

# STRONG TOMORROW

Briefing on specialist intensive youth mentoring and case management programs for young offenders in Kununurra and Perth, WA  
22 July 2016

## WHAT IS THE NEED?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are over-represented in crime statistics both nationally and in Western Australia. In March 2015, nearly 75% of young people in detention in WA were identified as Aboriginal. Evidence demonstrates that antisocial and criminal behaviour in adolescents is often due to a range of social and environmental factors including intergenerational poverty, exposure to substance misuse, lack of positive role models and lack of engagement with education.

## WHAT IS STRONG TOMORROW?

Strong Tomorrow is an intensive mentoring and case management program for young offenders that Save the Children has been delivering since January 2014 in Armadale (in metropolitan Perth) and since January 2015 in Kununurra (in the Kimberley). These locations both have high rates of crime with 6% of people in detention being from the Kimberley region (despite it only accounting for 1.5% of the population) and about 20% of WA's detainees being from Armadale. Strong Tomorrow is targeted at young offenders aged 10-17 and aims to reduce rates of offending.

- While the models being run in the two locations are different given the very different contexts in which they are operating, to achieve the overall goal of reducing offending the program objectives are to:
  - ~ Increase engagement and positive participation within the community (including peers, family and services)
  - ~ Increase linkages with formal education and training opportunities
  - ~ Improve family functioning, stability and relationships
  - ~ Help to develop life skills that support positive life choices
  - ~ Develop a stronger connection to, and understanding of, culture and cultural values
  - ~ Ensure connection with personal support networks to provide increased safety.
- In Armadale, Save the Children works in collaboration with Youth Crime Intervention Officers from WA Police to support targeted young offenders to reduce offending and increase pro-social behaviours. The program is outreach based and involves youth workers engaging with young people in their own environments to build trust and rapport. Caseloads vary depending on the complexity of needs and

support includes case management plans; practical day-to-day support; informal mentoring and role modelling; referrals to specialist services; brokerage and linking into pre-existing group work and pro-social activities. 4-6 young people at risk of re-offending are supported.

- In Kununurra, similar services are provided but it is possible to engage clients more regularly and in a holistic way through other local Save the Children programs, including “back to country” day trips every Saturday. Tailored intensive support is provided to 10-12 young people although again this is dependent on the complexity of individual cases.

## WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES?

**While the Strong Tomorrow programs are relatively new, some positive outcomes have been recorded.**

### **In Kununurra:**

- From January – June 2015 75% of clients did not reoffend while engaged
- From April – June 2015 no clients were recorded as having been involved in any offending behaviour
- From Jan – March 2015, 38% of clients were actively engaged in life skills, cultural or diversionary activities and this increased to 86% in the period April – June 2015.

### **In Armadale:**

- 3 out of 5 participants currently participating in the program have reduced their offending behaviour by at least 50%
- 5 out of 7 young people who have engaged in the program since its inception have reduced their rate of convictions
- Data collected by WA Police indicates that, while the rate of convictions for those engaged in the program is reduced, it increases for those not engaged in the program.

## HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

**Current funding for the Strong Tomorrow program is:**

- Kununurra - \$290,000 per annum to support 10-12 young people
- Armadale - \$90,000 per annum to support 4-6 young people.

**These program costs compare very favourably with:**

- The cost of keeping a young person in detention = \$817 per day (\$298,000 per annum)
- The cost to WA Police of dealing with offending – WAPOL estimates that direct costs are approximately \$2,637 per offence. One young offender committed 2.5 offences per month prior to participating in Strong Tomorrow and 0.5 offences per month while participating in the program. This reduced costs to WAPOL by \$5,274 per month.