with parents (and other community members)
- ❖ Source funding to re-run multi-media campaign in Camden and Wollondilly local government areas
- ❖ Source funding to implement campaign, particularly multi-media and promotional material, in Campbelltown local government area

Promotional Material

Promotional material was produced to support the multi-media campaign and was distributed during the campaign period. A sample of promotional materials are attached.

Resources produced included:

- 2,000 DL flyers
- 302 Posters – A4, A3 and A2
- 1,008 bottles of custom-labelled bottled still water
- 1,000 environmentally friendly Tote bags
- 1,000 stickers
- 1,000 parent information display folders

Resources were distributed equally among 10 high schools and 20 community services located in (or servicing) Camden and Wollondilly local government area residents.

Since resources have been distributed, there have been a number of services requesting additional copies including Sydney South West Area Health Service and Landcom. These requests have been met. It is interesting to note that the Landcom request will result in campaign information being included in New Residents Packs for Camden LGA residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Source funding to reproduce promotional material for distribution in Camden and Wollondilly local government areas
- ❖ Source funding to produce promotional material for distribution within Campbelltown local government area

Promotion and dissemination of existing relevant parental resources

Planning Party Fact File

Youth Solutions had previously developed a Planning Party Fact File which incorporates a checklist of things to consider when planning a celebration where young people may be present. This resource was reviewed and deemed appropriate for reproduction and distribution with the *Strengthening Parents Project* by the Project Advisory Group. The Fact File (attached) was included in the resource distribution resulting in over 2,000 copies being distributed to high schools and community services within the Camden and Wollondilly local government areas.

Electronic versions of the Fact File have been requested and provided to at least one high school within the Camden local government area.

The Fact File is available to download from the Youth Solutions website.

Youth Solutions Macarthur & Wingecarribee Referral Booklet 2008

As an ongoing reference point, this resource was updated and uploaded to the Youth Solutions website (www.youthsolutions.com.au) as part of the *Strengthening Parents Project*. As the resource is constantly evolving it is not formally printed or designed, rather managed in-house at Youth Solutions.

Youth Solutions Parent Information Booklet

Youth Solutions Parent Information Booklet was initially developed by Youth Solutions as a part of the Parent Links Project (funded by the NSW Government) in 2005. The resource was reviewed by the Project Advisory Group, with amendments being made based on the review. The booklet has been updated and is available on Youth Solutions website (www.youthsolutions.com.au) and continues to be promoted and distributed where relevant.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Continue to review, update and make available on Youth Solutions website the Youth Solutions Planning Parties Fact File
- ❖ Continue to review, update and make available on Youth Solutions website the Youth Solutions Macarthur & Wingecarribee Referral Booklet
- ❖ Continue to review, update and make available on Youth Solutions website the Youth Solutions Parent Information Booklet

Evaluation

Micromex Research were engaged to undertake key stakeholder interviews, both pre and post campaign activities, to analyse the project's performance across a set of specific criteria, incorporating a SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat) analysis of the project (Final Evaluation Report attached).

Outlined below is an excerpt of the research consultant's findings following six key stakeholder interviews (including three parent representatives).

Measurement of specific outcomes is very difficult with a project such as *Strengthening Parents*. With the aims of the project related primarily to increasing parents' knowledge and awareness of alcohol and other drug (AOD) issues amongst teenagers, a summary of actions has been developed.

- Promotional templates now developed for further use
- Development of the Advisory Committee
- Development of the Strengthening Parents web page

- Development and distribution of the *Strengthening Parents Project* resources
- Significant promotion of the project
- Increased links with Youth Solutions and other service providers within the community
- Increased links with Youth Solutions and other organisations (public and private) within the community

When analysing the effectiveness of a project such as *Strengthening Parents*, it is not possible to measure pure outcomes, i.e. reduced prevalence of teenage drinking, increased level of parental monitoring.

What is possible is to review the project's actions in relation to the project's aims, and identify whether these actions were appropriate and most likely to have an effect on the achievement of the project aims.

Upon reviewing the project's actions in relation to the project's aims, it is apparent that these actions were appropriate and were likely to have an effect on the achievement of the project aims.

Stakeholders identify a considerable local requirement that the project, and or similar projects, be expanded to meet an important local need.

In addition to the research consultants evaluation described above, the Youth Solutions team also undertook a SWOT analysis of the *Strengthening Parents Project* from a Service perspective (attached). The outcomes of the SWOT have informed the recommendations below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Having an external consultant undertake evaluation of Project ensured objective and transparent evaluation of the Project. This is important and should be encouraged, where funding permits, on all similar Projects.
- ❖ Timeframe for the project was too short. Ideally, an 18-month timeframe may have allowed for more opportunity to engage parents in the creative design process.

Dissemination of Project outcomes

This report will be disseminated to the Project Advisory Group and other key stakeholders within the local community. It will also be made available to download from the Youth Solutions website. It is the intention of Youth Solutions to present the project at the peak New South Wales Alcohol and Other Drug conference later in 2008.