



# **The 'U-Turns for Youth' Program Evaluation Report**

Final report

Bankstown City Council

31 May 2012

## Acknowledgments

This work was completed with the assistance of Margaret Southwell, Community Development Officer (Community Safety and Crime Prevention), at Bankstown City Council.

We would also like to thank the many key informants from the 'U-Turns for Youth' program, including the course facilitators and 'U-Turns for Youth' program participants. We thank them for their time and insights and trust that their views are adequately represented in this report.

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## Executive summary

The 'U-Turns for Youth' program was a program implemented by Bankstown City Council and the City of Canterbury Council from October 2011 to May 2012. The program aimed to deter at-risk young people from motor vehicle related offences, such as theft and stealing from motor vehicles. The program provided automotive and life-skills courses over a six week period to young people aged 15-16 who had exhibited some form of risky behaviour. The program was evaluated by an independent consultant (ARTD Consultants) based on a range of data provided by Bankstown City Council.

### *'U-Turns for Youth' program participants*

Participants were selected based on referrals received from the young person's school, youth support agencies, Juvenile Justice and Police. Selected participants had exhibited some form of "risky behaviour", such as known minor offences (most commonly fare evasion), poor behaviour or attendance at school, regular use of alcohol and/or cannabis or an identified vulnerability (difficulties in their home life or being at risk of domestic violence). Only one had a motor vehicle-related offence; other young people who were referred and had motor vehicle offences were not suitable for the program (due to the possibility of being a negative influence on the group and other known serious criminal offences). All participants were from the Bankstown and Canterbury local government areas, all but one was male, and most were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, reflecting the demographics of the local area.

### *Program delivery*

The program was generally well-received by its participants, who found the content interesting and learnt many things that they felt would be useful to them in the future. The participants liked the practical components of the automotive courses and life skills workshops, but would have liked the program to have gone on for longer (a few asked for a ten week program). Course facilitators agreed that it was difficult to successfully engage and connect with the participants over a six week program, and felt that providing ongoing support to the young people after the program may have provided better support for the young person.

Most young people completed the 'U-Turns for Youth' program, but regular attendance was an issue for some. A few participants exhibited poor behaviours that sometimes affected the engagement of the group—behavioural management strategies were put in place to address these issues. Other participants were engaged in the program and worked well.

### *Outcomes of the U Turns program*

'U-Turns for Youth' participants indicated some increase in knowledge regarding further training and employment options after their participation in the program, and many indicated an intention to participate in further education and training. Six participants

were followed up nine months after participating in the program, and five had participated in further education or training since their involvement in the program. This further training was often in fields related to the automotive industry, such as mechanic apprenticeships or welding courses. One participant felt that their mechanics apprenticeship had been directly supported by their involvement in the program.

Program participants also showed a desire and intention to reduce risky behaviours and to make better life decisions after leaving the program, such as abstaining from smoking cannabis, and not socialising with negative peer groups. But data collected from Police and the nine month follow-ups with course participants suggests this was difficult to achieve in practice. Ten 'U-Turns for Youth' participants had re-offended after exiting the program, and/ or had done things that they knew to be "risky". From the data collected from participants, it would seem that despite intentions to change their behaviours, negative peer relationships, issues at home and difficulties in managing aggressive and impulsive behaviours made their intentions difficult to achieve in practice.

### **Recommendations**

1. **Run the courses over a longer period and focus on active and practical course content.** Longer courses would support the program officer and facilitators to build a rapport with program participants, and enable participants to learn more complex automotive skills. The evaluation found active and practical activities were more engaging for participants.
2. **Allow more time for ongoing support for participants after the program.** Ongoing support from the 'U-Turns for Youth' program officer would help them to undertake a case management role, ensuring young people meet their goals after exiting the program, and linking participants to other services.
3. **Establish better direct links with further education, training and employment supports.** Supporting participant's links with employers or training organisations, or facilitating a form of career counselling during the 'U-Turns for Youth' program may have helped young people to engage in education, training and employment after participation in 'U-Turns for Youth'.
4. **Gaining parent's commitment to the 'U-Turns for Youth' program more actively.** Parents were asked to consent to the young person's participation in the program, but it was not really made clear to parents the importance of the program and what it was trying to achieve. The graduation event should be held in the evenings (as in the final intake of the program) to enable parents to attend and celebrate the young person's success. Parental engagement might also have a positive impact on participant attendance rates.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 About the 'U-Turns for Youth' program

The 'U-Turns for Youth' program was initiated in Bankstown and Canterbury Local Government Areas (LGAs) in October 2010, using funding received under the Proceeds of Crime Act. The aim of the program was to deter at risk young people from committing motor vehicle offences such as theft and stealing from motor vehicles, which has been identified as a particular problem in Bankstown and Canterbury LGAs. The program was inspired by the pilot 'U-Turns for Youth' program implemented in Tasmania in 2003<sup>1</sup>.

The 'U-Turns for Youth' program provided a hands-on training course in practical aspects of automotive mechanics, and was accompanied by workshops on a range of life skills, including anger management, drug and alcohol abuse, self-esteem and team work. A project officer was employed three days a week throughout the course of the project to facilitate the program, promote and manage referrals, liaise with parents and key stakeholders, and develop a project manual.

The program was delivered over six weeks. Twenty six young people participated in the 'U-Turns for Youth' program, across three intakes:

- intake one: May/ June 2011, eight participants
- intake two: Oct/ Dec 2011, eight participants
- intake three: Feb/ Apr 2012, ten participants.

Through the support of program facilitators and coordinators, the program aimed to encourage and support participants' use of local youth support services, and their participation in further education, vocational training and employment.

A project steering committee provided strategic direction for the project, with representation from a range of local youth services, Bankstown City Council, the City of Canterbury Council, the Department of Juvenile Justice, TAFE NSW (South Western Sydney Institute of TAFE), Bankstown and Campsie Local Area Commands and the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council.

## 1.2 Evaluation of the 'U-Turns for Youth' program — the role of ARTD

In May 2011, ARTD Consultants (ARTD) was commissioned to support Bankstown City Council in developing an evaluation framework and plan for the 'U-Turns for Youth' project. The framework and plan outlined the expected activities of the program and

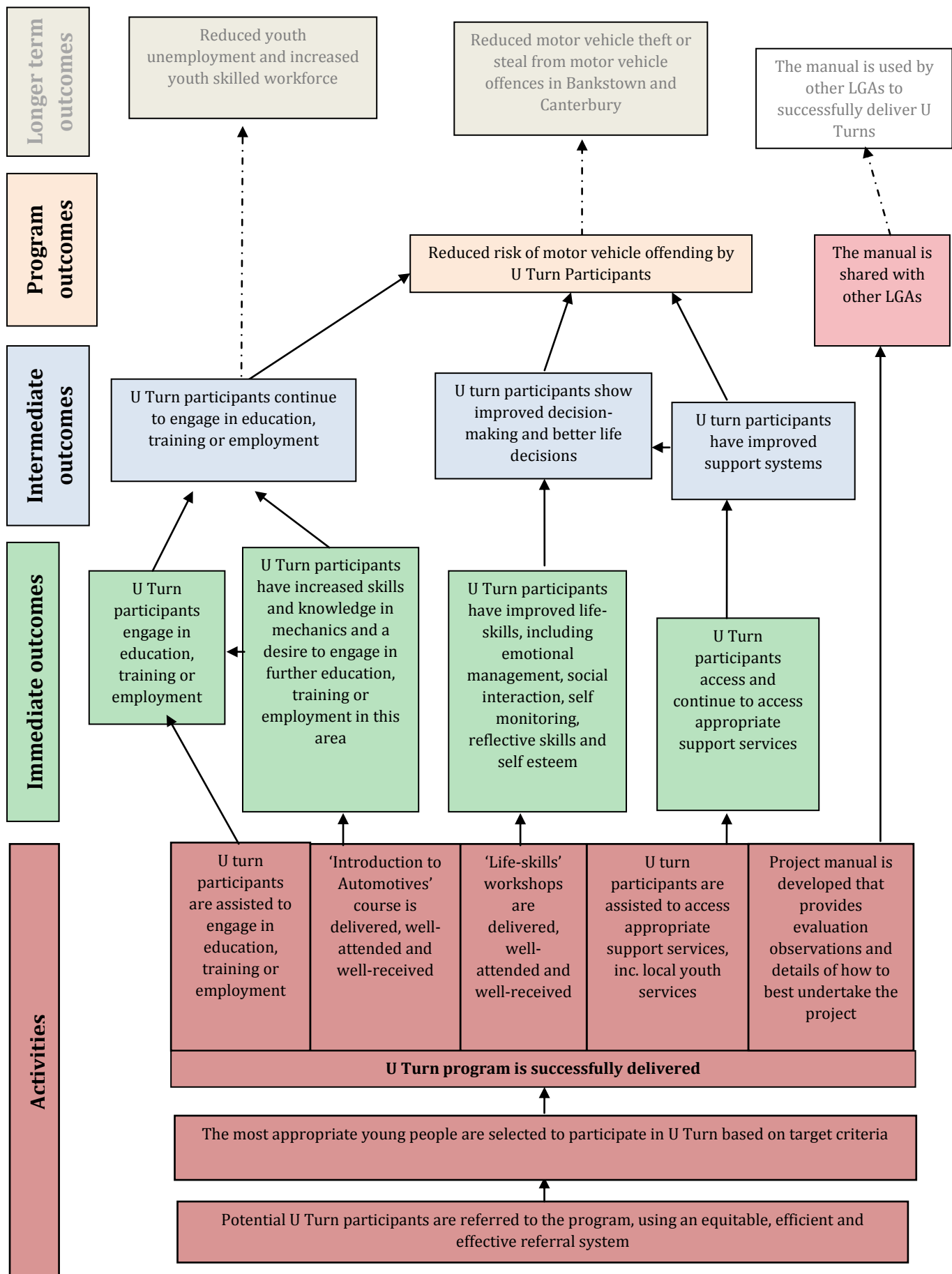
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<sup>1</sup> A description of the 'U-Turn' Tasmania program is provided in the 'U-Turns for Youth' project manual, as well as a description of how this differed to the program delivered in Bankstown and Canterbury LGAs



their relationship with expected programs outcomes. These are summarised in the program logic model in Figure 1. This was accompanied by data collection methods and tools to evaluate the program. The final evaluation framework and plan for this project is attached to this report (appendix 1). Bankstown City Council staff were responsible for collecting the data required for the evaluation, as specified in the evaluation plan.

Bankstown City Council then commissioned ARTD to analyse the data collected by the project officer, and write the final evaluation report (this document).

**Figure 1. U-Turns for Youth program logic model**

## Summary of data sources and data analysis

A range of data was collected by Bankstown City Council for this evaluation, which is summarised in Table 1. A fuller description of the information collected under each of these data sources is provided in the evaluation framework and plan (appendix 1).

Data was collected from those involved in the delivery of the 'U-Turns for Youth' program, including: the 'U-Turns for Youth' project officer, the automotive and life skills workshop facilitators, agencies that referred young people to the program, and the 'U-Turns for Youth' program participants. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected.

All data was entered into an online data portal (Survey money — [www.surveymonkey.com.au](http://www.surveymonkey.com.au)). Raw data was downloaded from the portal to Excel and a specialist statistical software package (SPSS) was used for analysis.

### 1.1 A note on data collection and analysis

A number of factors affected the data collected for the evaluation:

#### 1. Inconsistent data for intake one participants

The evaluation framework and plan and corresponding data collection tools were developed as the first intake were recruited. As such, pre-course interview and referral data collected for intake one participants was inconsistent with that collected for intakes two and three.

#### 2. Capturing real changes in educational or employment outcomes

'U-Turns for Youth' participants were mostly in compulsory full-time education, with limited opportunities to access new or further education, training or employment at this time in their lives (initially an expected outcome of the program). Evaluation tools explored participant's future intentions in relation to future education or employment and changes to these intentions after the program. Follow-up interviews with intake one participants nine months after program completion gave some evidence of longer-term changes in education, training and employment.

#### 3. Internal data collection

The 'U-Turns for Youth' program officer collected all evaluation data, but had limited experience in evaluation techniques. The program officer used clear and objective tools created by ARTD Consultants to collect the data, and the importance of objectivity and transparency was made clear. But at times, the qualitative data collected was limited in content.

**Table 1. Summary of data sources**

Data source	Focus of data source	No. received
Referral data	Data supplied by the referring agency, outlining why the young person would be suitable for the program.	26
Intake forms	Intake information collected by the 'U-Turns for Youth' coordinator about the young person's participating in the program (i.e. demographic information)	26
Pre course interviews	Interviews undertaken by the by the 'U-Turns for Youth' coordinator with program participants to ascertain their current life circumstances, risky behaviours at baseline and reasons for participating in 'U-Turns for Youth'.	20
Participant post course survey	Anonymous surveys completed by 'U-Turns for Youth' participants on their final day of the program asking about their satisfaction with the program.	19
Post course interviews	Interviews undertaken by the by the 'U-Turns for Youth' coordinator with program participants to further explore participants satisfaction with the program, their life intentions post-program, and immediate outcomes of the program (i.e. desire to participate in further education and training, changes to decision making).	18
'U-Turns for Youth' coordinator's project manual	A manual developed by the 'U-Turns for Youth' coordinator, to provide insight on the delivery of the 'U-Turns for Youth' program.	1 project manual
Nine month follow-up interviews	Interviews with intake one participants to assess any longer-term changes in their behaviour following the course.	6
Interviews with automotive course facilitators	Interviews undertaken by the 'U-Turns for Youth' coordinator with the automotive course facilitator, to ascertain what they felt went well in delivering the automotive course and what could be improved.	4
Survey of life skills course facilitators	Survey of all life skills course facilitators, asking them what went well in delivering their life skills workshop, and what could be improved. This survey also asked whether any of the young people from the course had accessed their service since participating in the workshop.	8
Police Intel	Data supplied by Campsie LAC, regarding offences committed by 'U-Turns for Youth' participants, before and after the program.	Data received for all 26 'U-Turns for Youth' participants

## Who participated in the 'U-Turns for Youth' program and how they were selected

### 2.1 How participants were selected

A total of 47 referrals were received to the 'U-Turns for Youth' program— see table 2. Most referrals were received from the young person's high school (27 of the 47 referrals), or youth services the young person was in contact with (15 of the 47). Fewer referrals were received from Juvenile Justice or Police, despite initial expectations that these would be the main referral sources, as they would have contact with young persons known to have motor vehicle-related offences. Discussions with Juvenile Justice during project steering committees indicated that many potential referrals had offences more serious than those related to motor vehicles, which may have caused difficulties in them attending a six week course<sup>2</sup>, and so they were not referred.

Young people referred to the program were aged between 14 and 18. Only two young women were referred to the program. This may be because referring agencies were more likely to suggest an automotive-related program to young men than to young women, or because young men were more likely to take-up the referral. The young women were known to have a passion for cars and a desire to become a mechanic.

Reasons for referring young people to the 'U-Turns for Youth' program were the young person struggling at school (either in regards to behavioural or learning issues), or the young person wanting to build their skills, knowledge or confidence, particularly in relation to motor vehicles.

**Table 2. Referrals by referring agency and by intake**

Agency/ Organisation	Intake 1	Intake 2	Intake 3	Total
High schools	12	8	8	27
Youth services	5	2	8	15
Juvenile Justice		2		2
Police	1			1
Self-referral		1		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>47</b>

Source: 'U-Turns for Youth' Referral data, supplied by Bankstown City Council

#### *Selecting 'U-Turns for Youth' participants*

A total of 26 of the 47 referrals were selected to participate in the 'U-Turns for Youth' program — see table 2.

<sup>2</sup> 'U-Turns For Youth' Program project manual.

The data suggests that young people referred by their school were more commonly selected for the program — nearly three quarters of participating young people (19 of the 26) were referred by their school (see table 2 below). The remaining six participants were referred by a variety of agencies the young people were involved with, including 'Youth off the Streets', the NSW Police (Campsie LAC), CatholicCare and MTC Work Solutions and MTC Youth Connections.

**Table 3. Referring agency of selected participants by intake**

Agency/ Organisation:	Intake 1	Intake 2	Intake 3	Total
<b>HIGH SCHOOLS</b>				<b>19</b>
Canterbury Boys High School	0	2	2	4
Condell Park High School	3	0	2	5
Punchbowl Boys High School	0	4	3	7
Sefton High School	0	0	1	1
Sir Joseph Banks High School	3	0	0	3
<b>OTHER SERVICES ACCESSED BY YOUNG PEOPLE</b>				<b>6</b>
MTC Work Solutions	0	1	0	1
MTC Youth Connections	1	0	0	1
NSW Police (Campsie)	1	0	0	1
CatholicCare	0	1	0	1
Youth Off the Streets	0	0	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>26</b>

Source: 'U-Turns for Youth' intake data, supplied by Bankstown City Council

## 2.2 Who participated in the 'U-Turns for Youth' program

### *Participants were mostly male, and from a range of cultural backgrounds*

All but one of the participants selected to take part in the program was male — there were only two females referred to the program. The young woman that was not accepted to the program lived outside either LGA and would have had to travel a considerable distance to attend Padstow TAFE.

Over four fifths of the young people selected for 'U-Turns for Youth' were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (21 of the 26 participating young people). Ten of these young people identified as Lebanese. The other participants identified as Samoan (4), Maori (2), Tongan (2), Albanian, Somalian or Cook Islander (1 participant each). Only one young person identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This generally reflects the cultural diversity across the Bankstown and Canterbury Local Government Areas (LGAs): Seventy one per cent of Bankstown residents and seventy per cent of

Canterbury residents speak a language other than English at home, and 23 per cent of Bankstown residents and 14 per cent of Canterbury residents speak Arabic<sup>3</sup>.

All program participants were either 15 or 16 years old (18 were aged 15, 8 were aged 16). Efforts were made to recruit participants across a mix of ages, as the evaluation of the 'U-Turn' pilot program in Tasmania indicated that the program was more successful when ran across mixed-age groups<sup>4</sup>. Unfortunately, most referrals received were for those aged 15-16. Pre-course interviews with those of an older age-group raised concerns about their desire to change their life choices and it was deemed inappropriate to mix these offenders with younger participants. Older participants also had more serious offences that may have led to negative influences on the younger participants<sup>5</sup>. A few younger participants were also referred, but were unable to participate as the automotive course was to be run at TAFE, and the minimum age of entry to TAFE NSW is 15 years old<sup>6</sup>.

***'U-Turns for Youth' participants lived in the Bankstown and Canterbury area, and most lived with their parents***

'U-Turns for Youth' participants lived in the Bankstown and Canterbury LGAs — a map of where 'U-Turns for Youth' participants lived is provided in Figure 2.

All but one of the participants who provided information with respect to their living arrangement lived with their parents (24/25 respondents); one said they lived with friends or extended family.

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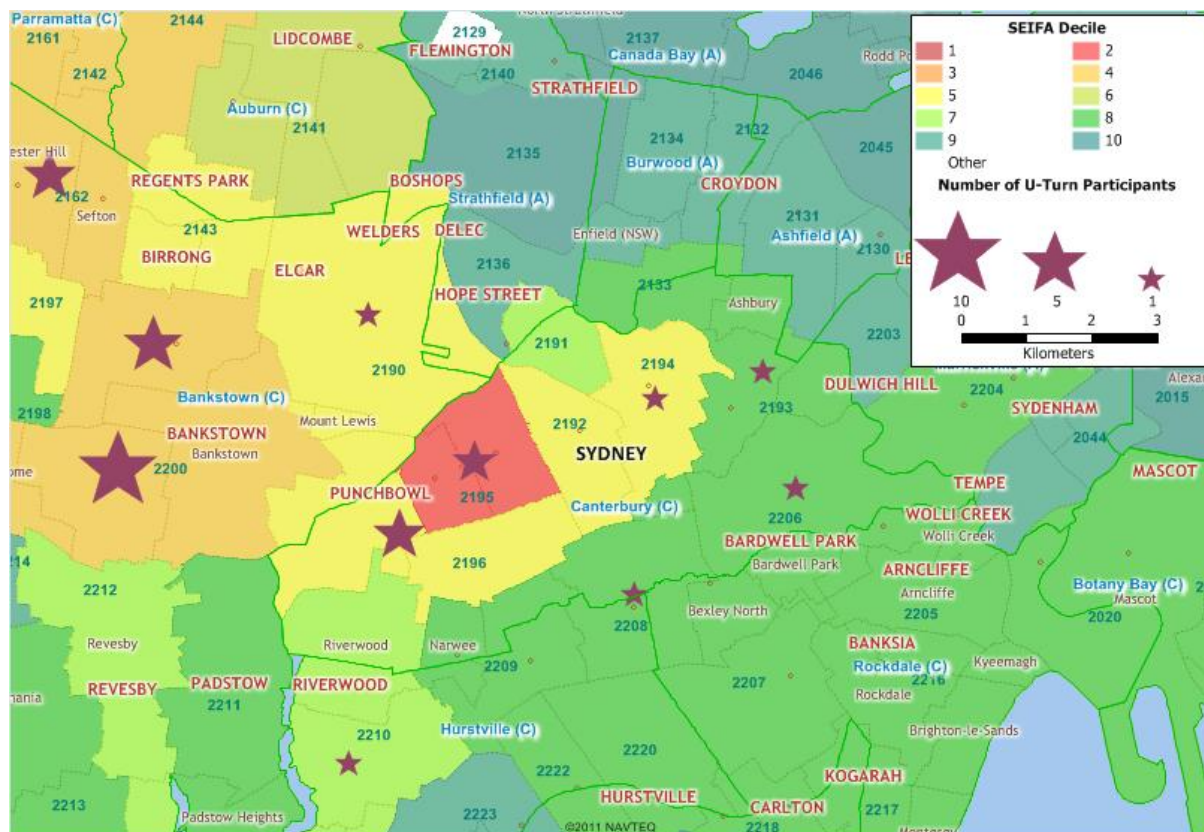
<sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2006  
<http://profile.id.com.au/Default.aspx?id=101&pg=105&gid=10&type=enum>

<sup>4</sup> University of Tasmania (2005) Young Recidivist Car Offender Program (U-Turn), Local Evaluation Tasmania- Final Report, prepared for the Department of Police and Public Safety, pg 2

<sup>5</sup> 'U-Turns For Youth' Program project manual.

<sup>6</sup> 'U-Turns For Youth' Program project manual.



**Figure 2. 'U-Turns for Youth' participants by postcode, and by SEIFA Decile**

Source: Postcode information from 'U-Turns for Youth' intake forms. SEIFA = Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas. SEIFA ratings are explained here: <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/2033.0.55.0012006>. Low SEIFA numbers equate to higher levels of socio-economic disadvantage.

### ***Most U-Turns participants were at school, but were not always regular attendees***

Most of the young people referred to 'U-Turns for Youth' were currently attending school (23 of the 26 participants). The majority of those attending school were in Year 10 (16/23 respondents); four were in Year 9 and two were in Year 11. One of these young people was also working part-time. Whilst most of these participants said that they attended school regularly, six said they attended school only 'often' and four 'not often'.

Two of the participants known not to be attending school completed school to Year 9 or Year 10, but left due to 'attendance issues' or 'personal barriers'. These two young people had already completed other courses and one had obtained a Cert II General Vocational Education and a White Card (OHS). No information was given as to why the third participant who did not attend school had stopped attending.

### ***Some 'U-Turns for Youth' participants had exhibited "risky behaviours", or had life issues that put them "at risk"***

Ten 'U-Turns for Youth' participants were known to have participated in "risky behaviours" prior to participating in 'U-Turns for Youth'. Data from Bankstown and



Campsie Local Area Commands indicate that nine participants had been given an infringement notice for train fare evasion or truanting. Six participants had more serious offenses, including assault and breaking and entering. One participant had a traffic-related caution and a caution for driving in a way that that was not within the conditions of their licence.

Three of the 'U-Turns for Youth' participants admitted to using alcohol and/ or drugs on a regular basis. One reported using alcohol weekly, another used cannabis weekly and another used both alcohol and cannabis (but did not specify how often). None of these participants were receiving support for their drug and alcohol issues prior to joining the 'U-Turns for Youth' program.

Referral information suggests that six 'U-Turns for Youth' participants had shown behavioural issues at school. One participant had been repeatedly suspended from school, one had exhibited aggressive behaviours and the others were having their behaviour monitored at school. One participant suffered from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, for which they were currently receiving support. Eleven of the 20 participants who had a pre course interview said that a *'lack of interest in lessons/ work/ training'* would stop them participating in further education or training, and nine said *'attendance rates at school/ college/ work'*. But four participants liked school and had good attendance there. One participant was concerned that they did not have the skills required to participate in further education or training,

A number of 'U-Turns for Youth' participants also had life circumstances that was making life difficult for them. A number of the young people in intake one and two witnessed the fatal stabbing of a young man at Bankstown train station in 2011. Two participants were known to be at-risk of domestic violence.

## 2. Delivery of the 'U-Turns for Youth' program

### 2.1 Most young people completed the 'U-Turns for Youth' program, but regular attendance was an issue

All but six participants completed the 'U-Turns for Youth' program. Two participants withdrew because of absences due to sickness, one was suspended from the program due to behaviour and another because they were unable to commit to attendance.

Of those who did complete the 'U-Turns for Youth' program, only six were known to have attended all sessions. The most frequent reason for absence was sickness; other reasons included having other commitments (exams, sports training, other meetings) and sleeping in. It is worth noting that a few participants said that their attendance at the program was better than their attendance at school, and that those who attended all sessions made a conscious effort to do so. Participants said they were more likely to attend the 'U-Turns for Youth' sessions than school because they were interested in the program and they didn't want to miss-out:

*I had better attendance than at school, I liked what I was doing, it was like starting a new chapter.*

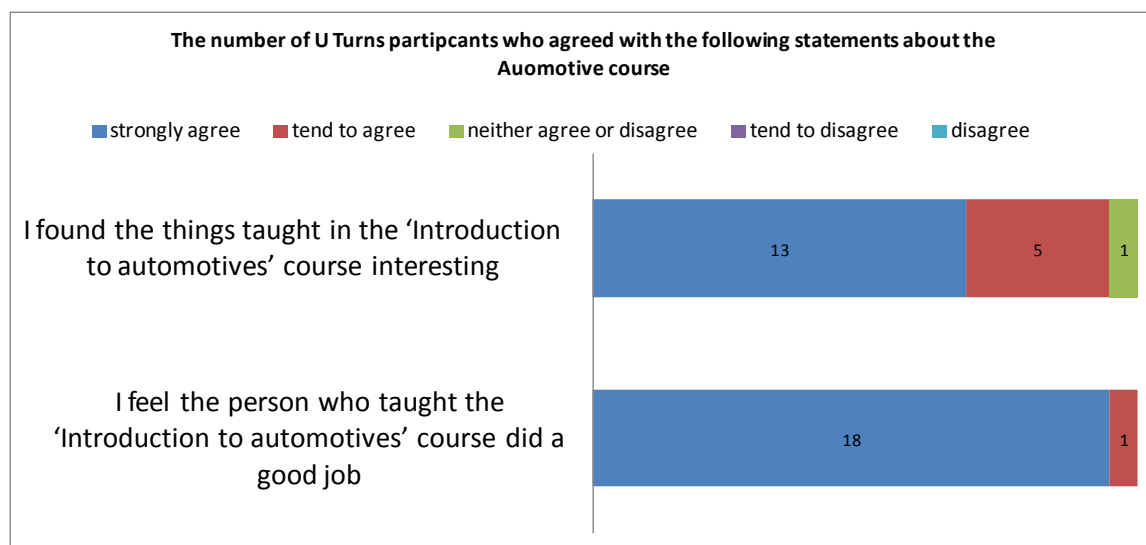
*I didn't want to miss a day.*

### 2.2 The automotive course was well-received, but could be longer with a larger focus on practical content

#### *Experiences of 'U-Turns for Youth' participants*

All of the nineteen participants who completed a post course survey agreed that 'the person who delivered the "Introduction to automotives" course did a good job', eighteen of which strongly agreed — see figure 3. All but one participant agreed that they found the course interesting; one participant neither agreed nor disagreed.

**Figure 3. The number of participants who agreed with statements on the automotive course**



Source: 'U-Turns for Youth' post-course participant survey

'U-Turns for Youth' participants said that they enjoyed the more practical components of the course most, including building the go-karts, fixing wheels on cars, stripping the motor and program excursions to companies within the automotive industry<sup>7</sup>. One participant said they didn't enjoy the more theoretical aspects of the course. The go-karting day at the end of the program was something that the participants looked forward to and enjoyed.

When asked how the program could be improved, four said that the program could have been longer, and two participants suggested that ten weeks would be a better amount of time for the course. Two participants asked for more excursions, two asked for more information on apprenticeships and three for more practical work on cars.

### *Experiences of the automotive course facilitator*

Telephone interviews with the automotive course facilitator after each 'U-Turns for Youth' intake provided additional information on the delivery of the course.

From these interviews, it is clear that there was some variation in course content across the intakes. The intakes that had more practical, hands-on activities seemed to be the most successful, as they were better able to keep participants engaged and "on-task":

*What keeps them engaged is that they actually learn about engines and they can see it run, it's very practical what you are learning, particularly the go-karts. They aren't just listening to theory, they are learning by doing, and I think this is why they attend so regularly.*

<sup>7</sup> Program excursions included visiting PolAir, a Police Air Division, and LSR, a smash repairer of luxury vehicles in Artarmon.

*In this round we didn't strip all the carts right back but we took off the plastic pods and repainted them. This is really laborious work and not very exciting for young people.*

It was clear that there were some behavioural issues in each intake, with one or two participants sometimes effecting the engagement and participation of their peers. As noted in chapter 2, many participants said they had trouble concentrating/ behaving at school. In one instance, a participant seemed to be distracted by things going on in their family, and other participants had general bad behaviour or trouble engaging in the program. In one intake, the group's engagement was effected by confrontation with a group of young people participating in a similar program in the area. It is worth noting though that while some participants were easily distracted, others were really engaged in the program and worked well. The facilitator noted that behaviour issues were less common when the participants were engaged in practical activities, like putting the go-karts back-together.

The facilitator felt that an effective behaviour management approach was to use attendance at the go karting day as a reward/ incentive for good behaviour.

The facilitator felt that involving the young person's family upfront might have supported the young person's engagement with the program:

*[The participant] ended up dropping out because there were so many family crises but I think if they understood the program and what [the participant] was doing maybe they wouldn't be calling and distracting [the participant] as much.*

The facilitator acknowledged difficulties in participants regularly attending the course. The facilitator felt that the program officer coordinating transport and either personally picking up the participants for the course or meeting them at a public transport interchange had a positive impact on attendance:

*I was impressed with how James had the boys catching the bus into TAFE, that he could arrange to meet them then have discussions on the way in with them.*

The course facilitator agreed with participants that the program should be longer. The facilitator felt that providing more ongoing support to the participants, particularly support in their emotional and personal lives, could make the automotive course have more of an impact for participants:

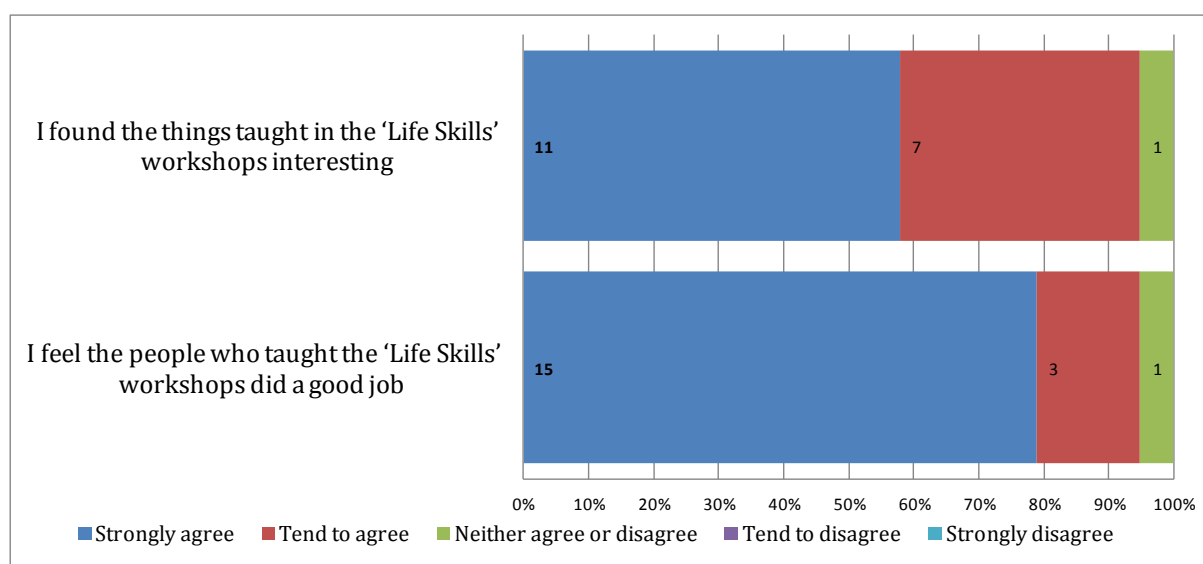
*I feel like there needs to be more ongoing support for the young people, we have them for six weeks and then say goodbye, I don't think they get much support from school counsellors and I think how we support U-Turns participants could be done better.*

## 2.3 The life-skills workshops were well-received, but could also be longer with a larger focus on practical activities

### *Satisfaction of 'U-Turns for Youth' participants*

All but one participant agreed, and most strongly agreed that the things taught in the Life skills workshops were interesting and that the people who taught the Life skills workshop did a good job — see Figure 4. Participants spoke particularly about the interesting information they had received on domestic violence, sexual assault, making better decisions, safe sex practices and drug and alcohol use. One participant said that the workshops that had practical activities were the most interesting, and another participant suggested that the workshops could be improved by making them *'more active'* and *'activity based'*.

**Figure 4. The number of participants who agreed with statements about the life skills workshops**



Source: 'U-Turns for Youth' post-course participant survey

### *Experiences of the life-skills workshop facilitators*

Facilitators of all life skills workshops were asked to complete a brief survey at the end of each intake. This was to capture their views on what went well when delivering the workshop, and what could have been improved.

The facilitators felt that the overall delivery of the workshop messages went well. A few facilitators felt that the activity-based components of the workshops were particularly well-received. Facilitators also spoke about creating a relaxed environment for the participants, for example delivering part of the workshops on gyms mats on the floor, which seemed to put the participants at ease. Facilitators also said that working with

the participants to discuss topics, as opposed to acting as the experts helped them to engage the participants.

One facilitator noted that a DVD they presented called “hot stuff” was felt to be a bit confrontational by the participants, and said that the presentation of this video would be more carefully considered in the future. Another suggested more diverse activities for participants with low literacy levels.

The life-skills facilitators felt that the participants were quite well-behaved at these sessions, although one facilitator said that the attention levels of the group fell by the end of the day. They suggested that more regular breaks could help sustain concentration.

A few facilitators felt that having a one-off session with the participants was not ideal, and that the participants may have benefited from a series of workshops on each life-skills topic. As one facilitator said — *This program needs to be continued for young people in the community to raise awareness and knowledge that they may otherwise not acquire.*

## **2.4 The program was managed well, but would benefit from the provision of longer-term project officer support**

A few comments from the participants at the post course interview and automotive and life skills course facilitators suggest that the 'U-Turns for Youth' program officers ran the program well. Participants spoke about being supported by the program officer to think about the education and employment options. Facilitators said that the program officer was well-organised and was clearly devoted to supporting the participants during the program. The program officer changed midway through the project, but there was no indication that this affected the delivery of the course from the perspectives of participants or course facilitators, other than delaying recruitment to intake two.

But a few course facilitators said that the program officer did not have much opportunity to support participants after the program ended, which many felt would be beneficial to the longer-term outcomes of the participants.

The program manual indicates that the project steering committee provided significant guidance and support throughout the program. This included advice on recruitment of referrals for the program, discussing and trouble-shooting program delivery issues, and providing advice on monitoring and evaluation. But there was inconsistent attendance at committee meetings by committee representatives and the local Police were hard to engage. The lack of consistent police involvement made it hard to reach the target group for the program: young people involved in motor vehicle offences<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> From observations made in the 'U-Turns for Youth' project manual, 2012.

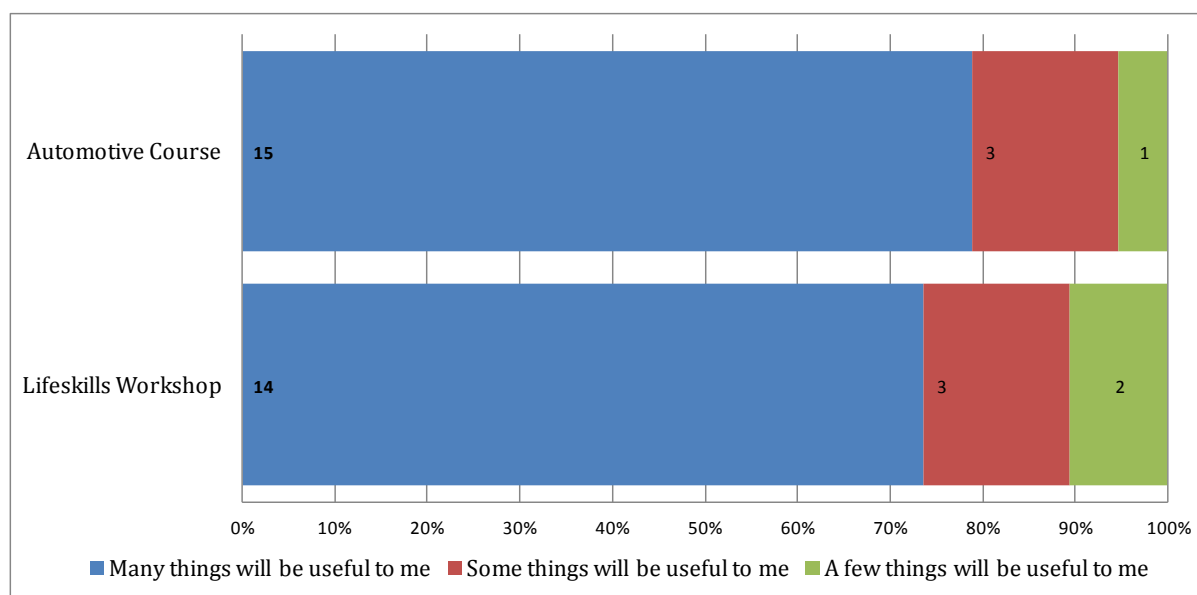
## Outcomes of the 'U-Turns for Youth' program

Information was collected from program participants and program stakeholders to explore the immediate and longer-term outcomes of the 'U-Turns for Youth' program. Data explored the impact of the program on the participant's skills and knowledge in automotive and life skills taught. It also explored participant's intentions and actions in relation to further education and training and accessing appropriate support services. What participants learned from the 'U-Turns for Youth' program.

### 3.1 'U-Turns for Youth' learnt a range of skills and knowledge they hoped to use in the future

All 'U-Turns for Youth' participants thought they had learned at least a few things in the automotive course and life skills workshops that will be useful to them in the future; most thought they had learned "many things" that would be useful — see Figure 5.

**Figure 5. The number of 'U-Turns for Youth' participants who thought the things they learnt on the automotive course and Life Skills workshops will be useful to them in the future.**



Source: 'U-Turns for Youth' post-course participant survey

Participants said that the automotive course taught them a lot about how engines work and about the tools used to work with motor vehicles.

*I learnt the names of new tools and learnt a lot about how a motor works and cars.*

*The interesting thing I found about TAFE was taking apart an engine and putting it back together with tools I didn't know how to use.*

Participants also said that they learnt about different forms of abuse during the life skills workshops, and about assessing the risk of particular decisions. Participants also learnt about the risks associated with drug and alcohol use, including how to respond to an overdose, and about sexual health.

### 3.2 Participants were given information about and planned to participate in further education, training and employment

#### *Support to access further education and training*

Many participants said that they had been supported to identify future training or employment options during the 'U-Turns for Youth' program. Four participants said that they had been given information on TAFE courses and apprenticeships, and a few others said that they had been given "ideas for the future" in regards to future education and training.

*This gave me a lot of ideas for the future to help me succeed in life.*

*They have given me assistance for looking for courses and information that could help me in the future.*

A couple of participants did not feel that they had been supported successfully to identify future study, training or education options or had not found this helpful:

*It gave me support, but I don't really have a better understanding of employment or education options.*

*Not very useful, I haven't found what [I can] do yet.*

#### *Plans to participate in further education and training*

After completing 'U-Turns for Youth', 18 of the 19 participants who completed the post course survey planned to participate in further education or training (equating to 95 per cent); this compared to ten of the 13 participants in the pre-course interviews (77 per cent). The post course survey was anonymous, making it impossible to track changes to individual participant's plans over time.

**Table 4. Number of participants who planned to participate in further education and training, before and after participation in the 'U-Turns for Youth' program**

	<i>Pre</i>	<i>Post</i>
Yes*	10	18
No	0	0
Don't know	3	1
<b>TOTAL N*</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>



Source: Pre course interview and post course feedback form. \*In post course survey, 'Yes' includes responses of 'yes, I intend to' or 'yes, I am already involved in new education or training'.

Qualitative responses from post course interviews provided further information on participant's education and training plans after 'U-Turns for Youth'. Four participants planned to undertake an apprenticeship in mechanics, and another wanted to undertake an automotive-related course. One of these participants said that they wanted to undertake an apprenticeship in aviation mechanics, a decision that had been influenced by Padstow TAFE whilst participating in the 'U-Turns for Youth' program. Other participants also planned to undertake further training or apprenticeships, including TAFE courses, training to become an electrician, carpentry courses and hospitality courses. Only one participant planned to move straight into employment.

### ***Barriers to participating in further education or training***

Participants identified a number of barriers they may face in participating in further education/ training – see Table 5. By far the largest barrier was not finding any opportunities of interest (ten of 19 participants said this was a barrier for them). Not finding any opportunities that matched their skills, a perceived lack of support from teachers, lack of money and a lack of time were also mentioned a few times.

**Table 5. Barriers to participating in education and/ or training**

<b>Barrier</b>	<b># of participants who ticked this response</b>
Not finding any opportunities that are of interest to me	10
Not finding any opportunities that match my skills	4
Lack of support from school/ teachers	4
Lack of time	3
Lack of money	3
Lack of support from family	1
A lack of transport	1
Difficult life circumstances	1
Lack of support from friends	0
'Other'	7
<b>Total n*</b>	<b>19</b>

NB: other included: a need to change behaviour or language, because currently at school and playing football Total n is not the total of the column numbers as respondents could tick more than one response.

Qualitative comments from post-course interviews provided a similar story. Many participants spoke about a lack of support, particularly from teachers as a barrier to achieving their future plans. A number of participants also identified that their behaviour, and particularly anger management issues as something that might impact their ability to achieve their future plans. Bad influences from friends, family problems and poor motivation were also issues that could prevent participants achieving their future plans.

### 3.3 Participants were taught new skills in decision-making and a few said they were putting these to use

Most participants said the Life Skills workshops had taught them new skills in decision making. Some said that they better understood how the decisions they made now might affect their future. The two students who reported risky or offending behaviour in the past (through the post course interview) felt they had changed their behaviour in a positive way: one thought that it was necessary to change behaviour such as swearing or being agitated or angry in order to remain in school, and the other decided to avoid any further trouble with friends and family.

### 3.4 Improved knowledge and access of support services

In the pre course interviews and post course surveys, participants were asked whether they have heard of, accessed or hoped to access several youth support agencies. The findings indicate a large difference in awareness and access to service before and after participation in the program– see Table 5.

At baseline, half of participants had heard of Bankstown Police and Community Youth Club (10 of the 20 participants with pre-course interview data); this rose to nearly 90 per cent after the program (17 of the 19 participants who completed the survey). Awareness of all other youth support services had also improved after participation in the program. Access to services had also increased after participation in 'U-Turns for Youth', across all youth support services promoted through the program.

**Table 6. Number of participants who had heard of and accessed youth support services, before and after participation in the 'U-Turns for Youth' program**

	Heard of (n)		Accessed (n)		Hope to access in the future (n)	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Bankstown Police and Community Youth Club	10	17		4	N/A	1
Baptist Community Services		7		1	N/A	3
The Corner Youth Health Services	3	14	1	6	N/A	8
Bankstown and Campsie Youth Safe		5		3	N/A	2
Red Cross	4	9		1	N/A	2
MTC Work Solutions	4	11	1	3	N/A	8
<b>TOTAL N*</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>19</b>

Source: Pre course interview and post course feedback form. Total N is not equal to column n, as respondents could tick more than one response.

Three of the eight life-skills course facilitators who completed a survey said that program participants had accessed their service since participating in the life-skills workshop they delivered.

### 3.5 Longer term outcomes

To gain some information on the longer term outcomes of 'U-Turns for Youth' participants, brief telephone interviews were undertaken with six intake one participants nine months after their completion of the 'U-Turns for Youth' program. Data supplied by Campsie LAC, regarding offences committed by participants after the program was also used.

#### Education and training

All but one of the interviewed participants was engaged in study or higher education nine months after completing 'U-Turns for Youth'<sup>9</sup>. One of the participants had started a mechanical apprenticeship after leaving the course; the young person felt their involvement in 'U-Turns for Youth' had helped them to get the apprenticeship. The participant had since dropped out of the apprenticeship due to travel issues, but was looking for new training opportunities closer to home. One 'U-Turns for Youth' graduate was training to be an electrician, another was doing a TVET in electro-technology, and another was doing a welding course.

The participants who were currently involved in further training said that this was one of their goals after leaving the 'U-Turns for Youth' program. A participant who was still at school said they had looked into employment opportunities, which was their goal after leaving 'U-Turns for Youth'. Another 'U-Turns for Youth' participant wanted to look into apprenticeships after participating in 'U-Turns for Youth' but they had not done so.

One participant felt that the 'U-Turns for Youth' course had helped them gain an experience of TAFE, which helped them to feel familiar and at ease in that environment. Another felt the course had given them the confidence to enrol in TAFE.

#### Risky behaviours

Five of the six participants we spoke to had been involved in some "risky behaviours" since participating in 'U-Turns for Youth'. One had four or five new minor offences, including swearing at police and violence. Three had been cautioned for drug possession, although one said they had since abstained from drug use for two months, based on what they learnt in the 'U-Turns for Youth' life skills workshop facilitated by Red Cross, "first aid save a mate" training. One had a breaking and entering charge and another had committed theft and drug-dealing, but had not been charged.

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<sup>9</sup> One participant had been expelled from school since leaving the program, as a result of truancy and oppositional behaviour.

Looking at police data, ten of the twenty six program participants had offences after the program. Of these, half had only minor offences, such as an infringement notice for train fare evasion and after participation in 'U-Turns for Youth' is provided in table X. for spitting. The other five participants had more serious offences, two of which were motor vehicle related<sup>10</sup>. Five participants who had committed offences before participating in 'U-Turns for Youth' had not offended since participating in the program. A summary of offensive behaviour before

**Table 7. Number of participants who with offence behaviours before and after participation in the 'U-Turns for Youth' program**

	<i>Pre</i>	<i>Post</i>
# participants with criminal charges or cautions	6	4
# participants with motor vehicle related offences	1	2
# participants with known 'risky behaviours' (i.e. truancy, transport fines etc)	9	7
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>

Source: Data supplied by Campsie LAC.

### Improved decision-making

Participants spoke about a number of ways the 'U-Turns for Youth' course had affected their life decisions and changed the way they looked at things. Three participants said the program had made them think about the consequences of their actions more, including who they socialise with and their risky behaviours. One participant did say that, despite considering the consequences of their actions, they still found it hard to make the right decisions:

*U-Turns taught me to think about consequences. I don't think before I do some things, my mates are bad influences.*

A few 'U-Turns for Youth' participants said that they had thought a lot more about their future education and training after leaving 'U-Turns for Youth', and were more motivated to further their education and skills. Some reported making changed to their life to meet these goals:

*U-Turns helped motivate me to get further education and skills. I also decided to sell all my motorbikes to reduce temptation.*

*It's made me think about the choice I make and the consequences. I attend school and I want to get a job.*

<sup>10</sup> One participant had been caught driving without a licence and another had been charged for motor vehicle theft.

**Use of support services**

Although none of the young people said they had accessed any of the youth services that were a part of the 'U-Turns for Youth' program after participating in the program, the Corner Youth Health Service have indicated a number of program participants attended the centre to access the counselling service.

## Conclusions

Overall the 'U-Turns for Youth' program was well-delivered and well-received by those involved in it. Efforts were made to adapt the courses based on feedback from participants: with more practical and active items introduced to better engage participants. Issues were faced in consistent engagement of stakeholders in the steering committee, particularly from key stakeholders such as police which effected the management of the program.

The program initially intended to recruit participants who had a record of serious criminal offences, particularly offences related to motor vehicles. But these participants may have had a negative impact on the program, given their current behaviours. Those who did participate in the program had exhibited "risky behaviours" or disengagement from education, which are known to be risk factors for more serious crime — these participants seemed to be a good fit for the program and generally responded well to it.

Program participants gained a number of immediate outcomes from participating in the program, including support and information about further education and training, better knowledge and skills, and intentions to change their risky behaviours and participate in further education and training. But data (although limited) on longer-term outcomes suggests participants sometimes struggled to put these intentions into practice, due to negative influences in their lives outside of the program.

## **Appendix 1: 'U-Turns for Youth' evaluation framework and plan**