



TRACK OUT Pilot Program

Evaluation Report

[September 2014]

Prepared by Effective Change Pty Ltd
for Merri Community Health Services



Located in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, Merri Community Health Services (MCH) has been providing drug and educational prevention programs and counselling and support services to young people over a number of years.

A key component of MCH's drug and alcohol prevention program is TRACKS a collaborative program between MCHS and the Victoria Police that delivers educational programs to young people in schools.

TRACK OUT, a recreational support program is an offshoot of the TRACKS program conducted for ten weeks in June and July 2014 as a pilot program.



Effective Change Pty Ltd was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of TRACK OUT.

For further information on the TRACK OUT Program please contact the TRACKS team:

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W: www.mchs.org.au/services/services-for-young-people/youth-outreach-education-drugs-and-alcohol/

Katherine Wositzky and Clare Keating from Effective Change would like to extend their thanks and gratitude to the young people, their families, and the staff involved in TRACK OUT for the fun, open and brave conversations that provided an honest insight into what the experience of participating in the program meant for them.

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TRACK OUT context

TRACK OUT beginnings

Merri Community Health (MCH) successfully manages and delivers a range of programs for young people in the northern metropolitan region including TRACKS, a Youth Alcohol and Drug Outreach program. TRACKS supports at risk young people aged 16-25 and their families.

TRACKS applies a number of approaches including one-to-one counselling and educational sessions in schools about cyber bullying, assault, drink driving, alcohol and drug education and harm minimisation strategies. The schools program is delivered collaboratively with Victoria Police Youth Support Officers.

TRACKS staff have a long history in working with young people who are struggling with or at risk of alcohol and other drugs (AOD) related issues. Staff identified a service gap in assisting these young people, concluding that many vulnerable or at risk young people do not want to or are not ready to engage in one-to-one counselling. Alternative outdoor experience programs were researched and explored and TRACK OUT was created as a pilot diversionary educational experience program.

Vulnerable young people can miss out on accessing appropriate and timely support because of their disengagement with conventional one-to-one counselling type of AOD support programs.
TRACKS program manual

TRACK OUT approach

The power of nature, physical activities and wilderness experiences as a catalyst for change in vulnerable and at risk young people has increasingly gained more notice.

Wilderness therapy is often used with youth at risk to help them address emotional, adjustment, addiction or psychological problems.¹

With growing evidence from the US, Australia, UK, Japan and South Africa, it becomes very clear that wilderness intervention has a positive effect on vulnerable youth behavior and health, making large savings to the benefit of the criminal justice system.²

There is great diversity of practice in outdoor youth experience programs, however research³ reports important points of commonality across the programs as captured in the ChANGeS Framework (Appendix 1). The ChANGeS model identifies five key components of outdoor programs believed to be critical for enhancing participant outcomes – Challenge, Activity, Nature, Guided experience and Social milieu.

The TRACK OUT concept and approach has been developed around the above principles and theoretical approach.

1 Power Of Wilderness Experiences As A Catalyst For Change In Young Offenders University of Essex 2009
<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/01/090105091536.htm>

2 A review of the social benefits of wild areas for youth at risk, healthcare and conflict resolution The Wilderness Foundation UK 2009

3 National Survey of Australian Outdoor Youth Programs Summary Report April 2012 Outdoor Youth Programs Research Alliance Murdoch Childrens Research Institute

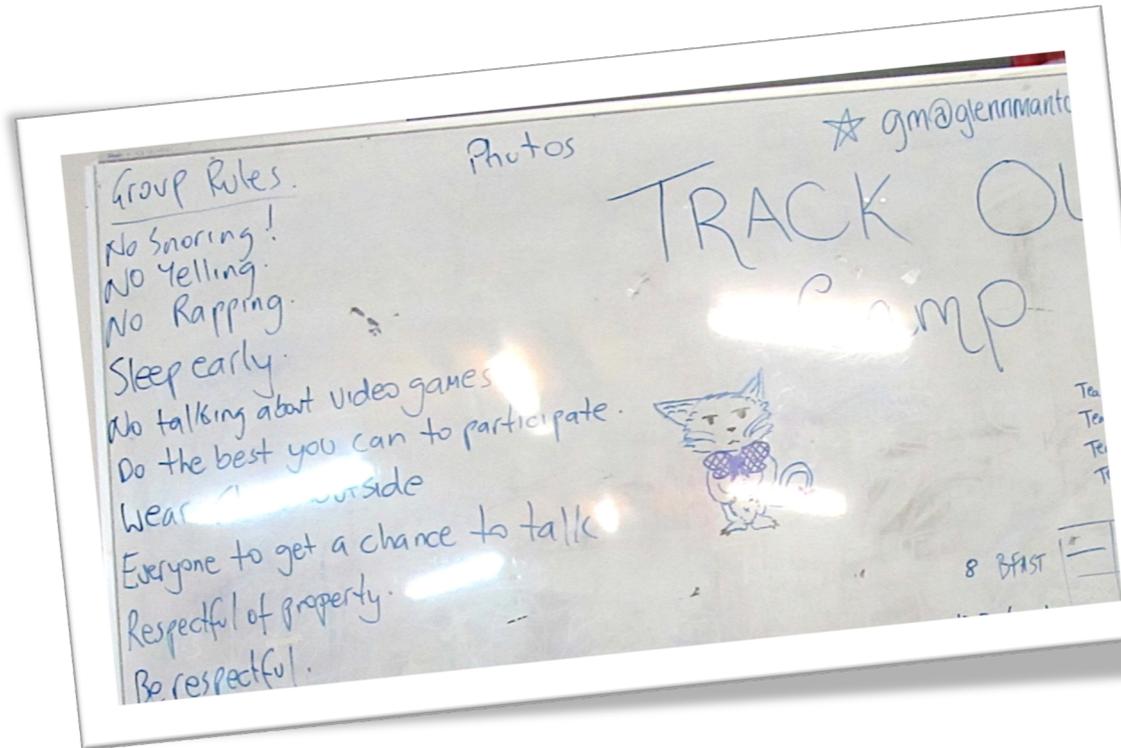
TRACK OUT pilot snapshot

TRACK OUT was piloted with eight young people over an eight-week period in 2014.

Goal	To provide a diversionary educational program in a residential camp setting away from participant's everyday environment with follow-up weekly group sessions, that engage and support young people at risk and their families, to redress behavior that may potentially lead to the young person disconnecting from family and society.
Funded by	Merri Community Health
Partners	Merri Community Health, Victoria Police Youth Resource Officers Brunswick Police Station
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ TRACK OUT promoted and advertised in schools involved in the TRACKS schools education program ♦ Interested young people referred to the program via the schools, police and Merri Community Health AOD workers ♦ Young people and their families interviewed and enrolled in the program
Participant Cost	None
Staff	3 x TRACKS counsellors 1x volunteer mentor
Guest Speakers/program support	2 x guest speakers 3x stakeholders including police officers participating in some activities YMCA Anglesea camp program leaders

Program June – August 2014			
25 June	30 June – 4 July	9 July	16 July
Preparation meeting and evaluation discussion	5 day camp at Anglesea: canoeing, high ropes challenge, discussion, reflection, archery, overnight campout, crate climbing, giant swing, video diary	Workshop #1: Reflections of camp and evaluation discussion	Workshop #2: Street Wise First Aid (All day)
23 July	30 July	6-8 August	13 August
Workshop #3: Get together and guest speakers	Workshop #4: Dinner and movie night	3 day ski trip at Falls Creek: tobogganing, cooking class, night activity, ski lesson, skiing, discussions, reflections	Graduation night

Camp Rules



Camp Reflections – Sharing personal stories

- ♦ Who are you?
- ♦ How are you similar or different to your parents?
- ♦ How can your family work better as a team?
- ♦ What role will you play in that team?
- ♦ How will you help others to do well in that role?
- ♦ What do we hold onto, what can we let go of?
- ♦ How do we let go?
- ♦ How can you be a leader in your family or community?

Video Diary Reflections

- ♦ What was the highlight of the day for you?
- ♦ What did you learn about yourself today?
- ♦ What positive things did you see in other people today?
- ♦ Was there anything that came up today that made you think you could change something about yourself?



TRACK OUT evaluation

The TRACK OUT evaluation was undertaken by independent consultants, Effective Change.

The evaluation aimed to explore whether TRACK OUT engaged young people, what are the benefits of a diversionary recreation type program compared with one-to-one counselling, and what impact did participating in TRACK OUT have for the young people, their families and staff.

In addition the evaluation intended to report on the 'learnings' from piloting the program.

Key evaluation questions

About the participants

- Who participated and why?
- What did participants expect to achieve?
- What did families expect to achieve?

About the program

- How did TRACK OUT engage the young people? What could be improved?
- What were the experiences for families, staff and stakeholders? What could be improved?

About the outcomes

- Does TRACK OUT engage and retain young people that are hard to engage in one-to-one counselling? How?
- What difference did participating in TRACK OUT make for young people, families and staff? How?
- What are the benefits of an outdoor experience compared to one-to-one counselling?
- What could be strengthened and improved?

Evaluation methodology

All TRACK OUT participants – young people, parents and staff were invited to participate in the evaluation. Undertaken alongside the delivery of the program, key evaluation data collection sources included:

Intake interview

- program intake interview data with young people and their parents

Pre and post camp workshops

- pre and post camp evaluation workshops with participants utilising photovoice⁴ technique

Informal discussions

- informal discussions with parents attending the graduation ceremony

Video diaries and photos

- video diaries and photos from young people at camp relating their reflections and experiences

Formal interviews

- formal interviews with TRACK OUT staff (3) and Victoria Police Youth Resource Officers (2) involved in delivering TRACK OUT.

⁴ www.photovoice.org and www.storyscape.com.au

Evaluation timeframe

The evaluation period commenced in May 2014 while the program was being developed and concluded in September 2014.

Evaluation limitations

Establishing a conclusive link between participating in TRACK OUT and the long-term impact / outcomes for young people and their families is beyond the evaluation brief. The inability to control influences and factors on participants outside of the program is a common challenge for program evaluation where multiple influences may impact on the desired outcomes that the program is hoping to achieve. In addition the evaluation timeframe did not allow for longer term post-program follow-up of participants over time.

Parent/families engagement in the evaluation was limited due to the consultants' decision to not approach parents if family circumstances and/or current vulnerabilities meant that participating in an interview could cause distress.

Evaluation data collected through workshops and interviews explored participant experiences and perceived impacts of the program. This quantitative data was collated and thematically analysed alongside TRACK OUT program information and client intake interview data. The consistency of information from staff and the young people who completed the program suggests that through participating in the program, young people and their families gained some positive outcomes.



Evaluation key findings

Timely, proactive interventions through early identification of risk and vulnerability can reduce the likelihood of harm compounding over time, to the individual, their families and the community.⁵

The TRACK OUT pilot program and approach was underpinned and guided by best practice and theoretical research on youth vulnerability, psychosocial development, teenage brain development, mental health and developmental issues⁶ applied in the TRACKS program. Prevention of risk and harm, early identification of vulnerability and early intervention are the key strategies of the TRACKS program. TRACKS counsellors work with young people to enable them to identify their own strengths and solutions.

Did TRACK OUT engage and retain young people who are hard to engage in one-to-one counselling?

TRACKS staff and Victoria Police Youth Resource Officers invited young people who they considered would benefit from TRACK OUT to participate in the program. Eight young people enrolled in the program, with one of these taking on a mentoring role. Of the eight young people, all participated in the camp and five completed the program through to graduation.

Reasons given for not wanting to enrol in TRACK OUT included reluctance to give up holiday time and/or the family was not supportive. Family issues, boredom and ineligibility due to breaking TRACK OUT rules, were reasons why three young people dropped out of the program.

Participants came from a range of schools, localities, family circumstances and were experiencing a range of issues or difficulties. A few had been involved in support services and programs, others had not.

The five-day camp engaged participants in a range of challenging social and physical activities as well

We had a wide variety of young people participating with different issues- transgender, anger, parental drug use, separation, bullied, depression, law breakers, etc. The program works quite well for all people.

TRACKS counsellor

The openness that people talked about what was happening for them was remarkable. I have worked in the field for a long period of time and I was very surprised that participants talked about their issues in front of peers.

TRACKS counsellor

The mentor played a big role in engaging some kids that were hard to engage. It was good for the mentor to be around their age and it helped (kids and staff) to bridge the age gap.

TRACKS counsellor

5 DHS Vulnerable Youth Framework Discussion Paper 2008

6 TRACKS ...Choosing the right path Program Manual Merri Community Health

as nightly discussions and reflections. Each participant completed an individual video diary about their life and reflections on what they learnt from the camp activities and discussions.

Some key differences in engaging with young people in TRACK OUT compared with one-to-one counselling were identified in the evaluation interviews. In particular it was noted that:

- ♦ engagement at camp is facilitated through a range of methods (activities, discussion, fun, friendship)
- ♦ engagement is centred around broader issues, challenges and ‘having a go’ rather than focusing on a problem or issue
- ♦ staff participate in all of the activities and tasks that the young people are asked to do, building trust, understanding and relationships that facilitate engagement
- ♦ the camp environment enables an intense time away from the young person’s everyday home environment which is beneficial for building rapport and engagement.

It is very hard to engage young people with counselling. On camp it was beneficial to have intense time and informal opportunities for engagement. We were very surprised how much the young people shared.

TRACKS counsellor



The TRACK OUT approach is not specifically structured on a ‘problem’. Having a diverse group was good with the focus on people having ‘life problems’.

TRACKS counsellor

Five of the participants remained engaged until the program finished with graduation. Most of these young people and their families reported that they would have liked the program to continue.

What difference did participating in TRACK OUT make for young people?

All participants – young people, their families and staff articulated feeling a ‘change’ from participating in the program. Some of these changes were shared while others were unique to an individual.

Young people reflecting on the camp experience related having a greater insight into themselves, having a go at activities that they thought they were not able to do, finding that they had more strengths than they knew, and that they enjoyed and learnt from working in groups or as a team. Making new friends was an important part of the program for many of the participants.

The archery activity showed me that at the start you may not be the best, others could be, but you can improve and overcome the people who you thought were better than you.

Young person post camp

Lots of participants came out of their shell and became more confident.

TRACK OUT counsellor

Reasons reported as to how and why TRACK OUT made a difference for the young people participating included that the program provided opportunities for:

- ♦ learning about yourself and others
- ♦ making new friends
- ♦ attempting things that you didn't think you could do
- ♦ relaxing in a nice environment – different from home
- ♦ hearing about other peoples lives, backgrounds and issues
- ♦ talking about how you feel.

I learnt that there are a lot of people in a similar position to me. A lot of people have the same problems but don't let them hold them back. I learnt to try and not to be afraid of who you are.

Young person at graduation

The biggest change (in many of the young people) was the confidence to be themselves, to see themselves through different eyes, to see the positives in themselves, not just the issues.

TRACKS counsellor

The program helped me a lot. Before I felt troubled. TRACK OUT allowed me to make new friends.

Young person at graduation

I have been a victim of bullying which has caused lots of problems. At TRACK OUT I learnt that it is safe to be myself.

Young person at graduation

I am physically and mentally stronger than I thought I was.

Young person post camp

Before the program my son was very withdrawn. Now he is a lot more outspoken, more social at home, not locked away. It has made a difference to our family and built a relationship with MCH.

Parent at graduation

Through the program we saw the kids become more open, more easy going and more confident.

Police officers

TRACK OUT staff and stakeholders reported a common benefit of the camp for all participants was that it gave the young people the confidence to 'look at themselves'. The camp activities and program was designed for the young people to experience physical challenges and team-work followed by the opportunity to reflect on what they learnt. Through these activities and processes the young people were able to feel good about what they had attempted or achieved which in turn helped them to see the positives in themselves and others.



I learnt many new things. I am feeling a lot better about my life.

Young person at graduation

During the program the kids became friendlier towards one another, displayed more maturity. Kids felt more comfortable to talk about their background, their issues. They all set goals on what they wanted to improve on at home – they were thinking about it.

TRACK OUT worker

Before I went I had a tough time fitting in. In TRACK OUT everyone was friendly and it was easy to fit in. I tried a lot of things I would have never done like canoeing and skiing. I really want to keep in touch with everyone. My favourite thing was the chance to get to meet everyone.

Young person at graduation

What difference did participating in TRACK OUT make for families?

TRACKS program information reiterates the importance of informing and engaging families to develop strategies to reduce exposure to risk by young people. TRACK OUT intended to build relationships with the families of the young people participating.

Youth drug and alcohol programs usually do not include the family. A distinct aspect of TRACKS and TRACK OUT is that they are able to do preventative work involving families.

Families were engaged in TRACK OUT initially at intake, attending the orientation/information session, welcomed at other program workshops and invited to the graduation. Parents were able to access counselling and link into other services through MCH.

At the intake interviews parents expressed hopes that the program would build self-esteem, self-confidence, resilience and more openness in their child. Many parents hoped their child would make new friends and have fun.

Commonly, parents expressed that if their child was happier then the whole family would be less stressed and happier.

My child has come from a tragic family situation. Hoping TRACK OUT will build self-confidence, self-esteem, resilience and to be more open. Hoping that he will come back from the camp with a more positive outlook, which will bring positive energy into the house.

Parent pre camp

The four parents who commented on the program as part of the evaluation spoke very highly of TRACK OUT and the positive impact the program had had on their child.

I think it was a great program. My son made new friends and came out of his shell. He pushed himself. Initially he was not keen to go but he stuck with it and gave things a go, did some challenging things. He made us so proud.

Parent at graduation

Fantastic program. Great to see my child making new friends.

Parent at graduation

I hope that my child will be able to put things he learns in the program into everyday life. If my child has a better outlook, everyone at home is happier.

Parent pre camp

A positive experience for families was that they know that someone else cares about their child.

TRACKS counsellor

We did not spend a lot of time with families – however we will continue our engagement with families beyond the eight-week program.

TRACKS counsellor

Families will reconnect when they need support – it's a good engagement process for families.

TRACKS counsellor

The family of one of the young people who did not complete the program is still engaged with the program. The program has provided us with the opportunity to work with the parent.

TRACKS counsellor

What difference did participating in TRACK OUT make for staff and stakeholders?

The three staff from MCH and two Police Youth Resource Officers involved in the TRACKS program were the key staff involved in TRACK OUT.

All staff related a significant number of benefits of TRACK OUT.

Benefits included opportunities for:

- ♦ strengthening of work with young people through deeper engagement and building of relationships between young people and staff
- ♦ participating in activities and extending yourself
- ♦ collaborating with other staff and stakeholders
- ♦ learning new skills and engagement techniques
- ♦ strengthening of relationships between stakeholders.

Staff and stakeholders comments included:

Loved it – it was very rewarding. You witness and see a lot of things happening for participants. You do not see this in one-to-one counselling.

The camp increased relationships and partnerships between staff. You get to know each other better and learn about other skills staff have that you do not have the opportunity to see (in an office environment).

It was beneficial for staff to see kids being comfortable enough to talk about their story.

Pretty much all of the kids bonded quite well. Of the kids who struggled with this, it gave us (as counsellors) the opportunity to see this.

It is important for the police to be involved in TRACK OUT. It increases our communication with kids and this snowballs onto other kids in the community. Helps us know what their issues are and what is going on at home.

Kids will follow up with us now they know us well.



Quality time with kids out of their environment, very rewarding, loved the hands on aspect.

TRACKS counsellor

TRACK OUT breaks down walls and barriers between young people and authorities.

Police officer

By the end the kids were friendly with staff, they saw staff as someone they could talk to. This was the main benefit of the camp.

TRACK OUT staff

You get to see the other side of the child. You just don't only get to see the kids in the police station.

Police officer

What are the benefits of an outdoor experience program compared to one-to-one counselling?



The MCH AOD program had identified that many vulnerable or at risk young people do not want, or are not ready, to engage in one-to-one counselling. There are many issues surrounding engagement in one-to-one counselling such as unreliability, transport, willingness to accept that there is a problem, parental influences, cultural shame and peer opinions.⁷

The TRACKS school based work is targeted at 15-18 years olds due to wide recognition that young people in this age range are challenged with the concept of one-to-one counselling.

The TRACK OUT pilot provided an opportunity to explore the benefits of a diversionary educational experience type program for future developments of the suite of services that MCH may provide to young people identified as vulnerable or at risk.

Informal stuff comes in, for example, while on a bushwalk or playing table tennis, the young person may mention some things to you – at times it's like an informal counselling session.

TRACKS counsellor

For the kids that went on the overnight camp they said it was the highlight. It was a great opportunity for engagement.

TRACKS counsellor

TRACK OUT activities provided the chance to give feedback on positive attributes and then the young people start to see this in themselves.

TRACKS counsellor

The building of trust and relationship with staff happened quite naturally.

TRACK OUT staff

Taken out of our formal setting we all have something in common.

TRACKS counsellor

⁷ TRACKS ... Choosing the right path program manual

A particular focus of the evaluation is identifying the benefits of a TRACK OUT type program compared to one-to-one counselling. A number of benefits for young people, families, staff and stakeholders who participated in the TRACK OUT pilot were identified in the evaluation and have been reported on earlier in this report. Additional benefits of an outdoor experience program identified by staff and stakeholders included:

- ♦ a greater capacity to relate and engage young people on an informal level
- ♦ improved communication as the young people and worker get to know and understand each other
- ♦ increased opportunities to build trust and relationships between young people and staff
- ♦ providing young people with activities requiring a level of physicality that they may not have had the opportunity to experience
- ♦ providing opportunities to learn from team activities and peer collaboration
- ♦ opportunities for sharing of fun and laughs and personal stories
- ♦ capacity to develop connections/pathways between young people and their families and MCH.

The program gave the opportunity and challenges that they would normally shy away from in the school environment.
Police officer



Main advantage is that it is more intimate and it allows you to connect with kids. As a worker you don't get to know kids in other programs. In TRACK OUT type of programs, you get to know kids and visa versa which helps kids open up to you.
TRACKS counsellor

You have the opportunity to plant a seed – for example 'you are calm under pressure and plant the seed that they should do that in the future', then kids take this on.
TRACKS counsellor

What the young people said

BEFORE	AFTER
Program intake interviews	Post camp reflections workshop
What do you hope to achieve for yourself by participating in the TRACK OUT Program?	What was the best thing about the camp?
<i>...Learn how to socialise with other people</i> <i>...Self confidence</i> <i>...To have a better outlook on my future</i> <i>...I don't know</i> <i>...I'm open minded about it</i> <i>...Leadership, make friends easier, self esteem, respect</i> <i>...Not really sure at this point</i>	<i>The (overnight) camp out was the best thing from the camp. I will always remember the scenery and all the views and all the people...everybody personally and all the fun from everybody being at the campsite sitting around the fire and talking.</i> <i>There was more stuff to do at the camp than at home. Usually I would play video games 24/7.</i> <i>Inspirational talk from Glen the footballer. He got real personal and talked about his mum who got cancer.</i>
What do you think will be good about the five-day camp at Anglesea?	What was the most challenging thing about the camp?
<i>...Get to know new people and fun activities over the holidays</i> <i>...Away from home, time to think</i> <i>...Not sure</i> <i>...Activities</i> <i>...Free food</i> <i>...Make friends</i> <i>...Get to know people</i> <i>...Do stuff I haven't done before</i>	<i>The high ropes was the most challenging. I am terrified of heights but I gave it a go. At least I tried.</i> <i>The walk to the overnight camp.</i> <i>Talking about yourself, I'm a shy person and don't really open up.</i>
Pre camp workshop	How do you feel about the camp now? (compared with how you felt before going)
How do I feel about going to camp?	<i>Before the camp I was paranoid. Since the camp, it was good experiences and I opened up to people I didn't know.</i> <i>During the games we played, everyone participated well, and for me as a trainee mentor I learned a lot of values in this.</i>
<i>...I think the camp will be fun</i> <i>...I am looking forward to making friends and having fun outdoors</i> <i>...I think about needing help and that is what going to camp is about</i> <i>...I think camp will be adventurous – just on the edge of something great, some adrenalin</i> <i>...I think camp will be about being willing to take up challenges</i> <i>...Adventurous and challenging, something that I would hope to learn from</i>	What will stay with you?
	<i>From the camp I will take away the experiences and the opportunities, the thrill of the 28 metre swing and the crates and the high ropes, that without everyone I would not have been able to be successful and make it to the top.</i> <i>Showed I had a lot more strength than I thought.</i> <i>Will always remember being at camp.</i>
	How you feel about being back home?
	<i>When I got home I have my mates to worry about. The camp gave me insight and made me think that I am close to the edge. I am not sure if I will make it or I might fall off.</i> <i>Now I am back home, I feel isolated again. Sad because I can't get or won't have the opportunity to do those things (activities) again.</i>

Key success factors of **TRACK OUT**



How could TRACK OUT program be improved?

The TRACK OUT pilot provided an opportunity for MCH to pilot a new kind of approach to working with young people as well as provide learnings for implementing the program into the future.

Staff suggestions for improvement included:

- ♦ factoring in alternative activities in the program if the weather restricts the planned activities
- ♦ developing specific activities or strategies to help breach any divide that may occur between different (friendship) groups of young people
- ♦ utilising school welfare officers/counsellors to inform potential young people and their families about the program and to facilitate the referrals into the program.
- ♦ streamlining and improving the referral process between partners/stakeholders.
- ♦ having a gender balance of participants
- ♦ considering single gender programs to cater for young people who cannot participate in mixed gender programs due to family/cultural/religious reasons
- ♦ training staff in interactive communication such as theatre sports (or incorporate specialists into the program).





Conclusions

TRACK OUT offered an eight-week outdoor experience program involving a five-day residential camp with diverse social and physical activities, four follow-up workshops covering Street Wise First Aid and other social and reflective activities, a three-day ski trip and a graduation ceremony. Young people and their families could also access one-to-one counselling if they wished.

As an outdoor experience program, TRACK OUT, an extension of the TRACKS program, offered a new way of working with young people who are vulnerable and or at risk.

Underpinned by the philosophies of prevention, early intervention and wilderness intervention, the overall the goal of TRACK OUT is to engage and support young people to build life-skills and resilience to address issues and behavior that may potentially lead to the young person disconnecting from family and society.

The pilot program was designed as a supported but challenging environment for young people to explore and understand their behavior and to build self-esteem and confidence. The target group was 14-18 year olds who are struggling with school attendance, family problems, peer pressure, bullying and mild behavior problems. The pilot also had a focus on working with the families to help them support and resolve some of these issues.

The TRACK OUT pilot aimed to explore the potential of an outdoor experience program for engaging and supporting young people compared with one-to-one counselling, and to learn about the delivery of such programs. To report on these outcomes, an evaluation of the pilot was commissioned by MCH.

Data gathered in the evaluation provides an insight into the experience and impact of TRACK OUT from young people, families and the staff and stakeholders involved. Qualitative data was collected through workshops with the young people, informal discussions with families and interviews with TRACKS staff and police involved in delivering the pilot program.

As part of TRACK OUT young people contributed their personal thoughts and insights on the program activities and reflected on their behavior. This information is captured on individual video diaries and photos and has been drawn on in this evaluation report.

The experience of TRACK OUT for the young people who completed the whole program was overwhelmingly positive. Comments recorded at the pre and post camp workshops indicate the young people felt that the experience had 'made a difference' to them. Making friends, finding strength in themselves, feeling less troubled and feeling more confident were commonly reported. These changes were confirmed and validated by staff, stakeholder and parent comments.



The biggest change in many of the young people was the confidence to be themselves, to see themselves through different eyes, to see the positives in themselves, not just the issues.

TRACKS counsellor

TRACKS staff and police participating in the pilot reported the outcomes to be beyond expectations. In particular, the engagement between staff and young people and the openness and trust that the young people showed in relating their personal stories was empowering.

The openness that people talked about what was happening for them was remarkable. I have worked in the field for a very long period of time and I was very surprised that participants talked about their issues in front of peers.

TRACKS counsellor

In comparison with one-to-one counselling, TRACKS counsellors reported significant positives for engaging young people who are hard to engage. Engagement at camp for example was facilitated through a range of methods – activities, fun, friendship, discussion – rather than a focus on discussing an issue. The program focus on people having ‘life problems’ rather than a ‘specific problem’ was reiterated as an important factor in successfully engaging the young people.

Informal stuff comes in, for example while on a bushwalk or playing table tennis, the young person may mention some things to you – at times its like an informal counselling session.

Staff reported rewards of being involved in the pilot as seeing the young people develop over the period and ‘come out of their shell’. In addition, benefits on a professional level included collaboration between staff, learning new skills, learning more about themselves and building relationships with the young people and their families.

Families engaged with TRACK OUT spoke highly of the value and benefits they had seen in their child. This they said translated to the family setting. Engagement with families was ad-hoc during the pilot, however relationships and connections made with families can be followed through beyond the pilot period. Staff reported having a greater understanding of the young people who did not stay engaged with the program until the end, which will be helpful in working with them and their families in the future.

A number of key success factors identified in the evaluation are presented in this report. Having a diverse group, having activities designed for team work and involving very experienced therapeutic staff were among the important success factors.

The overwhelming positive response on the pilot from all participants – whether young people, families, or staff, suggests that TRACK OUT is a valuable approach for working with young people who are vulnerable or at risk. This finding is consistent with research in this

area. MCH has a great opportunity to build on the pilot experience and the skills, knowledge and equipment gained.

If at risk or vulnerable young people can be better supported, there are significant savings to the wellbeing of individuals and their families, as well as the public purse through reducing the need for alcohol and drug and associated programs and police interventions.

TRACK OUT evaluation framework

Although the evaluation does not have the capacity to establish the long-term impact for the young people who participated, overall the results do suggest notable outcomes and empowerment for the group of young people who graduated.

I learnt many new things. I am feeling a lot better about my life.

Young person at graduation



Appendix 1: ChANGeS Framework

ChANGeS Framework - summary (developed by Dr. Ian Williams ¹ , 2009)	
Challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> aspects of programs in which participants are extended and have their abilities and personal resources stretched in demanding and stimulating ways components largely relate to processes that encourage participants to proactively discover and harness their abilities in the pursuit of goals and tasks that may appear at first to lie beyond their reach <p>e.g. challenging tasks and activities; problem solving; experiencing risk and novelty</p>
Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> captures the action-orientation and experiential nature of adventure programs participants are actively engaged in a vibrant learning environment and experience mental, emotional, and behavioural immersion <p>e.g. experiential learning; genuine responsibility; experiencing success and mastery; physical, emotional, cognitive and psychological involvement</p>
Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> refers not only to the physical setting in which programs are conducted, but also highlights a range of related components intrinsic to the natural environment which are believed to play a role in facilitating positive change specific qualities or components include open space, fresh air, natural light, freedom from distraction, absence of excessive artificial stimulation, solitude, and aesthetic features (sights, sounds and smells of nature) <p>e.g. wilderness setting; real/natural consequences; unfamiliar environments; simple living</p>
Guided experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognises the critical role that facilitators and leaders play in influencing program outcomes through their input in guiding participant experiences includes aspects that help give meaning and context to participants' experiences, and suggests that there is more to programs than simply participating in a series of outdoor experiences <p>e.g. goal setting; facilitated reflection; use of metaphor; processing or debriefing</p>
Social milieu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> relates to the social and cultural environment, settings and surroundings in which participants are typically immersed during a program highlights the central importance of the social context with factors such as group-living with peers, establishing meaningful relationships, practising new ways of relating to others, and social skill development <p>e.g. small-group work and group development; relationship with leaders; direct and immediate social feedback; group dynamics</p>

¹Williams, I.R (2009) *Depression prevention and the promotion of emotional wellbeing in adolescents using a therapeutic outdoor adventure intervention: development of a best practice model*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Melbourne.