Research Evaluation of PCYC Bornhoffen Catalyst Intervention Programs for Youth-at-Risk [2012-2013]

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Executive Summary

Image this hypothetical scenario:

You are 15 years old and you have a difficult home life due to lots of family fighting. You are finding school hard. You don’t have many friends. Sometimes you get into fights at school. One of your teachers seems to care - they have offered you a chance to do a 15-day Catalyst program. You would need to keep going to school and then you can do the program which involves hiking, ropes courses, raft building, group activities, camping, and more. There will be a weekend trip initially, to see how you go, and then a 9-day expedition, and a follow-up experience. What do you reckon? How do you feel? What will happen?

You take the plunge. The program is a lot of fun, but also very challenging. It is more physically challenging than you expected, especially the hiking. But it is also socially challenging as you have to learn how to tolerate other people, how to communicate effectively, and how to cooperate to get things done. You are also challenged by your emotional reactions and controlling your behaviours. You miss your family members and look forward to seeing them again and showing them who you have become. You feel more confident in who you are and about making decisions which will take you along the right path. As your confidence and belief in yourself grows, you become more optimistic about the possibilities for your future. You look forward to finishing school and developing plans for your future job and life.

It turns out that this scenario is not-so-hypothetical, but rather a prototypical example of the experience of many Catalyst program participants.

Program evaluation key points – in a nutshell:

1. The 15-day PCYC Catalyst program is an adventure-based intervention for Queensland youth from at-risk backgrounds (due to family, school, social and/or psychological problems). Participants were typically engaged by a teacher at their high school who encouraged them to participate.

2. Longitudinal surveys with youth participants and adult observers indicated positive overall changes for approximately two-third of participants. There were small to moderate positive short- and longer-term changes in most of the targeted life effectiveness skills, psychological well-being was enhanced, and several aspects of behavioural conduct improved. Whilst mostly positive, the measured changes were generally lower than comparative adventure therapy benchmarks. The Catalyst program effected a positive change of approximately 10 to 14%, whilst comparative benchmarks indicate an average positive change of approximately 17 to 19%. Thus, the efficacy of the Catalyst program is promising but could be further enhanced.

3. Interviews with youth participants indicated that they felt supported by the program staff, learnt to trust others, and developed self-belief, positive thinking, and persistence in overcoming problems. Reported program highlights were the high adventure and group activities, whilst the lowlights were the physical challenges of hiking.

4. Interviews with staff highlighted the importance of implementing a revised selection and screening process to target and identify at-risk participants who were motivated to engage in opportunities for change. Staff perceived that the program was well conducted, with most participants engaging willingly in most program activities, leading to enhancement of participants’ self-esteem and self-confidence. Nevertheless, there were some participants in each group for whom the program appeared to have no appreciable impact. At times there was some notable group conflict which challenged staff’s conflict resolution skills, but which was generally effectively resolved. There was some concern expressed by staff about the financial sustainability of the program.

5. Key recommendations for future program development include improving the screening process, exploring ways to better prepare participants for the physical challenge of hiking, staff training in managing group conflict, increasing exposure to high adventure activities, reviewing the use of reflective activities, redesign of the follow-up component, and revising the evaluation procedures.
This study reports on the short- and longer-term impacts of PCYC Bornhoffen Catalyst Programs on youth participants from multiple perspectives (self and observer) and multiple data sources (questionnaires and interviews). Catalyst is an adventure-based intervention program for adolescents who are at-risk of behavioural, psychological, and social problems. Catalyst aims to improve youths’ personal and social life effectiveness, mental health, and behavioural conduct. This evaluation focuses on the 56 participants in six Catalyst programs conducted in Queensland during 2012 and 2013.

There were notable short- and long-term improvements in life effectiveness, psychological well-being, and several aspects of behavioural conduct. There was no longer-term impact on psychological distress and some areas of behaviour. Overall, positive changes were evident for approximately two-thirds of participants. Observers (facilitators and teachers) tended to report greater positive change compared to youth participants’ self-reports. Although generally positive, the size of the outcomes from the Catalyst program was lower than for comparative benchmarks from Bowen and Neill’s (2013) meta-analysis of adventure therapy programs.

A more detailed summary of the results is:

**Life effectiveness skills**

1. Youth participants’ self-ratings indicated small, positive, short-term changes (from the beginning to the end of the program) in all the measured domains of personal and social life effectiveness skills, with an overall effect size (ES) of .16 (an 8% change; \( n = 36 \)). There were small to moderate, positive, longer-term changes in all personal and social life skills, with an overall ES of .30 (a 12% change; \( n = 29 \)).

2. Observer ratings indicated moderately large positive short-term changes in life effectiveness skills (ES = .60, a 29% change; \( N = 39 \)) and small positive longer-term changes (0.24, a 12% change; \( N = 24 \)).
Mental health

1. Youth participants’ self-reported a small overall worsening of their mental health in the short-term (during the Expedition; $ES = -0.12$, a 5% change), however they reported a small to moderate improvement in mental health in the longer-term ($0.35$, a 14% change) ($N = 39$).

2. These overall mental health self-reported results over time were made up of separate results for psychological distress and psychological well-being. There was a small to moderate short-term heightening of psychological distress during the Expedition ($-0.34$, a 13% change), probably due to the challenging physically, social, and emotional conditions. However, this apparent heightening of psychological distress was largely temporary, with participants reporting only a very small longer-term change ($-0.10$, a 5% change). Participants reported little short-term change for psychological well-being ($0.08$, a 4% change), but substantial positive improvements in longer-term psychological well-being ($0.80$, a 29% change).

3. Observer ratings of mental health indicated a different pattern ($N = 23$). Observer ratings indicated a large positive short-term enhancement of psychological well-being ($0.80$, a 29% change) and a very small short-term reduction of psychological distress ($0.12$, a 6% change). In the longer-term, observer ratings indicated no change in psychological well-being ($0.00$, a 0% change) and a small heightening of psychological distress ($-0.29$, an 11% change).

Behavioural conduct

1. Youth participants’ self-ratings indicated small, positive, longer-term improvements in behavioural conduct ($ES = 0.12$, a 5% change).

2. Observer ratings indicated a small to moderate longer-term improvements in behavioural conduct ($0.27$, an 11% change).

Although generally positive, the size of the outcomes from the Catalyst program was slightly lower than for comparative benchmarks from Bowen and Neill’s (2013) meta-analysis of adventure therapy programs: youth participants’ self-reported longer-term positive change of 12% in life effectiveness ($ES = 0.30$) compares to a benchmark of 17% ($ES = 0.45$). For mental health, youth participants reported a long-term positive change of 14% ($ES = 0.35$) compared to a benchmark of 19% ($0.49$). For behavioural conduct, youth participants reported a long-term positive change of 10% ($ES = -0.25$) versus a benchmark of 19% ($-0.50$). These differences are not statistically significant.

Youth participants were also asked to rate the Catalyst program, the outcomes, and their satisfaction with the program:

1. On average, youth participants indicated that it was “mostly true” that they had improved in their personal ($M = 6.2$ out of 8) and social (5.8) effectiveness as a result of the program, with a slightly stronger endorsement of change in personal than social skills.

2. Youth participants rated the program facilitators highly (6.4). There were many positive comments and no negative comments were made about the facilitators.

3. Youth participants provided mixed ratings and comments about the group dynamics (5.5). Roughly half of the comments indicated that the group worked well together whilst the other half reported that there were group difficulties such as formation of cliques and challenges in resolving social conflict.

4. On average, youth participants felt that it was “mostly true” (5.8) that they become fully involved in the group, however half of the comments about group participating were about a lack of group involvement.

5. On average, youth participants rated the Catalyst program very highly (6.7). Each of the three program components was also rated very positively: Lead-in (6.6), Expedition (6.5) and Follow-up (6.2).

6. In terms of the level of challenge (ease versus difficulty), the Lead-in was rated as about right (4.7; mid-point is 4.5), the Expedition as somewhat too hard (5.5), and the Follow-up as somewhat too easy (3.8). In terms of length, the Lead-in was rated as about right (4.7), the Expedition as somewhat too long (5.9) and the Follow-up as somewhat too short (3.9).
During interviews with 14 youth participants, they expressed a range of generally positive responses about the Catalyst program. Key points included that:

1. Youths typically came from at-risk backgrounds due to family, school, social and/or psychological problems, and were typically engaged by a teacher at their high school who encouraged them to participate.
2. Youths felt supported by the program staff as they faced personal and social challenges during the program, including learning to trust others, and developing self-belief, positive thinking, and persistence in overcoming problems during the Expedition.
3. Youths found the Expedition hiking the most difficult component of the program, yet this was also appeared to be the key component in helping the participants to develop their self-esteem and mental toughness.
4. The highlights of the program typically included the high adventure activities such as abseiling, caving, and canoeing, as well as playing group games.
5. Lowlights typically included the toughness of hiking.
6. The youths reported that they developed positive relationships with staff. They also often reported that they developed at least one positive peer relationship, if not several, through the program.
7. Youth participants reported that they looked forward to applying their learning at home and school and to further engagement with the Catalyst program, through the Follow-up.

Interviews with nine Catalyst and accompanying school staff highlighted these points:

1. A critical challenge is for Catalyst staff to work with high schools is to identify, engage, and select a group of youth participants who have problems but who are motivated towards, and capable of, learning how to cope better and take positive actions to change their futures. The program could benefit from further revision to the intake and profiling process.
2. Each of the program components (Lead-in, Expedition, and Follow-up) appears to have been well conducted.
3. Lead facilitators have considerable responsibility for the design and delivery of the program which has generally been effective but contributes to some inconsistencies between programs.
4. For the program to build on its potential, grow and develop further, the involvement of a senior adventure therapist to guide program design, provide staff training, and supervision would be beneficial.
5. Most youth participants engaged willingly in most program activities, although typically a few participants who were on the Lead-in did not continue their participation.
6. Program staff observed improvements in self-esteem and self-confidence as, arguably, the most common outcomes, followed by the development of social skills, awareness of the effects of one’s behaviour on others, and the positive experience of being in a supportive group.
7. Management of group processes required considerable skills, patience, and effort on the part of facilitators to negotiate and maintain awareness of group agreements. Participants appeared to struggle somewhat with self-reflection activities and facilitators had to work hard to help facilitate reflections about how participants’ personal actions had consequences for themselves and others.
8. In each program, there appeared to be some participants who derived clear, positive growth and benefits, whilst for other participants the signs of change were still in their early stages, and for some participants, there were no obvious signs of change.
9. The organisational sustainability of the program needs consideration as the Catalyst program is not core-funded by PCYC and so is dependent on external funding. In order for the Catalyst program to be sustainable into the future, it is likely to need at least some strategic core funding commitment from PCYC.
The key recommendations arising from these program evaluation results include:

1. **Nomenclature** - The Catalyst program is arguably more accurately described as “therapeutic adventure” (rather than “adventure therapy”). Few, if any, adventure-based intervention programs in Australia currently meet the criteria for “adventure therapy. If it was sought for the Catalyst program to become recognised as adventure therapy program, it would probably be necessary to engage in client diagnosis, adoption of therapeutic processes and techniques with a stronger theoretical and empirical basis, and for the programs to be supervised by staff with recognised qualifications in psychology.

2. **Screening** – Screening of potential participants was key to the success of the Catalyst program. It is critical that youths’ participation is voluntary and well-informed, although teacher support and encouragement is also vital. The target criteria for youth participants needs to be clearly understood by participating schools to help ensure optimal selection of target participants who are likely to benefit from the program.

3. **Physical challenge of initial Expedition hiking** – During interviews, participants’ main complaint related to the physical challenge of the Expedition hiking, particularly in the initial days. Many participants also recognised this physical challenge as an important part of their overall learning process. Nevertheless, the extent of physical challenge involved could be more clearly and consciously communicated during recruitment and screening. Some strategies could also be considered for mitigating (but not removing) the physical challenge of the initial up-hill Expedition hiking (e.g., pre-Expedition fitness training, closer scrutiny of pack weights, and/or providing more gear swap/food resupply opportunities during the Expedition).

4. **Group storming and norming during the Expedition** – Many participants were significantly challenged by difficult group relations during the Expedition. Most groups eventually succeeded in learning how to live and work effectively together, with the assistance of facilitators. It could be beneficial to explore additional and/or best-practice strategies for group and facilitation management as facilitation methods varied considerably according to facilitator. Perhaps the best ideas from amongst different facilitators about group management techniques could be pooled, reviewed, and then become more standard.

5. **High adventure activities** – The highlights of the program for participants were the “high adventure” activities. It could be useful to consider ways in which the program might increase exposure to such activities (e.g., maximising time on activity and/or including multiple or longer sessions and/or additional high adventure activities). Other activities that may be possible include rock climbing, orienteering, creek, swimming hole activities, and additional group initiative challenges.

6. **Reflective activities** – Many participants struggled with self-reflective activities (such as journal writing). Nevertheless, these activities were important in helping to develop self-awareness, self-understanding, and self-disclosure. Implementation of these activities could be reviewed and potentially revised to help them to achieve greater impact.

7. **Follow-up activities** – Participants rated the Follow-up component less favourably than the Expedition and Lead-in components. Participants appeared to expect a more challenging capstone experience.

8. **Future evaluation** – An on-going program evaluation framework for monitoring program impacts should be developed. A future evaluation approach could use streamlined versions of the current evaluation tools and aim to provide closer to real-time program monitoring and feedback.

9. **Program sustainability** – The Catalyst program is well situated for future viability in terms of its location, facilities, equipment, expertise, and relevance to the needs of youth-at-risk. However, the program’s sustainability appears to be vulnerable due to its reliance on short-term cycles of external funding. The program warrants consideration for further development and possible expansion through core funding.
Introduction

Background

The main purpose of this research evaluation project was to examine the effectiveness of the 2012-2013 Catalyst programs in achieving their targeted youth development objectives. The second purpose was to identify which aspects of the program processes and outcomes appear to be working well and which aspects can be recommended for improvement. The third purpose is to facilitate the capacity of the program staff to undertake ongoing evidence-based program evaluation.

Key steps involved in the evaluation included:
1. Operationalising the program objectives
2. Describing, contextualising, and reviewing the intervention model
3. Examining the short- and longer-term effectiveness of the program in facilitating youth development and benchmarking the outcomes
4. Proposing an ongoing evaluation model

The research evaluation design involves a longitudinal (Pre, Post, and Follow-up), mixed-method (quantitative and qualitative), multiple-perspective (self and observer) research study to examine the impacts of the Catalyst program on 53 youth participants. More specifically, this study collected quantitative (numeric) data using self and observer measures of generic life skills, mental health, and behavioural conduct and qualitative (non-numeric) data using semi-structured interviews and case studies.
Youth-at-risk

Ensuring young people get the best possible start in life is central to the health, social inclusion, and productivity agendas of the Australian Government (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008). In undergoing the critical transition from childhood to adulthood, young people face threats and dangers from themselves, others, and society at large (Kelly, 2000). Thus, there is a cultural need to protect, monitor, contain, and sustain young people (Sharland, 2006). Of concern, in particular, are young people who are at-risk of manifesting negative life trajectories with regard to their psychological well-being, education and career, and/or civic or social contributions.

Risk taking is a healthy and desirable component of young people’s lives and development. Taking risks is intrinsically linked to identity formation, and ideally supports the growth of an integrated sense of self, self-esteem and self-regulation (Sharland, 2006). Young people are also increasingly expected to become the architects of their own lives (Crime Prevention Victoria & Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2003). This increasing independence, however, brings many challenges and risks of negative, as well as positive, developmental outcomes. As adolescence is a critical period for the emergence and entrenchment of cognitive and behavioural patterns, positive experiences during this period help to enable a young person to achieve and maintain a healthy and productive life (Cunneen & White, 2011). However, negative experiences can put individuals on problematic pathways which, for some, persist into adulthood and involve considerable costs for individuals, families and the community (Crime Prevention Victoria & Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2002).

The risks encountered by young people operate across a variety of contexts which can be categorised as individual, family, school-based, life-events, and societal (Crime Prevention Victoria & Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2002). The more proximal the risk factor, the greater its influence (Walker & Shinn, 2002). In addition, the onset, frequency, persistence and duration of risks matter; the more risks one is exposed to and the longer the exposure, the greater the potential negative impact upon the individual’s well-being (Welsh & Farrington, 2010). Risks also often overlap, so the presence of one risk can make the occurrence of another risk more likely. An individual’s degree of exposure to risk for negative outcomes can be categorised as:

1. Typically developing youth, with no elevated concern of risk for negative outcomes;
2. Youth with an elevated risk status for negative outcomes; and

Negative psychosocial developmental outcomes can be characterised as being either internalised (e.g., anxiety and depression) or externalised (e.g., aggression, violence, delinquency, school failure and dropout, sexual harassment, unsafe sexual practices, dangerous driving, substance abuse). Such problems are associated with higher rates of injury among young people and, in the longer-term, a range of health conditions and associated risk factors (e.g., mental health disorders, chronic and communicable diseases, and overweight and obesity) which may emerge and continue into adulthood (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008). The problems that youth-at-risk experience are clearly evident in health, education, and crime statistics.

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1 A quarter (26%) of Australian adolescents aged 14 to 19 years had high alcohol use, 10% smoked tobacco, and 16% used an illicit drug in the previous 12 months (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008). Mental health disorders account for almost 50% of the disease cost for the 15 to 24 year age group (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008), with 6 to 7% engaging in self-harm in any 12-month period (Martin, Swannell, Hazell, Harrison, & Taylor, 2010).
2 Attendance declines during secondary school in Australia and remains below primary school levels (COAG Reform Council, 2013). Approximately 15% leave before Year 12 (80% of females complete, whereas 69% of males complete), with Indigenous students being almost half as likely to complete Year 12 (43% retention rate) (COAG Reform Council, 2013). Young people living in remote or very remote locations and Indigenous young Australians continue to experience far lower education and training engagement and achievements (Foundation for Young Australians, 2013). Approximately 1 in 14 students do not reach the minimum standard in literacy, and approximately 1 in 15 in numeracy (COAG Reform Council, 2013). During 2006 to 2012 in New South Wales, the number of long suspensions (up to 20 school days) increased by 47.5%.
Youth-at-risk intervention programs

Intervention programs can decrease the likelihood of youth-at-risk developing negative life trajectories. Programs can be characterised by the point at which they engage in an individual’s development:

1. Primary prevention aims to enhance protective factors and keep minor problems and difficulties from emerging. It targets the whole population and also targets specific groups.
2. Secondary prevention aims to counteract or stop harm from exposure to known risk factors. It targets individuals with early warning signs of developing negative life trajectories and aims to help support the individual towards a positive life trajectory.
3. Tertiary prevention aims to reduce, rather than reverse, harm amongst the most severely at-risk individuals who have established problems. It also aims to minimise the potential for future problems and their consequences (Chan et al., 2004; National Public Health Partnership, 2006; Weissberg, Kumpfer, & Seligman, 2003; Williams, Holmbeck, & Greenley, 2002).

Earlier prevention strategies are preferred over those which are implemented after problems have become entrenched (Crime Prevention Victoria and Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2002). Early prevention is an efficacious and cost-effective approach to promoting positive development and preventing potential problems for youth exposed to negative risk factors (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999; Walker & Shinn, 2002). Prevention programs use a wide range of models and techniques, variously aimed at reducing opportunities for problem behaviours to arise or become established, enhancing social opportunities for individuals and groups, and facilitating social empowerment and institutional change (Cunneen & White, 2011).

Several prevention programs have been evaluated in recent decades to assess their effects on delinquency, youth mental disorders, and substance abuse, including Cognitive-Behavioural Therapies, family-based therapies, justice-system interventions, residential treatment programs, and adventure-based programs.

Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy has been widely used for individual and group treatment of youth with mental health issues, social behaviour problems, and comorbid conditions (Kendall, 2012). Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy aims to increase positive behaviours and thoughts, decrease negative behaviours and thoughts, and improve interpersonal skills (Szigethy, Weisz, & Findling, 2012). Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy techniques include identification and modification of maladaptive thoughts and behaviours, skill building, anger management, rehearsal, role taking, and contingent reinforcement (Van Bilsen, 2013). Meta-analyses of Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy programs have shown effectiveness in reducing recidivism rates (Landenberger & Lipsey, 2005), substance use problems (Waldron & Turner, 2008) and mental health difficulties (Compton et al., 2004). Meta-analytic reviews of Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy for youth have found effectiveness in reducing anxiety ($d = .98$; 30 studies; James, James, Cowdrey, Soler, & Choke, 2013), criminal offending ($d = .84$; 58 studies; Landenberger & Lipsey, 2005), anger ($d = .67$; 40 studies; Sukhodolsky, Kassinove, & Gorman, 2004), antisocial behaviour ($d = .48$; 30

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1. The cost of crime in Australia represents 4% of national gross domestic product (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2008). Since 2010, the offending rate has been highest in the 15 to 19 year age group (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2013) with an increase in the seriousness of offences for which juveniles have been apprehended over the last few decades (Cunneen & White, 2011). In 2010 to 2011, the offending rate of 15 to 19 years was almost three times the rate for all other offenders in other age groups (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2013). The major reasons for young people’s contact with police relate to theft, property damage, physical assault and sexual assault (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2013; Cunneen & White, 2011). As a result, approximately 7,000 young people (aged 10 and older) are under youth justice supervision in Australia due to their involvement or alleged involvement in crime (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2013).
Family-based interventions include Multi-Systemic Therapy, Functional Family Therapy, Multi-Dimensional Family Therapy, and Brief Strategic Family Therapy. These interventions assume that juvenile antisocial behaviour is developed and maintained through maladaptive family interactions, structures, and patterns (Tarolla, Wagner, Rabinowitz, & Tubman, 2002). The therapies aim to improve parenting skills (e.g., child/parent communication patterns and skills, behavioural contracting, specification of rules, and positive reinforcement), as well as youth social, coping, and regulation skills (Greenberg & Lippold, 2013). Additionally, they seek to address problems in the broader family system, as well as youth interactions in other domains (e.g., peer and school settings) (Henggeler & Sheidow, 2012). Family-based interventions are associated with reductions in adolescent substance use, delinquency, recidivism, associations with deviant peers, and with improvements in educational outcomes and family functioning (Farrington & Welsh, 2003; Liddle, Rowe, Dakof, Ungaro, & Henderson, 2004; Szapocznik & Williams, 2000; Waldron & Turner, 2008). A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of family-based crime prevention programs reported small significant short-term reductions for offending outcomes ($d = .22$; 40 studies) and delinquency outcomes ($d = .32$; 19 studies), and a small non-significant short-term reduction for antisocial behaviour outcomes ($d = .20$; 27 studies; Farrington & Welsh, 2003).

Multi-Systemic Therapy is an intensive, family-focused and community-based intervention for families of adolescents with social, emotional, and behavioural problems. It uses a combination of empirically-based treatments (e.g., Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy, behavioural parent training, functional family therapy) to address multiple variables (e.g., family, school, peer groups) that have been identified as factors in juvenile and antisocial behaviour (Henggeler, Schoenwald, Borduin, Rowland, & Cunningham, 2009). Multi-Systemic Therapy aims to reduce adolescent criminal activity and antisocial behaviour by empowering youth and their parents with the skills and resources needed to independently address difficulties and manage their complex environmental and social problems (Littell, Popa, & Burnee, 2005). Multi-Systemic Therapy has a relatively strong research base, with program effects including longer-term reductions in rearrest, severity of crimes committed, reduced risk of out-of-home placement, and improvement in academic outcomes (Henggeler & Sheidow, 2012). A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of Multi-Systemic Therapy reported a moderate significant short-term reduction in antisocial behaviour and psychiatric symptoms ($d = .55$; 11 studies; Curtis, Ronan, & Borduin, 2004).

Juvenile court systems have implemented several systems to reduce youth delinquency and reoffending, including restorative justice, Adolescent Diversion Programs, and changes in adjudication and sentencing (Cunneen & White, 2011). Restorative justice aims to increase the involvement of criminal offenders with the victims of their crime and the greater community through the voluntarily meeting of the offender with the victim to discuss the crime and to decide ways to repair the harm (Rodriguez, 2007; Strang, 2001). A meta-analysis by Latimer, Dowden, and Muise (2005) concluded that restorative justice is a promising approach for adolescents. Adolescent Diversion Programs divert youth from the juvenile justice system and instead refer them to community-based services. A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of Adolescent Diversion Programs reported a small non-significant short-term reduction in recidivism ($d = .10$; 28 studies; Schwalbe, Gearing, MacKenzie, Brewer, & Ibrahim, 2012).

Residential Treatment Programs are for youth who have medium to high emotional and behavioural support needs. They provide stays of varying periods in a non-family setting, from a few weeks to several months (Brady, 2002). Residential Treatment Programs range in degree of restrictiveness from treatment foster care and community-based group homes through to psychiatric hospitals (McCurdy & McIntyre, 2004). Residential Treatment Programs provide short-term housing as well as development of other skills, support, and activities necessary for recovery. Together with specialised therapeutic treatment, these needs are addressed through intensive supervision and group work in a highly structured environment (Knorth, Harder, Zandberg, & Kendrick, 2008). They are often family-focused and can include vocational education and training. Reviews on the outcomes of Residential Treatment Programs suggest that they
improve functioning for many, but not all, youth (Frensch & Cameron, 2002; Hair, 2005; Knorth et al., 2008). However, gains made by youth during treatment are not easily maintained and tend to dissipate over time (Frensch & Cameron, 2002). Post-discharge changes depend on family involvement, community support, and aftercare services (Hair, 2005). A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of Residential Treatment Programs reported moderate significant short-term reduction in internalising problem behaviour \( (d = .45; 7 \text{ studies}) \) and externalising problem behaviour \( (d = .60; 5 \text{ studies}; \text{Knorth et al., 2008}) \).

**Adventure-based interventions**

Adventure-based interventions generally combine small groups, contact with nature, adventure-based activities, and eclectic therapeutic processes to create opportunities for change in participants with the purpose of supporting an individual (or family) to move towards greater health and well-being (Pryor, 2009). Adventure-based interventions can operate in a wide range of settings and utilise diverse and innovative practices to achieve a variety of outcomes (e.g., recreation, enrichment, training, education, prevention, early intervention, respite, treatment, recovery, palliative care) (Pryor, Carpenter, & Townsend, 2005). Adventure-based intervention programs may be as brief as one-day activities, are often multi-day residential camps, but could also take place over several weeks or months. Programs may be one-off experiences or may involve lead-in and follow-up components and/or weekly activities.

Adventure-based interventions may aim to be recreational (to have fun), educational (to learn), developmental (to grow and develop), or therapeutic/redirectional (to help resolve dysfunction) (Neill, 2006). According to Williams (2004), there should be further distinction made between “therapeutic adventure” and “adventure therapy” as there may be substantial differences in processes and outcomes (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Therapy</th>
<th>Therapeutic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosis (problem identification)</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Not required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Specific remedial outcomes are intended</td>
<td>Non-specific or serendipitous outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Targetted intervention that treats the identified problem</td>
<td>Generalised intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program design and decision-making</td>
<td>Based on a body of theoretical knowledge</td>
<td>Need not rely on guiding framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and evaluation</td>
<td>Systematic research and evaluation on processes and outcomes</td>
<td>Does not rely so heavily on research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitation</td>
<td>Facilitation by trained therapists</td>
<td>Specialist therapy training not needed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Benchmarks for adventure-based interventions**

Benchmarks for evaluating the effectiveness of adventure-based interventions can be drawn from relevant meta-analyses. Meta-analysis draws together empirical literature about a specific topic. The key meta-analytic studies which can be recommended as a basis for comparison with adventure-based interventions for youth have focussed on adventure education (Hattie et al., 1997), adventure therapy (Bowen & Neill, 2013) and wilderness therapy for delinquency (Wilson & Lipsy, 2000). In Hattie et al. (1997) and Bowen and Neill (2013), participant age predicted outcomes, with adult-age participants reporting stronger positive outcomes than youth participants. Thus, age-appropriate benchmarks should be used where possible. Furthermore, the size of outcomes depends on the type of outcome being measured. Thus,
where possible, comparisons should be made with benchmarks based on similar outcomes where possible.

In the major meta-analysis of adventure education programs to date, Hattie et al. (1997) analysed 96 studies about measured effects of such programs. The overall short-term effect size\(^4\) was positive and moderate (ES = 0.34), with a small additional positive effect size during the follow-up period (ES = 0.17), suggesting a moderate longer-term overall effect size of approximately 0.51\(^5\). For delinquents, there were similar positive short-term outcomes (ES = 0.33) with considerable additional positive change during the follow-up period (ES = 0.34), suggesting a moderately large longer-term overall effect size of approximately 0.67. For school-aged participants, there were smaller positive short-term outcomes (ES = 0.21), followed by additional positive effects (ES = 0.19), suggesting a moderate longer-term overall effect size of 0.40.

In the major meta-analysis of adventure therapy program outcomes to date, Bowen and Neill (2013) analysed 197 studies of outcomes for adventure-based intervention programs with therapeutic intent. The overall short-term effect size was 0.47, with little additional change during the follow-up period 0.03, suggesting a longer-term overall effect size of 0.50. For 10 to 17 year olds in this study, the short-term effect size was 0.44, suggesting a moderate longer-term overall effect size of 0.47.

A third major meta-analysis of relevance to the current study focused on 22 studies of wilderness therapy programs for delinquency (Wilson & Lipsey, 2000). The overall effect size was positive, but relatively small compared to the other studies (0.17), perhaps because it focused on behavioural indicators such as recidivism and antisocial behaviour. Of particular note was that outcomes varied according to intensity (high intensity wilderness challenge programs, such as those that employ strenuous solo and group expeditions and other difficult physical activities, produced larger delinquency reductions than programs that employed less rigorous activities) and whether the program incorporated a distinct therapy component (programs with a distinct therapy component resulted in lower delinquent and antisocial behaviour than those without such enhancements).

Overall, these meta-analytic studies (and other similar studies, e.g., see Neill, 2009) indicate that a typical adventure-based intervention with therapeutic intentions targeting youth for which there is publically reported outcomes tends to have a moderately positive longer-term effect on measured outcomes (including clinical, self-constructs, interpersonal skills etc.) or, more specifically, a change of approximately half a standard deviation, or a standardised mean effect size of .40 (16% change) and .50 (19% change)\(^6\).

\(^4\) The data analysis section explains effect sizes in more detail.

\(^5\) The short- and longer-term effect sizes from the Hattie et al. meta-analysis study can be added to estimate a longer-term overall effect size.

\(^6\) By converting an effect size to an area under a normal curve we can translate say an ES of say 0.50 to meaning that a group which originally scored on the 50th percentile is now scoring on the 69th percentile – or that they are now higher than 69% of the original cohort scores. This can be calculated using the area under the normal curve, such as via

http://davidmlane.com/hyperstat/z_table.html
The Catalyst Program

The Catalyst program is an adventure-based intervention program for young people (aged 13 to 16 years) who are considered to be at risk of adverse outcomes in their educational, vocational, and life-course pathways. The program’s primary aim is to help young people to make positive life choices, experience a meaningful life, make a positive contribution to their community, and to assist in the transition into young adulthood. The intervention program applies early intervention strategies to support individuals, families, and communities.

The Catalyst program is intended to serve as a “catalyst”, that is, the start of a process which aims to help a young person to improve his or her current life trajectory (PCYC Bornhoffen Adventure Development, 2010). Catalyst programs are conducted by the Bornhoffen Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) in Queensland, Australia. The PCYC is a non-profit youth development organisation, which partners with the Queensland Police Service. PCYC’s vision is to improve communities through youth development. PCYC Bornhoffen is one of 55 PCYC Queensland clubs.

PCYC Bornhoffen’s Catalyst programs began in 2005 with seed funding from Queensland Rail. Since this time, a substantial project that partners with schools (Department of Education or Learning centres) and other regional PCYCs in Queensland has evolved. Catalyst has attracted a variety of corporate and government sponsors, including support from the Blue Light Association since 2008.

The Catalyst intervention model is based on the Adventure Based Counselling approach established by Project Adventure in the early 1970’s (Gass, Gillis, & Russell, 2012; Schoel & Maizell, 2002; Schoel, Prouty & Radcliffe, 1988). Adventure Based Counselling uses an experiential learning approach in the context of group-based adventurous activities for psychological and social development or therapeutic purposes.

Catalyst programs are conducted with groups of approximately 10 participants selected by state high schools and/or partner agency. Groups are typically lead by two PCYC Bornhoffen facilitators who have training and expertise in conducting a broad range of outdoor adventure activities, youth work skills (such as counselling), and group facilitation and management skills. The facilitators are accompanied by two teachers or caseworkers from the partner agency who help to provide skills, such as behaviour management, which are important in working with youth-at-risk.
Catalyst programs consist of 15 programming days delivered over a 10 to 12 week period. The key program components are:

1. 3-day Lead-in,
2. 9-day outdoor adventure Expedition, and
3. 3 separate Follow-up days.

In addition, as a part of the partnership with schools, teachers are required to conduct eight additional hours of mentoring per participant (before, during, and after). To date, there have been several hundred Queensland youth participants (2005-2013).

Catalyst program objectives and their measurement

Thirteen youth development objectives were identified as targets of the PCYC Bornhoffen Catalyst Program as a result of:

1. Reviewing existing program documentation (including PCYC Bornhoffen Adventure Development, 2010)
2. Consultative discussions between the researchers and the program staff
3. A program evaluation needs assessment completed by two Catalyst program staff using the tool developed by Gass and Neill (2001).

The 13 youth development objectives consisted of 10 life skill factors, 2 mental health factors, and 1 behavioural conduct factor. Self-report survey measurement items for each of the factors were derived from pre-existing instrumentation. These items were adapted for observer surveys. More details are provided in Table 2 and the Measures section.

Table 2
Youth Development Catalyst Program Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Development Objective</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life effectiveness (10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Resilience</td>
<td>Ability to manage emotional responses and stressful situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>Ability to set/achieve goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Risk Taking</td>
<td>Knowledge of difference between healthy and unhealthy risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of Control</td>
<td>Sense of control over one’s own life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Awareness</td>
<td>Self-awareness and self-understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Esteem</td>
<td>Sense of personal worth and value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Confidence</td>
<td>General confidence in one's self and one’s capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>Effective communication in interpersonal and group settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
<td>Meaningful engagement with community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Teamwork</td>
<td>Cooperation with others to achieve group tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Distress</td>
<td>Extent of recent negative psychological experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Well-being</td>
<td>Extent of recent positive psychological experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural Conduct (1)</td>
<td>Frequency of most common adolescent delinquent behaviours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also of interest in this study were the program processes that at least one of the two senior Catalyst program staff members thought were very important or somewhat important to investigate:

1. Program length
2. Program difficulty
3. Participant motivation
4. Facilitation style
5. Organisation’s philosophy
6. Organisation’s culture
7. Profiling
8. Evaluation

The present study

Youth prevention programs that utilise innovative and non-traditional approaches, such as adventure-based prevention programs, often do so in isolation and with limited knowledge about how to maximise their effects. A critical task for program developers, and for advancing the field as a whole, is effective use of research and evaluation (Gray & Neill, 2011).

The aim of this study was to evaluate the effects of the PCYC Bornhoffen Catalyst program on youth-at-risks’ life effectiveness, mental health, and behavioural functioning. The methodology used mixed methods to help seek verification of quantitative and qualitative data from multiple perspectives (youth participants, program leaders, teachers, and significant others) to address the study aims.

Mixed methods research draws on the respective strengths and perspectives of quantitative and qualitative data (Östlund, Kidd, Wengström, & Rowa-Dewar, 2011). Each type of data provides a different representation of the world and their integration broadens the scope of perspectives that can be investigated in attempting to address the research questions (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Both quantitative and qualitative knowledge are important for understanding the change processes in psychotherapeutic interventions (Hanson, Creswell, Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005). The combination of qualitative and quantitative findings produces an overall or negotiated account in which the findings are forged, which is not possible by using a singular approach (Bryman, 2007). Thus, employing both approaches enhances the integrity of findings and provides a better understanding of a research problem than might be possible with use of either methodological approach alone (Palinkas, Horwitz, Chamberlain, Hurlburt, & Landsverk, 2011).
Method

Participants and programs

There were 53 adolescent participants (16 females (30%); 37 males (70%)) who completed a PCYC Catalyst intervention between 2012 and 2013. Participant ages ranged from 13 and 16 years ($M = 14; SD = 0.68$).

There were six programs involved in this evaluation:
- Bracken Ridge 2013 ($n = 9$)
- Dalby 2013 ($n = 10$)
- Goondiwindi 2013 ($n = 8$)
- Helensvale 2013 ($n = 9$)
- Spinnifex 2013 (Mt Isa) ($n = 10$)
- Woodridge 2012 ($n = 7$)

In addition, there was an incomplete program which was also considered:
- Woodridge 2013

Matching short-term data was obtained from 38 participants (26 males and 12 females; Mode and Median = 14 years, Range = 13 to 15 years):
- Bracken Ridge 2013 ($n = 7$)
- Dalby 2013 ($n = 5$)
- Spinnifex 2013 ($n = 8$)
- Woodridge 2012 ($n = 5$)
- Goondiwindi 2013 ($n = 6$)
- Helensvale 2013 ($n = 7$)

Matching longer-term data was obtained from 29 participants (20 males and 9 females; Mode and Median = 14 years, Range = 13 to 15 years):
- Bracken Ridge 2013 ($n = 6$)
- Dalby 2013 ($n = 4$)
- Spinnifex 2013 ($n = 4$)
- Woodridge 2012 ($n = 6$)
- Goondiwindi 2013 ($n = 2$)
- Helensvale 2013 ($n = 7$)

The most common reason for missing longer-term data was that the participant was no longer a student at the high school.

Materials

Design

Quantitative data about the Catalyst participants was collected at three time points:
- Time 1 (Pre-program – collected during the Lead-in),
- Time 2 (Post-program – collected during the Follow-up), and
- Time 3 (Longer-term – collected during the following 6 to 12 months).
Ratings of youth’s life skills, mental health, and behaviour were provided by youth participants using the Youth Participant Self-report Survey developed for this study and observers (PCYC facilitators and teachers/caseworkers) completed the Observer Survey. In addition, youth participants completed Time 2 program satisfaction and feedback ratings about the program and its impact.

Qualitative data was collected via semi-structured interviews with youth participants and observers (PCYC facilitators and teachers/caseworkers) towards the end of the Expedition and/or during the Follow-up. These interviews were recorded, transcribed, and summarised, with key themes identified in terms of program impacts and areas for potential improvement.

**Life effectiveness**

Life effectiveness skills were measured by using an adapted version of the Youth at Risk Program Evaluation Tool (YARPET; Neill, 2007). This measure contained 30 items designed to measure 10 dimensions of life effectiveness (see Table 3). The life effectiveness dimensions were selected in consultation with the Catalyst program staff, to reflect the Catalyst program youth development goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life effectiveness dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Resilience</td>
<td>Ability to manage emotional responses and handle stressful situations</td>
<td>I stay calm in stressful situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>Ability to set/achieve goals</td>
<td>I have specific goals to aim for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Risk Taking</td>
<td>Knowledge of difference between healthy and unhealthy risks</td>
<td>I think carefully about the consequences of my risky actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of Control</td>
<td>Sense of control over one’s own life</td>
<td>My own efforts and actions are what will determine my future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Awareness</td>
<td>Self-awareness and self-understanding.</td>
<td>I understand myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Esteem</td>
<td>Sense of personal worth and value</td>
<td>Overall I have a lot to be proud of.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Confidence</td>
<td>General confidence in one's self and one’s capacity</td>
<td>When I apply myself to something I am confident I will succeed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>Effective communication with other people in interpersonal and group settings</td>
<td>I communicate effectively with other people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
<td>Meaningful engagement with community</td>
<td>I enjoy living in my community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Teamwork</td>
<td>Cooperation with others to achieve group tasks</td>
<td>I like cooperating in a team.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An eight-point Likert scale was used, ranging from “False - Not like me” to “True - Like me” (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Eight-point Like Me Likert rating scale.
Mental health

Mental health was measured by using a 2-factor, 10-item version of the General Well-Being Inventory (GWB) which was adapted from Heubeck and Neill (2000) and Veit and Ware (1983). This version asked how the participant has been feeling recently (during the last month for Time 1 and Time 3 and during the Expedition for Time 2). The instrument measures psychological distress (5 items) and psychological well-being (5 items; see Table 4). The eight-point Likert scale from “False – Not like me” to “True – Like me” used for the YARPET was also used for the GWB.

Table 4  
Structure of the 2-factor 10-item Version of General Well-Being

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life effectiveness dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Distress</td>
<td>Extent of recent negative psychological experience, including distress, depression, and anxiety</td>
<td>During the past month, I have felt downhearted and blue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Well-being</td>
<td>Extent of recent positive psychological experience, including uplifting mood and positive, optimistic outlook</td>
<td>During the past month, I felt relaxed and free of tension.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adolescent Behavioural Conduct

Adolescent behavioural conduct was measured using a short version of the Australian Self-reported Delinquency Scale (Mak, 1993). This survey contained eight items which asked participants to rate the frequency with which they had engaged in eight of the most common different types of adolescent delinquent behaviour over the past six months (see Table 5).

Table 5  
Structure of the 8-item Version of the Adolescent Behavioural Conduct Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cheating</td>
<td>on a school assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug use</td>
<td>drunk alcohol, used marijuana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagging</td>
<td>not attended school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>with fists or weapon with intent to threaten or harm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicles</td>
<td>driven a car illegally or been driven illegally in a car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealing</td>
<td>stolen cash or items from someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harming</td>
<td>intentionally caused hurt or upset to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vandalising</td>
<td>illegally graffitied property</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, youth participants were asked an open-ended question about their recent behaviour (Describe your behavioural conduct over the past six months) and to rate whether his/her behaviour had “got a lot worse”, “got a bit worse”, remained “about the same”, “improved a bit”, or “improved a lot” over the past six months.

Participant outcomes and program satisfaction

At the end of the Catalyst program (Time 2, during the Follow-up), youth participants’ perceived program outcomes and satisfaction with various aspects of the program experience was measured using a 54-item survey, the Participant Evaluation of Catalyst Program, which was based on the Participant Evaluation of Instructor and Program Quality (PEIPQ; Richards & Neill, 1994). There were 47 items about outcomes and satisfaction levels which were assessed using an eight-point False-True rating scale (see Figure 2) plus there were 7 open-ended questions. The eight question categories are described in Table 6.
Figure 2. Eight-point False-True rating scale

Table 6
Participant Evaluation of Catalyst Program: Outcomes and Satisfaction Dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th># of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Outcomes</td>
<td>Value of the program for personal growth and development, including self-confidence, self-awareness, self-esteem, self-confidence, goal setting, healthy risk-taking, locus of control, and emotional control.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Outcomes</td>
<td>Value of the program for developing social skills and relationships, communication skills, cooperative teamwork, and community engagement.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitators</td>
<td>Satisfaction with the program facilitators, including their enthusiasm, encouragement, being able to easily talk with them, their listening, working with the group, explanations, patience, and safety.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Dynamics</td>
<td>How well the group worked with each other, usefulness of group discussions, cooperation and involvement of all group members.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Participation</td>
<td>Extent to which the participant become fully involved in the group, including comfort, acceptance, support from the group and being able to talk openly and easily within the group.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Overall</td>
<td>Overall excellence of the program, including the extent to which it was worth the effort, well organised, and recommended to other people.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Design</td>
<td>The Lead-in, Expedition, and Follow-up excellence, difficulty, and length.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Comments</td>
<td>Open-ended questions about the best and worst aspects of Catalyst and other comments.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observer survey
Observers were school or community representatives. Observers were usually teachers, but also included a school chaplain and a local police officer. Up to three observers rated each program participant on the 13 youth development outcomes (10 life skills, 2 mental health dimensions, and overall behavioural conduct) on up to three occasions (Pre-program, Post-program, and Follow-up). An eight-point True-False Likert rating scale was used (see Figure 2).

Procedure
Conduct of this study was approved by the University of Canberra Human Research Ethics Committee (2012-2014; #12-96).

Short-term data was collected during 2012 (Woodridge 2012) and 2013 (the rest of the programs). Long-term data collection took place February to May, 2014. This data was used to examine:
- Short-term changes (between Time 1 and 2), and
- Long-term changes (between Time 1 and 3).

Data analysis
To help interpret changes in measures using ratings scales at different points in time, standardised mean effect sizes were calculated. These effect sizes indicate the amount of change in standard deviation units. This is a way of expressing changes in scores over time in a standardised manner which facilitates comparison with other studies. Useful introductions to the use of effect sizes in program evaluation are provided by Coe (2000), Marzano Research Laboratory (n. d.), and Neill (2008).
Cohen (1977) provided the most widely used guideline for interpreting effect sizes, suggesting that 0.2 indicates a small change, 0.5 indicates a moderate change, and 0.8 indicates a large change. However, Cohen also recommended that effect sizes should be interpreted in the context of other research findings about the subject of interest, such as those reported in the Hattie et al. (1997) adventure education meta-analysis and in the Bowen and Neill (2013) meta-analysis of therapeutic adventure programs, as described in the section in the introduction section about benchmarks for adventure-based interventions. Based on these studies, the following ratings of effect sizes for adventure-based interventions for youth are suggested:

- Very small positive change (~0.1),
- Small positive change (~0.2)
- Small to moderate positive change (~0.3)
- Moderate positive change (~0.5)
- Strong positive change (~0.6+)

Effect sizes can also usefully be interpreted as z-scores which expresses the amount of change using the properties of a normal distribution. For example, an effect size of 0.2 is equivalent to an average participant (who would sit on the 50th percentile) moving to the 58th percentile for the outcome of interest. An effect size of 0.4 would be equivalent to a participant moving to the 66th percentile. In other words, for an effect size of 0.2, 58% of participants who receive treatment are likely to be better off, whilst an effect size of 0.4 means that 66% of participants who receive treatment are likely to be better off.

In the current study, standardised mean effect sizes were calculated based on the differences between the means divided by the estimated population standard deviation. The population standard deviation estimates were based on the Time 1 (N = 56) standard deviations which are shown in Appendix A.

Results

Youth participant self-evaluations

Thirty-eight out of the 53 PCYC Catalyst youth participants from six schools completed matching Time 1 (Pre-program) and Time 2 (Post-program) surveys about their life effectiveness and mental health. Table 7 provides descriptive statistics and effect sizes for short-term changes with comparative benchmarks from Bowen and Neill’s (2013) meta-analysis of adventure therapy programs.
Twenty-nine participants from five schools provided complete matching Time 1 (Pre-program) and Time 3 (Long-term) responses about life effectiveness, mental health, and overall behavioural conduct. Table 8 provides descriptive statistics and effect sizes for PCYC Catalyst youth participants’ long-term changes along with comparative benchmarks from Bowen and Neill’s (2013) meta-analysis of adventure therapy programs.

Table 9 presents a summary of these findings and the comparison between the Catalyst program short-term and longer-term self-reported outcomes and the comparative benchmarks. In general, the Catalyst program outcomes were lower than for the comparative benchmarks, but it is important to also note that:

1. Catalyst program self-reported outcomes were, by and large, indicative of positive changes
2. Catalyst program self-reported longer-term outcomes were more positive than the short-term outcomes
3. Several Catalyst program longer-term outcomes were higher than the comparative benchmarks
4. None of these differences were statistically significant (i.e., \( p > 0.05 \))

**Life effectiveness skills**

The average short-term (Time 1 to 2) effect size for life effectiveness was small and positive (ES = .16, \( N = 38 \)). The short-term effect sizes for the 10 dimensions of life effectiveness were all positive (see Table 7) and ranged between .02 (Self-Awareness) and .31 (Communication Skills). The average short-term effect size of .16 is akin to 56% of participants in Catalyst programs exceeding the life skills of an equivalent group who don’t participate. Examination of effect sizes for individual participants indicated that 40% reported lower overall life effectiveness at the end of the program and 60% reported higher life effectiveness.

The average longer-term (Time 1 to 3) effect size was small to moderate and positive (ES = .30, \( N = 29 \)) and slightly larger than the short-term effect size. Long-term improvements were reported, on average, for all 10 dimensions of life effectiveness. These long-term improvements included moderate to strong change in Communication Skills (ES = 0.73), moderate change in Healthy Risk-Taking (0.50), Self-Esteem (0.45), and Self-Confidence (0.45), small to moderate change for Cooperative Teamwork (0.32) and Emotional Resilience (0.26), small change for Self-Awareness (0.13) and Locus of Control (0.11), and very small change for Community Engagement (0.04) and Goal Setting (0.04). Overall, an average long-term effect size of .30 is akin to 62% of participants in Catalyst programs exceeding the life skills of an equivalent group who don’t participate. Examination of overall life effectiveness effect sizes for individual participants indicated that 38% reported lower effectiveness and 62% reported higher life effectiveness in the longer-term.

**Mental health**

The short-term changes for the two measured dimensions of mental health differed (see Table 7; \( N = 36 \)). Youth participants reported a small to moderate heightening of Psychological Distress (ES = -0.34, a 15% change) during the Expedition and a very small improvement in Psychological Well-being (ES = 0.08, a 4% change). When these two aspects of mental health were combined, there was an average short-term effect size of -0.12 which is akin to 45% of participants in Catalyst programs exceeding the mental health of an equivalent group who don’t participate. Examination of effect sizes for individual participants indicated that 65% reported lower overall mental health during the Expedition and 35% reported higher mental health.

The long-term effects (see Table 8; \( N = 28 \)) indicated a very small negative change in Psychological Distress (ES = -0.10, a 5% change) and a large improvement in Psychological Well-being (ES = 0.80, a 28% improvement), with an overall average effect size for mental health of 0.35 which is akin to 64% of participants in Catalyst programs exceeding the mental health of an equivalent group who don’t participate. Examination of effect sizes for individual participants indicated that 29% reported lower overall mental health and 79% reported higher mental health in the longer-term.
Adolescent behavioural conduct

Adolescent behavioural conduct was assessed at Time 1 (Pre) \( (N = 52) \) and Time 3 (Long-term) \( (N = 28) \). At Time 1, there was an average of 12.5 self-reported behavioural conduct issues over the previous six months (~2 incidents per month). The most commonly reported behavioural conduct issues were Harming \( (M = 2.41) \), Fighting \( (M = 2.26) \), and Wagging \( (M = 2.22) \) which were reported as occurring, on average, more than twice over the previous six months. These behaviours were followed in frequency of occurrence by Cheating \( (M = 1.33) \), Drug use \( (M = 1.19) \), Vehicles \( (M = 1.11) \), Stealing \( (M = 1.04) \), and Vandalising \( (M = 0.93) \), which participants reported engaging in, on average, once over the previous six months. This represented a collective total of 337 self-reported behavioural incidents by the 27 participants in the previous six months.

Follow-up assessments were conducted 6 to 18 months after the Catalyst program completion. For the six month period prior to the Follow-up assessment, participants reported fewer behavioural conduct incidents (average of 10.7 incidents per month compared to 12.5 at Time 1); an overall reduction of 49 incidents per six months. There were substantial reductions in the reported frequency of Harming \( (ES = -0.65) \), Fighting \( (-0.46) \), Stealing \( (-0.34) \), Vandalising \( (-0.41) \), small increases in Cheating \( (0.18) \), Vehicles \( (0.14) \), and Wagging \( (0.04) \), and a small to moderate increase in the self-reported frequency of one behaviour (Drug Use; 0.41).

The overall adolescent behavioural conduct effect size was -0.12 which is akin to 55% of participants in Catalyst programs having reduced behaviour conduct problems compared to an equivalent group who didn’t participate. Examination of effect sizes for individual participants indicated that 29% of participants reported more behavioural conduct problems and 71% reported fewer behavioural conduct problems in the longer-term.

When asked at Time 3 (Follow-up), 58% of the 28 respondents indicated that their behaviour had improved (11% of participants indicated that their behaviour had “improved a lot” and 47% indicated that their behaviour had “improved a bit”), 21% indicated that their behaviour was “about the same”, and 13% indicated that their behaviour “got a lot worse”.

When asked at Time 3 (Follow-up) to comment in their own words about their behaviour over the previous six months, 19 participants responded. Fourteen participants (75%) reported positive outcomes:

1. In the past 6 months I have gotten everything together. I'm proud of my achievements.
2. Well over the past 6 months I have been doing very well, I have learnt to control myself and be more self confident. I have been staying out of trouble 90% of the time.
3. I think my behaviour has improved a lot as I'm not getting in trouble in school or at home anymore. I'm doing very well with most things I'm doing.
4. It has been alright. Got a lot better.
5. Gotten happier and better with my attitude.
6. Its been fine and fun.
7. Happy and fun.
8. Brilliant.
9. Pretty good except obviously all the things numbered above.
10. Yeah I think that I have been acting good.
11. More good than bad.
12. Really good
13. Excellent because I'm an excellent student
14. Decent
Three participants (21%) indicated no particular improvement or worsening of behaviour:
   1. Sometimes I was bad, sometimes I was good, but overall I was okay.
   2. Yeah nah yeah nah yeah nah good.
   3. My behaviour has been bad then good but I feel fine now.

Two participants (14%) indicated poor or worse behaviour:
   1. My behaviour has been okay but not the best. To be honest I got worse after camp. It taught me I got rewarded for bad behaviour.
   2. hahaha shit, hit someone and harmed myself, good one!! But I got better friends?
Table 7
*Short-term Changes in Youth Participant Self-reported Life Effectiveness Skills and Mental Health Factors (N = 36)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<th>ST.025</th>
<th>ST.975</th>
<th>ST BMES</th>
<th>ST BM.025</th>
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<td>Overall</td>
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Note. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; ST = Short-Term; ES = Standardised Mean Effect Size; CI = Confidence Interval; BM = Benchmark (10-17 year old age-based benchmark; obtained from [http://www.danielbowen.com.au/meta-analysis](http://www.danielbowen.com.au/meta-analysis)). An increase over time signifies improvement.
### Table 8

**Longer-term Changes in Youth Participant Self-reported Life Effectiveness Skills (N = 29), Mental Health (N = 28) and Behavioural Conduct Factors (N = 27)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Lead-in (Pre) - Time 1</th>
<th>Long-term - Time 3</th>
<th>Long-term Catalyst Confidence Interval</th>
<th>Long-term Benchmark Confidence Interval</th>
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<tr>
<td>Life effectiveness skills</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional Resilience</td>
<td>4.81 1.66</td>
<td>5.24 1.58</td>
<td>0.25 -0.35</td>
<td>0.49 0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
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<td>5.91 1.95</td>
<td>0.04 -0.58</td>
<td>0.49 0.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Healthy Risk Taking</td>
<td>4.56 1.50</td>
<td>5.31 1.34</td>
<td>0.50 -0.05</td>
<td>0.49 0.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Locus of Control</td>
<td>5.80 1.74</td>
<td>5.97 1.40</td>
<td>0.11 -0.52</td>
<td>0.44 0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Awareness</td>
<td>6.20 1.56</td>
<td>6.37 1.40</td>
<td>0.13 -0.44</td>
<td>0.44 0.35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
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<td>5.55 1.32</td>
<td>0.45 -0.07</td>
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<td>Self-Confidence</td>
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<td>5.94 1.27</td>
<td>0.45 -0.17</td>
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<td>Communication Skills</td>
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<td>0.44 0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Teamwork</td>
<td>5.41 1.56</td>
<td>5.90 1.30</td>
<td>0.32 -0.25</td>
<td>0.44 0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
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<td>5.77</td>
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<td>0.45 0.37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychological Distress</td>
<td>5.47 1.76</td>
<td>5.29 1.83</td>
<td>-0.10 -0.75</td>
<td>0.55 0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Well-Being</td>
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<td>5.96 1.33</td>
<td>0.80 0.23</td>
<td>1.37 0.49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
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<td>0.35 -0.26</td>
<td>0.96 0.49</td>
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**Behavioural Conduct**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Lead-in (Pre) - Time 1</th>
<th>Long-term - Time 3</th>
<th>Long-term Catalyst Confidence Interval</th>
<th>Long-term Benchmark Confidence Interval</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cheating</td>
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</tr>
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<td>0.04 -1.27</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting</td>
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<td>1.45 1.45</td>
<td>-0.46 -1.41</td>
<td>0.25 -0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicles</td>
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<td>0.14 -0.95</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.44 1.31</td>
<td>-0.34 -1.50</td>
<td>0.61 -0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harming</td>
<td>2.41 2.19</td>
<td>1.04 1.56</td>
<td>-0.65 -1.67</td>
<td>0.46 -0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vandalising</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>1.56 1.33</td>
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<td>-0.12</td>
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</table>

**Note.** *M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; LT = Long-Term; ES = Standardised Mean Effect Size; CI = Confidence Interval; BM = Benchmark (10-17 year old age-based benchmark; based on [http://www.danielbowen.com.au/meta-analysis](http://www.danielbowen.com.au/meta-analysis) – as the overall Post-program to Follow-up effect size was 0.03, this has been added to the Short-Term benchmarks). An increase over time signifies improvement except for Behavioural Conduct.*
Table 9

Summary of Effect Size Comparison Between Catalyst Program Outcomes and Meta-analytic Benchmarks for Self-reported Life Effectiveness Skills, Mental Health and Behavioural Conduct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Short-term ((N = 36))</th>
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<th>Long-term ((N = 29))</th>
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<td>Benchmark</td>
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<td>Emotional Resilience</td>
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<td>0.46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
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<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Healthy Risk Taking</td>
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<td><strong>0.50</strong></td>
<td>&gt;</td>
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<td>Locus of Control</td>
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<td>0.11</td>
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<td>Self-Awareness</td>
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<td>Cooperative Teamwork</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Bold items indicate scales for which the Catalyst program had a higher effect size than the benchmark; none of these differences are statistically significant, but may be indicative. LT = Long-Term; ES = Standardised Mean Effect Size; BM = Benchmark (10-17 year old age-based benchmark; based on [http://www.danielbowen.com.au/meta-analysis](http://www.danielbowen.com.au/meta-analysis) – as the overall Post-program to Follow-up effect size was 0.03, this has been added to the Short-Term benchmarks). An increase over time signifies improvement except for Behavioural Conduct.
Observer ratings of youth participants

Short-term

Matching Time 1 and Time 2 observer ratings were used to analyse short-term change in the 13 youth development objectives (N = 39 from 6 schools; see Table 10). Observers typically rated youth participants lower (between 4 and 5 out of 8) than the youth participants rated themselves (between 5 and 6 out of 8). Observer ratings indicated positive changes, on average, in all 13 youth development outcomes. Observers ratings indicated moderately strong positive short-term change in life effectiveness (ES = 0.60, a 29% change) and mental health (0.46, a 22% change) and large improvements in behaviour (0.76, a 35% change).

More specifically, observer ratings for life effectiveness indicated strong short-term improvements in Healthy Risk-taking (0.91) and Self-Esteem (0.79), moderate to strong positive changes in Self Confidence (0.65), Locus of Control (.63), Emotional Resilience (0.61), Community Engagement (0.58), Goal Setting (0.56), and Communication Skills (0.53), and small to moderate positive effects for Effective Problem Solving (0.43) and Cooperative Teamwork (0.34). For mental health, observer ratings indicated strong positive improvements in Psychological Well-being (0.80) and very small positive improvements in Psychological Distress (ES = 0.12) during the Expedition.

Longer-term

Matching Time 1 and Time 3 observer ratings were used to analyse long-term change in the 13 youth development objectives (N = 23 from 4 schools; see Table 11). On average, there were positive long-term changes for 11 out of the 13 outcomes (all except Effective Problem Solving and Psychological Distress). Observer ratings indicated small, positive long-term change for life effectiveness (0.24, a 12% change), small negative long-term change for mental health (-0.14, a 7% change) and a small to moderate improvement for behavioural conduct (0.27, a 13% change).

More specifically, for life effectiveness, observer ratings indicated moderate positive effects for Cooperative Teamwork (0.48), Communication Skills (0.43), Emotional Resilience (0.40) and Self-Confidence (0.40), small positive changes for Community Engagement (0.31), Goal Setting (0.23), Healthy Risk-taking (0.18) and Locus of Control (0.15), little to no change for Self Esteem (0.05), and small to moderate negative outcomes for Effective Problem Solving (-0.23). For mental health, observers saw no change in Psychological Well-being (0.00) and a small negative change in Psychological Distress (-0.29).
Table 10
Short-term Changes in Observer Ratings of Youth Participant Outcomes (N = 39)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Development Objective</th>
<th>Time 1 (Pre)</th>
<th>Time 2 (Post)</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life effectiveness skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Esteem</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>5.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Confidence</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>5.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of Control</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>5.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Problem Solving</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>5.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Risk-taking</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>5.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Resilience</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>5.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>5.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Teamwork</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>5.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>5.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Well-being</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>6.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Distress</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent Behavioural Conduct</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>5.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. All dimensions are scored in the positive direction, so that higher scores represent more desirable outcomes.
Table 11
*Longer-term Changes in Observer Ratings of Youth Participant Outcomes (N = 23)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Development Objective</th>
<th>Time 1 (Pre)</th>
<th>Time 3 (Follow-up)</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life effectiveness skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Esteem</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>5.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Confidence</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>5.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of Control</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>5.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Problem Solving</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>5.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>5.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Risk-taking</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>5.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Resilience</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>5.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>5.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Teamwork</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>5.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>5.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Well-being</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>5.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Distress</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>4.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent Behavioural Conduct</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* All dimensions are scored in the positive direction, so that higher scores represent more desirable outcomes.

Youth participant outcomes and satisfaction with program

Program evaluation data was obtained from approximately half of the participants (26 out of 53). Overall results for each of the survey items are provided in Table 12. These results are summarised along with participants’ open-ended comments in the following sections.
**Personal outcomes**

The results indicated that participants felt it was “Mostly True” ($M = 6.21 / 8$) that they had improved in their personal skills as a result of the program. When asked what the main thing they had learnt about themselves, participants responded:

1. I learnt that I can go great distances (and weeks) without the xbox.
2. That when I put my mind to things I can do it.
3. That violence doesn't solve everything and to be a good leader.
4. That I can do anything no matter how hard it is.
5. That if I set my mind to things I can do it!
7. To believe in yourself, never give up & no matter how hard it is give it a go.
8. Get it done and respect everyone.
10. To learn new things and to do it and get it done.
11. I can do better things.
12. I learnt that I have more control over myself and I am talking to my mum with more respect.
13. I learnt that I can carry a lot of weight on my back.
14. I'm a stronger person :)
15. I can push myself.
16. Confidence is key.
17. I can do anything.
18. That I'm braver than I thought I was.
19. That I can work with other people.

**Social outcomes**

Participants reported that it was “Mostly True” ($M = 5.85 / 8$) that the program had improved their social skills. When asked about the main thing that had been learnt about working with others, participants responded:

1. No matter who they are you can always trust them.
2. That I have to listen to others not just do everything my way or how I want to.
3. That everyone is different.
4. That everyone can get along if you respect one another.
5. That it takes patience and you can't always get what YOU want - it has to also benefit the team.
6. Teamwork.
7. Never put people down & encourage them.
8. If everyone uses team work we will get it done.
9. I don't know.
10. To keep giving our best.
11. That I can trust them more and talk to people more nicely.
12. It is healthier to work with others to get it done faster.
13. To listen to everyone's opinion.
14. Not to be bossy.
15. Don't argue.
17. Team work.
18. It can be hard.
19. Its easy to get things done.
20. It's not easy.
**Facilitators**

Overall, facilitators were rated quite positively ($M = 6.38 / 8$), with participants indicating that it was “Mostly true” that facilitators were excellent. Facilitators were rated highest for the levels of safety they taught and maintained (6.87), followed by their enthusiasm (6.58) and encouragement of participants to achieve for themselves (6.52). The lowest rating was for the perceived fairness of their actions (6.13). The 10 additional comments about the facilitators were very positive:

1. They were great leaders.
2. They were a really good help, and easy to talk to.
3. They were really positive and were really easy to get along with.
4. They were amazing and did a great job.
5. They were really helpful when you needed to talk and they explained stuff so it was easy to understand.
6. They were good.
7. They were really nice and very respectful.
8. Always there for us.
9. Awesome!!!
10. They were good people.

**Group Dynamics**

Participants rated how well the grouped worked together as 5.50 (half-way between 5 “More True than False” and 6 “Mostly True”). Half of the additional eight comments described groups that worked well together, the other half of the comments indicated that were notable problems with the group paying attention, participating, and working together:

1. We had a good, trustworthy group.
2. We did alright considering we didn't really know one another.
3. They worked good.
4. The group was very good and respectful but sometimes we didn't work out as a team.
5. The group didn't work together until the end of the program.
6. Some people didn't participate as much as others.
7. Formation of cliques didn't help.
8. Some wasn't listening.

**Group Participation**

Participants felt that it was “mostly true” ($M = 5.78$) that they became fully involved in the group and participated throughout the program. When asked about their personal participation in the group, about half of the participants indicated that they were engaged with the group while the other half indicated awareness of their lack of group involvement:

1. I gave everything a go and tried to do all that I had to do.
2. Everyone helped get everyone involved.
3. I tried :)
4. It was good.
5. Encouraged others.
6. That if I wanted to be listened to they would listen.
7. I think I could have done better
8. I probably could have made more of an effort in the 9 day Expedition, but I still think I did alright.
9. Yes sometimes I really didn't want to participate in the group.
10. The group never let each other talk.

**Program Overall**

Overall, participants rated the quality of the program very highly ($M = 6.66$). Participants indicated that it was between “Mostly True” and “True” that the program was excellent, worth the effort, well organised, and recommended for others like themselves. Comments about the program overall were not sought.
Program Design

Participants rated the program design quality separately for the Lead-in ($M = 6.58$), Expedition ($M = 6.47$) and Follow-up ($M = 6.47$). These ratings were largely consistent with the overall program quality rating which suggests reasonable consistency in quality for each component, although perhaps the Follow-up could be improved.

Program difficulty was also rated by participants. A mid-scale rating (4.5) would indicate that the program wasn’t too easy or too difficult (i.e., “just right”). Lower scores would indicate that the program was perceived as too easy and higher scores would indicate that the program was perceived as too hard. Participant ratings indicated that the Lead-in was about right (4.71), the Expedition was too hard (5.53), and the Follow-up was too easy (3.79).

Finally, program length was rated by participants. A mid-scale rating (4.5) would indicate that participants thought the length wasn’t too short or too long (i.e., “just right”). Lower scores would indicate that the program was too short and higher scores would indicate that it was too long. Participant ratings indicated that the Lead-in was about right (4.68), the Expedition was too long (5.89), and the Follow-up was too short (3.89).

Table 12
Descriptive Statistics for Youth Participants’ Evaluation of Catalyst Program Outcomes and Program Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Participant Evaluation of Catalyst Program Outcomes</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$N$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, the program was valuable for my personal growth and development.</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the program, I have more confidence in my self.</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the program, I have improved how well I understand my self.</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the program, I feel that I am a more worthwhile person.</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the program, my ability to set and achieve goals has improved.</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the program, I make better choices about taking healthy risks rather than unhealthy risks.</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the program, I have greater control over my life.</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the program, I am better at managing my emotional responses in stressful situations.</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the program, I have been experiencing more positive emotion.</td>
<td>6.09</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the program, I have been experiencing less negative emotion.</td>
<td>6.09</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, the program improved my social skills and relationships with others.</td>
<td>5.85</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the program, I communicate better with other people.</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the program, I am better at working in team situations.</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the program, I am more involved in my community.</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the program, my behavioural conduct has improved.</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Participant Evaluation of Catalyst Program Outcomes</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>$N$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitators</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, the facilitators were excellent.</td>
<td>6.38</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The facilitators were enthusiastic about the program.</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The facilitators encouraged participants to achieve things for themselves.</td>
<td>6.57</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could talk openly and easily with the facilitators.</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The facilitators listened well and were good counselors / mentors.</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The facilitators’ actions and decisions were fair.</td>
<td>6.43</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The facilitators worked well with the group.</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The facilitators gave information and explanations in a clear and understandable way.</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The facilitators were patient with participants if they had any difficulties.</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The facilitators taught and maintained high levels of safety.</td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Dynamics</strong></td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, group members worked well with each other.</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group discussions were useful and productive.</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group members cooperated and shared responsibilities like cooking and cleaning very well with each other during the program.</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group members were always fully involved in the program.</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Participation</strong></td>
<td>5.78</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I became fully involved in the group and contributed well throughout the program.</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt comfortable and accepted within the group.</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I got a lot of help, support, and encouragement from the group.</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could talk openly and easily within the group.</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Overall</strong></td>
<td>6.66</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, the program was excellent.</td>
<td>6.83</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, the program was worth the effort.</td>
<td>6.88</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, the program was well organised (e.g., information received, arrangement of activities, logistics, transport, equipment).</td>
<td>6.71</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend the Catalyst program to other people like me.</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Design</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lead-in was: POOR 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 EXCELLENT</td>
<td>6.58</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lead-in was: TOO EASY 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 TOO HARD</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lead-in was: TOO SHORT 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 TOO LONG</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Expedition was: POOR 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 EXCELLENT</td>
<td>6.47</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Expedition was: TOO EASY 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 TOO HARD</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Expedition was: TOO SHORT 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 TOO LONG</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Follow-up was: POOR 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 EXCELLENT</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Follow-up was: TOO EASY 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 TOO HARD</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Follow-up was: TOO SHORT 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 TOO LONG</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Youth participant interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 youth participants from two Catalyst programs (Helensvale 2013 and Spinnifex (Mt Isa) 2013). The interviews were conducted towards the end of the Expedition and aimed to capture youths’ backgrounds, how they came to be involved in Catalyst, their experiences of the Lead-in and Expedition, including highlights and lowlights, outcomes, and recommendations. Audio of the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Case summaries of each interview were then prepared (see Appendix B) and then mini-case summaries were developed (see Table 13).

Together these case summaries paint a picture of youths who typically experienced one or more risk factors, most commonly family problems, social problems with peers, behavioural conduct problems at school, and psychological issues including depression. The youths were typically encouraged to attend by a school teacher. Several students commented that the program wasn’t fully explained to them beforehand, particularly the amount of hiking involved. The Lead-in experience provided a valuable chance to get to know the group and facilitators, become familiar with camping and cooking skills, try some adventure activities, and play fun games. The youth participants looked forward to the Expedition although they found it to be harder than they had expected (particularly hiking uphill with heavy packs). The youth participants also found that their capacity for teamwork was challenged. Often there was group conflict during the Expedition which eventually improved and appeared to serve as a catalyst for significant personal change (particularly in thinking more positively, believing in oneself, and perseverance) and social change (improved communication skills, greater tolerance and respecting of others, and new and improved friendships). By the end of the Expedition, the youths looked forward more positively to their futures, felt better about themselves, felt more resilient and courageous, and appeared to genuinely believe that their lives at home and school would be improved.
### Table 13

Mini-Case Summaries of Interviews with Youth Participants in Catalyst Programs (N = 14)

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<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Age, Gender (School)</th>
<th>Summary of interview</th>
<th>Highlights</th>
<th>Lowights</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>14 yo female</td>
<td><strong>Background:</strong> Difficult family life due to fights at home. Finding school hard. Didn’t have many friends. Keen when offered Catalyst by teacher; supported by parents. Didn’t know other participants. <strong>Lead-in:</strong> Nervous, but enjoyed the experience. <strong>Expedition:</strong> Homesick first few days; made tougher by group conflict which was eventually resolved through leader intervention, but could have been addressed earlier. Looking forward to Follow-up. <strong>Highlights:</strong> “Everything”, especially raft-building, abseil, finishing the Expedition without wanting to go home. <strong>Lowlights:</strong> Upset over group member conflict and being told by others to shut up. <strong>Outcomes:</strong> Improved relationships with others by talking with and respecting them. This change was also evident at home, with an improved relationship with her mother after the Lead-in. More motivated about school and completing assignments. She made friends with other program participants and hoped to continue these back at school. <strong>Recommendations:</strong> Too much hiking and the hills were too steep.</td>
<td>“I was bit nervous at the start because I didn’t know anyone. I don’t really talk to much people around school. I don’t have that much friends really. [But] since I’ve come here it’s like I’ve become close with some of them - boys and girls. So I’ve made more friends.”</td>
<td>“I hope I can do this again sometime. I like everything outdoor - adventure sort of activity stuff - the highropes and flying fox.”</td>
<td>“It was just fun!”</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Year 9 male</td>
<td><strong>Background</strong>: Lived with Mum, Step-Dad, and 4 siblings. School going alright. Physically active (played footy and sometimes went to the gym). Teacher explained Catalyst to his class. He wasn’t sure (scared of doing some activities e.g., abseiling and hiking), but asked his Mum and she was encouraging. <strong>Lead-in</strong>: 1st day was hard, but it got better from 2nd day onward. <strong>Expedition</strong>: A bit hard at the start, but it got easier. He knew most of the participants and thought the group went alright and improved but they could have done a bit better, particularly in communicating and helping each other out. <strong>Highlights</strong>: Raft-building testing it on the water (even though it fell apart). Abseiling. Caving. Staff members – available and helpful whenever participants were in need. <strong>Lowlights</strong>: Hiking and sleeping at night. <strong>Outcomes</strong>: Taking a lot away. Learned to speak up and listen to others’ opinions (wasn’t doing much of before) and how to work in a team. Now believes that you can do pretty much whatever you want as long as you set your mind to it. In the end, hiking wasn’t as hard as he thought – now he can do more, take on more. Well worth his time and he would do it (or something similar) again if given the chance. <strong>Recommendations</strong>: Less hiking and more fun activities such as caving, rock climbing, abseiling, and water activities like raft-building.</td>
<td>“I didn’t know if I wanted to go or not because some of the things she [a school teacher] told me [on describing the Catalyst program], I was scared of doing.”&lt;br&gt;“It was a bit hard at the start and it started getting easier and easier as we went.”&lt;br&gt;“You can do pretty much whatever you want as long as you set your mind to it.”</td>
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| 3  | 14 yo male           | **Background:** Moved from another country to Australia with parents and brothers. Parents worked a lot and he lived in a remote area. Home life boring – played a lot on his phone. Attended school, found it alright, and didn’t get into much trouble. A teacher suggested the program and he thought abseiling and camping sounded cool, but was annoyed that the teacher didn’t inform him about the amount of hiking involved. Knew about half of the Catalyst participants. **Expedition:** Found Catalyst fun, but hiking dampened that fun. Hiking was the hardest thing he’d ever done in his life (he didn’t feel fit enough and found it difficult to carry the weight). Second day was the hardest due to hiking up hill. But it got easier as he went along, with the last two days being much easier to get through. Got along well with other group members, except for one boy (they hated each other the whole time and had a clash of personalities, exacerbated by initially sharing a tent together). This relationship improved towards the end of the program. **Highlights:** Flying fox, river rafting, facilitators. **Lowlights:** Rated program 7/10 (-3 due to the hiking). **Outcomes:** Might change a bit when he returned home, but felt that no-one would notice. He would like to help more around the house and said he would not annoy teachers as much at school. He looked forward to the future. **Recommendations:** Cut out hiking and use van transportation. Pack less and do a clothes/gear swap during the hike. Get rid of “theory stuff” (reflective self-development activities) - said he didn’t participate in it and found it difficult to focus on that sort of thing. | “She just said abseiling and camping - [I thought that] was pretty cool. She never said anything about hiking.”  
“I just didn’t like the hiking. [It was] the hardest thing I’ve done in my life.”  
“I might change a little bit - I don’t know. Try and do work around the house and get money. Don’t annoy the teachers as much.” |
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| 4  | 13 yo female        | **Background:** Lived at home with her mum, two sisters, one brother. Shared a conflicted relationship with mum was filled with conflict - she moved out of home briefly prior to Catalyst. Liked school - had recently made some new friends there. **Lead-in:** H9’s Lead-in experience was mixed. Lead-in was cool but really hard as it was her first time carrying a pack while hiking, and she felt disorganised. **Expedition:** Didn’t know any of the participants in advance - anticipated everybody would be mean to her, and that everybody would be unhappy. Although there was some conflict, the reality was closer to the opposite - she made a lot of friends. **Highlights:** Opportunity to meet new people – was hopeful about continuing the friendships back at school. Enjoyed abseiling, flying fox, and canoeing. **Lowlights:** Conflict between other group members at beginning of the program. Being told to shut up when she tried to help them. **Outcomes:** Had learned how to find calm, which meant she attracted less conflict. Aimed to try harder at school, help out more around the house, and be kind to herself rather than take her distress out on herself. She also thought the program had helped to become more tolerant, but also more assertive. Felt able to let go of the past. Said Catalyst was life-changing. **Recommendations:** Add in a little bit of “free time” once the group had set up at each new campsite. | “I thought like everyone was going to be so mean to me. And like I’d have no friends to hang with. And like we weren’t going to be happy, we were just going to be picking on each other … it wasn’t like that at all … we were all like family - we always fight and then make up.”

“It was pretty cool. It was really hard though. Because it was my first time carrying those packs. And I wasn’t organised.”

“When I got back, I felt so calm … I can let go of the past … I am going to say it was really fun and life-changing … it will probably make me a better person.” |
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<td>5</td>
<td>14 yo male</td>
<td><strong>Background:</strong> Lived on school campus and was happy with his living situation and his family at home, although he had been in a few fights recently due to anger management issues, and was disrespectful to some teachers. Despite the fights, he felt that got along with other kids. The school had called him to the front office and told him that he been selected for the Catalyst program which he was excited about. <strong>Lead-in:</strong> He referred on several occasions to an activity in which he held the partial body-weight of his 9 fellow participants (this was a highlight) as were the 10m abseil and canoeing. <strong>Expedition:</strong> Everything about the Expedition was good, particularly games, including “mafia”, “stomp”, and a trust activity which had been important to him. He had coped well with being as he was used to living in the bush and being away from home. <strong>Highlights:</strong> Hiking - provided a sense of accomplishment. 10m abseil. <strong>Lowlights:</strong> 30m abseil (he only made it half-way and came back up). An incident that lead him to become angry in response to a fellow participant and to then walk away from another participant who tried to calm him down. <strong>Outcomes:</strong> Pride at being able to support the weight of others. Identified his fear of heights as a weakness. Less likely to get into fights and predicted that his grades would improve as the program helped him to stay focussed and put 100% effort in. Also learned to be able to let things go, a bit step considering his anger problems. Felt that the program was worth the time and effort and that he had a positive outlook on his future, including some specific goals related to becoming a bull-rider and improving his relationship with his older brother. <strong>Recommendations:</strong> None.</td>
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<td>“[I was] excited, at the start, and still am excited [about] the trip, and all the things they told us that we would be doing.”</td>
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<td>“[I’ve learned] to trust these people here”</td>
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<td>“Doing the great walk trail, I got stabbed by all these plants, and I just said “Oh, things happen”. (He suffers from anger management issues but has learned to “let things go”).”</td>
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<td>“It’s just helped me to stay focused, and put 100% effort in.”</td>
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| 6  | 14 yo female         | **Background:** Lived with her grandparents and brother – things were “pretty bad” because she was constantly arguing with her grandmother, brother, and grandfather. School was “pretty good”, some wagging, but she generally got on with teachers, did her work, and listened. However, she had problems arguing and fighting with some other students, leading to detentions and suspensions.  
**Lead-in:** Lead-in experience was boring and crappy because she wanted to go home. Meeting new participants and playing the games were positives. Was glad she hadn’t gone home by the end and looked forward to the Expedition.  
**Expedition:** Coped fine away from normal (physical) environment, but felt lonely and frustrated away from family, and bored away from friends. Breaking her comfort zone was a challenge, as was getting along with all of the boys and a couple of the girls.  
**Highlights:** Creeking on the first day, and the Expedition abseil. Sense of pride from completing the Expedition abseil, as she did not complete the Lead-in in abseil.  
**Lowlights:** The 900 stairs - a difficult feat, the flying fox - scary. Proud and happy after completing each of these activities, though.  
**Outcomes:** Learned to try her hardest. Increased courage by getting through the hiking. Learned more about other people, and how to relate to other people. The break from home allowed her to feel better about home. She aimed to treat her family members more positively and help more around the house. She also aimed to develop a closer relationship with her older sister and oldest brother who lived out of home - she hadn’t seen them in some time. Predicted her school participation and attendance would increase, and attitude at school would become more positive. Program was worth her time and effort. Believed she had “done herself proud”.  
**Recommendations:** None.  | “[The Lead-in] was a bit boring and crappy for me, because I wanted to go home. But I didn’t end up going home. So then I just couldn’t wait to come down here [and participate in the Expedition].”  
“I learnt [to] try my hardest.”  
“I might just be positive all the time … Just give it a go and all that.” |
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<td>7</td>
<td>14 yo female</td>
<td><strong>Background:</strong> Lived with Dad - Mum passed away in the previous year. Brother lived out of home. School less enjoyable than usual as her friends suddenly hated school and she couldn’t relate. Decent grades, high intelligence that she could apply more. No history of behavioural misconduct. Bullied in primary school. Sadness got to her - spoke to friends and played play station to “just get over” it. <strong>Lead-in:</strong> Said it was a good idea to go to Bornhoffen for a shorter duration (the Lead-in) prior to the longer stint (the Expedition) - it gave the group opportunity to practice everything. Enjoyed abseiling, canoeing, and the meals. <strong>Expedition:</strong> Coped well away from home. No bother being away from friends. Did miss Dad and brother, but knew she would see them soon. Climate was challenging - dealt by using more layers of clothing, raincoat, and singing. <strong>Highlights:</strong> “The fun things” - making new friends, abseiling, and the flying fox (as she conquered fear of heights). Hugging a tree at the top of the flying fox - memorable. <strong>Lowlights:</strong> Hiking, the cold, and the “really gross”, “just yuck” food. The “teasing” incident between the female participants was a challenge. Resolution came from talking this out - better friendships resulted. <strong>Outcomes:</strong> Learned that heights were a weakness, her mental and physical ability allowed her to walk far with a heavy pack, it is enjoyable to walk with company rather than alone, attending to an issue is better than avoiding it, better to not backchat. Aimed to be different with peers, stop pretending to be sick, and improve her sibling relationship. Future looked bright - learning to finish things rather than stop half-way lead her to start believing that she could actually do “it” (e.g. of “it”: finish school - something numerous people told her she was incapable of). Now felt more articulate, confident, &amp; tough. <strong>Recommendations:</strong> Better tasting food + greater portion sizes. Better tents, sleeping bags, &amp; mats.</td>
<td>“[The program was] pretty good - ups and downs. But overall it was alright.”</td>
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<td>“Climbing up the hills - that was hard. Climbing down was easy, but climbing up was really hard.”</td>
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<td>“[It was] good to walk with people instead of alone. ... I hang out with people all the time, but this has just highlighted that I really enjoy people.”</td>
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<td>“I finish things now. I don’t just do halfway and then stop. I keep going! … It makes me think that I can actually do it.”</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>14 yo male</td>
<td><strong>Background:</strong> Lived at home with Mum, Dad, and sister. Brother lived in Cairns. Got on well with each family member - home life was “good”. Dad had “a really big job” - went away every week, coming back on Saturday and Sunday. School was “normal” - achieved Cs and Ds, would get an A or B in subjects he liked. Behavioural conduct good. Got into fights because others bullied him - said he had become used to this. Not many friends at Spinifex. Some close friends from primary school he infrequently saw. <strong>Lead-in:</strong> Weird - he didn’t know anyone - fun at the same time. Making friends helped. The rope and “hands and feet” games were enjoyable, and the debriefing activities stood out - although he saw benefit in and wanted to do them, they weren’t very fun. <strong>Expedition:</strong> [Not covered- see highlights and lowlights.] <strong>Highlights:</strong> Developed new friendships. Doing fun stuff with his new mates. Flying fox and abseil: semi-highlights. He enjoyed them but had done them before. <strong>Lowlights:</strong> First time away from home overnight - didn’t cope well with this. Missed his family and dog. The cold climate. <strong>Outcomes:</strong> The program highlighted that he’s not scared of much. Came to believe it’s always possible to control emotion by changing attitudes. Changed his attitude when it came to dealing with other people and as a result became better at talking. Aimed to improve his grades. Thought his behavioural conduct in class and at home was already fine. Acquired the ability to not be affected by little things, but did still get fired up by bigger things. Learning it is possible to find better solutions for problems would stay with him long-term. Saw a good (“normal”) future for himself. <strong>Recommendations:</strong> More height-related activities so people could get over fear of heights.</td>
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<td><strong>“I’ve had some fights. And they’re all from the other person starting it. Like they’d hit me first, because apparently I’m like stupid and all that. I don’t know. Just the unlucky one.”</strong></td>
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<td><strong>“It’s good fun … it’s fun and awesome … practically everything [about Catalyst is good fun].”</strong></td>
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<td><strong>“There is always another solution. You can always control your emotions by just changing your attitude.”</strong></td>
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| 9  | 14 yo female        | **Background:** Had a 10 month old son – only one of the other participants knew and she was only willing to speak to one staff member about it. Happily lived with foster family (husband and wife and their three biological children) – they were really nice people she got on with. No behavioural issues at school. Achieved Cs and Bs. Got on well with peers. Mental and physical health “all good”. **Lead-in:** “Chocolate river” (game) and canoeing were stand out experiences. **Expedition:** Coped well away from home. Missed friends, family, and regular environment (especially showering). **Highlights:** Enjoyed walking up the 900 stairs, abseiling, and flying fox - even though she feared both the latter two. **Lowlights:** Hiking in rain and not understanding the point of the program. Hardest thing about being part of a group was talking, but she became better at talking. **Outcomes:** Her courage, self-confidence, and self-esteem were positively impacted, and she learned to work within a group and get along with others. Found program worthwhile and had a lot of appreciation for the facilitators. Positive about the future. Didn’t think anybody else would notice any changes in her. **Recommendations:** None. | “Thought it [the idea of Catalyst] was boring, but when I came here it was fun.”

“It’s too hard for me.” (Regarding the interview/interview questions [S5 was very closed off to exploring and expressing her inner experiences - these few words are a good representation of that].) |
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<td>10</td>
<td>14 yo male</td>
<td><strong>Background:</strong> Lived with Mum, Step-dad, and one (brother) of four siblings. Stressful home life due to constant conflict due to moody Step-dad. Poor relationship with biological father - typically fought and hit one another. Low self-esteem. Depression. Self-harmed in grade 7. History of being bullied. Isolated herself because of her troubles and lost friends at previous school. More recently developed a strong friendship group at the new school. Current and regular thoughts of suicide. These issues hadn’t been addressed professionally. Tended to receive Cs and Bs - sometimes As. No history of behavioural misconduct. <strong>Lead-in:</strong> Fun because of the activities and teamwork between participants (teamwork led to harmony). Canoeing was the most memorable - she and her partner got stuck on an island. <strong>Expedition:</strong> Going without a bed, shower, nice food, and mobile phone was difficult, otherwise being away from home was otherwise fine. Didn’t miss her friends, except her close friend in Brisbane and her little brother. <strong>Highlights:</strong> Teamwork and subsequent harmony of the group. <strong>Lowlights:</strong> Stop-start nature of hiking. Conflict either side of group harmony (usually due to participants being tired from hiking). Rain and temperature zapped her energy. <strong>Outcomes:</strong> Wouldn’t have participated had she been fully informed of what was involved (particularly hiking), but was thankful in the end. Realised that although things can be difficult, she had the capacity to get through them. Being left to their own devices meant that teamwork was imperative. Despite individual differences and some conflict along the way, this ultimately brought the group together. Found it too difficult to groom herself – but realised that people (especially boys) treat her the same regardless of her appearance. This boosted her confidence and self-esteem. Learned to reduce complaining. Thought the quality of her friendships may improve. Understood how teachers must feel about non-complying students. Didn’t acquire tools to counteract bullying. Predicted change in home life because she knew how to reduce her stress and distress. Positive about her future. Believes she can now do anything she puts her mind to. Well worth her time because she communicated with new people and got to engage in new activities. <strong>Recommendations:</strong> Better tasting food - every other bit of the program was pretty good.</td>
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<td>“[I have] anger problems. [The anger problems are] disturbing. Like you get angry at little things.”</td>
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<td>“First time abseiling. First time canoeing. Creeking. The activities we do. That was good fun.”</td>
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<td>“I can carry a lot of weight [and] handle being away from home ... It’s the first time away from home with just friends.”</td>
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<td>Future outlook - “[I want to] get along with people, help mum more, change the attitude … less anger … won’t be going to jail for bashing people … I want to do something that I really like doing.”</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>13 yo female</td>
<td><strong>Background:</strong> Lived with Mum, Step-dad, and one of four siblings (brother). Home life stressful - conflict due to moody Step-dad. Poor relationship with biological father. Low self-esteem. Depression. Self-harmed in grade 7. History of being bullied. Isolated herself because of her troubles and lost friends at previous school. Recently developed strong friendship group at school. Current and regular thoughts of suicide. Tended to receive Cs and Bs - sometimes As. No history of behavioural misconduct. <strong>Lead-in:</strong> Fun because the activities and teamwork between participants led to harmony. Canoeing was most memorable. <strong>Expedition:</strong> Going without a bed, shower, nice food, and mobile phone was difficult. Being away from home was otherwise fine. Missed close friend and little brother. <strong>Highlights:</strong> Teamwork and subsequent harmony of the group. <strong>Lowlights:</strong> Stop-start hiking. Conflict either side of group harmony. Rain and temperature zapped her energy. <strong>Outcomes:</strong> Although things can be difficult, she had the capacity to get through them. Being left to their own devices meant that teamwork was imperative. Despite individual differences and some conflict along the way, this ultimately brought the group together. Too difficult to groom which led her to realise that people (especially boys) treat her the same regardless of her appearance. This boosted her confidence and self-esteem. Learned to reduce complaining. Quality of friendships may improve. Hadn’t acquired tools to counteract bullying. Predicted change in home life because she knew how to reduce her stress and distress. Positive about her future. Believed that she could now do anything she put her mind to. Well worth her time because she communicated with new people and engaged in new activities. <strong>Recommendations:</strong> Better tasting food – rest was pretty good.</td>
<td>“We might not have the same personality, we might not get along - like… even though we might have disagreements on this program and stuff like that, we’ve still all learnt to still stick together and work together.”&lt;br&gt;“Since we’ve been out here I haven’t really had any suicidal thoughts. I’ve been able to think, and just breathe. And just, yeah have all this open space. And if I need time alone I can just go for a bit of a walk, I guess. And just listen to the birds and stuff like that.”&lt;br&gt;“Even though it’s hard, I can still do it. It might take a bit more energy and effort to do, but I can still do it.”</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>13 yo female</td>
<td><strong>Background:</strong> Parents split when she was four months old. Mum worked 12 hour days – so she was home alone a lot. Anger management issues over little things – frequent verbal and physical fights with peers. Many detentions and a number of suspensions. Mostly pass grades, although a number of fail grades. Not many close, current, stable friendships. <strong>Lead-in:</strong> Lead-in was really cool. Enjoyed canoeing across the lake, travelling via plane, abseiling, teamwork, the fun in staying at PCYC for two nights. <strong>Expedition:</strong> “Good but bad”. Good because she got to hang out with friends, enjoyed walking up the hills, and felt supported by a number of group members (staff members included). Bad because she missed her home, bed, mum, brother, and niece. It really annoyed her that contact with home/phones were not allowed. <strong>Highlights:</strong> Creeking, low ropes, flying fox, raft building, and “mafia” were the most memorable activities. Having a fire at the campsite, and spending time with her new-made friends, and the accomplishment from managing to get through the entire program were also highlights. <strong>Lowlights:</strong> Having issues with the way one of the facilitators treated her. Learning to get along with the group - refraining from going off at them. The mental and physical drain from hiking. Having to push through tiredness to hike even when it became dark. Not having showers. <strong>Outcomes:</strong> Reduced her habit of complaining. Didn’t wear makeup once, and realised that was OK. Learned an “I can do it” attitude to replace feeling down about herself. Also reined in her “I do things by myself because then I know its right” attitude. Felt positive about the future. Aimed to spread less rumours, develop a better relationship with her brother, and achieve better grades. <strong>Recommendations:</strong> Less walking, only having to set up camp once, one male and female facilitator (rather than two male facilitators), visit the beach during the program.</td>
<td>“It was hard! All I was thinking is ‘I cannot do this’... Yeah. Looking at the hill and going ‘I can’t do that’. Walking up a steep bit going ‘Holy hell this is hard’... with everyone else’s support [I changed my attitude to] ‘If I can make it to there, I can have a rest’, and then once I made it to there I just kept going and go ‘If I can make it to there, well then, I can…’ - you know, just setting myself little goals and going with it.” “Doing the actual whole program ... like getting through and finishing it [was a highlight].” “I’ve set myself up. Like might try harder in school, and I’ve decided where I want to be, where I want to go, and what I have to do to get there.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Age, Gender (School)</td>
<td>Summary of interview</td>
<td>Quotes that capture the essence of the participants’ experience</td>
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| 13 | 14 yo male           | **Background:** Lived at home with Mum, Dad, and brother, and got along well with them all. Achieved decent grades despite feeling overwhelmed by school work. Did not (and had never) consider(ed) anybody his friend due to self-proclaimed issues with trust and respect – tended to treat others poorly as a result. Knew all but two of the other participants prior to the program. **Lead-in:** Enjoyed the Lead-in (particularly the canoeing, as although he had lived in Mt Isa for 11 years, this was his first time going out on the lake). Did not complete the 10 metre abseil as he did not trust the equipment would keep him safe. **Expedition:** Very happy over completing the 30 metre abseil. Coped pretty well being away from home by taking each day by the hour. Had trouble sleeping because he didn’t have a mat. **Highlights:** Completing the 30 metre abseil despite fear, rain, and entering a dark cave. The flying fox experience. **Lowlights:** Insensitive group members. Differing needs and abilities of group members while hiking. The temperamental weather. The dark, cramped space caving involved. **Outcomes:** Learned that everybody is different, and that it was important he started treating those differences with respect. Realised that life was about getting out and pushing his comfort zone rather than hiding away. Learned to have more trust in others via activities requiring teamwork. Aimed to continue improving his relationships/the way he treated people. **Recommendations:** Either easier but still physically exertive mode of travel (e.g. horse or bike), or shorter walking distances. Better (nicer) food. | “It’s actually helped me realise what’s actually... what life actually means, and what it’s meant for. We’re not going to just stay at home and sit somewhere in the corner where we’ll be safe - we’re actually meant to be getting out and exploring - pushing our comfort zone.”  
“It’s better to go do it and then fail, then just walk away and not having a go at it and finding out if you can or not do it. You usually don’t know if you’re going to be good at something unless you give it a go.”  
“Basically it was great, really. I’ve loved every bit about it. The challenges, the negatives, the positives. They all balance each other out.” |
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<th>ID</th>
<th>Age, Gender</th>
<th>Summary of interview</th>
<th>Quotes that capture the essence of the participants’ experience</th>
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| 14 | 13 yo male  | **Background:** Custody battle was ongoing between Mum and Dad. Lived with dad and Step-mum (which is where he wanted to live). Behavioural conduct had shown improvement since he started living with Dad (although he still commonly received lunchtime detentions). Achieved decent grades, but was not good at working in a team. **Lead-in:** Lead-in was fun. Enjoyed hanging out, relaxing, talking, and playing games (the rope game and “hands and feet” in particular). Having to prepare and cook his own food on a trangia was a challenge that he ended up overcoming. **Expedition:** Missed his Dad, Step-mum, warm showers at night, home-cooked dinners, and being able to ride his scooter. Hiking was hard but also fun. Appreciated the Catalyst staff members. It was nice/made it easier to have friends on the program with him. **Highlights:** Most enjoyed the hiking, creeking, and the two games “mafia” and “stomp”. **Lowlights:** Canoeing (didn’t like his partner and their canoe flipped), differing needs and abilities of group members while hiking (and the associated “whinging”), the rain, having to hike despite availability of drivable roads, having to frequently re-set up the tent. **Outcomes:** Surprised at his physical ability. Learning to get along with others was one of the most profound outcomes for him. He believed it would be a long-lasting effect that others would notice. The result was a reduced level of intolerance and increased ability to work in a team. **Recommendations:** Replace some of the hiking with horses, push bikes, or mountain bikes. | “I like to keep to myself sometimes. Like, I like to talk to people. But sometimes I just like to be by myself ... I’m good at doing the work, but not at working within a team.” [attitude before Catalyst]  
“Hiking with a big bag on - I never thought I’d be… like when I lifted it up at first I thought ‘I’m going to die’. But, yeah - I made it here.”  
“It’s easier to get along with people that you have to work with, and not try to do it by yourself.” [attitude toward the end of Catalyst] |
Youth participant interviews \((n = 14)\) indicated a range of generally positive responses to the Catalyst program. Youths almost universally reported challenging personal backgrounds, including family, school and personal problems. During the program they were faced with not only personal challenges, but also having to learn to trust others. They developed more positive thinking, particularly self-belief, and persistence in overcoming problems. Youths reported that the Expedition hiking was the most difficult component. They reported social challenges in getting along with other participants and developing effective team work. Youths reported developing positive relationships with staff and generally at least one peer, if not several, through the program and looked forward to further engagement with the program, through the Follow-up days. Highlights for the youths were the high adventure activities, including abseiling, caving and raft-building. Youths generally reported feeling more positive towards the future and themselves, as well as being more motivated towards working harder and more harmoniously at home and school.

Staff and observer interviews

There were six semi-structured interviews with Catalyst staff, 2013 and 2014 (the leadership development manager and five facilitator interviews). In addition, there were three semi-structured interviews with accompanying staff (a teacher, a PCYC youth worker, and a school chaplain). The interviews aimed to capture how interviewees’ became involved with Catalyst, background of the youth participant client group, staff experiences of Catalyst program (including the Lead-in, Expedition, and Follow-up program components), program outcomes, overall worthwhileness, suggested program improvements, and any other comments. Audio of the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Summaries of each interview were then prepared (see Appendix C).

Together, these case summaries describe the challenges of working with Queensland youth-at-risk including connecting with schools in low socioeconomic areas and with students who commonly have a lack of home/family support and/or home/family problems, as well as social and behavioural difficulties at school. One of the key, challenging issues in working with schools is to identify, engage, select a group of youth participants who have problems but who are motivated towards, and capable of, learning how to cope better and take positive actions to change their futures. Critical to this process is the initial engagement with the school (who need to have at least one key motivated teacher or behavioural support person or chaplain), the profiling, selection and engagement of potential participants, and then conducting of a Lead-in experience with more than 10 potential participants in order to try to select a group of 10 or so for the rest of the Catalyst program. This is far from an easy or smooth process due the nature of the at-risk target group and the success of this process varied from program to program. The most successful partnerships appear to have been forged over time with some schools (e.g., Woodridge State High School), although this is no guarantee
of success on any one program, as each group is unique. There was general agreement, however, that the selection and profiling process would benefit from further revision and streamlining in particular of the information sent to schools and teachers prior to each program.

The Lead-in, Expedition, and Follow-up program components generally appear to have run well from the point of view of those interviewed, with the typical staff team structure of two school/community staff and two PCYC Catalyst facilitators working well. Lead facilitators had considerable scope for taking responsibility of the entire program which contributed to them having the most significant personal investment and control of the program which generally seemed to be very constructive, although it meant that there was also some notable variation in the facilitation styles and the program design used from program to program. In the future, the possible involvement of a senior adventure therapist could be beneficial in a supervisory role and consulted on training and program design. This could benefit consistency and quality in program delivery.

Most youth participants engaged willingly in most program activities, although typically a few participants who were on the Lead-in did not continue their participation. This is not necessarily a problem, as the Lead-in is, in part, designed to be used by the facilitators as important part of a mutual selection process to determine the participants who are suited to the Expedition. However, it is necessary for there to be sufficient intake in the Lead-in to allow for drop-outs and still provide for a group size of at least 10 on expedition. The structure of the Follow-up programs and attendance varied somewhat according to location and program.

Program staff observed improvements in self-esteem and self-confidence as, arguably, the most common outcomes, followed by the development of social skills, awareness of the effects of one’s behaviour on others, and the positive experience of being in a supportive group. Nevertheless, group processes were far from easy and required considerable skills, patience, and effort on the part of facilitators to negotiate and maintain participants’ awareness and compliance with group agreements (an important part of the Lead-in, Expedition, and Follow-up). Participants appeared to struggle somewhat with self-reflection activities and facilitators clearly worked hard to help facilitate reflections about how participants’ personal actions had consequences for themselves and others. In each program, there appeared to be some participants who derived clear, positive growth and benefits, whilst for other participants the signs of change were still in their early stages, and for some participants, there were no obvious signs of change.

From the leadership development manager’s point of view, the organisational sustainability of the program needs consideration. As the Catalyst program is not core-funded by PCYC it is dependent on external funding. In order for the Catalyst program to be sustainable into the future, it is likely to need at least some core funding commitment from PCYC.
Discussion

The PCYC Catalyst program uses challenging, adventure-based activities in a supportive group environment based on the adventure-based counselling model in order to effect positive change in the lives of youths at risk of adverse outcomes in their educational, vocational, and life-course pathways. The program partially exhibits each of the key features of adventure therapy programs suggested by Williams (2002) and thus, may currently be most accurately described as a therapeutic adventure program or an adventure-based intervention program with therapeutic goals:

1. Diagnosis: Specific participants are targeted; however, the criteria for selection is somewhat unclear
2. Outcomes: Some remedial outcomes are intended, but these are somewhat broad and lacking in specification
3. Intervention: The intervention is somewhat tailored to the needs of specific groups and individuals but in many ways is a generalised intervention
4. Design: The program design is based on the adventure-based counselling and experiential learning theory. However, the guiding framework lacks focus on specific therapeutic frameworks.
5. Research: The program takes research and evaluation seriously, but is in the early stages of integrating research evaluation into a systematic approach.
6. Facilitation: Programs are conducted by staff trained in outdoor skills and various aspects of youth-related work. Staff with more training in recognised therapeutic processes would help to enhance the therapeutic processes.

The overall outcomes are comparable to adventure education programs, but appear to be equivalent to approximately two-thirds of the size of effects for comparable adventure therapy programs. Thus, the Catalyst programs appears to have promising potential, with small to moderate positive outcomes, but this program could strengthen its therapeutic processes and become even more effective.

For life effectiveness skills, youth participants reported small to moderate, positive, short- and longer-term impacts. For mental health, youth participants reported large longer-term improvements in psychological well-being, and very little longer-term effect on psychological distress. There were reductions in some problematic behaviours (particularly Harming, Fighting, Stealing, and Vandalism), however there were increases in some behaviours (Cheating, Vehicles, Wagging, and Drug Use). Participants reported that it was "mostly true" that the program contributed to their personal and social development. A summary of the youth self-report and observer ratings in relation to the youth development objectives is presented in Table 14, followed by a more detailed discussion and recommendations.
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<tr>
<td>Emotional Resilience</td>
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<td>Healthy Risk Taking</td>
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<td>Locus of Control</td>
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<td>-0.23</td>
<td>No overall change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self Awareness</td>
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<td>0.23</td>
<td>Small to moderate +ve change</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
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<td>Self Esteem</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>Moderate +ve change</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self Confidence</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.40</td>
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<td>Communication Skills</td>
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<td>0.43</td>
<td>Moderate +ve change</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
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<td>Cooperative Teamwork</td>
<td>0.21</td>
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<td>Small to moderate +ve change</td>
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<td>Psychological Distress</td>
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<td>Psychological Well-being</td>
<td>0.07</td>
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<td>Behavioural Conduct (1)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>Small +ve change</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
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Note. ★ = Very small positive change (~0.1), ★★ = Small positive change (~0.2), ★★★ = Small to moderate positive change (~0.3), ★★★★ = Moderate positive change (~0.5), ★★★★★★★ = Strong positive change (~0.6+)
Life effectiveness

Youth participant self-ratings from the beginning to the end of the program indicated small, positive changes in all 10 personal and social life skills, with an overall ES of .16, an 8% change. This is a similar sized effect to outdoor education programs with high school-aged participants (.21; Hattie et al., 1997) but is lower than for adventure therapy programs with similar aged participants (.41; Bowen & Neill, 2013). Youth participant self-ratings indicated that the small short-term improvements in life skills were sustained in the longer-term and even continued to improve (.30).

Observer ratings of life effectiveness indicated moderately large positive short-term change (.60) and small positive longer-term changes (0.24). Youth participants and observers concurred in that rated small to moderate longer-term improvements in life effectiveness skills (0.30 and 0.24 respectively). These longer-term effects appear to be similar to, but somewhat weaker than, the longer-term effects in the adventure therapy program benchmarks identified by Bowen and Neill (2013).

Mental health

Mental health can be conceptualised as consisting of two independent components: psychological distress and psychological well-being. Results varied according to the type of mental health being measured. Results also varied between participants and observers.

In the short-term, participants reported a heightening of psychological distress during the Expedition, probably due to the physical and psychologically challenging nature of the Expedition. Previous outdoor education research has also found a temporary increase psychological distress during the program (Neill & Heubeck, 1995). This short-term heightening of psychological distress, however, was largely temporary, with almost no evidence for longer-term changes in the level of psychological distress (ES = -0.10).

In the short-term, participants reported little change in psychological well-being (ES = 0.07), however participants reported strong positive change in psychological well-being in the longer-term (ES = 0.80). Thus, from the participants’ point of view, they had notable longer-term improvements in their psychological well-being and little to no change in their psychological distress. The improvements in psychological well-being are greater than the Clinical outcomes reported for adventure therapy programs by Bowen and Neill (2013), whilst the psychological distress outcomes are lower.

Observer ratings indicated a different pattern of changes for the two dimensions of mental health. Observer ratings indicated a strong short-term improvement in psychological well-being (0.80), with little short-term change in psychological distress (-0.12). In the longer-term, however, observers saw no change in psychological well-being (0.00) and a small worsening of psychological distress (-0.29).

Thus, participants reported considerable long-term positive improvements in their psychological well-being with little to no change in their psychological distress, whereas observer ratings indicated no long-term improvements in well-being and a small long-term deterioration in distress.

Adolescent behavioural conduct

Longer-term changes in adolescent behavioural conduct were measured in this evaluation through self- and observer- reports of the frequency of engaging in a variety of relatively common adolescent delinquent behaviours. There was mixed evidence about the impact of the program on behavioural conduct. According to youth participants, they engaged, overall, in slightly less delinquent behaviours. In particular, youths reported that they engaged in less fighting, stealing, harming, and vandalising, but also in slightly more cheating, drug use, and vehicles. According to observers, there was a large short-term reduction in behavioural conduct problems (during the Expedition) and a small, longer-term improvement. Thus, the
program appears to have had positive overall effects on behaviour although, as with most other outcomes, the changes in behaviour do not appear to be as large as benchmarks derived from the adventure therapy meta-analysis by Bowen and Neill (2013).

Program ratings

Youth participants generally rated the program, facilitators, the group, and their outcomes very positively. Facilitators were strengths of the program, with an average rating of 6.4 out of 8, although this also suggests some potential for improvement.

Group dynamics were rated positively (5.5 out of 8), however it was clear from open-ended comments, observations, and interviews that group dynamics were one of the most challenging aspects of the program for participants and staff. The fundamental challenge seemed to revolve around individuals with personal and social problems learning to work and live effectively together during the Expedition. Resolution of this challenge was largely achieved, with youth participants ultimately feeling that they were reasonably involved in the group (5.8 out of 8).

The overall ratings of the program were very positive (6.7 out of 8). Each of the phases (Lead-in, Expedition, and Follow-up) were rated positively, with the highest ratings for the Expedition and the lowest ratings for the Follow-up. Participants felt that the Expedition was somewhat too long and difficult, with many participants commenting on the difficulty of hiking up-hill with a heavy pack. In contrast, the Follow-up was rated as somewhat too short and easy. Although participants rated the Expedition as somewhat too long and difficult, it should be noted that challenge-based adventure therapy intentionally aims to challenge participants in order to help them develop new skills and coping strategies (Neill & Dias, 2001) and most participants acknowledged the value of the challenging Expedition in catalysing their learning about themselves, and that hiking got easier as they went along. Nevertheless, it remains important to ensure that sufficient perceived support is provided in order to nurture growth through challenging experiences (Neill & Dias, 2001). The fact that the Follow-up was rated as somewhat too short and easy suggests that the program left participants hungry for additional health-promoting challenges rather than being shy of them.

Youth participant interviews revealed that participants typically experienced one or more pre-occurring family, social, behavioural, and/or psychological risk factors and problems. Teachers played an important role in initially engaging participants and encouraging their participation in the Catalyst program. However, several students reported not being sufficiently well informed about the program and its difficulty. Some participants felt coerced or occasionally forced to participate. All three program components were positive experiences, with highlights related to the peak adventure activities and the development of group teamwork and harmony. Lowlights related to the physical, social and personal challenges of hiking and group conflict. Outcomes reported by participants often related to self-belief and self-confidence, positive thinking, resilience, and positive future outlook.

Strengths and limitations

Strengths of this study include the use of multiple perspectives and multiple outcome measures in a longitudinal manner to assess short- and longer-term changes, as well as the use of mixed methods and benchmarks. Limitations include that this was a non-experimental study. Thus, there was no control group to compare with the experimental group. As a result, observed changes could be due to natural development, self-selection bias (there was limited analysis of drop-outs), and/or methodological artifacts such as regression to the mean. Thus, the results of this study, whilst substantial, should nevertheless be interpreted with caution.
Recommendations

Overall, the results indicated that the Catalyst program was, by and large, a positive, rewarding experience for participants with relatively minimal negative side effects. Nevertheless, these results also indicate that youth-at-risk participant outcomes could potentially be enhanced by improvements to the program design and delivery. Such changes could enhance achievement of the targeted outcomes. Points for future consideration include:

1. **Therapeutic adventure vs. adventure therapy** – The Catalyst program is more accurately described as “therapeutic adventure” than “adventure therapy”. The Catalyst program targets at-risk participants and provides a secondary prevention treatment program that appears to facilitate positive personal, social, and behavioural change. However, the Catalyst program lacks the key distinguishing features of an adventure therapy program. In particular, if it was sought for the Catalyst program to become recognised as adventure therapy program, it would be necessary to become more engaged in client diagnosis, adoption of therapeutic processes with a stronger theoretical basis, and be supervised by staff with recognised qualifications in clinical psychology. Very few, if any, adventure-based intervention programs in Australia currently meet such criteria.

2. **Screening** – Screening was key to the success of the Catalyst program. The screening process could be improved by developing more explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria for referral agents. The program appears best targeted as a secondary prevention program (for adolescents with early indicators of problems). In many cases, youths clearly benefitted from encouragement from teachers to become involved in the Catalyst program, however it is critical that youth’s perceive their participation as fully informed and voluntary. In the case of at least one program (Woodridge 2013), a critical mass of participants appeared to feel coerced and this contributed to problematic behaviours during the Expedition which eventually lead to its cancellation. At the other end of the spectrum, participants who were not notably at-risk were selected for one program (which continued to be delivered, but not as a Catalyst program). Integration of an existing, recognised framework (such as the Common Approach to Assessment, Referral and Support; Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, n. d.) for screening and intake assessment purpose could assist in profiling participants and discussing their needs. It could be beneficial to initially target a larger group (e.g., 15) for the Lead-in, to allow for drop-outs and to help ensure that the Expedition and Follow-up are delivered for groups of a reasonable size (e.g., 10).

3. **Physical challenge of initial Expedition hiking** – Participants’ main complaint related to the physical challenge of the Expedition hiking, particularly the initial day or so (hiking out of the Numinbah Valley). Many participants also recognised this physical challenge as part of the process, however this should be clearly disclosed during recruitment and screening. Strategies may also be considered for mitigating (but not removing) the physical challenge of the initial up-hill Expedition hiking. For example, PCYC could work more closely with schools and participants with regard to pre-Expedition fitness training. Another option could be to rationalise Expedition pack weights, possibly by weighing packs and scrutinising contents more closely prior to leaving base and/or providing more gear swap and/or food re-supply opportunities along the way.

4. **Group storming and norming during Expedition** – Several groups and many participants were significantly challenged by difficult group relations during at least the first several days of the Expedition. Most groups succeeded in learning how to work together, with the assistance of facilitators appropriately and useful using group adventure-based counselling techniques such as group contracts and challenge-by-choice principles. However, it may also be beneficial to explore additional strategies for group and facilitation management. Facilitation methods varied considerably between programs (depending on facilitator). Perhaps the best ideas about group management techniques could be identified, pooled, and then become more standard.
5. **High adventure activities** – The highlights of the program for almost all participants were the “high adventure” activities (e.g., abseiling, flying fox, caving, raft-building). It could be useful to consider ways in which the program might increase exposure to these activities (e.g., through longer sessions, multiple sessions and/or by providing other adventure activities). Additional possibilities might include rock climbing, orienteering, creeking, swimming hole activities, and additional group initiative challenges whilst on Expedition (e.g., the beam).

6. **Reflective activities** – Many participants struggled with self-reflective activities (e.g., journal writing, solo time, and group discussions). Nevertheless, these activities appeared to be critical to developing self-awareness, self-understanding, and self-disclosure. Implementation of these activities could be reviewed and potentially revised to help achieve greater impact.

7. **Follow-up activities** – Overall, participants rated the Follow-up component of the program less favourably than the Expedition and Lead-in components. Participants also rated the Follow-up as somewhat too easy and too short. Participants appeared to expect a more challenging capstone experience.

8. **Future evaluation** – An on-going model for monitoring program impacts should be developed. This could be a streamlined version of the current evaluation. Ideally, a future evaluation approach would allow for comparison with results from the current evaluation and provide closer to real-time program monitoring and feedback for continual program development.

9. **Program sustainability** – The Catalyst program is well situated for future viability in terms of location, facilities, equipment, expertise, and needs of youth-at-risk. However, the program’s sustainability is highly vulnerable due to its reliance on short-term cycles of external funding. To the extent to which the program objectives and demonstrated outcomes are seen as aligned with the PCYC mission, the Catalyst program, or a revised version of the program, appear to warrant consideration for further development and possible expansion through core funding.
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Appendix A: Standard deviations for calculating effect sizes

Estimates of Youth Participant Population Standard Deviations for Life Skills, Mental Health, and Behavioural Conduct Based on Time 1 Responses (Used for Calculating Effect Sizes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Time 1 SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life Skills (N = 56)</td>
<td>Emotional Resilience</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Healthy Risk Taking</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Locus of Control</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Awareness</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>1.39</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Confidence</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperative Teamwork</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health (N = 56)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychological Well-Being</td>
<td>1.76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavioural Conduct (N = 52)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Drug use</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wagging</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stealing</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harming</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vandalising</td>
<td>1.67</td>
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Appendix B: Youth participant interview summaries

Participant 1

1. Direct quote(s) that captures the essence of the participant’s experience

“I was bit nervous at the start because I didn’t know anyone. I don’t really talk to much people around school. I don’t have that much friends really. [But] since I’ve come here it’s like I’ve become close with some of them - boys and girls. So I’ve made more friends.”

“I hope I can do this again sometime. I like everything outdoor - adventure sort of activity stuff - the high-ropes and flying fox.”

“It was just fun!”

2. Participant’s background

H2 was a 14 year old female who participated in a Catalyst program in 2013. H2 reported that home life - prior to Catalyst - was sometimes hard as a lot of fights went on between her mum and step-dad. H2 had two sisters (ages 19 and four) and one brother (age 12). H2 reported that she had been finding school a bit hard - the work was a bit challenging for her. H2 also reported that she didn’t have many friends back at home.

3. How the participant got involved in the program

H2 got involved in the program when a teacher pulled her aside at lunchtime to describe and recommend it to her. H2 was extremely keen - she signed the form “then and there”. She said she was so keen because it sounded good, and fun, and she saw it as a one-off opportunity that was being offered to her. Mum and [step-]dad supported her involvement, readily signing their required sections. H2 didn’t know any of the other 2013 Catalyst participants prior to the program.

4. Participant’s experience of the program stages e.g., highlights and lowlights

Lead-in experience:

Because she embarked on the Catalyst program without knowing anybody, H2 was a bit nervous. H2 found the canoeing experience really fun because everyone was laughing and having a good time. Her canoe nearly got tipped over at one point, which she said added to the fun. H2 also enjoyed the “down time” - everyone in the group chilling out and hanging out together in between activities.

Expedition experience:

H2 was less keen to go along on the Expedition, as - for her - the aspect of being away from home for so long without seeing her family was a bit tough. She said that the first couple of days were particularly tough as she got home sick, and also because there was a lot of conflict between group members. H2 said that the conflict did dissipate over the last few days of the Expedition - because the group facilitators got everybody to sit down in a circle and each provide a reason as to why they were having trouble getting along with everyone. H2 stated that it may have helped if the facilitators arranged this earlier on in the program, as it led to everyone being a lot nicer to one another.

Follow-up expectations:

H2 said that she was looking forward to the Follow-up.

Highlights:

When asked which experiences stood out to her as highlights, H2 said “everything”. Specifics she mentioned were the raft-building (as with the canoeing, she nearly fell in the water, which added to the fun), completing the abseil despite some apprehension, and also getting to the end of the Expedition without wanting to go home.

Lowlights:
H2’s only lowlight was her upset over the conflict between her fellow group members. H2 tried to helpfully intervene with this conflict, but her attempts resulted in being told to shut up/getting called names. Because of this outcome she gave up, as she arrived at the conclusion that there was no point trying.

5. **Participant’s outcomes**

H2 reported that she herself had made a bit of a relational change throughout the duration of the Catalyst program - she started talking to people better, and respecting them. Signs of this were already apparent following the Lead-in - H2 relayed that at this point in time, her mum said to her that there was a difference in the way H2 spoke to her. H2’s mum said that H2 would talk to her instead of shouting, talking under her breath, and swearing. H2 also reported that after the Expedition she planned to help her mum out around the house more, and look after her younger sister when their mum wanted to go out. H2 said “I just respect her”.

Regarding school, H2 said that she was a bit behind (had a number of assignments to catch up on). She said that she was a bit more motivated to try harder [compared to pre-Expedition].

From a social perspective, H2 became close with some of the other participants on the program - both boys and girls. This outcome meant a lot to her, as she was nervous about not knowing anybody in the beginning. H2 hoped to maintain these new friendships back at school.

6. **Participant’s recommendations**

H2 recommended less hiking. She thought there was too much hiking involved in the Catalyst program, and that the hills they had to hike up were way too steep.
Participant 2

1. Direct quote(s) that captures the essence of the participant’s experience

“I didn’t know if I wanted to go or not because some of the things she [a school teacher] told me [on describing the Catalyst program], I was scared of doing.”

“It was a bit hard at the start and it started getting easier and easier as we went.”

“You can do pretty much whatever you want as long as you set your mind to it.”

2. Participant’s background

H4 was a year 9 male who participated in a Catalyst program in 2013. He lived with his mum, step-dad, three sisters, and one brother. When the interviewer asked what had been going on in his life that made the teacher approach him and see if he wanted to participate, he reported that school had been going alright - he never wagged and hadn’t been getting into trouble. H4 was physically active - he was a footy player, and also went to the gym sometimes.

3. How the participant got involved in the program

H4 got involved in the Catalyst program when a teacher came to his class and described what would be involved before asking if he would like to participate. Initially H4 wasn’t sure if he wanted to commit or not, because he was scared of doing some of the activities that the teacher had described (e.g. abseiling down a 30 metre cliff, and the amount of hiking that was involved). He said that it sounded kind of fun as well though, so he asked his mum if he could go. Mum said yes, and that it sounded like fun.

4. Participant’s experience of the program stages e.g., highlights and lowlights

Lead-in experience:
H4 summed up his Lead-in experience by saying he found the first day hard, but it got better from the second day onward.

Expedition experience:
H4’s sum-up of the Expedition was much the same as his Lead-in summary. He found the Expedition a bit hard at the start, and it got easier and easier as he went along. He recalled that the first day consisted of resting and games, but the second day consisted of hiking up mountains all day. He stated that he was really tired after that first day of hiking, but from that point onward it just got easier and easier. H4 knew most of the participants prior to the Catalyst program. He thought that the group had gone “alright” living and working together - and that it was good that they improved as the program went on - but that they could have done a bit better overall, particularly when it came to communication and helping one another out.

Highlights:
Building a raft and going out onto the water to test whether or not it was functional was a highlight for H4 - even though the raft was unsuccessful (it fell apart). Similarly, the abseiling was the thing H4 was most afraid of - yet it turned out to be one of his favourite parts of the program. He also enjoyed the caving. Additionally, H4 valued the Catalyst staff members (facilitators as well as teachers) - stating that they were available and helpful whenever the participants were in need.

Lowlights:
For H4, the hiking and sleeping at night were tough experiences.

5. Participant’s outcomes

H4 said that he would be taking a lot away from the program. He commented that through learning to both speak up, and listen to other people’s opinions (both of which he wasn’t doing much of before) on Catalyst, he had learned how to work within a team. H4 now believes that you can do pretty much whatever you want - as long as you set your mind to it. He also stated that in the end, the hiking wasn’t as hard as he thought -
and that now that he can do more, he could take on more. H4 reported that the program was well worth his time and that he would do it again (or a similar sort of thing) if he had the chance.

6. **Participant’s recommendations**
H4 recommended less hiking, and more fun activities such as caving, rock climbing, abseiling, and water activities like raft-building.
Participant 3

1. **Direct quote(s) that captures the essence of the participant’s experience**
   “She just said abseiling and camping - [I thought that] was pretty cool. She never said anything about hiking.”

   “I just didn’t like the hiking. [It was] the hardest thing I’ve done in my life.”

   “I might change a little bit - I don’t know. Try and do work around the house and get money. Don’t annoy the teachers as much.”

2. **Participant’s background**
   H5 was a 14 year old male who participated in a Catalyst program in 2013. H5 originated from Christchurch, New Zealand. He didn’t like moving to Australia in the beginning, but he adjusted eventually. H5 lived at home with his dad, mum, and two brothers (one older one younger), and reported that home life was “boring”. H5 lived in a remote area, his dad worked a lot, and his mum worked part time (five days a week - but mornings only). H5 said that although he had friends, they didn’t come over very much. When asked how he spent his time at home, he responded saying that he just played on his phone. H5 reported that school was alright. He went to school (didn’t wag), and never really got up to trouble. Prior to the program, H5 knew and got along with roughly half of the other 2013 Catalyst participants.

3. **How the participant got involved in the program**
   H5 got involved in the Catalyst program when a teacher pulled him aside and asked if he would like to participate. H5 thought the teachers description of the Catalyst activities - namely abseiling and camping - sounded pretty cool. He was a bit bitter that the teacher didn’t extensively inform him about the hiking that would be involved. H5 then gave the relevant paperwork to his parents, who agreed to his Catalyst participation. H5 didn’t have any particular goals when he agreed to participate in the Catalyst program, he just thought he’d go along and see what happened.

4. **Participant’s experience of the program stages e.g., highlights and lowlights**
   H5 found the Catalyst fun - but said that the hiking dampened that fun down a lot for him. He stated that the hiking was the hardest thing he had ever done in his life. He didn’t feel fit enough for it, and he found it difficult to carry such weight. He said the second day was the hardest because it consisted of hiking (largely up hill) the whole day. But it got easier as he went along, with the last two days in particular being much easier to get through.

   H5 got along well with the other group members, apart from one of the boys. H5 stated that he and this other boy “hated each other the whole time”. Their personalities just clashed - they annoyed one another. This clash was probably exacerbated by the fact that the two boys initially shared a tent. Toward the end of the program this did improve - the boys stopped being mean to each other naturally - as they realised life might be a bit easier if they didn’t harass each other so much.

   **Highlights:**
   H5 enjoyed the flying fox experience - he said it was fun and that he would do it again. He also enjoyed the river rafting, and additionally mentioned that the facilitators were good.

   **Lowlights:**
   Overall, H5 rated the program a 7/10 - the three points he minused from his program experience were due to the hiking element.

5. **Participant’s outcomes**
   H5 thought he might change within the context of his life a little bit when he returned home from Catalyst, but doubted whether anybody would notice any of those changes.
H5 stated that - despite his mum and dad offering him money to do so - he did nothing to help out around the house prior to Catalyst. He said he would like to change this - he wanted to take up their offer - and start helping out more in exchange for a monetary reward.

H5 recognised a need to “not annoy the teachers as much” when he returned to school after the Catalyst Expedition. He said that this was not something that he wanted to do, but that he thought he probably would.

Looking forward into the future, H5 has a particular goal - to breed dogs by getting two Jack Russell’s and selling the puppies. He had Pomeranian at the time of this Catalyst - and wanted to build something for it - like a big box or cage.

6. Participant’s recommendations

H5 recommended for the hiking to be cut out of the Catalyst program altogether, and for transportation between campsites to be via van instead.

H5 said that if he were to do a similar program in the future, he would pack less content into his backpack. On reflection, he realised that he had packed an unnecessary number of items of clothing, and also packed a bigger sleeping bag than necessary. Alternatively, he agreed that a gear swap half way through the program (to plan in advance to take the content he would no longer need out of his backpack, drop it off; and exchange it for some fresh stuff) would be beneficial, as each participant would then only have to carry half the weight.

He also recommended for Catalyst get rid of all the “theory stuff” [reflective self development activities], stating that he didn’t participate in any of it (as - indicatively - he found it difficult to focus upon that kind of thing).
Participant 4

1. **Direct quote(s) that captures the essence of the participant’s experience**

“I thought like everyone was going to be so mean to me. And like I’d have no friends to hang with. And like we weren’t going to be happy, we were just going to be picking on each other … it wasn’t like that at all … we were all like family - we always fight and then make up.”

“It was pretty cool. It was really hard though. Because it was my first time carrying those packs. And I wasn’t organised.”

“When I got back, I felt so calm ... I can let go of the past … I am going to say it was really fun and life-changing … it will probably make me a better person.”

2. **Participant’s background**

H9 was a 13 year old female who participated in a Catalyst program in 2013. H9 lived at home with her mum, two sisters (one older one younger), and younger brother. H9 reported that life before she came on the program was “alright”. The relationship shared between H9 and her mum was filled with conflict - at one point H9 moved out of home (up the street) for a few days before deciding to come back. H9 said that right before Catalyst she had finally been getting along with her mum - they hadn’t been fighting, and she didn’t get kicked out on the street anymore. H9 said she liked school, and that she had recently made some new friends at school.

3. **How the participant got involved in the program**

H9’s Catalyst participation was initiated when a school teacher called her up. H9 then told her mum, and the two of them then went to a meeting about it at the school. From the insight the meeting provided H9 with, she thought it was going to be a big challenge, but that it would also be fun. H9’s mum thought it would be a good idea for her to participate in Catalyst because it would allow her an opportunity to get away and have some time to herself.

4. **Participant’s experience of the program stages e.g., highlights and lowlights**

**Lead-in experience:**

H9’s Lead-in experience was mixed. She thought it was pretty cool - but she also thought it was really hard. She experienced difficulty because it was her first time carrying a pack while hiking, and also because she wasn’t organised. H9 did think her Catalyst participation allowed her to improve on both of these things though.

**Expedition experience:**

Prior to Catalyst H9 hadn’t met many of the other participants. Because of this, she entered the Expedition expecting that everybody would be mean to her, that she wouldn’t have anybody to hang out with, that everybody would pick on one another, and that they would all be unhappy. More toward the end of the program, she was able to reflect and realise that things actually turned out close to the opposite - she became friends with each of the other participants. H9 stated that she had feared the worst in the beginning, but in actuality they were like one big family who always fought and made up.

**Highlights:**

The biggest highlight for H9 was the opportunity to meet new people. Prior to Catalyst she would see some of her fellow participants around, but they had never had the opportunity to get to know one another as their paths hadn’t crossed before. H9 was hopeful that she would get to hang out with the people she had connected with on Catalyst back at school. Particular activities H9 enjoyed were abseiling, flying fox, and canoeing.

**Lowlights:**
A fair amount of conflict existed between certain group members at the beginning of the program. Although it did not directly involve her, this was the biggest lowlight for H9. Specifically, she found it uncomfortable when people would simultaneously scream at one another/tell one another what to do - despite none of them listening to the other. She attempted to temper these incidences by intervening, but instead of having success, she got put down - which was something that also negatively affected her. H9 did however mention that the individuals of direct involvement did change their act right toward the end of the program - they started helping rather than heckling one another.

5. **Participant’s outcomes**

H9 reported that the Lead-in left her feeling calm. She said that this sense of calm meant that back at home she no longer became irritated by her sister, no longer made a big deal out of everything, and also got into less fights.

H9 thought that after the Expedition she would be able to go home and take the effects of the program a step further - that she would be able to try harder at school, and help out more around the house. She also thought the program had helped to become more tolerant, but also more assertive.

H9 reported that before learning how to calm herself, she would get pretty worked up. She said she would take that out on herself more than anyone. She will work on being kinder to herself in the future.

H9 said that “everything” about her future looked different, and that participating in the program had allowed her to feel able to let go of the past. She said that it was really fun and life-changing, and that it would probably make her a better person.

6. **Participant’s recommendations**

H9 commented that the facilitators already do a good job, and that she wouldn’t change a thing. She did say that she would maybe add in a little bit of “free time” once the group had set up at each new campsite. She elaborated, saying that in this time, participants would get to choose whether they wanted to (a) join in on an organised, group activity or (b) spend some time on their own doing sporty stuff like playing with the football. She said that the latter is something she regularly does back at home.
Participant 5

1. Direct quote(s) that captures the essence of the participant’s experience
“[I was] excited, at the start, and still am excited [about] the trip, and all the things they told us that we would be doing.”

“I’ve learned] to trust these people here”

“Doing the great walk trail, I got stabbed by all these plants, and I just said “Oh, things happen”. (He suffers from anger management issues but has learned to “let things go”.)

“It’s just helped me to stay focused, and put 100% effort in.”

2. Participant’s background
S1 was a 14 year old male who participated in a Catalyst program in 2013. S1 lived on school campus in a residential. S1 communicated that he was happy with his living situation, although he had recently been in a few fights due to anger management issues (for which he was in isolation at the time of this interview). S1 also said that things back at home (inclusive of things with mum and dad) were really good. S1 got on well with other kids at school - according to him he was friends with nearly everyone (even despite the fights he was getting into). S1 reported that he did not skip school (but also that the reason for this was that he was not allowed to do so at all this year), and that he generally passed his classes - averaging C-grades. S1 reported that along with the peer-related conflict, he was disrespectful to some (and only some) teachers.

3. How the participant got involved in the program
S1 was called to the front office, and it was then that he got told he had been selected for the program. He was excited about the trip and all of the things he had been informed that he - as a Catalyst participant - would get to do. He said he looked forward to climbing up the 900 stairs in particular. Talking about the Catalyst program still excited S1 at the time of this interview.

4. Participant’s experience of the program stages e.g., highlights and lowlights

Lead-in experience:
One of the Lead-in activities required S1 to physically hold the partial body weight of his nine fellow participants up. This was arguably the experience that most stood out for S1 - he referred to it numerous times throughout his interview. S1 also made special mention of the 10 metre abseil, and the canoeing.

Expedition experience:
S1 commented that everything about the Expedition was good. His stand out Expedition experiences came from the games that were organised at the campsites - namely “mafia” and “stomp”. Another activity involved all of his fellow participants standing in a circle holding a rope that he had to walk around. He said that the teamwork involved in this activity meant that he learned a lot about the importance of trust. S1 coped well being away from home and away from his normal environment - he is used to such conditions as he lives in the bush away from home anyway.

Follow-up expectations:
S1 is looking forward to having fun on the Follow-up.

Highlights:
The hiking was actually a highlight for S1. The sense of accomplishment that came from trekking from point A and arriving at point B (and each subsequent point thereafter) was a highlight for him. The 10 metre abseil was also a highlight for S1.

Lowlights:
Although he mentioned the 10 metre abseil as a highlight, the 30 metre abseil was a lowlight for S1. He is afraid of heights - and only made it half way off the cliff before he came back up. The other lowpoint S1 mentioned was a specific incident that occurred during the Expedition. This incident involved him not being able to control his anger that derived in response to the actions of one of his fellow participants. The effect of his anger was that he was unable to pay attention, which led him to walk away from a second fellow participant who was trying to help S1 by calming him down. S1 stated that apart from these two points, he liked everything else about the program.

5. Participant’s outcomes
One of the Lead-in activities required S1 to physically hold the partial body weight of all nine of his fellow participants. He was very proud of this - and identified it as a strength that he previously didn’t know he embodied. Similarly he was able to identify his fear of heights as a weakness.

S1 reported that he thought he would be less likely to get into fights as a result of participating in the program. He also predicted that he would get better school grades - stating that the program helped him to stay focused, and put 100% effort in.

S1 said that he had also learned to just be able to let things go. This is a big statement considering his anger management problems. To demonstrate how this was so, S1 gave the example of when the Catalyst group was doing the great walk trail. Along that walk, he ran into - and was hurt by - some spiky plants, and was able to respond to the incident by saying “Oh, things happen”, when usually he would have become angry.

S1 stated that overall, the program was worth his time and effort. His outlook on the future was positive. He had two particular goals that he planned to work towards - becoming a bull rider, and improving his relationship with his older brother (they had a history of fighting with one another).

6. Participant’s recommendations
S1 had no recommendations to make for the Catalyst program.
Participant 6

1. Direct quote(s) that captures the essence of the participant’s experience

“[The Lead-in] was a bit boring and crappy for me, because I wanted to go home. But I didn’t end up going home. So then I just couldn’t wait to come down here [and participate in the Expedition].”

“I learnt [to] try my hardest.”

“I might just be positive all the time … Just give it a go and all that.”

2. Participant’s background

S2 was a 14 year old female who participated in a Catalyst program in 2013. S2 lived with her grandparents - and reported that things at home before the program were “pretty bad”. Her reason for saying this was that she constantly argued with her grandmother, brother, and grandfather. Conversely, things at school had been going “pretty good”. Although S2 sometimes skipped/wagged school, she generally got on with teachers, and just did her work and listened. She was however having some problems with other students at school - sometimes getting in trouble because of fighting/arguing - leading her to receive various detentions and suspensions.

3. How the participant got involved in the program

S2 couldn’t remember how she became involved with the Catalyst program - other than her grandmother wanted her to go along to see how she would go. She also remembered being excited to go on the program.

4. Participant’s experience of the program stages e.g., highlights and lowlights

Lead-in:
S2 reported that the Lead-in experience was a bit boring and crappy for her, because she wanted to go home. But she didn’t end up going home - and in result was excited about going on the Expedition. Meeting the other participants on the Lead-in was a positive, as she didn’t know any of them prior to. She also enjoyed the games they played on the Lead-in.

Expedition experience:
S2 was fine being away from her normal (physical) environment, however she found being away from her family lonely and frustrating. She also found being away from her friends boring. She found it tough to break her comfort zone, and she also found it challenging to get along with all of the boys, and a couple of the girls. One specific incident involved one of the girls getting her period during the rafting activity. Some of the girls told the boys that this had occurred, which created a bit of a rift through the participants. S2 stated that they settled it by talking and being friendly.

Follow-up experience:
S2 was looking forward to the Follow-up.

Highlights:
There were two activities that stood out as highlights for S2 - going creeking on the first day, and also the Expedition abseil. The Expedition abseil was a highlight for her because she did not complete the Lead-in abseil as she was scared. When it came to the Expedition abseil, she just wanted to get over it and do it - so completing the Expedition abseil was a feat - and she felt as if she had done herself proud.

Lowlights:
There were two activities that S2 did not enjoy - she found the 900 stairs difficult, and the flying fox scary. She persisted with both despite not enjoying them, and was proud and happy when she completed each.

5. Participant’s outcomes
S2 mentioned that hiking up to Turtle Rock was a physical and mental challenge because of how steep the climb was. Through trying, though, she was able to just keep going - and she felt as though successfully making it up to the top had an impact on her courage - she felt as though she had a bit more courage to face things thanks to the Catalyst program. S2 also said that she learned to try her hardest on the Catalyst program.

S2 also noted that she has learned more about other people, and relating to other people from the program. She indicated that because things were hard at home, going on the program allowed her to feel better about home. She said that would change how she treated her family members at home - in a positive way. She had visions of helping her grandmother out around the house, and also helping out her little brother. She also set the goal of developing a closer relationship with her older sister and oldest brother while on the program - saying “I haven’t seen them for so long”.

S2 also saw that her participation in the program would have an impact on her behaviour at school - stating “I might just be positive all the time now. I will just give it a go and all that, now. And it will impact my attendance.”

S2 said that overall, the program was “all good”, and worth her time and effort. S2 believed she had done herself proud. She also thought that the facilitator she looked up to would be proud of her.

6. Participant’s recommendations
S2 had no recommendations to make for the Catalyst program.
Participant 7

1. Direct quote(s) that captures the essence of the participant’s experience

“[The program was] pretty good - ups and downs. But overall it was alright.”

“Climbing up the hills - that was hard. Climbing down was easy, but climbing up was really hard.”

“[It was] good to walk with people instead of alone. ... I hang out with people all the time, but this has just highlighted that I really enjoy people.”

“I finish things now. I don’t just do halfway and then stop. I keep going! ... It makes me think that I can actually do it.”

2. Participant’s background

S3 was a 14 year old female who participated in a Catalyst program in 2013. S3 described life prior to the program as “pretty good”. She lived with her dad only - her mum had passed away the year prior to this program, and her brother had moved out of home. Leading up to the program, S3 had been finding school less enjoyable than she used to. She said that was due to her friends changing - they suddenly started hating school. She still liked school, so this difference made it difficult to relate to her friends. S3 reported that generally she went to school, unless she happened to be sick. S3 was a well-behaved student (she had never received a detention or suspension), and had a history of achieving average grades, with teachers tending to comment that she had a high level of intelligence that she didn’t apply as much as she could or should. S3 also reported being a victim of bullying in primary school. S3 had no problems with anger, but sadness got to her sometimes. She reported that the strategy she employed for this was to just get over it and make herself happy - by talking to her friends and playing her play station. S3 reported that her physical health was “not that good” before coming on the program.

3. How the participant got involved in the program

The only thing S3 was able to recall about her Catalyst initiation was receiving a phone call from one of the involved teachers, to confirm that she was one of the students who had been selected to participate in the program.

4. Participant’s experience of the program stages e.g., highlights and lowlights

Lead-in experience:
S3 stated that she thought it was a good idea to go to Bornhoffen for a shorter duration (the Lead-in) prior to the longer stint (the Expedition), as it gave the group opportunity to practice everything. The specific aspects she enjoyed were the abseiling, canoeing, and the meals.

Expedition experience:
S3 reported that her ability to cope with being away from home was pretty good. She said that being away from friends did not bother her, but that she did miss her dad and brother. Although she did miss them, she wasn’t too affected, as she knew she would see them very soon. S3 also the temperature discrepancy meant that it was strange to be away from her normal environment - she said it was weird and not very fun to adapt to a cold and wet climate, after being used to an extremely hot climate. S3 listed her strategies to cope with this unusual weather as putting on more layers of clothing, wearing a raincoat, and singing random songs to help with the mental aspect.

Follow-up expectations:
S3 did not predict the Follow-up to be as fun as the Lead-in or Expedition, as she expected that there wouldn’t be any more (or as many) fun activities in store. She thought reuniting as a group again - participants and staff members - would still be fun though.

Highlights:
S3’s highlights included doing [what she considered to be] the fun things - making new friends, abseiling, and the flying fox. Completing the flying fox was a highlight for S3, as she was afraid of the height. Participants were required to climb to the top of a tree to get up to the departure point for the flying fox. S3 said that she was holding on to this tree for dear life. In this moment she took a moment to stop, relax, and hug the tree. The act of hugging the tree was memorable for S3.

Lowlights:
One specific incident occurred between the female participants. One of the girls got her period during the rafting activity, and some of the other girls told the male participants that this had occurred - creating a rift through the participants. S3 referred to this as teasing, and indicated that she found it to be a challenge. She listed it as one of her lowlights. She did, however, say that they got over it and worked it out by talking about it, and that better friendships came from this resolution. Other things S3 listed as lowlights included the hiking, the cold, and the food (she said used the words “really gross” and “just yuck” to describe some of the food).

5. Participant’s outcomes
Through participating in the Catalyst program, S3 learned a number of things about herself. She learned that heights were a weakness for her. She learned that she had the ability to climb up big hills with a heavy backpack on - which was something that she had questioned at the outset. She learned how far her mental and physical ability allowed her to walk - and also that it is enjoyable to walk with other people instead of alone. S3 stated that until the program highlighted it for her, and although she hung out with people all the time at home, she didn’t realise how much she enjoyed people.

S3 thought that the people around her would notice that participating in the Catalyst program had made her tougher. She believed that into the future, she would be able to speak her mind more often (a gain she specially credited one of the particular Catalyst activities for - “fish to fry” - which involved participants talking as a group about their problems).

Socially, S3 learned that if other people are annoyed, it is better to attend to the issue instead of keeping quiet - she realised that although her natural preference was to select the comfortable option and avoid the conflict, working an issue out is the better option. S3 also reported that she had learned not to backchat. She aimed to apply these to her social life, and be different with her peers back at home. S3 also admitted that at times she has pretended to be sick in order to stay home - she recognised this as something that needed to change. Additionally, S3 set the relational goal of learning to understand her brother more - as she wished to put a stop to the frequent fighting that existed within their relationship.

S3 reported that her future ahead looked bright because she had learned to keep going and finish things rather than reach halfway and then stop. S3 reported that her outlook about the future had changed because of her participation in the program - learning to finish something rather than give up halfway made her think that she was able to actually do “it” [presumably a general reference to life and its counterparts]. It even helped her to believe that she could finish school (S3 reported that throughout her life, numerous people had told her that she would never finish school - she channelled what she had learned on Catalyst into setting herself the goal to complete school).

6. Participant’s recommendations
S3 recommended better tasting food - and greater food portion sizes. She also recommended better tents, sleeping bags, and mats.
Participant 8

1. Direct quote(s) that captures the essence of the participant’s experience

“I’ve had some fights. And they’re all from the other person starting it. Like they’d hit me first, because apparently I’m like stupid and all that. I don’t know. Just the unlucky one.”

“It’s good fun … it’s fun and awesome … practically everything [about Catalyst is good fun].”

“There is always another solution. You can always control your emotions by just changing your attitude.”

2. Participant’s background

S4 was a 14 year old male who participated in a Catalyst program in 2013. S4 lived at home with his mum, dad, and sister. He also had a brother, but the brother lived in Cairns, so S4 didn’t see much of him. S4 reported that he got on well with each of his family members, and that home life was “good”. He did however mention that his dad had “a really big job” as a major boss for a copper company called Xstrata, for which he went away every week, only coming back on Saturday and Sunday’s. S4 reported that he didn’t have any mental health problems, difficulty controlling emotions, or physical health problems. He commented that things at school before coming on the program were normal - he would sit in a classroom and learn some stuff. He mostly achieved C’s and D’s, but he only found the subject’s he wasn’t interested to be in difficult - usually if he liked a subject he would get an A or a B in it. He had never wagged or pretended to be sick, and his general behaviour in the classroom (i.e. work ethic, performance) was positive - he said he just did what he was told to do. His main trouble at school was that he had been in a number of fights. He said that these incidents had occurred all throughout the past few years - it wasn’t just a recent thing. He reported that every fight he had been in was because the other person had started it - he said that people would often tell him he was stupid, and hit him. He wasn’t 100% why this was the case - he said he was just unlucky - he guessed it could be called bullying. On the surface it didn’t seem to upset him greatly - he said that he had become used to it. S5 reported that he did have some close friends in primary school that he still caught up with outside of school - but these catch ups were infrequent - particularly with one of his best mates, they only got to catch up in school holidays as he attended boarding school. S4 was the only student from his primary school to go to this high school, and although he had developed some new friendships at Spinnifex, the people he had connected with were about to leave town.

3. How the participant got involved in the program

S4 said that the participants were recruited for this program via teacher selection - the teachers voted for who they thought should participate in the program. He thought that the teachers may have chosen him because he’d been good in class. He said that once the teachers had decided he was a viable candidate, they called his mum, who relayed the message on to him.

4. Participant’s experience of the program stages e.g., highlights and lowlights

Lead-in experience:

S4 reported that his Lead-in experience was weird, because at the program’s outset he didn’t really know anyone. He said that it was fun at the same time though, and that getting to know the other participants helped the “weird” aspect. S4 was drew out three of his stand out Lead-in experiences. Two of these were physical challenges that the group had to do as a team - the first involved them holding a rope in the shape of a circle for one individual at a time to walk around. The second was a game called “Hands and feet”, in which the facilitator would give the group a number of hands and feet (e.g. 12 hands and six feet). The number of hands and feet given by the facilitator were the hands and feet that were allowed to touch the ground - one of the youth participants had to hold up all of the body weight of each of the limbs that were not allowed to touch the ground. The third Lead-in experience S4 drew out was the debriefing activities. He said that this stood out because although he did want to do these activities, and he did see benefit in doing them, they weren’t very fun.

Expedition experience:
Wasn’t directly covered - see highlights and lowlights.

Follow-up expectations:
S4 said that looking toward the Follow-up, he was neither here nor there. He said he was sad that the co-facilitator would be absent, but that he was sure that the experience would be pretty fun.

Highlights:
A main highlight for S4 was getting to know and develop friendships with a number of his fellow participants. He really enjoyed doing a lot of fun stuff with these new mates. He mentioned the flying fox and abseil as semi-highlights - he said that while he did enjoy doing these things, they didn’t bother him very much - they didn’t give him much adrenaline as he had done them before.

Lowlights
S4 had never slept out, or gone to anyone’s house before, so his time spent on Catalyst was his first time away from home. He reported that he hadn’t coped very well with this - from day one of the program - and at least once daily - he would become upset whenever somebody would bring it up. S4 was crying as he shared this experience. S4 missed his family, the heat (the unusual cold climate made him sick), and his dog. S4 also shared that throughout the program, people would constantly complain when they were asked to do something, and also fight/say stuff about each other. S4 struggled with this in-group conflict.

5. Participant’s outcomes
S4 reported that the Catalyst program highlighted that he’s not scared of much. He didn’t believe that it had had an effect on his physical health - he was used to walking up and down hills, so was already pretty fit. He didn’t think that his mental health had been impacted either - other than acquiring the outlook that there is always another solution to a problem, and also that it was always possible to control your emotions by just changing your attitude. One facet that did see some change via his participation in the program was his social development. S4 reported that he had never been very good at talking/relating with people, he was very quiet in response to others, but the Catalyst had helped him to learn to change his attitude when it came to dealing with other people.

S4 remarked that he was usually well-behaved at home - never got in trouble, and had already completed a lot of household chores prior to Catalyst - so he didn’t see the need to make any changes there. He similarly, thought that his behaviour at school would remain the same, but that he would have to keep trying to improve his grades. He was unsure whether a change would be made in relation to the fights he seemed to magnetise into his life - he said that depended on the situation. He said that controlling his emotions did work at times - sometimes he would be able to ignore the person who was trying to provoke him - but at other times, certain individuals made him that cranky that he would just go off at them. He was positive about this halfway change, though, saying that even though he would still get fired up about the big things, it was the Catalyst program that had given him the ability to not be affected by the little things.

S4 said that he had no clue whether or not others would notice any change in him - he said he would have to wait until he got back to school to see if they would say anything. S4 said that the lesson he learned on Catalyst of changing his attitude - finding a better solution for any problem he faces - was something that would stay with him long-term. S4 also reported that he saw a good future for himself - he used the word normal to describe what he saw.

According to S4, Catalyst was “heaps worth the time and effort”. He indicated that he felt privileged to do a free program that not many people get to do, and also inferred that overall, the program had benefited him in a positive sense.

6. Participant’s recommendations
S4 thought that a lot of the Catalyst program participants were afraid of heights, and wanted to get over their fears of height. He mentioned that although he knew the Catalyst program already comprised a lot of
activities - and not every group would have so many participants who were afraid of heights, his recommendation was to include a lot more height-related activities in the design of the Catalyst program. Other than that S4 didn’t have any recommendations.
Participant 9

1. **Direct quote(s) that captures the essence of the participant’s experience**

   “Thought it [the idea of Catalyst] was boring, but when I came here it was fun.”

   “It’s too hard for me.” (Regarding the interview/interview questions [S5 was very closed off to exploring and expressing her inner experiences - these few words are a good representation of that].)

2. **Participant’s background**

   S5 was a 14 year old female who participated in a Catalyst program in 2013. S5 lived with her foster family - a husband and wife and their three biological children. S5 stated that home life had been good prior to the Catalyst program - she said that she got on well with her foster family, that they were really nice people, and that she was happy living with them. S5 reported that her mental and physical health were both “all good” before coming on the program. Her school attendance was high - she reported only ever having skipped school once, she achieved C and B’s, and did not have a history of receiving suspensions or detentions - despite having some trouble with “some” of her teachers due to yelling across the classroom to talk to, annoy, or distract her classmates in certain classes (e.g. math). S5 reported that she got on well with other kids at school, and had one good friend in particular. S5 knew a lot of the other participants prior to the program’s start, but her good friend was not on the program.

   The lead facilitator of the 2013 Catalyst program disclosed that S5 had a 10 month old son. He said that the staff on the program were aware of that, but that it was a secret to all but one of S5’s fellow youth participants. The facilitator reported that S5 had been willing to discuss her motherhood and child with one of the Catalyst staff members only.

3. **How the participant got involved in the program**

   S5 said that she believed she had been chosen to participate in the Catalyst program because she had been good in classes - she did her work and used her manners. It became evident that she was having the interviewer on in saying this - but after moving past this playful answer and being probed further, she was unable to relay any serious thought as to why she thought she had been selected.

4. **Participant’s experience of the program stages e.g., highlights and lowlights**

   **Lead-in experience:**

   When asked about her Lead-in experience, S5 mentioned two particular activities - a game called “Chocolate river”, and the canoeing.

   **Expedition experience:**

   S5 had been coping well with being away from home, but was a bit sad at the same time, as she missed her friends and family. Similarly, S5 stated that being out of her normal environment had been fine to cope with, but that she preferred the comfort that comes from having ease of access to showers etc.

   **Follow-up expectations:**

   S5 wasn’t aware there would be a Follow-up. When the interviewer told her about it, she was sad to find out that the person who had acted as co-facilitator for the 2013 Lead-in and Expedition was going to be unavailable for the Follow-up, but was excited about the prospect of seeing the lead-facilitator again. S5 also looked forward to getting the group back together another time.

   **Highlights:**

   Each of the highlights S5 listed related to a Catalyst activity - she enjoyed walking up the 900 stairs, the abseiling (she stated “it was really good for me to go down. I was scared but I just had to do it”), and the flying fox (again, she was scared about doing this, but just let go and rewardingly completed the activity).

   **Lowlights:**
H5 said that other than having to hike in the rain, she had “no troubles” on the Catalyst program. She did, however, mention that the reason/point of the program was not clear to her.

5. **Participant’s outcomes**

S5 was unable to communicate that she had identified any strengths or weaknesses (apart from physical weakness in the muscles of her legs and back from carrying the backpack), or noticed any changes in herself because of participating in the Catalyst program. She asked if she could “pass” all self-development related questions (e.g. whether she thought participating in the program would have an impact on her behaviour at school or on her home life) - she said these questions were too hard for her. The interviewer did not skip over these categories, but instead asked S5 some more specific questions (they had “yes or no” answers) - to which she was more responsive. From these more specific prompts, she indicated that her courage, self-confidence, and self-esteem had been positively impacted, and that she had learned some things about other people (e.g. new strategies to help her work within a group and further her ability to get along with and relate with people). S5 was not at all able to elaborate on her responses to these prompts though. S5 did not think anyone will have noticed a change in her.

S5 did say that people had treated her well on the program, and that the hardest thing about being a part of a group of people was talking. She noted that she had become better at talking because of participating in the program. S5 did not understand what was meant by the question “has your outlook about the future changed?”, but indicated that she was positive about what the future ahead held for her. When asked for one word to sum up what this program meant to her, she gave the two program facilitator names. She said that they were good - she appreciated their leadership. When asked whether she had found the program worthwhile, and worth her time and effort, S5 convincingly answered with a big yes.

S5 had trouble answering most of the interviewer’s questions - she labelled them as hard, and asked if she could pass a number of them. S5 also continually tried to bring an early end to the interview. The lead-facilitator interview has a specific section on S5 that provides the lead-facilitator’s perspective of/insight into the impact the Catalyst program had on S5.

6. **Participant’s recommendations**

S5 had no recommendations for the improvement of the Catalyst program.
Participant 10

1. **Direct quote(s) that captures the essence of the participant’s experience**
   “[I have] anger problems. [The anger problems are] disturbing. Like you get angry at little things.”

   “First time abseiling. First time canoeing. Creeking. The activities we do. That was good fun.”

   “I can carry a lot of weight [and] handle being away from home ... It’s the first time away from home with just friends.”

Future outlook - “[I want to] get along with people, help mum more, change the attitude … less anger … won’t be going to jail for bashing people ... I want to do something that I really like doing.”

2. **Participant’s background**
   S10 was a 14 year old male who participated in a Catalyst program in 2013. S10 reported that in the lead up to Catalyst, home life had been “usual”/“good as” - he stated that he enjoyed that at his house he was allowed - unlike some of his peers - to sit around and watch TV by himself without restrictions. According to S10, he didn’t have very many friends because he didn’t choose to. S10 said that things had been going well with the few friends that he did have prior to Catalyst (one of those friends being another of the Catalyst 2013 male participants). S10 reported that apart from having asthma that only presented itself when he had a commonplace illness, his physical health was in good condition. Psychologically, S10 struggled against anger. He reported that little things made him angry, and that he found his short fuse disturbing. He also reported that he did not have any coping strategies to deal with his anger, other than sometimes being able to walk away. Relatively, S10 had been getting into a bit of trouble at school pre-Catalyst, for what he described as swearing at smart-mouthed people. S10 regularly attended school - he did not wag, and hadn’t pretended to be sick since primary school. Pretending to be sick was something that S10 often did in primary school to avoid the frequent bullying that he encountered. At the time of this program, S10 had not been picked on since primary school. S10 had a history of physically fighting his peers at school - he correlates his ability to stand up for himself in this way with the dissipation of his bullying experiences. S10 reported that he mostly achieved C’s and D’s, but sometimes A’s and B’s. He recognised that his behaviour and the amount of effort he exerted were the factors that determined his grades - both of which, he said, depended on how he felt when he walked into the classroom day by day.

3. **How the participant got involved in the program**
   S10 believed the reason he was chosen as a Catalyst participant was that his teachers thought he would be a good candidate for it. S10 reported that his mum and dad discussed the idea, and decided that it would be good for him to go. S10 agreed to participate as he felt happy about being asked to go on the program - and through the teacher’s description of the activities that would be involved (S10 specifically mentioned camping and hiking), he thought it would be fun.

4. **Participant’s experience of the program stages e.g., highlights and lowlights**
   **Lead-in experience:**
   S10 described his overall experience of the Lead-in as good fun. He had never abseiled or canoed before, so the Lead-in provided him with his first experience of each of those activities. S10 stated that he found it challenging to settle into the group dynamic - reporting that although he knew most of the other participants prior to Catalyst, he found it a challenging process to form together as a group. He believed that this challenge derived because of the smart-mouthed, ignorant nature of certain other participants.

   **Expedition experience:**
   S10 reported that overall, being away from home had been good. This was apart from one instance back at Bornhoffen, right before the Expedition began - S10 recalled something triggering his anger, and because of this upset, he was apprehensive about heading out on the Expedition - he was really missing home at this
point. To move forward he sat there and calmed himself down by finding some space and using his own self-talk.

**Follow-up expectations:**
S10 wasn’t aware that a Follow-up program was in store, but when he came to learn about it, his response was positive - he indicated that he looked forward to getting the group back together, and seeing one particular staff member again.

**Highlights:**
S10 listed the activities - the hiking, 30 metre abseil, and running and jumping into the creek (although it was cold) - as highlights - he described them as fun. What he liked about the 30 metre abseil was that he didn’t have any hesitance in doing it - he just went on down.

**Lowlights:**
S10 listed a handful of Catalyst experiences that stood out in his memory as lowlights. To start with, he got travel sickness on the plane heading from Mt Isa to Bornhoffen for the Lead-in, so having to travel by car from the airport was uncomfortable. Another lowlight S10 listed involved one of the other male participants - S10 didn’t appreciate that this individual not only had things to say about him, but didn’t say those things to his face. S10’s third lowlight related to the group’s inability to work as a team during the raft-building activity - S10 reported that instead of listening to and considering everybody’s raft-construction suggestions, the group only listened to one person’s idea. Another of S10’s lowlights involved a specific incident - as the group was walking along the road side to a scout camp, S10 walked over the white line on the road (and therefore onto the road). S10 felt that he was reprimanded unnecessarily for this by not only one, but two staff members. This irritated and frustrated him, and led him to sit down on the side of the road and not want to go any further - he wanted to give up, walk away, and go home. In the end, S10 did not give up, walk away, or go home; he instead got back up, continued walking, and ended up arriving at the scout camp before any other member of the Catalyst group. An additional lowlight for S10 was having to constantly battle against the cold climate all throughout the program.

**Participant’s outcomes**
S10 reported that through participating in the Catalyst program, he had learned that he had the ability to carry a lot of weight, and handle being away from home (S10 had never been on a school camp or a sleep over - this was his first time away from home overnight/for an extended period of time without his family). S10 also reported that the Catalyst debriefing activities helped him to understand his own emotions, as well as the emotions of other people. Further from this, S10 indicated that he had learned to gain an awareness and understanding of somebody else’s state by picking up on their body language.

S10 wasn’t able to pin-point exactly what or why, but he observed that his behaviour had already improved. S10 expressed that following on from the Catalyst program, he wanted to continue to work on getting along with people, and walking away rather than retaliating when fired up. S10 thought that being able to make these changes would help him to help his mum more than he does (with things around the house such as cleaning and cooking), increase his class attendance, improve his work ethic, and therefore improve his grades.

Although S10 was able to report all of the things he had learned and changed, he didn’t believe that anyone else would notice a difference in him. He did however report that his outlook about the future had changed because of his participation in the Catalyst program - he actually stated that these changes were going to mean that he would not end up in jail for bashing people. S10 also reported that to him, his future looked pretty good. He said that this was because - although he wasn’t sure quite what at that moment in time - he wanted to do something in the future that he really had a passion for.

S10 said that overall, the Catalyst program was worth the time and effort.
6. **Participant’s recommendations**

S10 did not believe that the Catalyst organisers needed to change anything.
Participant 11

1. **Direct quote(s) that captures the essence of the participant’s experience**

“We might not have the same personality, we might not get along - like… even though we might have disagreements on this program and stuff like that, we’ve still all learnt to still stick together and work together.”

“Since we’ve been out here I haven’t really had any suicidal thoughts. I’ve been able to think, and just breathe. And just, yeah have all this open space. And if I need time alone I can just go for a bit of a walk, I guess. And just listen to the birds and stuff like that.”

“Even though it’s hard, I can still do it. It might take a bit more energy and effort to do, but I can still do it.”

2. **Participant’s background**

S6 was a 13 year old female who participated in a Catalyst program in 2013. S6 had four siblings - with all of whom she had a good relationship - but only herself and her younger brother were still living at home. S6 reported that home life prior to Catalyst had been pretty good overall, but it had been stressful at times because her parents were always moody and the family dynamics constantly consisted of conflict because of this. S6 attributed the contagious moodiness to the fact that her step-dad worked on the mines (this made him moody). Her step-dad’s moodiness affected her mum, which in turn affected S6, which constantly resulted in them all fighting. S6 also disclosed that she did not have a very good relationship with her biological father - she said that they always fought and hit one another. S6 shared that she suffered from low self-esteem and depression, and that she had self-harmed in grade seven. S6 was not at for grade seven - at this stage she went to school in Brisbane, where she had issues with bullying. At this point in her life (grade seven), S6 became withdrawn, which impacted on her friendships. She stated that she lost “all” her friends in Brisbane. She thinks this occurred because she was taking her issues with her biological father and her depression out on her friends - isolating herself, becoming really moody, and avoiding talking to anyone meant that they did not want to be her friend anymore. S6’s friendships did see a change when she became a bit happier. S6 had been taking a medication for her mood for a couple of months, but she stopped these of her own initiative some time ago because she started feeling happier. But at the time of Catalyst, S6 was still experiencing very low moods - she disclosed that at the current time she had regular suicidal thoughts. S6 said that while she sometimes felt like ending her life would help her, there were probably other ways to deal with her distress. She doubted she would act on these thoughts because she had seen the impact of suicide on other families and didn’t want to put her family through such pain. At the time of Catalyst, S6 indicated that she had never seen a school counsellor, psychologist, or the equivalent for help with the depression, self-harm, or suicidality she had been experiencing. S6 reported that her physical health was fine. At her current school (Spinnifex), the type of grades S6 tended to receive were C’s and B’s - sometimes a few A’s. Her current level of school enjoyment was 5/10, mainly because she got to socialise with her friends. S6’s general behaviour at school had been fine leading up to Catalyst - although she attracted a little bit of trouble by talking and mucking around in class, her history did not encompass any major incidences or misbehaviour, and she had no particular issues with teachers. Typically she followed directions and completed her school work. Outside of the classroom, S6 reported that things at school had been “not good”. She shared that this was because she was a common victim of bullying. She reported that this inhibited her ability to pay attention in class. One of S6’s peers had threatened to bash her on several occasions, and feeling threatened had led her to wag twice. S6 reported that the bullying started when she first moved to Mt Isa. Specifically, one of her peers started picking on S6, because S6 looked at her the wrong way. Following this, another peer spread a rumour (which went around both of the two high schools in Mt Isa) saying that S6 had lost her virginity to a carrot. Many people believed this rumour, and bullied S6 about it. Because she was new to town, she had trouble making friends as people did not want to risk being subjected to the same kind of bullying. The rumour also exacerbated her low self-esteem. S6 reported that at the time of Catalyst, this was still a very present and difficult situation, as people were still doing things like yelling out “carrot”. She had, however, recently established a good group of friends, and was also now able to joke about the rumour rather than get really upset over it as she did at the outset. S6 also mentioned that
she had one really good friend that lived in Brisbane (which is where S6 previously lived - although the two girls went to different schools). S6 stated that she missed her friend - although they caught up in school holidays, it was otherwise hard to talk and catch up due to the distance.

3. **How the participant got involved in the program**
S6 recalled receiving a sheet on which she had to write (a) her family history, and (b) why she wanted to participate in the program. According to S6, this was something that each potential Catalyst participant had to do, and from this the teachers selected individuals they thought would suit the program. S6 thought she had been chosen to participate in Catalyst because the teachers thought that interacting with other students that she wouldn’t usually interact with would help her break the isolation she experienced at school and build up her confidence levels by getting her out of her comfort zone.

4. **Participant’s experience of the program stages e.g., highlights and lowlights**

**Lead-in experience:**
S6 reported that for her, the Lead-in was fun. She elaborated, saying that this was because all of the activities were fun, and all of the participants got along without any conflict. She did say that it was challenging to work together as a group, but through having to talk to each other to make strategies for the activities they had in front of them, they got there. One of the stand-out Lead-in experiences for S6 was the canoeing - as it was windy when they did this activity, S6 and her canoeing partner got stuck on an island and had to get out and walk their canoe while everybody else paddled.

**Expedition experience:**
S6 said that she was used to being away from home, as she had to go to her dad’s house in Brisbane every school holidays. Despite this, however, she found it difficult to be without a shower, comfortable bed, and nice food (S6 stated that the food was gross - it just wasn’t the type of food that she’d usually eat). S6 particularly missed her mobile phone - she said that it was really difficult to be without it as she was “addicted” to it. S6 said that apart from her good friend that lived in Brisbane, she could do without most of her friends - so being away from them because of Catalyst didn’t bother her. She did, however, miss her little brother - she said that he was one of the main reasons she hadn’t taken her own life - he kept her going.

**Follow-up expectations:**
S6 expected the Follow-up to be pretty good. She stated that it would be good to reunite and see how everybody was going. S6 anticipated that some of the friendships she had established on Catalyst would continue, and she thought that the Follow-up would allow her to become even closer with these people that she previously did not associate with.

**Highlights:**
S6 reported that the 2013 Catalyst youth participant group working together and getting along was a big highlight for her.

**Lowlights:**
S6 found stopping and starting throughout the hiking frustrating, but stated that it was unavoidable because of how hard the hiking was (especially with the back packs). S6 reported that further to this, the participants kept getting cranky at one another because they were all tired from hiking - this also affected her. Additionally, S6 reported that the rain and the temperature had also been hard, as she was not used to the cold - it zapped her energy.

5. **Participant’s outcomes**
S6 said that the program took a lot of physical energy out of her because she was unfit, but that she made it to the end despite this. S6 said that if she knew the entirety of the Catalyst program’s physical requirements in advance, she probably would not have agreed to participate because it would have sounded too hard. For this reason, she was glad that she went along without being fully informed (about the hiking in particular) - because it allowed her to realise that although it was hard, she could still do it. The program allowed S6 to
see that she’s got - within herself - the capacity to do things (physical and mental) that are difficult, even if doing those things did take up a bit more of her energy and effort.

S6 reported that being left to their own devices out in the bush meant that the participants really needed to work together if they wanted to get things like setting up camp and cooking a meal done in reasonable time. She said even though they had their disagreements, this brought them all together. She stated that although each of the participants may not have had the same personality, may not have got along, and may have had disagreements on the program, they still learned to stick together and work together.

Being in the bush without certain facilities also meant that it was difficult and impractical for S6 to apply makeup or do her hair as she usually would. She also did not have the energy to invest time into this. She reported that this actually turned out to be a positive thing - it made her realise that people (especially boys) will treat her the same, regardless of her appearance. S6 found that this boosted her levels of confidence and self-esteem, and made her reconsider whether she ever needed to wear makeup.

S6 reported that being on the program reduced her stress levels. She thinks this was because spending time on her own in the open space meant that she was able to “just think”, and breath, and listen to the birds, which allowed her to find a sense of calm. S6 reported this helped her with her depression, self-harm, and suicidality. She said that the program had helped her to see that she didn’t need to self-harm, stating that all it did was put scars on her body. S6 said that she did not want to self-harm anymore, and had started bottling things up to prevent herself from doing it. She also reported that although she did still have suicidal thoughts, they were far less frequent.

Catalyst also helped S6 to learn to control her emotions a bit. The example she provided to portray this was that she gradually reduced her level of complaining on the program. She believed Catalyst helped her to reduce her complaining in two ways. Firstly, she needed to save the energy she would have been using to complain to instead just get to the camping ground. Secondly, she had observed how “shitty” her fellow participants became when somebody (whether herself or another participant) would complain a lot, and she did not want to attract that response.

S6 initially said that she did not think the program would have an impact on her behaviour at school, because going home meant that she would go back to spending time with her regular friends. After saying this, however, she did mention that she thought the quality of those friendships may see a change - as she had learned to stop complaining, her friends would no longer become “shitty” at her. From this thought, she went on to say that she now understood how a teacher may feel when students misbehave, and how frustrating it must be to have to refrain from saying something unacceptable. S6 did not believe the program had equipped her with the skills or ability to deal with bullies any differently, as the bullying she had gone through was quite extreme – it was even recurrent despite her getting the school principle involved.

S6 thought her home life would be impacted, because the program had taught her to “just think” – she thought that if she needed space at home she could just go to her room, or go for a walk and breathe. She thought that others would observe that the program had allowed her to become more calm, and able to respect other people. She observed that she had become able to control herself by holding her response in rather than opening her mouth and telling someone what she thought of them. She also thought people would probably say that she seemed a bit happier.

S6 said that although she did prefer the idea of having a future in Brisbane (because that’s where her main support is), the future she saw ahead of her looked alright. She reckoned it was going to be okay in Mt Isa – she now believed that if she put her mind to something, she could do it. S6 believed that the most prominent long lasting effect of Catalyst was her new found ability to stay calm. She said that overall, Catalyst had been well worth her time because she got to communicate with people that she wouldn’t have usually communicated with, and she got to engage in activities that Mt Isa did not provide opportunity for.
6. **Participant’s recommendations**

S3 recommended better tasting food for Catalyst, but said that she would not change anything otherwise - she thought that every other bit of the program had been pretty good.
Participant 12

1. Direct quote(s) that captures the essence of the participant’s experience

“It was hard! All I was thinking is ‘I cannot do this’ ... Yeah. Looking at the hill and going ‘I can’t do that’. Walking up a steep bit going ‘Holy hell this is hard’ ... with everyone else’s support [I changed my attitude to] ‘If I can make it to there, I can have a rest’, and then once I made it to there I just kept going and go ‘If I can make it to there, well then, I can…’ - you know, just setting myself little goals and going with it.”

“Doing the actual whole program … like getting through and finishing it [was a highlight].”

“I’ve set myself up. Like might try harder in school, and I’ve decided where I want to be, where I want to go, and what I have to do to get there.”

2. Participant’s background

S7 was a 13 year old female who participated in a Catalyst program in 2013. S7 reported that her parents split up when she was four years old. At the time of Catalyst, her mum worked 12 hour shifts. As she lived with her mum, this meant that S7 was home alone “most of the time” - which she described as a normal circumstance that was easy to handle. S7 also used the word “normal” to describe school life [although the picture she painted when asked more specific questions pertaining to school life indicated otherwise]. She said that she got on “okay” with teachers, and missed every Tuesday afternoon lesson because she went to counselling for anger management. S7 answered that she got on well with peers, although a few sentences later she said that she frequently got into verbal and physical fights at school - her anger emerged because of little things - it was mainly the actions of other people that triggered her, and her response to those people was to verbally and physically retaliate. S7 reported having received 15-20 detentions and at least two suspensions for her behavioural misconduct. When the interviewer asked what sort of grades she generally achieved, S7 said that she hadn’t received any grades at all for the school term before Catalyst. This was because she had been away for just under a month visiting her grandmother in St George (because her grandmother was “having trouble”). The month she was away coincided with the school’s assessment week. As she was prevented from sitting her exams, she failed them. S7 said that putting this aside, she usually passed all of her subjects. S7 reported that the only class she had ever wagged was math, but that she hadn’t done this since she had moved into a different math class. S7 reported that apart from her anger, she had no mental health or emotional struggles. When asked whether she had some good friends, S7 did not directly answer - she said that her brother was popular, so a lot people knew her through him. S7 eluded that she did have a group of friends, but that she had removed herself from the group after having a fight with one of the group members. S7 said that she was still friends with the group, but she didn’t feel as close to them as she didn’t really hang with them anymore. S7 used to smoke and drink with this group, but spending less time with them meant that she no longer did.

3. How the participant got involved in the program

S7 reported that her teachers nominated her as a Catalyst participant, but wasn’t sure what was behind them nominating her. She remembered having to sign a lot of papers once her spot as a participant had been confirmed.

4. Participant’s experience of the program stages e.g., highlights and lowlights

Lead-in experience:

S7 commented that as there is not much to do in the small town of Mt Isa, the Lead-in was really cool. The experience she found most fun was canoeing across the lake. Other experiences she enjoyed included travelling via plane for the first time (although she was scared because of the stories she’d heard about flying), abseiling (although she didn’t complete the abseil as she was scared), the teamwork of the Catalyst group, staying at PCYC for two nights, mucking around and having fun at PCYC with the girls, and seeing hot boys at PCYC.

Expedition experience:
S7 summarised her Expedition experience as “good but bad”. The good bit was comprised of hanging out with her friends, walking up the hills, and the support she received from a number of group members. S7 felt very supported by one staff member in particular - S7 said that she felt respected and treated fairly by this staff member. The “bad” existed because she missed home, her bed, her mum, her brother, and her niece. Not being allowed to have contact with these people really annoyed S7 - she thought participants should be allowed to either bring phones, or call their parents two or three times while on the Expedition. S7 did not really miss her friends.

Follow-up expectations:
S7 reported that she was not really looking forward to the Follow-up, because the person who had acted as co-facilitator for the 2013 Catalyst program was going to be absent. This meant that the lead-facilitator (who she had a few problems with on the Expedition) would be running the Follow-up on his own. S7 expressed that was something she was a bit sad about.

Highlights:
A number of activities stood out to S7: creeking, the low ropes, the flying fox (even though she didn’t do it - she said it looked pretty cool), raft building, and “mafia”. Other things that were memorable for S7 were staying in the place where the flying fox was (she wasn’t sure what it was called), having a fire at the campsite, and getting to know, hike with, and muck around with the other participants (two of the other females in particular). S7 also felt very accomplished that she had managed to get through the entire program - it was a good feeling to be able to say she had walked over three mountains.

Lowlights:
A very prominent lowlight for S7 involved one of the 2013 Catalyst program facilitators. S7 stated that she didn’t like him. She didn’t appreciate the way the facilitator generally spoke to and acted toward her, and his actions over one specific incident left her feeling chastised and disrespected by him. To elaborate on this incident, S7 and another of the female youth participants she had established a friendship with had a tough time hiking up one of the particular tracks. According to S7, instead of encouraging the girls, the facilitator was impatient and rude - she said he swore at the two girls. Another lowlight for S7 was the caving and 30 metre abseil in the dark - she found these very daunting as she was scared of heights. Another lowlight for S7 arose when some of the other girls started “stuffing stuff” into S7’s backpack - for S7, others messing with her possessions in this way crossed a line. A fight arose over this, with S7 saying she wanted to hit one of the other girls. Additionally, S7 said that although the lead-facilitator said that the reason for doing the 900 steps as a solo was to think and reflect on the program, she did not understand why the participants had to do the 900 steps by themselves after all of the emphasis on teamwork. Overall, S7 described her experience of the Catalyst program as hard. She was mentally and physically drained by walking as much as she did, as well as trying to get along with the group without getting angry and going off at them. S7 indicated that she found it arduous to have to get to a certain place before being able to set up camp. She said that if something unexpected happened - e.g. somebody injuring themselves - the ETA was prolonged, sometimes meaning that the already tired group had to walk in the dark. S7 also stated that she hated not having showers.

5. Participant’s outcomes
S7 identified a number of program-derived benefits. The program helped her to identify her physical strength and ability to walk up mountains. The hiking allowed S7 to transform her attitude of “holy hell this is hard ... I cannot do this” into setting herself a little goal such as “if I can make it to there, I can have a rest”, achieving the goal, and setting another. The support of certain group members helped her to execute this. Catalyst helped S7 realise that she complained a lot - which is something she wanted to change. S7 did not wear makeup at all throughout the program, because she considered it a waste as it would just rub off during the activities. This helped her realise that she didn’t need to wear makeup to hide her freckles and other imperfections, because people treat her the same regardless of whether or not she wore makeup. S7 stated that when she went home she probably wouldn’t wear makeup every single day anymore. S7 reported that prior to Catalyst, she also had an “I do things by myself because then I know it’s right” attitude. She
indicated that this was something that had changed thanks to the program - having to work in a team helped with this. S7 also learned to respond to others more politely, and not go off when someone did something “wrong”.

S7 had a number of things she wanted to work on back at home - she aimed to stop spreading rumours about people (S7 created a bit of conflict on the Expedition, through telling the male youth participants that another of the female participants had her period), develop a better relationship with her brother, try harder at school to achieve better grades (to ultimately try and get somewhere in/do something with her life. S7 stated that she had always wanted to finish school – she wanted to become an ENT surgeon when she became older. Another thing S7 wanted to change was the amount of negative self-talk she executed (e.g. saying that she’s too unfit to do Catalyst), because the things she told herself weren’t true - she had shown that she was capable.

S7 thought that others would have noticed that after participating in the Catalyst program, she had acquired an “I can do it” attitude, and was no longer so down about herself. She also thought they would have noticed that she didn’t wear makeup at all throughout the program.

S7 was positive about her future - stating that she believed she had set herself up by deciding where she wanted to go in her life, and what she had to do to get there.

6. Participant’s recommendations
S7 recommended less walking, one camping site to avoid having to pack up each morning and set up each night, at least one male and female facilitator rather than two male facilitators, and getting to go to the beach at least once throughout the program duration.
Participant 13

1. Direct quote(s) that captures the essence of the participant’s experience

“It’s actually helped me realise what’s actually... what life actually means, and what it’s meant for. We’re not going to just stay at home and sit somewhere in the corner where we’ll be safe - we’re actually meant to be getting out and exploring - pushing our comfort zone.”

“It’s better to go do it and then fail, then just walk away and not having a go at it and finding out if you can or not do it. You usually don’t know if you’re going to be good at something unless you give it a go.”

“Basically it was great, really. I’ve loved every bit about it. The challenges, the negatives, the positives. They all balance each other out.”

2. Participant’s background

S8 was a 14 year old male who participated in a Catalyst program in 2013. Things at home had been “alright/pretty good” prior to Catalyst - S8 lived at home with his brother, mum, and dad, and got along pretty well with all of them. Although S8 found his school work load a little heavy, he went well with it - mostly achieving C’s and B’s, and sometimes D’s and E’s. He attributed this grade discrepancy to the level of difficulty of each particular class. S8 got on pretty well with other students - he reportedly had no social difficulties. S8 also reported that he was mentally, emotionally, and physically healthy. S8 generally did not wag. He did however have a two week suspension from school the term before Catalyst for getting into a physical fight. He got into the fight because one of his peers was spreading rumours - saying that S8 was going to stab someone. S8 had also been in a few verbal arguments with the same peer in 2012. Other than this one relational issue, he reported that he had no behavioural issues at school or home. S8 did not have many close friends. He said that he had never (in his life) had true respect or trust in anybody - meaning that he had always considered the people around him as acquaintances rather than friends. S8 had met all but two of the other Catalyst participants prior to the Lead-in.

3. How the participant got involved in the program

S8 was not one of the initially selected youth participants - he got involved last minute due to another youth withdrawing. S8’s mum received a phone call from one of the school teachers informing her of the newly opened place. S8’s mum then called S8 at school to ask if he was interested. He was - and was “straight into it” after accepting the place. S8 thought he was probably selected for the Catalyst program because teachers saw that he was trying to make a difference in the way he dealt with his issues (trying to be less “argumentative and persuasive”). He stated that he used to argue and argue and argue, and not get along with others. He said that this had become more of an on and off thing - it was still happening, but not as much.

4. Participant’s experience of the program stages e.g., highlights and lowlights

Lead-in experience:

S8 enjoyed the Lead-in. He particularly enjoyed the canoeing, as although he had lived in Mt Isa for 11 years, he had never been so far out on the lake before. S8 did not complete the 10 metre abseil as he did not trust that the equipment would keep him safe.

Expedition experience:

Considering he did not complete the 10 metre abseil on the Lead-in, S8 was very happy that he completed the 30 metre abseil on the Expedition - he said that if he had it his way, he would not have even gone up to the edge of the cliff because it was out of his comfort zone. But the people helping him persuaded him that if he did the same thing he normally did, he wouldn’t get anything different out of it. S8 reported that he coped pretty well being away from home - especially in comparison to his expectations - he thought he would have missed his family and his home terribly. S8 said that while he was in fact missing them, he was somehow able to continue on and take each day by the hour, which made it feel as if the program was going really quickly. S8 did not miss any of his acquaintances. S8 mentioned that he had been having a bit of trouble...
sleeping because he didn’t have a mat - he had been sleeping on the hard ground with sticks poking into his body.

Highlights
A big highlight for S8 was completing the 30 metre abseil despite his fear, the rain, and the dark. He achieved this with thanks to the support of his group members, and telling himself to avoid looking down. S8 also enjoyed the flying fox - he called it awesome, and stated that he had never been on a proper, actual flying fox like that before. He stated that it was good to push himself out of his comfort zone and learn to have more trust in the activity equipment.

Lowlights
The biggest lowlight for S8 was the insensitivity of his fellow participants. He observed people intentionally annoying others, and not stopping when the other would ask them to stop. This got to S8 on a daily basis. He said that he found it really easy to pick up whether someone else was feeling annoyed, so he did not understand why other people didn’t have the same consideration. Another thing S8 found tough was the hiking - especially with all of the weight from his backpack - but he was able to accept it as part of the program, and also recognise that it provided benefits (e.g. it allowed him to feel accomplished over having hiked over heaps and heaps of ranges, mountains, and hills). He said the toughest part about the hiking was having to stop and wait for other participants when he himself did not need a break. Two additional challenges for S8 were the “temperamental” weather, and the dark, being subjected to the dark, cramped space during the caving activity.

5. Participant’s outcomes
S8 reported that he was not fully informed about the requirements of Catalyst in advance, but that this turned out to be a good thing. He thought that if he had know he would have to survive seven days out in the bush with nothing but a tent, a bag of snacks, a couple of bottles of water, a bottle of fuel, a couple of matches, and a stove - walking from place to place - he would have doubted his ability to do it.
In the end, S8 stated that he could see that the program had changed him a lot. Physically, participating in Catalyst allowed S8 to realise abilities that he was previously unaware he embodied. He learned that he had the ability to push himself to do a 30 metre abseil, carry a pack - up and down hill, through creeks, and around rivers - for over a week, that he is persistent (he walked and walked without really needing a break), and also withstand cold weather. Experiencing these things made him realise that life back at Mt Isa is “a breeze” in comparison.

Throughout the Catalyst program, S8 learned that people are not all the same. He came to understand that people had differing interests, abilities, styles of interaction, and appearances. He stated that in the past he had treated people differently just because of their appearance, and that this was something he planned to change. S8 thought that if he changed the way he spoke to and treated others, and stopped being so negative about things, it was likely that other people would reciprocate this, meaning that they would have a greater liking for him. S8 reported that the teamwork required for activities like abseiling, hiking, and caving - allowed him to build up trust in others. S8 also thought that he would start helping out more around home, and stop thinking so much about himself.

S8 set three goals toward the end of the Expedition. His first goal was to finish school, and go through to year 12. He saw benefit in having his year 12 certificate for employment prospects. His second goal was to try and make his familial relationships a little bit stronger. He said they were not always perfect - they always had their ups and downs. His aim was to regulate that - make the ups and downs a little less incongruent. His third goal was to be there for his little brother - to be available to help him when he was in need.

According to S8, the Catalyst program didn’t change his outlook about the future. It did, however, help him to realise what life actually means - he realised that it is not about staying at home and sitting in a corner where safety is guaranteed. He had come to understand that it was better to give something a go and fail
rather than walk away without finding out if he was or was not capable - he stated that you usually don’t
know if you’re going to be good at something unless you give it a go. S8 said that he saw a decent future
ahead of himself, but that he recognised a need to keep getting out there, exploring, and pushing his comfort
zone.

S8 thought that other people would notice and be impressed that he stuck with the program, and did not give
up. He thought that they would notice that he approached challenges differently, rather than repeating the
same strategy. And he also thought that they would notice that he had learn to treat other people with more
respect and trust.

S8 reported that his overall Catalyst experience was “great”. He stated that he loved every bit about it - and
acknowledged that the challenges, negatives, and positives were all essential components of that experience,
as they all balanced each other out. He stated that the program was totally worth the time and effort.

6. Participant’s recommendations
S8 found that a number of people had trouble with the amount of walking Catalyst involved. For this he
recommended an easier mode of travel (other than walking) - that would still take physical exertion - such as
riding a horse or a bike. His other suggestion for this problem was shorter walking distances. The other thing
S8 recommended for Catalyst improvement was better food. He said he ate it because food is food, but that
it wasn’t very nice.
Participant 14

1. Direct quote(s) that captures the essence of the participant’s experience

“I like to keep to myself sometimes. Like, I like to talk to people. But sometimes I just like to be by myself ... I’m good at doing the work, but not at working within a team.” [attitude before Catalyst]

“Hiking with a big bag on - I never thought I’d be… like when I lifted it up at first I thought ‘I’m going to die’. But, yeah - I made it here.”

“It’s easier to get along with people that you have to work with, and not try to do it by yourself.” [attitude toward the end of Catalyst]

2. Participant’s background

S9 was a 13 year old male who participated in a Catalyst program in 2013. At the time of Catalyst, S9 lived with his dad, but his parents were in the middle of a custody battle - S9’s mum wanted him to live with her, but S9 wanted to stay living with his dad. S9 reported that things at school had been going pretty well - he recalled achieving an A, a B, some C’s, and two D’s. He stated that there was no real difference between getting an A and a D, although the teacher of the class did have an impact. He also stated that he didn’t really care about grades as his step-mum had told him that comments were more important than grades. S9 reported that the comments he generally received said one of two things - that he didn’t try or put enough effort in, or that although he paid attention and was good at doing the work, he was not good at working within a team. S9 said that he got on reasonably well with other kids at school - he got along with and was nice to anyone that got along with and was nice to him. But after a while, he would stop wanting to be their friend, and he would tell them that. If they kept “annoying” him beyond that point, he would become agitated and tell them to “f-off”. It was not uncommon for S9 to receive a lunch time detention at his current school - usually for talking in class and being late to class. However, S9 hadn’t received a suspension since being at his old school. Likewise, S9 used to wag a bit at his old school, and hadn’t wagged at the new school once yet. At the time of Catalyst, S9 had been at the school about 11 months. The difference between his behavioural conduct at his previous school and the new school was (a) that he was happy upon turning up to school in Mt Isa, and (b) he actually like school in Mt Isa. He said that was because he lived with his dad, who (in opposition to his mum) let him do things (e.g. Catalyst), didn’t annoy him, and didn’t make him do chores every morning. S9 stated that he did not have any mental health problems. When asked about his physical health, S9 reported that he had his nose broken at his mum’s house via physically fighting with older brother. He also reported colour blindness - but said that he had some friends on Catalyst that helped him out with any colours that he needed to know.

3. How the participant got involved in the program

S9 said that he heard about the program in the newsletter. After hearing about it, he went down to the office to sign up because it sounded fun. He wasn’t so sure he would get in, but his woodwork teacher told him that she had recommended him. As S9 regularly spoke about his living situation to his friends in woodwork, he thought that this teacher may have overheard these conversations and therefore thought he would be suited to the program. After S9 signed up, the principle came into his classroom and asked him if he wanted to go. S9 said yes, and was given a couple of forms to take home for his parents to sign.

4. Participant’s experience of the program stages e.g., highlights and lowlights

Lead-in experience:

S9 thought the Lead-in was fun. He enjoyed hanging out, relaxing, talking, and playing games. He said that he liked all of the activities - he gave special mention to two activities in particular. First was the “hands and feet” activity (in which one person had to hold up the partial body weight of the other nine youth participants). Second was an activity which involved the participants holding a rope off the ground in the form of a circle, so that one participant at a time could walk around it. For S9, having to prepare and cook his own food on a trangia was initially a challenge - but he came to find it easy after getting used to it.
Expedition experience:
S9 held on to the fact that the Expedition was only nine days to help him get through missing his dad and step-mum, the luxury of having a nice warm shower every night, having dinner already cooked for him (although S9 often pitched in cooking dinners at home, it was a different story to have to cook it on a trangia), and being able to wake up and ride his scooter. S9 found the hiking pretty hard, but also pretty fun. He liked the Catalyst staff members - he thought they were pretty cool, and also helpful. S9 didn’t mind being away from friends, because he was friends with a lot of the youth participants that were with him on the program.

Follow-up expectations:
S9 said that he was particularly looking forward to reuniting with two of the staff members at the Follow-up - he reckoned that was going to be pretty fun. He was also looking forward to reviewing how he had gone from the start of the program to the end.

Highlights:
S9 reported that he most enjoyed the hiking, going through the creeks, and the games “mafia” and “stomp”.

Lowlights:
The canoeing really stood out as a lowlight for S9 - to begin with he didn’t like being paired with the female youth participant that he was paired with, and additionally the pair flipped their canoe, meaning that they ended up in the lake. Although they managed to flip the canoe back over and carry on and complete the activity, S9 didn’t find any of this an enjoyable experience. S9 found that during the hiking, the group was segregated - the boys built up a consistent pace that the girls couldn’t keep up with. For S9, having to stop and start and wait for those that were struggling was difficult to deal with. He also found it difficult to deal with the “whinging” of those that were struggling. Other lowlights for S9 included the rain, not understanding why they had to hike (particularly uphill) despite there being roads to all of the destinations, and packing the tent up only to have to set it back up again. Although he didn’t like these things, S9 said that they were alright, didn’t bother him too greatly, and were fun in a sense.

5. Participant’s outcomes
The program allowed S9 to realise his own physical strength. He said that when he first lifted up his backpack, he did not think he could carry it through the hills. In fact he thought he was going to “die”. But he surprised himself - getting through allowed him to realise his ability to carry things.

S9 said that before the program, he liked to keep to himself. Although he would talk to people, he would prefer to be alone. Hanging out with the group on Catalyst showed him that spending time with others was actually quite fun. He realised that it was easier to get along with people that you have to work with rather than arguing or trying to get tasks done alone (e.g. he found that it was easier to hike in a group than alone, and that although he liked lighting fires on his own, it was easier and more fun to do it with other people). S9 predicted that he would now start getting along with people back at school because he would be more agreeable when teachers asked him to do something, participate rather than refuse to participate, and also give things a go rather than write them off as impossible activities. While S9 recognised that he still regarded other people with a level of intolerance - he also stated that he wanted to continue working on his interpersonal skills after the program. S9 did not believe that any of what he had learned would have an impact on his home life, as he considered everything at home to be “perfect” already.

S9 said that the program was worth his time and effort, and that getting along with other people would be the most long-lasting effect for him. He believed that others would notice that he had improved how he got along with people, too.

6. Participant’s recommendations
The only recommendation S9 had for the Catalyst program was to replace some of the hiking with another mode of transport such as horses, push bikes, or mountain bikes. After giving this suggestion, he did say that
he thought the hiking was alright, and that he reckoned that the Catalyst program on the whole was pretty good.
Appendix C: Staff interview summaries

Catalyst leadership development manager [Arron Sullivan]

Background and role with Bornhoffen PCYC

Arron is the Bornhoffen PCYC leadership development manager. He has been working with the Catalyst program since 2006. His role is to supervise the Catalyst program, to ensure it runs on budget while having maximum effectiveness for youth leadership development (via adventure-based and experiential learning programs). The specific tasks this role requires are supporting the other staff members, logistical programming, rostering, and “everything” behind the scenes (i.e., making sure the right things, people, equipment, and processes are in the right place at the right time).

Catalyst program funding

Catalyst is a signature program for Bornhoffen PCYC. Catalyst makes up a quarter of Bornhoffen’s business (in terms of workload, deliverable days, and finance). Catalyst makes a far-reaching contribution to the development of youth leadership. Although Catalyst brings kudos to Bornhoffen as a signature external program, it isn’t identified separately within Bornhoffen PCYC budget [it is stand-alone funded]. Funding options for the future of the Catalyst program include a) entirely Bornhoffen funded, b) combination Bornhoffen/stand-alone funded, or c) entirely stand-alone funded. Currently Bornhoffen funds Catalyst in-kind - with hours, support, and logistics – and with external grants. If it were a [core] PCYC program, PCYC would cover some of the administrative overheads, first aid kits, radios, vehicle use, and coordination. This would be a massive support for the program. The reality, however, is that the Catalyst team only receives funds for the program delivery components. Nothing else has ever been covered - the team has always worn the remaining costs (e.g., all the time management time invested into this program has not been identified as an additional cost - it has been considered as part of PCYC Bornhoffen contribution to community/youth development).

There seems to be an assumption (from the perspective of both Arron/the management team, and PCYC as a broader association) that the current situation will continue.

Ideal financial (and structural) model

Bornhoffen PCYC delivers programs in the areas of outdoor recreation, outdoor education, youth development, and adventure therapy / Catalyst programs. One self-sustaining business model is to divide this work into clusters according to the specialisations of the Bornhoffen team. As a result there would be a youth-at-risk coordinator to coordinate all youth-at-risk programs, a school coordinator to coordinate all school outdoor education programs, etc. This model would still allow delivery staff to move between different delivery areas but the different areas would act as stand-alone arms of Bornhoffen’s service delivery capacity. This would mean that the funding for each area of work is then spent in that area. Currently the school work we develop helps to fund the youth at risk work we deliver. The youth at risk work should be better funded and not reliant on work that already exists. i.e. at risk work is not subsidised by a business unit (Bornhoffen PCYC) that is already under pressure to recover all costs.

This model has been spoken about as the ideal for a number of years, but it isn’t the ideal because staff burnout is massive within outdoor education/adventure therapy. The very thing that drives the service - staff - is the thing that is endangered because burnout is so common. Very little research has been done to make the above model a sustainable one.

If adventure therapy was viewed as a treatment, it could be subsidised like the rest of the health care system. However, as the research to say that it is a good treatment is missing, it is not possible to weigh in with the structures and supports needed in order to make it sustainable. This is a chicken-egg situation.
Catalyst could be funded in its entirety by the PCYC association. Catalyst should be based at Bornhoffen. Catalyst should be managed by whoever is managing at Bornhoffen. This evaluation is a step in that direction because it is an external perspective that can be taken to the PCYC association.

When Catalyst was initially undertaken by Bornhoffen, a lot of comments were made about it being expensive, not sustainable, not beneficial, not a good idea. But now comments are being made about how the staff working on Catalyst could be used to deliver other youth at risk work like the “boot camp” programs, because they have been doing it for a while. Simply sticking around long enough to prove you can deliver, so that people see that you are “part of the furniture”, is important.

The Catalyst program has to be attached to financial sustainability, thus officially attach Catalyst to Bornhoffen, and have PCYC association fund it. If things were going to operate in this way, an agreement would need to be made with the association.

Whoever is coordinating the program cannot move into a welfare space/mentality, because that action creates risk of the program being closed down as someone will decide it’s not a financially sustainable model.

Instead of the program coordinator stepping into this welfare role, add “some sort of psychological supervisor” to the program. The person in this welfare role would run training throughout the year to support the facilitation team, and recruit facilitators who aresolidly skilled in that space/with demonstrated history in that area - and pay them accordingly. The time has come where a psychologist needs to be attached to the Bornhoffen business unit in general, anyway.

Ideally, employees are trained in first aid at a high level, but there are also an array of individuals who support the program (e.g., with advice and research). Ideally, employ people to help with these, as well as a number of other logistical things.

A project worker employed to whole-heartedly invest time - a good month - towards “cleaning everything up” would be most beneficial. The current budget and staff model does not allow the expenditure or time needed for this. Primary tasks for this worker would include: operational/strategic planning, setting a duration (2-3 year ongoing Catalyst business model), clearly mapped out budgets, and establishment of a consistent delivery team (for at least the first 18 months - because of the nature of the work it would be difficult to recruit somebody for a straight up 3 years). Somebody with experience in both business and adventure therapy would be ideal. An adventure therapist has experience in both outdoor education and therapy, but it is rare to find somebody trained in business, outdoor education, and therapy - but this would be extremely beneficial. It is more common to find someone with business/outdoor, or outdoor/adventure experience.

Managers need to be involved in the field work, otherwise they lose their capacity to manage and understand what’s going on.

If Catalyst is going to live at Bornhoffen, it needs a space of its own, on the same property, but a separate operation. Placement of the Catalyst program youths needs to be separated from the main campsite (e.g., Catalyst involves the participants working out how to be around one another - putting that alongside another operation will change the Catalyst group dynamic, and impact those who are sharing the environment but not involved with Catalyst. Also some people, adults included, do not understand the nature of the Catalyst program or the participants on the Catalyst program. It is common for such people to view the Catalyst participants as rude etc. - which interferes with the Catalyst process.)

A lot of training is needed to improve Catalyst’s sustainability. A clear training pathway for new facilitators would be really useful, including:
• First aid training adequate for 5-7 day wilderness expeditions is necessary (such things are not always written as an industry standard, but it is an unspoken industry standard).
• Counselling accreditation.

In short, someone coming up with a really clear training pathway for new facilitators would be really useful.

Assessment/profiling procedure
Pre-evaluation:
• GRABBSS [Goals Readiness Affect, Body, Behaviour, Stage, and Setting] was used - it was sent to the school for the students to fill in, and for the teachers to understand so that they could determine who the most appropriate students were.
• “One School” data was drawn upon to assess whether a student was appropriate. The data from this base is really quite good.
• Informal conversations held between staff members about which students are suited (whether or not that is a reliable recruitment means).
• The three Lead-in days are really supposed to validate the profiling - when the facilitator on the ground meets the participants/group and makes the decision about the individuals and their appropriateness, as well as the group profile and dynamic.
• Additionally there is a partnership agreement to say “This is what is expected of you as a school/you need to be able to profile, catering to this”. Even before the partnership agreement, the school has to apply to become a partner. In their application the school has to demonstrate an understanding of experiential learning, and also talk about what is going on in the school (as Catalyst may enhance or compliment already existent behavioural management or welfare projects or programs - e.g. a school will often talk about a chaplain/positive thinking classroom/some other behavioural measurement program that is going on as one of their strategies which is a positive as Catalyst was never intended as a stand-alone program) - it was always meant to complement existing education processes and practices. Basically, the application process allows Bornhoffen to assess who they will be working with. And a big thing Bornhoffen looks for in a partner is an already existing department of education processes that help them identify young people at risk.

Key inclusion criteria were:
1. At risk of not living a full and meaningful life as a consequence of substance abuse either within the family unit or at an individual level
2. Learning ability
3. Loss of family unit (e.g. divorced parents)
4. etc.

This has now been replaced with:
1. The six aspects of the CAARS [Common Approach to Assessment, Referral, and Support] model. This allows one to look at the whole child within his/her environment, so that any elements of concern can be identified. The previous criteria are still in there - but they are classed in six distinct aspects [Safety, Physical Health, Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing, Relationships, Material Wellbeing, and Learning and Development]. However, for Catalyst, the CAARS criteria are too broad. Use the CAARS model as a backdrop to conversation to get a sense of what’s going on for each individual kid. From this process, make a judgement based on where the strengths were existing and lacking.
5. Willingness to learn/readiness to change is an important factor, however it is difficult to measure. Therefore, it is more of a judgement call made by teachers and facilitators.
6. Choice to be on the program. It has to be voluntary.
7. For a youth to be a viable participant, they have got to have some external support (e.g., family who want the youth to participate). Broader support beyond the family (e.g., a positive intent to continue this beyond the program) needs to exist; the notion behind Catalyst is that it’s the start of, not the end
of. The idea behind Catalyst is that it’s supposed to broker the relationships that may not be there - which is where the CAARS model comes in.

There is probably more exclusion criteria than inclusion criteria. The youth at risk community is starved of criteria to judge what “youth at risk” means. A number of people have different perspectives on what youth at risk means. Roger Greenaway proposed a model that involves five levels of youth at risk - this is helpful in identifying youth at risk.

Exclusion criteria include that participating in Catalyst is not a good idea for young people who are in a family of crime or involved in ongoing substance-related dependence - or young people who are heavily involved in these things themselves. This environment/lifestyle is not sustainable/suited for/to Catalyst.

In short, finding a useful method of evaluating a youth’s readiness to be on the program is hard to come by. The inclusion/exclusion criteria are not currently documented in a way that a teacher or facilitator would find usable/readily-understandable/efficient - it is more down to intuition. A lot of the inclusion criteria is based off judgement call by teachers, followed by a conversation between facilitators and those teachers.
Involvement with the Woodridge 2013 Catalyst program

Mike has been involved in Catalyst as a facilitator since 2009 and has worked in collaboration with the Leadership Development manager in developing the program to its current format. As a facilitator Mike works in partnership with the learning agency in selection of participants, delivery of the program and evaluation.

Woodridge background

Woodridge State High School is located on the South side of Brisbane which is Brisbane’s lower socioeconomic area. Woodridge would be considered as being at the bottom of that demographic as well. The school is very culturally diverse - they have a large population of New Zealand Maori, Pacific Islander and refugees. The school definitely has a fair amount of challenges with racial and gang related violence. The community and school is in high need of support.

2013 is the fifth Catalyst program with Woodridge SHS. The partnership began in 2009 and has run every year since.

Typically, there are a lot of New Zealand Maori and Pacific Islander kids on the Catalyst program from Woodridge SHS. Less than half of the participants are Australian or European. One or two of them might be Indigenous.

Home life for these participants includes high levels of generational unemployment, single parents and abusive or negative family structures, with little support and encouragement towards goals for the young people themselves. There is a fair amount of physical abuse, particularly within the Pacific Islander and New Zealand Maori families. Generally a lower quality of life is being had in terms of access to medical care such as dentist and doctors etc.

The Woodbridge 2013 program started off with a full group of 10 participants on the Lead-in. Six participants returned for the Expedition which consisted of five males and one female. There were two European-Australian males, two New Zealand Maori males, one Pacific Islander male, one young girl who was half Australian European and half New Zealand European.

Most of the participants had been identified as being at risk for a number of factors including One School data [a computer system with log entries about behaviour at school - whether it be positive or negative - although only negative stuff tends to get captured. Most of these kids had amongst the highest data entries in their year level. One school data could be entered if they turn up to school and they don’t have the correct books or their uniform isn’t correct. Or it might be something more severe – e.g., they swear at a teacher, or they get sent out of the classroom. There was also a lot of behavioural and defiance type behaviours as well. But in general, these kids had also displayed some potential at school at various times, and there was some potential there to build on.

Amongst participants there was a lot of self doubt, low self confidence and negativity that comes with living in the suburb of Woodridge (e.g., “What’s the point? Life isn’t going anywhere for me, and it’s just how it is in Woodridge.”) These sorts of totalising statements - they don’t allow a lot of room for participants to succeed. They were expecting, themselves, that they would fail. And the general expectation of them from other people in their lives - whether it be their classmates or family - they’ll fail as well. There is a fear of having a go at something. And there is of even a fear of wanting to aspire towards something.

Some of the opportunities and needs of participants were to challenge that perception that they have of themselves. To challenge this idea of “just because I’m at Woodridge means that I can’t lead a full life”.

Catalyst facilitator [Mike Coker]
Mike really wanted to challenge that, and play in that narrative space of re-writing some of those stories. And getting them to look at their stories differently. Because there’s no reason why they can’t make a decent go of life. But even amongst the Lead-in when things were really hard going, three of the six participants did really well. That was an indicator of some of their potential. If there were more moments like that, we may have started to gain some momentum.

As well as One School data, schools use the profiling tools that we provide them. There’s a student profile sheet, which the school fills out on the student. It’s the schools’ data about that young person. They summarise some of the one school data for us, some of the traits, or behaviours, or things that the student’s been involved in at school - whether it be good, bad, or otherwise. And then there’s also a goals and readiness questionnaire [cut down from GRABBS] that we get the students to complete - that helps us to identify some goals and readiness for the young person. But that didn’t happen at Woodridge this year. It’s always been kind of unhelpful anyway, because it seems - at least with the Woodridge kids - the responses that you get are so limited that it doesn’t provide any useful data. That wasn’t followed-up because in the past it hadn’t provided Mike with any great insight. If anything it’s the Lead-in that allowed Mike to get some insight as to what’s going on. But what the school provides about participants is useful in terms of what sort of behaviours are present, their family structure, is there anything going on at home, that sort of detail was really important. The students also have to go to two teachers in the school, and get a permission slip signed, that is them saying to the teacher “This is what I’m trying to do, do you support me?” It’s about the student actively trying to do something to help get them on the program, change their situation and actively involve other teachers. For every participant that came on the Lead-in, at least two teachers at school - other than the two involved in the program - were supporting of, or aware that they were going on Catalyst.

Mike feels that currently the profiling tool is too open to interpretation. What you interpret from what one statement might be is different from what I interpret. Your tolerance for a young person’s behaviour will be different to mine as well. When you go into a school like Woodridge that sits in a low socioeconomic area where they’ve got high truancy rates, behavioural issues, and general challenges in the school, it means that the kids that they think might be ideal would be different to say the kids that would be selected just 20 kilometres away on the north side of Brisbane, where it’s not such a low socioeconomic community. The teachers doing the selection are desensitised to the environment that they’re working in. And therefore, you’ll end up with harder kids. This is my fifth Woodridge program so my perception about accepting a participant would be different to some of the other staff at Bornhoffen.

A revised profiling tool could have more specific examples - to allow a teacher to go “Yeah I believe this person is suitable”. More examples that would prompt some thought about how participant would behave in a particular situation. Things like, if you were to leave this participant with minimal supervision, for five minutes, while staff were distracted - could you trust that they would do the right thing? Or that things wouldn’t become vandalised? Currently in the profiling tool is a statement about if you’re in a public place, could you leave them unsupervised, or could you trust that they would do the right thing - something to that effect. We need more statements, or more questions, that prompt thought and consideration about the group that will address some of those safety and behavioural type concerns. It needs to be also tailored towards selecting participants that are not only willing to participate in the program, but are willing to participate in the change process. What they see is the adventure part of the process, they don’t see or understand the therapeutic aspects or the outcomes.

The profiling process is not very turn-key or straightforward. There are too many documents currently. And part of that’s also made challenging because there’s Bornhoffen documents, and then there’s University of Canberra evaluation documents, there’s duplication there straight away which is something we’ve got to live with.

The pre-Lead-in paper work is huge. There’s so many different tools, and templates, and documents that need to be completed and returned that it’s almost impossible to make sure everything gets returned. As a
facilitator of the process, it’s hard to make sure that you even give them the right documents at the right time - because there’s too much. If you’re only in the office, and all you’ve got to worry about is your Catalyst program then it may be more manageable. But when we’re working other programs as well, it makes it really difficult. Schools are struggling with trying to make sense of it - because it’s too much. It’s information overload.

Mainly the profiling and participant information needs to be revisited and overhauled so that it is a lot more clear and concise, with less duplication. It’s also made challenging because there’s documents that are school-specific documents, and then there is some stuff that is parent-specific, and then there is some stuff that is participant-specific. Trying to coordinate all that paperwork gets really hard and it should almost be one document that goes to the school, to the parent, to the participant (in that order) and gets filled out. Then it’s one document to manage - it’s just got to go around these people rather than having three different tools.

. But we will need to keep information confidential - what Mum writes you don’t want the participant to see. And I’m sure there would be things that the school wouldn’t want the student to see either.

There is potential with the CAARS tool. We’re not utilising that to any real effectiveness yet. And we either need to use it, and use it properly, or we should cut it out of the process altogether.

Somebody trained in conducting the CAARS assessment could go out to the school and use that to determine appropriateness and a needs assessment for the student.

Last year I used the CAARS post-program, more as a discussion tool to talk to the participant about anything that was still going on for them at home - the challenges they were having. And we used that to write up a goal for that person - or a support plan - that the school could initiate. For one kid it was “we think this student needs to get their eyes checked”, so the school was going to arrange for the student to go get his eyes checked as that was a current issue for him, or something that’s not been sorted out at home. Another kid needed to go to a doctor and get his knee looked at, sometimes just simple things like that. During that profiling stage, we need to be determining, “what is the need for this person?”. At that point, before the Lead-in even happens, we need to be considering an outcome for them. It’s almost like goal-setting for facilitators. Where is it that we want this young person to be - that’s the destination - that’s where we’re aiming for. Where are they now and what are we going to do to get them there? What’s the plan to get them there? Currently, we’re not identifying the end point for the individual. We’ve got some really general, holistic program type outcomes that we like to be doing, but it’s not specific to any person as such - we need to get more specific about it. We need to know exactly for that young person - what’s the area of need, what’s the outcome, and designing the path to get them there. And working in partnership with the school to make that happen. The adventure part or program part is a process of helping them get there. Before the Lead-in even happens, we could have a target in mind that we’re working with. Until we can get that right - we’ll get out of it whatever we get out of it. We’ve gotten away with it because the nature of the program allows for some really great personal growth - you could put anybody on that program and they’ll come out of it feeling different, responding to challenges differently. Anybody. Which is great - and it’s fine to have those by-product outcomes, but we need to have some more specific and targeted outcomes as well.

If you go down that route, it means that the kids that you select are all of similar challenges - they’ve all got similar things going on. For, example if you’re doing a drug rehabilitation program, they’d all be there because they’ve got substance abuse problems. So ideally it would be targeting kids who have, for example, defiant behaviour. Or impulse control. You’re working towards the same thing. Otherwise it could be really hard to work on that one participant when all these other things are going on that are completely separate and completely different for the other group members.

Whatever action plan gets created needs families and schools to be invested and involved. It’s not enough to have the one teacher involved - not if we’re going to have any real success. The CAARS tool, because it’s designed in a way that it’s got that 360 approach where you can interview the young person, then interview the family members, and maybe a teacher or somebody else to get a third person perspective, that would
create a more holistic approach. By doing that as a pre-Lead-in assessment tool, you’d be able to (hopefully) have an idea as to what this young person has going on - what gaps there are, what strengths there are that you can use to bridge those gaps, and know what the outcome is. And have a really clear goal and defined outcome for that young person.

[In terms of the make-up of the facilitators, teachers, and potentially community/youth worker facilitation mix], working in with the school is a great experience to bring to the program. We need somebody outside of the school on a community level, like somebody from the local PCYC. In order to do that we would need to have - in the budget - funds to help cover that person’s costs. We need to be catching and supporting the participant at a school level, but also at a wider community level. I like that it’s the facilitators on the program - if you were to bring in a counsellor as well, or somebody that’s got an outside process, then it would complicate things. We need one person running the process. And everybody else that’s on board with the process. So if you were to have a counsellor - they’d be the one running the process. And I’d be there for basically technical aspects. And the teachers would be there for support. Maybe there’s some strength in that. It’s not how I’d like to do it because this is where my interests lie. But you wouldn’t be able to have two people trying to run any sort of process - even when I work with other experienced facilitators, typically one of us runs process and focuses on that, and the other plays technician. So I can be focussed on process, and they can be focussed on the next food drop and what needs to happen.
Involvement with Catalyst

Emma has been involved in 6 [maybe 7] Catalyst programs since mid-2010 (lead-facilitator for 4, co-facilitator for 2 [maybe 3] programs). She initially got involved in Catalyst facilitation as it is one of her job requirements to deliver two Catalyst programs per year. Her level of experience in the youth work field led to her be more involved in Catalyst facilitation than other employees (and deliver more programs than required). She was also the only facilitator at her workplace throughout the 2010-2013 period, due to colleagues being off on sick leave etc.

Dalby 2013

Emma’s most recent Catalyst involvement was Dalby 2013. Working with Dalby was new for Bornhoffen, but the Dalby PCYC branch manager is the former Cloncurry PCYC branch manager, so Emma had already worked with him quite a lot in the past (making the partnership familiar despite new). Emma did all of the ground work (i.e. organisation, helping the school profile participants, design the whole program, and redesign the whole program when weather issues unfolded). The Dalby co-facilitator was Adam, and that was his first Catalyst. He brought a lot of new/fresh/different ideas to Catalyst - subsequently Emma took more of a step back on this program than she normally would.

There were two two-day follow-up’s (this moderation to the follow-up model was due to flooding in Dalby). Emma was absent for the first follow-up, and ended up handing the lead-facilitator role over to Adam for the second follow-up.

Partnership development step-by-step process

The process of developing a partnership with a school varies according to the individuality of each school. Emma’s process has relied a lot on her already-existing community relationships - meaning that every partner she has approached as a potential partner, she has known in advance. For example, Emma knew the Mt Isa PCYC manager through non-Catalyst programs she had been involved with in the past. Subsequent to this manager expressing some interest, Emma had a meeting with the Mt Isa deputy principle to gauge his level of interest (according to Emma you can quite easily/quickly tell if a potential partner is or is not going to be committed). The deputy was on board, so then it was a matter of informing him (the party/the school) what is expected of them and how time consuming the program would be for the teachers (sometimes once a party is fully informed, and realises the reality of what their commitment will require, they are unable to commit).

Emma highlighted how a lot of the time, schools want to send the “worst” kids on Catalyst. Realistically these aren’t usually the type of kids who are going to be suited to the program. If the partner (school) accept that this is the case, and are able to (a) commit to providing appropriate staff, and (b) designate the time and resources necessary for these staff members to carry out the required workload [e.g. paper work and time to support the kids]), confirmation of the partner relationship is quite likely.

It is positive/beneficial to have more than one staff member of the teacher/youth worker/chaplain/etc. variety involved so that the kids consistently have a support figure. An outside-of-school support (e.g. PCYC youth worker [even if they don’t actually go on the expeditions]) is ideal, as that consistent support figure is also then available outside of school. The support non-teacher figures provide is also more flexible/accessible, as schools are under a lot of pressure with time constraints and financial limitations. The Dalby PCYC branch manager offered for the kids, if they so chose, to organise their own additional follow-up - this is a good example of that flexibility/accessibility - and a beneficial luxury that schools are unable to provide.

After establishing the partner relationship, the lead-facilitator gets the partner to fill out a selection criteria, and sign a partnership agreement. After this step, the program is confirmed, and dates for execution of the program are arranged.
Participant profiling

Emma encourages a school to consider potential participants very early on in the process. Emma has a thorough conversation with the school about what sort of participants would be suited to the program. She explains that although it is a youth-at-risk program, it’s not for the kid that has the most incidents recorded. It’s also probably not for a kid who needs convincing he or she wants to do it - it needs to be for someone who is struggling with some aspect of their life, has exhibited some desire for change, but either doesn’t know how to change it or doesn’t have the support to change it. It is understandable that there may be some resistance to participating in the program - but there needs to be an element of voluntary participation, because if the individual cannot identify with the need for change, the likelihood of the program affecting change is low. Participants need to be in the contemplation stage rather than the pre-contemplation stage.

Emma also emphasises that although 10 is the target regarding number of participants for a program, there is a high drop-out rate - so it is preferable to identify a larger pool of potential participants.

According to Emma, Bornhoffen currently does not have any form of profiling tool to give to teachers to help them select participants (e.g., a list of requirements or checklist for teachers to use as a guide). Emma has either given a “big [verbal] spill”, or “painstakingly” written personalised emails (about what kind of things the schools should be looking for within the kids) to the last two schools she has been in partnership with because “I wanted the right kids to be chosen, because if they’re not choosing the right kids and sending the right staff (or providing those staff with support), that’s where the program falls over. The profiling thing is an issue and Bornhoffen doesn’t have a very good way of doing it.

Bornhoffen does have some documents (including a “project guide”) that lists some of the required participant criteria, but that these are not well written. She thinks it would help to better explain the contemplation and pre-contemplation stages to teachers, and also use the CAARS tool as more of an intake tool (rather than an assessment tool as it is currently being used).

Due to past experience (students not being profiled properly, meaning that some of the ones selected as participants weren’t actually suitable for the program), Emma wanted to make the profiling requirements clear. To ensure this for the Mt Isa program, she had a face-to-face meeting with the Mt Isa school principle at the outset (before Lead-in) regarding selection of participants. As the 10 selected participants actually all ended up completing the entire Catalyst program, she suggests that it could also be a useful addition for facilitators to go to school and help with the profiling for the program for future Catalysts.

Paperwork

Emma recommends fewer forms for future Catalyst programs - and that those forms “need to make a bit more sense”. The project guide is good for providing information about the actual program, but profiling information needs to be drawn out and expanded, the selection criteria & corresponding cover letter is theoretically good for viable partnership assessment/identification/selection, however a lot of the time this tool ends up a void piece of paperwork due to reality of tangible responsibilities, partnership agreement, support letter (for teachers to show their support of student Catalyst participation - though this hardly ever gets returned to Bornhoffen), medical forms, equipment list, and the University of Canberra evaluation paperwork.

The way these forms are distributed to the teachers is often too much - unless the facilitator knows how to communicate to the teachers what each form is, what needs to be done with each form, and how to strategically time when they are going to distribute each form (rather than all at once) - it becomes overwhelming, and a lot of the time ends up an erroneous process. Bornhoffen has created a timeline to (in theory) guide the facilitators to be able to do the above three things, but applying that to reality is not viable.

Facilitator training
For facilitators that aren’t so experienced, more information could be useful. New facilitators are “thrown in” but there is no one way of facilitating - everybody starts off as a co-facilitator, and learns to do “their own thing” from that initial co-facilitation experience. As with any new job or unfamiliar task, that is probably the best way to learn. However, when somebody has their first lead-facilitator experience, it is not as simple to learn about the “behind the scenes” tasks such as budgets and logistics (i.e., bookings for campsites) - but that, again, the easiest way to learn about these things is through experience.
Background to Dalby PCYC Bornhoffen Catalyst program involvement

Dalby Catalyst was with a partner that I already had a relationship with. The branch manager at WPCYC was previously the branch manager at Cloncurry, and I had run Catalyst with Cloncurry before. So when Mick moved to Dalby, we saw that as a chance to have a really good partnership with Dalby. And because of my relationship with him I took on board that I wanted to do that one.

I had a lot of contact with the school about the type of kids that we were looking for, and I know that Mick was really involved in that as well (having been involved in successful and unsuccessful programs in the past). The kids that were selected wanted to be a part of the program - they all volunteered for it. The behavioural support teacher at the school was the teacher that came along on the program - he was in contact with all of these kids already. He was already sort of case-managing them, to some extent. He selected them, so they were already kids known to him. They were all kids that were having various issues within the school. They’d all received suspensions, probably within the last 12 months, for various things, but they (through his meetings with them) had expressed some desire to not continue doing that behaviour (most of them). That’s how they were selected.

There were a few issues trying to get 10 for the lead in. They had identified 12. We had a couple pull out, so we ended up with one or two of the back ups that came along. One of those kids had some pretty major issues that turned out not to be suitable for the program. That was an issue. And then after the Lead-in we had a few that no longer wanted to come along on the expedition. Also there were a few issues that arose in the Lead-in that had to be dealt with, so trying to get 10 on the expedition was pretty challenging. We ended up with seven. The program came pretty close to being cancelled because we had an issue with drug use on the Lead-in. We found some evidence of drug use that involved two of the participants. The lead-in didn’t end very well. It was decided that the primary drug user would not be on the program - not as a punishment but because he needed extra help - and he then went back into the community and was put in contact with (or he was referred onto) other services. So he was out of the program. There were two kids on the lead-in that said that they had some major health issues that were going to be an issue on the expedition. After the kinds of things that they were talking about we then couldn’t allow them to come on the expedition without some kind of doctor clearance - and that was a bit of a struggle to get as well. We ended up not having long between the Lead-in and the expedition, so that was a struggle. One of those kids was told by the doctor that they couldn’t do the program, and one of them was told they could, so that was the second one out. The third person, it’s not really clear what happened there. She said that she didn’t want to attend the program. When her parents were called to try and discuss it I think the parents said “she’s already said she’s not coming, why are you calling me?”, and that was it. Some of her issues were a bit more extreme than some of the other kids. It was probably quite good she didn’t come along, because there was some interesting relationship going on between her and one of the other girls - they were at times best friends, and at times really dysfunctional. So we lost three participants between the Lead-in and the Expedition. There was some resistance from the other three girls as well, so at some point we were concerned about actually losing maybe 50% of the group, and I think we made the agreement that if we couldn’t get seven we were not going to go ahead with the program. But we got seven.

All of the girls had some pretty major self-esteem issues going on. They struggled to see any sort of future for themselves. I’m not sure if that’s a product of being at Dalby, or if that’s caused by something else; but they were really apathetic, and not really seeing any kind of future for themselves, and no self-esteem. One of the girls, in order to increase her self-esteem, was doing things that gave her certain labels within the school that she didn’t like, and she would often get into fights with people about that (physical fights). Basically she was called a slut and she was known as the slut in the school and when people called her that she would punch them. That’s how she ended up in behavioural. One of the girls has no parents and lives with her Grandparents. She’s got a boyfriend who is three years older than her and who she half lives with, and she makes really poor life choices and is living in an unhealthy situation - from diet to what she’s doing.
One of the girls, has really major self-confidence issues. She has really, really amazing leadership potential - she could be a school captain if she wanted to - but she will follow anybody who she wants acceptance from. This girl had a strong desire to be accepted by one of the girls who didn’t come along, so she would break into people’s houses and things like that with her. If she felt more confident within herself she wouldn’t need to follow people so much. One of the boys probably wasn’t profiled that well - he was probably not really suited to the program. He’s Aspergers, or ASD, or something - he struggles with comprehension, gets bullied a lot - I can see why - he’s a very irritating person to be around, he will make stupid comments all the time. Even the teacher from the school lost patience with him by the end of the Expedition in a pretty major way. He’s the target of bullying because of his strange behaviours which isn’t something that he has the capacity to change, because he can’t comprehend what he’s doing, and what impact it has on others, and how that then impacts on him. He was probably not profiled that well. Another of the boys has got a lot of potential, but makes silly decisions, maybe to impress his peers. He can be a really good kid if he feels like he’s in control. His Mum has terminal cancer, and he might feel like he doesn’t have a lot of control over his life at the moment. He tries to control his life in other ways - so if a teacher is asking him to do something, and he feels like he doesn’t have control over the situation, he responds in a pretty negative way, which results in him going to behavioural. Another boy was poorly profiled as well. He has literacy and numeracy issues, and comprehension issues. He really struggles to understand basic concepts. He didn’t have any ability to reflect. He is involved in drug use. He’s on a pretty negative path that in terms of what we were doing on Catalyst. I’m not sure we could have done much for him. He really struggles with comprehension. The fourth boy comes from a pretty violent household where it’s okay to beat up Mum, including this boy. That’s what’s accepted in his household, and that’s where he’s grown up. A lot of that attitude (maybe towards women and towards violence) comes out at school occasionally. But he’s actually a really good kid - he came on our PCYC state leadership program. A lot of kids involved with Mick Hughes (who’s the branch manager of Dalby) will go on to do the leadership program. This boy did it the other way around - he started with the leadership program, because he was already involved with PCYC, and shown potential, but meanwhile he’s going home and being violent towards Mum, and then violent towards others in school.

Program experience for participants

The Dalby Bornhoffen Catalyst program went really well for most of them except two boys because they didn’t have the level of intellect (they really struggled to understand basic concepts). But the other five definitely had a chance to reflect on their behaviour and how they respond to situations. All three of the girls, in particular, had really major light bulb moments where they realised how their behaviour actually impacts on their own lives, and they did start to develop some strategies to improve that. All three girls ended up on the Follow-up and we had one-on-one interviews with them. I spoke to two of the girls. For both of them there’s been some really major reflection on their lives. Maybe they felt powerless, and weren’t sure. They accepted their lives as they were and thought “the track that I’m on now is my destiny, I can’t really change it”. Catalyst made them aware that they do have a lot more power than what they thought they had. They started thinking about what it is they want to change, and thinking about how to change it. One of the boys I spoke to in the one-on-one’s has had some pretty major breakthroughs. He said that before Catalyst he was on the wrong track - he called it the “bad” track - he said he was “on the bad track”. And now he knows that there’s a good track, and he knows which track he wants to be on, and he thinks that he has moved and maybe is in between the two tracks, and he knows how he can get on the good track now. So they have the ability to understand that they do have more power over their lives than what they think they have, and maybe give them some strategies to be able to make changes.

Program activities

The expedition component (hiking with packs and communal living at campsites) was the major thing for these guys. Most of them weren’t used to having to push themselves and they weren’t used to having to do things that they couldn’t be bothered doing. The real challenge for these guys came with being able to live with other people, think about others, be able to modify their behaviour so that they can achieve as a group. We did the leap of faith activity with these guys, and for the girls (and maybe one of the guys), they were
pretty adamant that they weren’t going to do it. It caused some pretty serious anxiety for a few of them. And they had the opportunity to do that. And the group was really working well at that time - it happened at the right time of the program. They had stormed, and then then they went and did the leap of faith, and the group was really supportive of everyone as they went through it. And even the people who had been really scared ended up having two go’s, and some people had three go’s, and that was a pretty positive moment for the group. Especially for some of these guys who had really low self-esteem, that was a bit of a breakthrough moment for those guys - when they suddenly realised that they were capable of more than they were giving themselves credit for.

All of the activities were positive for these guys. Anything where they had to push themselves, and get out of their comfort zones was a positive for these guys. A lot of the reflection activities that we did with this group worked fairly well (for some people).

We did quite a long solo with them - an hour long solo - which was more guided; we gave them questions and things to think about while they were on the solo, and then we came back and we shared that stuff. That was pretty positive. Everyone was in the space where they were happy to share what they had thought about. It was pretty clear that they had spent most of the time actually reflecting and thinking about their lives - that was a good thing.

The journal wasn’t used on the Expedition, but we used it a lot at the Follow-up. I’ve changed the journal since that Catalyst. Partly because Adam coming in as a new person and looking at the journal with fresh eyes, he made a lot of observations. But the main observation that we made on Dalby was that the bit that got used of the journal was the blank page at the back. That’s really what we used. I made a new journal where I’ve cut a lot out of the stuff that doesn’t get used. It’s got a lot of blank pages at the back - for them to write their own stuff down. It could be more useful to have an empty journal.

I’m not sure. But yeah that’s what my guys did. We actually… oh should I talk about the follow-up?

I can’t think of anything that didn’t go well.

We did have to modify the Lead-in and Expedition for the weather. For the Lead-in slightly, we had to cut out a walk we were going to do. And when we found the drugs, that definitely majorly changed our plans for that day. That was the final day of the Lead-in. That turned into a large group discussion rather than the planned activity. On the expedition we had to cut it back a day because Dalby was flooded - cut-off by road. So it did get reduced to an eight day program. And then we had two two-day Follow-ups which had some modifications as well due to weather (we couldn’t get across the river). Unfortunately because the program changed slightly (it was reduced by a day and also moved back by a day, which had it finishing a day later), the teacher said that he could not stay an extra day. So we lost our teacher on the second last day, which neither Adam or I were particularly happy about and we thought that was a negative thing. It didn’t impact because the branch manager (the second staff member) is such a strong member of the team (of the staff team), but it would have been really nice for him to be there for the final reflection, and be there the whole time.

Aside from the drug thing (which we didn’t really have a lot of control over) the Lead-in went well. It was going quite well up until then. We had a good balance of teaming activities with a bit of adventure, so they did a day with a hike and abseil. We managed to do quite a good working agreement with them. Everything went well - they were gelling as a team, everything was going quite well when we found these drugs, that changed things pretty majorly. The actual handling of finding the drugs - I’m happy with how we handled that. The staff included a behavioural support teacher from the school, and a police officer. Adam was managing the rest of the group at this time, so it was the three of us. Everyone had their individual way that they wanted to handle it. There’s the police perspective, the behavioural support perspective, and then there’s me as the facilitator of this program. I convinced them that my way was the way to handle it. Which I’m happy with the way that we did handle it, because basically it was going to be handled very differently by either of the two guys. The way that we ended up handling it was that the whole group was given an
opportunity to tell us why we’d found these things in the bush and what was going on. We did the working agreement early on - maybe day one. We sat around for ages and eventually the story of where these drugs had come from was told by the rest of the group (other than the two boys that were involved in it). The scenario resulted in the working agreement being pulled out and the question being asked “Does this mean anything to anyone?”. There wasn’t a lot of response, so the response from the staff was “Well if it doesn’t mean anything shall we just cut it up?”. The group said yes, so the working agreement was cut up at that point. At the time, it seemed it made a lot of sense to do at the time - the group was saying “Yep, it doesn’t mean anything, it’s not our agreement anymore, we’re going to cut it up”. On reflection, cutting up the working agreement was probably not the best idea. But during the expedition, I gave them some materials to actually sew it back together. It actually worked quite well. We kept the cut-up working agreement - it was fabric (on calico). We kept that, and then they had the chance to sew it back together. Which was actually a really positive thing, because at times the group would say (it needed some fairly major stitching) things like “Oh maybe we can… we’ve been working really well, can we sew a bit more of the working agreement back together?”. I actually quite liked what happened, but I was given some feedback by others that cutting up working agreements is not a good thing to do. I’ve never cut one up before. I didn’t do the actual cutting, but I probably would have. It was a pretty big thing, but it was a big thing for them to sew it back together as well - because they were consciously thinking about it and going “Hey, we’re doing all this stuff now, how about we sit down and sew a bit of it back together?”, and it was a really important thing for them. Unfortunately it was then lost by the teacher between the expedition and the follow-up, which was a pretty upsetting thing for everyone, so we didn’t have that at the Follow-up.

We had somebody go missing for a while as a response to the drug situation. The way that was handled was pretty good. It wasn’t a positive that he went missing, but the way it was handled was fine. We had to try and work pretty hard after this situation - to try and end the Lead-in on a positive. We probably didn’t do that well, but we did what we could with the situation.

The expedition was pretty positive.

There were two follow-ups that were two days each. Adam took over leading the program for the Follow-up, so I wasn’t at the first follow-up. But it was held in Dalby, and it was two separate days. I know that not all of the participants came on the first day, and then not all of the participants came on the second day - but they weren’t the same participants each day. Everyone made an appearance at some point. Having it in the community was probably not a good idea because it meant that people were coming and going and weren’t really committing to it, because there were so many other distractions. They did go canoeing, and they did a community service activity. It was hard to get the participants, and the major reflection was we need to not do it in the community where they can just go home. The community service activity they did some gardening at a respite centre alongside people with intellectual disabilities. That was actually a really positive experience for those guys because they were doing a selfless activity - there was no real gain for them in it - it was for this respite centre. And it also challenged some of the kids’ views on the type of people that they were working with. They had never maybe spent time with people with intellectual disabilities before, and they definitely had some judgement about those people before they spent time with them. Some of them really enjoyed it and it changed their views. The second Follow-up we both went to, but Adam led. We went to Dalby and then we took them to the Bunya Mountains (so we took them out of community). We only got five on the second follow-up. Unfortunately at some point between the Expedition and that Follow-up, one of the boys had been spreading rumours about one of the girls around the school. So we got to the Follow-up with some pretty major issues in the group, which I’m not sure how you can deal with that, really. We were working pretty hard to try and get the team working as a team again. That was pretty hard. It felt like we were pushing up hill to try and make it work. It was a bit of a struggle. The first day was a real struggle. We got them to do a little bit of solo time - or not solo time, but one-on-one interviews, but they were all spaced out. I had really positive individual conversations with three of the participants about what changes they’d made, and gave them a bit of support in terms of where they can go from here and what they can do to keep up the momentum with the change that they want to make. I did that with the behavioural support teacher. I think that was really positive. That was probably the most positive part of the
Follow-up for me. The following day the kids organised an afternoon tea for their parents (or Grandparents) at the PCYC. I had put together a slideshow in my own time (there’s not really any budget for it, so I spent about five hours of my own time making a slideshow for them). And the kids put together an afternoon tea. I got them to write stories for themselves about their time on Catalyst, what it meant to them, what the highlights were, and how they felt it impacted them. Initially I had them write it for themselves, and then I said these stories are really good (I think I had read one of them), and I said do you guys want to share these with your parents at the graduation? They decided that they would each read out their story at the graduation. The parents arrived, had some afternoon tea, we did the slideshow, the kids each read out a story - and then we presented them with certificates. That was a really positive end to the program as well. The stories were really good. I actually took the stories - I asked each kid if I could take the story, photocopied them, and did something that we learnt in the narrative therapy course - put them into a collective document and then changed it so it was from the group’s perspective. (Rather than “I did this” it was “we”). So I created this group document that I’ve sent to them. I asked the teacher to print it out for them and make it look nice - I’m not sure if he’s done that, I hope he has. They gave me permission to share that with people. That was a pretty positive end for them - sharing those stories.

I’ve tried to contact Brad [at the school]. He’s really difficult to contact, He was always difficult to contact, but once the program ended and he knew that not contacting me back wouldn’t jeopardise the program, he hasn’t contacted me. That’s been difficult. I’ve had some contact with Mick from the PCYC, but he’s been on leave. He did offer that if the kids at any time wanted to get their group back together and come to him and say “we want to do this”, he’ll find a way to make it happen - whatever it is (or help them make it happen). He’s got an “open door” policy for anyone that he’s worked with on the Catalyst program. I think some of the girls - maybe all of the girls - he’s given a gym membership to because the girls expressed interest in it and last I heard they were going to the gym at the PCYC. Even after the follow-up (because we did the follow-up at the PCYC) the girls went and got changed and went to the gym. I suspect that at some point if one of the girls continues to be involved with the PCYC - or around the PCYC - she may end up on the youth management team, and may end up on a state youth leadership program (that’s definitely a conversation that we’ve had). That’ll depend on if she chooses to stay around or not.

Program outcomes

For the girls, there’s been a definite change in their self confidence and their perception of having some power over their lives, and being able to make changes - or, live their life in a way that they want to, and achieve things. That’s been big for the girls. Definitely for one of the boys - realising that he’s not the person that he wants to be. He had a major breakthrough that he’s not the person that he wants to be. And he understands how this impacts him and on his Mum as well. And on his relationship with Mum - which is not long term. That was a pretty major breakthrough for him - that there are changes that he can make to improve his own life, and also improve, what’s left of his relationship with his Mum. I think one of the other boys has started to understand that the way that he is around people is annoying; he was never able to see that his behaviour is what caused people to treat him the way that they treat him. He always blamed it on somebody else - “They’re treating me like this because they’re horrible”. He doesn’t deserve to get treated the way he does, but he is incredibly difficult to be around. Increasing his awareness that he does actually contribute to how he’s then treated and the fact that he’s bullied has maybe been a positive for him. The third boy I haven’t seen since the Expedition, so it’s hard to say how things might have changed for him. I spoke to him during the Expedition. When he was tying packs onto the ute, I managed to get him away from the group, and I told him that he has a massive amount of power in a group. Which he does - he’s a really good leader. I said to him, “You’ve got a lot of power in a group setting - when you speak, people listen to you”; and I said to him “It’s your choice what you want to do with that - you can either be a really strong leader in your school and in your community, and you can be a really positive influence on people; or you can go the other way, and you can choose to do the wrong thing and have people follow you down that path” - and that was something that he definitely sees and understands. Hopefully he can start thinking about being a positive role model and a positive leader because he’s got an amazing potential to do that but needs to make some better choices. Hopefully we helped him do that.
For this group, there were times when it became really clear to them that their behaviour impacts on everybody in the group. There were a few situations where we had some pretty major storming issues at times. People didn’t hold back with how they were being affected by what was going on in the group. That gave people the chance to understand how they impact on others and also start thinking about how the behaviour of everyone impacts on them as well.

[In terms of physical health], we have three gym memberships out of it. For one of the girls, or a couple of the girls in particular, there were some pretty unhealthy lifestyle choices being made. That became clearer to them on the program. The biggest change would be the fact that they’ve got the opportunity to be involved with the PCYC gym now. One of the boys spent nine days away from drugs - that would be a positive for him.

One of the participants on Lead-in who was involved in the sniffing went and got a referral and also now has a connection with Mick at the PCYC. To me, that is a positive outcome, even though he didn’t make it onto the Expedition.

[In terms of mental health], for some of the girls there were some pretty negative thoughts going on for them. One of the girls had some really negative thoughts about herself - really low self-esteem. That has changed for her. Another has the issue where she’s labelled as the slut of the school. And the reason for that is that she’s trying to boost her self-esteem through actions that maybe are not that desirable. I had a very big discussion with her on the Follow-up about that stuff, and she’s definitely started to think about it since then, so maybe that’s positive for her. I think one of the boys definitely had some major breakthroughs for himself. He’s gone from being angry at the lack of control he has over things to being able to accept that - or being able to see that that’s not how he needs to be. And being able to make changes - move to the “good path” - as he calls it. The others, it’s hard to say. I don’t think there’s any major outcomes for two of the boys off this program. One of them maybe occasionally has become more aware of what he does and how that impacts on others.

From what they said at the Follow-up, two of the participants have made changes in their home life. One of the boys told me that his Mum said something like “I’m going to call sergeant Mick and ask him what he’s done with my son, because this guy’s much better” or something like that! One of the girls always had a pretty strong relationship with Mum, but I know Mum struggled with some of her daughter’s choices. Once her daughter came back and started talking about some positive changes that she wanted to make, that strengthened her relationship with Mum. For the others I’m not sure about changes in home and school life.

One of the boys has not been to school since the program. He didn’t go to school before the program, but it didn’t increase him going to school. At the follow-up, Brad, the teacher, told that somebody had not wagged school since the program. For most of these guys attendance wasn’t really an issue. Academically (other than two of the boys) they are doing okay. It was more the behaviour in the classroom and outside of the classroom. One of the boys told me that he hadn’t been in trouble. He’d started to manage his anger a little bit since the program. One of the girls was telling me she has the issue at school where she gets called a slut and she punches someone - that’s her big issue. She was talking to me about having strategies to deal with that. She was telling me that she had started to put strategies in place. That was at the Follow-up. Whether she has succeeded I’m not sure, but she’s definitely thinking about it.

How about how did the program affect participants’ outlook about their future?

[In terms of outlook about their future], two of the participants discovered that they have a lot of leadership potential. And for the girl that means that she can do her own thing - she can be a leader in her own life and not have to follow others. She’s realised that she’s actually got a lot of potential there to do what she wants to do - not just follow others. The boy knows that he is a leader, and he has given some thought to the fact
that he can do what he wants to do with that. He has definitely spoken a lot about moving from the bad path to the good path, and what that means for him.

Staffing

The combination of staff on this program was probably the best combination I could think of. Having the branch manager involved - if they’re a dedicated branch manager like Mick is - means that there is a link to the community. And that there is an extra support there for kids outside of the school setting. Not all branch managers are like Mick, so I wouldn’t say that that means that there should always be a branch manager involved. Having Brad (the behavioural support teacher) was a real positive as well. He’s already working with these kids, so he knows the kids and he is able to have continued contact with them at school. That’s a real positive as well. The staffing combination was good. I think if you have a classroom teacher - unless the school gives that teacher a space to be able to spend time with the kids before and after the program - it’s not going to be as effective. And most schools won’t do that; they don’t have the money to do that. The teachers don’t have the time. But Brad could fairly easily do this as part of his role. It doesn’t necessarily need to be a behavioural support teacher, but anyone who’s in that support role - not a classroom teaching role - like a chaplain (depending on the chaplain), or some other kind of support role. Counsellor. That was good.

Profiling

Profiling always seems to be an issue. These guys did it fairly well. Even the fellow that got kicked off the program for drug use was profiled well. But the two fellows that had some intellectual stuff going on made it really hard. They couldn’t contribute to group discussions and group reflection - everything with them had to be individual. And even then it was a challenge to have them reflect. So they probably weren’t suited to this kind of program. There needs to be some level of ability to reflect, and those guys couldn’t do it. But profiling overall was pretty good for this program. That comes from Mick having done it several times, and also me talking to Brad about what we needed in terms of participants. I would definitely change the fact that Brad left the program on the second last day.

Facilitation style

I try and guide things maybe a lot more than others would. Adam and I working together was pretty interesting because we have a different way of doing things. Once I had worked with Adam for a few days on this program, and he had gotten comfortable with the program, he took over a bit with his style. And because it was so different to mine, and I’m inclined to doubt my ability at times, that’s what contributed to the switch of leadership of the programs as well. At some point there was a definite switch, and he became the lead facilitator. We probably did things his way a little bit more than my way.

I feel like I don’t plan. I can plan the program and logistics, but in terms of reflection and facilitation, I definitely don’t plan it. I go with what I feel will work at the time which makes it hard for people to work with me, in some ways. I’ll suddenly get a feel for what I think the group needs, and that’s what I’ll do.
Involvement in the Spinnifex Bornhoffen Catalyst program

It’s one of the requirements of my job that we need to run or be involved in two Catalyst programs per year. Spinnifex Catalyst was my primary Catalyst that I contacted and they chose to be part of Catalyst - they decided to consent to that. That’s why we went ahead and worked with them.

Mike, the coordinator at Bornhoffen, did some research on the different schools and colleges around Queensland, and he looked for schools that had the lowest marks in schools over Queensland, or had other issues. Spinnifex specifically - and Mt Isa - had one of the highest youth suicide rates in Queensland. That’s why they were chosen to work with.

We sent a selection profile to the school, and information about the Catalyst program that had key areas for the school to look at and to identify whether the kids met those areas. Then 15 students were selected and we narrowed it down to 10. Quite often kids will pull out of the program, so having that 15 allows for other kids to be put in those places. But once they come to the Lead-in, we don’t put extra kids into the program if they don’t do the Lead-in. They need to do the whole process.

The key things for me - that I recommended to the school - was the willingness of the kids to be part of the program. If they wanted to give the program a go, and also whether they had a willingness to work on themselves. That was the key criteria for me. Catalyst is about making positive change (or making change) in your life, so if they were willing to try to change things, then they were the kids we wanted here. Whereas if the behaviour that they were displaying and things; they thought that that was okay, or they didn’t think that it needed to change at school then I suggested to the teachers to opt for kids who could identify that their behaviour was at least getting them into trouble, and maybe there could be something that could be done to change that.

Spinnifex / Mt Isa background

Some of the participants come from single parents homes, some have relationship issues in their lives, some of them live away from their parents completely and live with carers, some of the kids come from quite rural parts of Queensland and they live on site and on campus at the school.

The main opportunity is that they start to think about themselves. And they start to think about the behaviours and the things that are going on for them in their lives. And then that stuff’s awakened in them. We don’t expect to have amazing back-flip results from every single kid - but we expect them to start to identify that stuff, and then it’s about a beginning process. And then when they leave Catalyst they can then choose if they are going to do something about those behaviours or not.

Program experience

All 10 kids are still here, that’s a success for us. We sometimes have kids opt out of the program, or leave part way through. This Catalyst we have all 10 still here, so that’s a success. Every single kid who’s here has definitely thought about things that are going on for them - and thought about behaviours and stuff at home. This group is a bit younger - some of these kids are 13 - usually we would have 14/15 years olds. And some of them have just turned 14. So the maturity level of some of the kids isn’t as high - so that willingness to speak about what’s going on, and share in front of other people - is less than other groups that I’ve worked with.
These guys come from Mt Isa, one of the hottest places in Queensland. So the environmental factors have been a hardship for these guys. The first day at Binna Burra - the cold weather, and then when it’s been windy - are extra things that have added a bit of value. Even though it might have been initially a negative response, going through those hardships have added and helped to the resilience building of the participants.

There hasn’t been anything negative from the participant side or the partnering side. The only thing that’s been a struggle for me is my budget and my flexibility, with what I have to work with. Working with Mt Isa requires me to fly there and back - so having that added in chews up the budget pretty quick.

There’s nothing major that hasn’t worked well. It’s just their (some) of the participants willingness to engage in certain parts of the program. They’ve chosen to opt out of that - which is the opposite of what we want, but we don’t make people do anything. We try to encourage and support people to participate in everything and give 100%. With the working agreement with these guys - some of the stuff they’ve chosen to say they want as guidelines for them as a group - they’ve broken that a few times. And that trust building in the whole group is partly lost because they don’t follow through with what they’ve originally come up with.

**Modifications to the program**

The first day they arrive and stay the night at Bornhoffen and then the actual first day of the program (once they’ve done trust, and packed up and got everything organised) they’re meant to walk from Bornhoffen to Binna Burra. I changed that because of (during the Lead-in) gauging the physical capabilities of the kids - coming from an extremely flat area in Mt Isa, and also have never carried backpacks, and the young age of the kids - I chose to have the guys bus to Binna Burra rather than hiking. That’s partly viewing these guys, and from past experience of taking guys who were 13/14 up there, and knowing that the result isn’t always the best. It’s great if they achieve it, but if you’re hiking, and it’s hiking in the dark and at night time, then it’s not the desired - it’s not what we’re after.

We adjusted a few other things, like the days that things run, but other than cutting out that walk, everything that’s in the program has been run, just not at the exact time that it had been put in. One day we came off abseiling and caving, and we ran later because the group process (the group was still resolving, and getting over a large group process storm and coming together). And then once they had worked out the group process storm we started later, so that meant we finished later, and then that evening we didn’t have a solo time for example. Then the following day we added in one-on-one’s and solo with the guys.

**Lead-in**

Having Lake Moondarra close to Mt Isa is really great - it’s an easy, accessible site for us. For these guys, coming from Mt Isa and having that lake so close, and that’s their backyard. Having the Lead-in in their own town was a difficult thing, because there’s always “Oh, well we’re just here, why should we stay? We could just go home.” That was a difficulty. Being able to take the Lead-in away from where the participants are from would make it a lot easier to keep them on track.

The lead-in is just a stage for us to gauge the kids. And then it’s also for them to gauge each other. They see each other probably behaving in different ways (that they haven’t noticed before) from school. People have the opportunity to interact with people who may have been a bully, or someone they wouldn’t have spoken to at school. It’s an ability for both us (the teachers/facilitators) and students to see each other in a different light.

The Lead-in also identifies the social challenges, we speak to the young people about that as well and see how they go with that.

**Expedition**
The high-adventure stuff has been a real highlight for a lot of the guys. Being able to overcome some challenges. There’s a few participants who opted out of the abseil in the Lead-in. They came to the cliff and had a look but they didn’t go any further. Whereas on the Expedition, every single person descended a cliff in some way with a rope. Then when we did the flying fox, 9 of the 10 participants were willing to give the flying fox a go. Whereas earlier in the Lead-in, that wouldn’t have happened.

Being around the fire at night time and reflecting on past experience has been positive for these guys. And being able to share adventures (and the stories that come from those adventures) with each other has been positive as well.

Follow-up

The Follow-up will be in about a month’s time. It’s important to bring the group back together and to recap on what they learnt from the Expedition. And whether they are choosing to make positive change, or whether they are reverting back to their own ways. When you have that positive group environment and you can bring them back together - then they have a willingness to share and reconnect - then we can keep a positive eye on what’s going on for them. Between now and the Follow-up, I’ve been trying to organise that the Mt Isa staff have a couple of catch-up sessions with the guys.

Program effects

Every single participant has probably learned that they are capable of doing things they weren’t previously aware of. It’s helped quite a few of them who may struggle socially, connecting with other people. They have a group of people around them who are supporting them, and they’ve become a group. They’ve been given the ability to communicate and speak with others who usually they wouldn’t. And they’ve been made aware that if they have social things that they would struggle with - other people in the group have shared that with them. They’re actually taking that feedback on board, whereas at home maybe they would be told that and then that would lead to - rather than thinking “what could I do about that behaviour” - it would lead to maybe a punch up or something like that, wouldn’t have been responded to as well. That’s definitely positive, a willingness for them to push themselves as well, and with the high-adventure stuff, giving that a go is something that at the beginning of the program some of them wouldn’t have done that. Having that drive, or, something changed in them - they’ve had a click - “Okay, I want to push myself, I want to give this a go.” Realising that they can be self-sustained and survive for nine days carrying everything on their back from tents, stoves, clothing, sleeping equipment, food - everything they need - is a pretty cool concept as well.

There’s definitely development of self, development of how you interact with others. Like self-awareness, and social-awareness - that’s definitely improved. Some of the guys’ physical ability to look after themselves, probably improved. A lot of these guys might not have ever cooked before, or had to be self-reliant and dependent.

I think the program will have a positive impact back at school. By doing this program, some of these guys might be able to step outside of their own shoes and look at stuff from another person’s point of view. Maybe not all of them, but I think being able to be empathetic towards others is a skill that they’ve gained here - maybe they can take that back and use it.

The future outlook is probably mostly positive for 90% of the guys. For some of them, it’s brought up issues that are going on at home or at school that might not be so positive. But we’re trying to give the guys the strength or understanding - and the tools - to be able to deal with these issues. And then to go home and to apply that when they get home. Doing this whole program gives them the ability to have a positive outlook when they go home and to use what they’ve learnt to apply to their home life.
One participant has a 10 month old son. The staff on the program are aware of that. But other than one other participant, that’s a secret to the other participants. And it’s not something that she - at this stage - is willing to discuss with myself, or a couple of other staff members. One of the staff members has spoken to her about that, and she is okay to talk about that. Her willingness to push herself has just blown me away. Being able to carry her pack (one of the heavier packs out of all of the kids in the group) will definitely give her the skills to persevere and to strive to achieve things in life. By going through this program, that will definitely impact her - and potentially also impact her child because she’s been given these skills. She was one of the participants during the Lead-in who did abseil but it took her three attempts to get her over the edge. Coming back for the Expedition, she was the first female participant to do the 30 metre abseil. And she was also one of the first to do the flying fox as well.

One of her goals is to be a police officer. The connection with PCYC staff here on the program means that when she goes back to Mt Isa, she will be able to be supported by Jo, the youth worker from Mt Isa. And then also speak to the sergeant who was the branch manager of the PCYC, and hopefully they can organise and point her in the right direction to achieving that goal of possibly becoming a police officer later on in her life.

Recommendations

I’m pretty happy with this program layout and how it goes. The program used to only be six days long, so extending it to the nine is definitely a big improvement. Having that extra time, and, input on the lives of the young people is very valuable. We have a bit of flexibility, as the lead facilitator, that we can alter the program slightly, if we need to, to meet the needs of the groups. If it means having to do extra walking, or extra physical things, or putting more high-adventure in there - that’s stuff that we can do. Or if it’s just more one-on-one chats with the kids, or, more time spent doing debriefing with them, or personal talks, there’s a bit of flexibility there. I’m pretty content with how the program’s set up at the moment. We have everything that we need. If I had a bigger budget that would make things a lot easier and would probably save a lot of time. We have enough time but we are also under the pump with other programs and other things that are on. That’s a budget implication or it’s a staff thing. If we had more staff or more budget that would be easier. But we do make it happen. And I think we do a very good job at getting it done. But with the time sometimes, things don’t always run like clockwork.

The leadership team on the program worked really well. It would usually be four people on the program - two PCYC facilitators and two people from the local community that the participants are from whether that’s PCYC staff, or a teacher from their community, or two teachers, or chaplain, or police officer. The dynamic amongst the staff for this program has been in certain ways different - participants are able to relate to different people. So having the variety of people, and pretty much having a two participant to one staff ratio has been really valuable. So, I could recommend to have an additional staff member on the program, maybe, as something that could be a positive impact. Having a different perspective, like if you have two teachers, that’s fine, but maybe having a youth worker, or a police officer, or someone who comes from a different perspective is helpful. If, maybe a police officer is going to be, “This is a law - this is how it goes.”, whereas a school teacher might approach the program “If this is the school rules, this is what we have to do.” And then as facilitators, we’re pretty open to tailoring the program to the group that’s here, and then, we opt for working agreements so they basically set it up. They set themselves up to succeed, and then everyone else slots in around them.

This is a positive program, and I hope that it continues in the future.
Catalyst facilitator [Adam Nock]

Facilitator’s background
Adam began working at Bornhoffen in 2013, and was given the role of Spinnifex 2013 Catalyst co-facilitator. He was involved in the logistical set up of the Spinnifex Catalyst (e.g. campsite set up, lead-in reflection/expedition planning, etc.).

Spinnifex profiling process
Adam was not involved in the profiling process. The profiling and reports were done by the lead-facilitator. Profiling involves selection criteria, broad selection by teacher (of roughly 50 participants), then narrow teacher/facilitator selection (of 10 participants)

Group background
A lot of the Spinnifex participants have been exposed to bullying (sometimes at home, sometimes at school), or absent parents (whether the parent is entirely absent or the works too much) - so there is a strong need to belong and have friends/support.

Spinnifex program experience
Some individuals took huge leaps and bounds. Participants seemed to take backward steps at times, but forward steps at other times, which is natural in life. For example, one female participant went from being compassionate and leading the group one day, to being completely negative - calling her fellow group members names and telling them they never look after her, she always gives but they never give back - and bringing the group down the next day.

The weather (cold and rainy) had an impact - being from Spinnifex [Mt Isa] it was an extra challenge they had to overcome to bond together. If it was what they were used to (sunny), they wouldn’t have needed to give/receive that extra support. From this they learned more about each other, and learned to trust each other.

The high-adventure activities such as high ropes, flying fox, and abseil meant the participants pushed themselves that little bit further. Participants would be confronted by the difficulty of such activities, believe they didn’t have the ability to complete the activity, and then be so rewarded once they’d made the decision to just do it - they realised that they did have the ability - they conquered their own fears.

The activities at the start of the program (trust games etc.) allowed participants to get to know each other, communicate a lot more than they otherwise would have, unblock communication barriers between staff and students.

The dynamics of this group were positive - especially for certain individuals. For example, one male participant was completely “anti-girls” at the beginning of the program. By the end of the program he was able to have fun and talk with the female participants.

Some facilitator role-modelling needed improvement. For example, at times (e.g., heat of moment) facilitators would swear at participants/call them names. This only reinforced something that they were trying to get participants to work on changing.

More journal time would have been beneficial - to get out of a group dynamic and reconnect with the individual self in order to reflect on thoughts and feelings. Being in a group setting for nine days straight can generate frustration etc., and reflective activities can help participants release/deal with such things.

Modifications made to the program
The facilitator made the decision to take out major hiking on the first day. This decision was based on judgement (the physical capabilities, personal behaviours, and group dynamics of Spinnifex were not suited) compared with past programs (some past programs participants didn’t arrive on camp site until 8:30pm).

Usually the high ropes activity is scheduled the day before the abseiling activity. The reason for this order is that the high ropes “ramp” participants up to the abseil. The order of these activities was switched by the Spinnifex facilitators to reduce a lot of walking and back/forth carrying of gear (again because of the nature of the group).

The Spinnifex group did not end up doing the high ropes activity. On the day it was scheduled, they only did the flying fox. This appeared to be due to the nature of the group (they took longer than average to complete the flying fox and the hiking between activities), however potentially it was also a planning error.

Lead-in

The co-facilitator reported that the Lead-in went extremely well. There were a lot of trust and team-building activities that, in conjunction with microstorms/microprocesses and constant changing up of teams (to avoid formation cliques and to encourage formation of a functioning whole), acted as a rapport-building framework for staff and students. Overall, there weren’t many things in the Lead-in that needed changing.

Expedition

The decisions to make the changes to the Expedition were made based on benefit-risk (what were the benefits vs. the risks of going ahead with the standing plan).

The co-facilitator believed the Expedition went well overall - that positive movements had occurred (even if to a small degree that won’t be noticeable until the future). Some participants learned things about themselves/how to work within a team/the ability to recognise and remove oneself from a negative environment (incl. people) to place oneself in a positive setting to improve one’s life.

Recommendations

Although the program went well overall, there are things that could have been done differently. With five total staff, everyone’s got their own ideas that you need to work in with. Adam would have placed more emphasis on journals, so they could take this home with them, provide less down time (e.g., get up earlier and have solo time rather than sleep-in) because it became boring for some students who then became disruptive. Planning for more constructive time rather than dealing with student responses to a lack of activity. On the flying fox day, they could have arrived earlier to also do the Leap of Faith or Giant Ladder (there was supposed to be two activities on that day but it didn’t happen due to time constraints).

The two facilitators and three program support staff worked well together to share responsibility. There was also excellent support from the local PCYC to help raise funds for participants’ travel.

The lead instructor did most of the planning – but if there was an extra half-day to co-plan with the co-instructor prior to the program, this would have been beneficial to help the facilitators communicate how to work together more effectively prior to the program and to plan the program together.

For the Follow-up, it is important to follow-up on how they are going at school and to understand why they were selected for the program now that they’ve had time to reflect on the program.

Program outcomes
For some participants, the outcomes are more obvious than for others. Being able to lead in a different manner. One participant was getting frustrated with no-one listening to him, but with some feedback and coaching he was able to work on how he talked to other students which improved his social standing in the group and he became a part of the team and was listened to and respected more. One of the smallest boys in the group was able to hold up the whole group in a push-up position in one of the initiatives which showed that you if you try you might be able to do what you think you can’t – if you have the guts, some of them have realised, then you will be able to do things.

Regarding social development, it has been a roller-coaster for some of these kids. The cliques have been very interesting, with several close pairs, but these evolved and changed during the Expedition. There was less abusive social strategies used when participants become frustrated. Participants acquired tools to give feedback to help overcome differences, so communication skills improved.

Self-confidence has improved as indicated by complaining that “I can’t” dropping to a minimum. They’re self-confidence has gone up because they’ll give hard things a go.

In terms of mental health, one of the participants said that her goal is get rid of her depression which meant moving away from a lot of negative influences in her life. For the others, dealing with bullies and being put down and realising that they have the capacity to mentally block it out or deal with the situation in other ways. In terms of emotional regulation, the participants are pulled up everyday by staff on how they are reacting to things. Out here, you have to deal with the situation, so you become more aware of how you react. For example, one participant has acknowledged that he has an anger problem, but he wants to become a boxer but he has been getting into fights and has become aware that he needs to develop greater control over his anger.

In terms of behavioural conduct, some have realised that they don’t like getting bullied and become aware that they’re own behaviours were effecting others in this way. Working within a team, having to work together and not just be on your own. Learning how to accept help even if you don’t think you need it.

In terms of school attendance, some students realise that to achieve their goals in life they need to attend and achieve at school, which has been a positive influence on them.

In terms of participants’ outlook on the future, the program has effected participants positively by getting them to reflect on their goals and dreams, but also becoming more aware of the barriers and that they can overcome them.

In the debrief, participants were asked to set a goal, some were to finish school, become a carpenter, bull-rider, boxer. Participants were also asked about relationships; one participant wanted to build a better relationship with her Mum.

In terms of program worthwhileness, for one of the male participants it has been a positive overall. At first he wasn’t socially accepted, but now is he accepted and has a lot more social confidence. His biggest improvements have been social but also confidence. For another male participant, the program has been positive. This participant verbalises that he doesn’t want to be here, but at other times he has had very positive reactions to activities. In his more positive moods, he has realised more about how he behaviours towards and treats others. For one of the girls, she has gone from not being able to share much about herself, to be being to share and positively influence others. She has gone from not doing the abseil on the Lead-in to completing the 30m abseil on the Expedition and the flying fox.

**Recommendations**
Adam prefers longer programs. Catalyst is 15 days, but is split up, which leads to losing some participants before the Expedition, leading to say six to eight participants on the Expedition, which means that there are unfilled spots. Some effective programs don’t have a Lead-in.

In terms of what could be improved, it depends on the group whether to emphasise team-building first, then high adventure or vice-versa. For facilitators, more time to come up with a more detailed, structured plan would be helpful. The more experience you have, the more tools you’ll have to deal with different situations. Additional training such as psychology, counselling, youth at risk work, etc. could be helpful especially to deal with the more difficult participants.

The lead facilitator has appropriate flexibility to adapt the program design and activities to the group needs. For example, there are some differences in opinions amongst instructions about the first day hike (some saying it takes 6 hours and others say 10 hours).

In terms of what could be improved, having a big negative voice in the group has a big influence on the group. It may have affected the program positively for this participant to leave. This could have been dealt with differently.
Chaplain [Spinnifex (Mt Isa)]

Background to the program

The chaplain was unsure exactly how the school got involved. He thought that perhaps the sergeant of the PCYC approached Spinnifex (considering she had been involved in two Cloncurry Catalyst programs in the past, and had spoken of how she thought it would be a good idea to run a joint Spinnifex/Cloncurry Catalyst program).

The school chaplain started at the end in term four of the school year prior to the Spinnifex 2013 Catalyst program. He became involved with the program on an individual level after the year 9 coordinator approached him.

As the chaplain was externally employed, he had limited involvement with the pre-program work (the school wanted the pre-program work to be done by one of their own staff members). One aspect that did involve him was finalising the selection of youth participants. After all expression of interest had been received, he and the teacher involved in Spinnifex Catalyst sat down and sifted through the potential candidates in order to determine the most suitable group.

To select the participants, they looked at both the Bornhoffen website and the information/criteria the sergeant of the PCYC provided them with. The teacher emailed this criteria to the year 9 teachers so they could nominate suitable students. The entire year 9 body was also spoken to, to provide opportunity for self-nomination. If a student who had self-nominated was also nominated by a teacher, the school teacher and the chaplain took this as a good indication that they were a viable candidate. One of the main things they looked for was a willingness to change.

The chaplain did not know any of the participants personally prior to actually going on the program, however after going on the Lead-in with them (i.e. witnessing the group dynamic + learning about individual backgrounds), the main learning needs/opportunities he saw for this group were to work together as a group, take on other people’s opinions, handle adversity “properly”, develop communication skills, develop as individuals, overcome some of the self-beliefs they held, mature, grow, and become better citizens.

Spinnifex program experience

The chaplain believed that the program went really well for this group. While 100%, immediate change did not happen, significant changes did occur within participants and their lives. These changes were noticeable to both parents and Catalyst staff.

The specific breakthroughs that participants had were transformation of some self-beliefs that were held before coming into the program (i.e. what participants believed they could achieve/what they believed they could endure), improved ability to accept other people’s views (through having to work with other people), improved ability to identify things that are not “right” (socially unacceptable) in their lives, and a desire to change these things (the structure of the program constantly reminded participants about what is not socially acceptable and provided an environment in which participants could recognise and work toward changing such things).

These changes transpired largely due to the participants being taken out of their normal environments (i.e., home and school life where they were typically told the ground rules and given directions about what to do and how to do it), and placed in an environment in which they were given group goals that they had to reach amongst themselves, and individual goals that they had to reach on their own. In other words they were given a greater level of control and subsequent power. It was frustrating for staff to watch participants make
decisions that were not efficient/ideal, but it gave them opportunity to look at how responsibility works and that with it comes consequences for actions.

While the program design and staff members were there to facilitate and enable change, how much participants got out of the program depended upon what they put in. Two or three Spinnifex participants chose against engaging and investing their energy or emotions into the program, meaning that they didn’t achieve the best/desired outcomes. This was a failure of attitude rather than a failure of the program – attributable to “really non-compliant” participant personalities and natures. These few participants could have done better - although this was a judgemental call.

Overall, the Spinnifex Catalyst worked quite well for everyone - it gave everyone an opportunity to stretch and challenge themselves, and think about their lives; goals; and futures.

**Modifications made to the program**

The initial lead-in hike was 23km over rugged terrain - this got changed to a 7km hike over gentler terrain to the same camping site. This was a smart decision - the 23km hike would have been a massive challenge, as the group struggled to meet even the 7km target. All the activities were dependent on weather and timing. On the flying fox day, the group was also meant to do another adventure activity, but the team agreed to have more down-time.

**Lead-in**

The Lead-in is really critical for the Catalyst facilitators to meet the team and the students to meet as a team to get to know each other and bond, and it gave an opportunity for the staff to meet with the facilitators, to get a hand on how things are going to go over the Expedition. We did trust and team building exercises and outdoor activities (such as abseiling and canoeing) to get an idea of how they would go in a physical environment and working as a team.

**Expedition**

The couple of days of the Expedition were spent at base at Bornhoffen, laying down the ground rules, getting used to being away from home, different climate and environment, doing training and preparation for being out bush, and then a walk on the first day to get everyone a bit tired and challenged, and then doing activities that challenged them and put them in a different environment, and learning how to work together. There were challenges getting the team to work as a whole. Sometimes not everyone wanted to participant in group activities or wanted to pull out and go home. It was up to the group and the students to make decisions on whether they really wanted to continue and how that would happen. By Day 8 there still all 10 participants. It has been challenging for the staff as well. All of the participants have pushed themselves more than they thought they were capable of. They might realise it right now, but going away from this they may realise that they can achieve things that they didn’t think they are capable of.

**Program outcomes**

Overall, the program has been successful. The participants were suitable young people for the aims and outcomes the program is designed to achieve. They’ve had opportunities to do activities that would stretched them and they’ve had adequate opportunities to reflect on the activities they’ve done, the way they’ve done it, how things have happened, their own performance, their lives, their futures, their interactions with other people, and their place in society. They’ve all come through everything, they’ve done some amazing things, they’ve been scared, they’ve overcome fear, they’ve grown as a group, they don’t always agree with each, they don’t always get along, but all in all, it has gone pretty well.

**Follow-up**
Regarding the Follow-up, everyone’s ready to go home and have a shower. At the moment, they’ve had enough of the bush, but they’ve formed quite a good little unit and when they get back together and reflect on what they’ve done here, the good times, the bad times, the challenges, the shared experiences, they’ll be in a better mood and have more energy and with a bit of time to reflect on the goals they’ve set for themselves they will hopefully be able to make a connection between the challenges and the personal development they’ve gone through and what’s occurred on this course and translate that into their lives, their school, and their family and get into their minds that they can do this sort of stuff in their own lives all the time as well.

The chaplain has been talking to the teacher and PCYC staff member about ways to continue connecting with participants and support each other. A couple of the young people want to connect with the PCYC and we’re thinking of ways to help connect participants with potential job opportunities.

Program outcomes

The program has had a positive effect on the personal development of all participants in regard to having an outlook on the world outside of themselves. There’s been a lot of whingeing about no showers and no mobile coverage. That might be the talk while they’re here, but they’ve all shown signs that they’ve been able to look at their attitude and their behaviour in a number of different areas and recognise deficiencies, that they can make improvements and ways that they can make improvements.

In regard to their physical health, spending nine days out of doors doing physical activities will do them a world of good. A number of participants have said that they want to find other ways of dealing with conflict instead of fighting/violence. There’s a couple of participants who are here for depression or personal self-worth issues. There are two girls, in particular, who have shown signs of seeing themselves as having more value and seem a little brighter on the inside, and they have goals for the future that they want to work towards personally after the course. There’s one girl who suffers from depression and has been self-harming and the chaplain has talked to her about taking some steps to follow-up after the course to find ways of dealing with these issues – she’s indicated that she wants to change that. This course has been an opportunity and a venue where they can feel free to talk about those things with people and share about them, think about them, and decide that they want to overcome them. That’s been a real positive.

Some of the participants haven’t given any indication that they have a different outlook in the future (a couple) whereas the other seven or eight have shown signs of improved outlook in the future.

Getting students away from their friends, family, and their normal routine gives them the opportunity to realise that the way they’ve always thought about life may not be the best way to do things. Being away from families has been a challenge. With peer pressure and social networks they are expected to act a certain way around their friends and here they have to be themselves, they have to own their own behaviour and own their consequences.

For one participant from a rural town, he has a history of riding horses and bull riding. He comes from a small community and he’s come to town and staying in residential at the school where he doesn’t his usual outlets and he’s got into fights etc. The program has got him back into the outdoors and be with people who will challenge his behaviour and encourage him to think about things. He has been really challenged and he has displayed behaviour that staff haven’t really appreciated, but have talked to him about, and he’s taken steps to improve that. He can look at this behaviour and understand why it is wrong. He has said that he wants to take steps to improve his behaviour and engage more at school, so it had been positive for him.

The chaplain doesn’t have any specific suggestions about what could be improved.
The Catalyst staff have worked really well (Jai and Adam) with the participants and support staff. We’ve all got different experiences and skills that we bring to this group. At different times when there might be behavioural problems or different group dynamics that need improving, there’s different times when each one of us can have an input, there’s different students that each one of us has been able to develop a rapport with. It has worked really well with the staff in this specific environment that every one of the participants has had someone that they can identify with, talk to, share about, and challenge them. It is an environment that can be pretty stressful on leaders and we can tag-team when it becomes too much and they need a bit of space and the others can take over. It helps for leaders to maintain composure whereas possibly young people might have had reactions from adults that are more emotional and not been quite so helpful for them, but this way we’ve been able to stay on top of our emotions and think about what we’re doing and why we’re doing and being really strategic and that’s been really key over the last nine days.
PCYC youth worker [Spinnifex (Mt Isa)]

Background to the program

The PCYC Mt Isa manager put in an application to be part of the Catalyst program but she was busy so couldn’t come on the program, sending the youth worker instead. The youth worker didn’t know any of the children prior to the program (the school had this information). She had access to basic information about the participants’ background. They all have different issues (bullying victims, those who are bullying, some not fitting in). There are quite a range of issues. She wasn’t involved in selecting the participants. The first time she met the participants was on the Lead-in, because she doesn’t have anything to do with the participants at school.

Prior to the program she was involved in some of the logistics for the program (e.g., bus to pick up participants). She had a couple of meetings with the school about airfares (the PCYC branch helped with some funding).

Her understanding of the participant needs and goals were to guide them and help them to find better ways to handle situations and improve self-confidence and self esteem.

Program experience

The program has worked well. There have been a lot of issues along the way but there have also been a lot of kids opening up (some more than others), some kids crying, some kids yelling, but it is all part of it. She hopes to be more involved with Catalyst programs in future.

The instructors are an important ingredient, they’ve got a program to follow, but they’ve got different personalities, as do teachers and the PCYC youth worker too, but they have all got a caring aspect. If you have teachers that don’t see eye-to-eye then it could be a problem. Patience is key; if you don’t have patience, you shouldn’t be doing this job. It is hard to have patience, but these kids are here for a reason (yes, they are annoying, they are pushing the buttons, but that’s why they are here, and the staff need to be adults).

The hardest part for the kids was doing the Solo – they were only asked to be by themselves and be quiet for 15 minutes and it just didn’t happen. You can’t do the Solo any sooner because they haven’t had time to think about stuff. It’s a good idea, but Day 8 being wet and muddy was not good. Maybe it all depends on the kids and the group again. These kids are younger too (only 13 years), so maybe older kids could handle it a bit better.

Modifications made to the program

There used to be a 23km hike, but a lot of that’s coming out the program now because it’s just too hard. The lead facilitator realised that they were young and not that physical.

Lead-in

The Lead-in went well. There was one girl who didn’t want to be there. The kids were really good and had a good go. Highlights included abseiling on Day 3 (they all got out of their comfort zone and had a try). If they had have done that on the first day (two days earlier) a lot of them would not even have attempted to try or stand on the cliff and have a look. Everyone had a try, got up there, had a look, some got all strapped up, took a couple of steps, and then sat back down, but they ended up doing it when they came on the Expedition. It was also valuable for the participants to meet the instructors and for the instructors to get to know the kids a little bit, so the kids aren’t coming away with a complete stranger. They know who is going to be here, whether they like them or not (it has nothing to do with it), but keeping the instructors the same
facilitators between the Lead-in and Expedition provides continuity. It was also helpful for the kids to be together for a few days as a way of getting to know each other before they came away. It is also a chance for participants to decide whether to continue or not. If they can’t handle the Lead-in then they are not going to be able to handle the nine day Expedition, so it is better than just throwing participants in the deep-end.

Expedition

The Expedition went really well. It was really hard, a lot harder than she thought it would be. Some of the challenges are full-on. Today (Day 8) was a challenge because it was raining and mud. The previous day day was an 11km hike, but it was dry. Getting up to Turtle Rock was huge because some people were unfit and their attitudes didn’t help. The abseiling was massive because it was cold, windy and dark and they were coming down a 30m cliff and they all did it (except 3 did a smaller one). The other challenges for these kids are opening up and talking in a group. Some of the kids one-on-one are not a problem, but in the group sessions they get quite defensive, muck around, hang their head, some get loud; its hard to talk in front of people about person stuff. There was physical and emotional challenge every day.

Two of the girls had a hard time in the Lead-in. On the second day of the Expedition, they didn’t realise that it was full-on uphill hiking. Their attitudes let them down. The staff all tried to help them. It was everyone else’s problem. It was hard on the group. The others got on with it. There was another three who were struggling, but they let the staff support and guide them. They were fantastic. The only reason the other girls failed on that day was their attitude. The other girls were struggling just as much but had a better attitude. That changed the group a lot. It continued the next day. During two group process “shins in” and “fish to fry” sessions, the attitudes of these two girls were discussed. The two girls then stormed off. The instructors sat back and let the group decide and they went and discussed with the girls. Because of these issues in the morning, the day ran late and that’s why the abseil was in the dark that night. The group processing time in the morning was great because the staff stepped back and letting the group deal with it; it was the rest of the team saying “hey come on, what are you doing”. There have been issues since, but that was a turning point. The boys didn’t handle it particularly well, but one of the facilitators pulled the boys aside and helped them change the way they talked with the rest of the group. The girls did well because they got those two girls to rejoin the group, apologise, and they made a couple of promises and the two girls did the activities for the rest of the day.

The most valuable activities on the Expedition were the team activities and trying to get the kids to talk and open up. The letter to self was good (at least a couple of kids took it seriously) and then getting it in another two or three of months. A couple of the participants said they have set goals for what they want to do when they get back to Mt Isa. The teamwork was valuable to show the kids that what you do affects a lot of people. This program is trying to teach them that, “there’s 10 of you, so you can do that, but when you do, you’re affecting another 9 people”. Hopefully, when they go back, they’ll say this is not just about me, I’ve got a team here (e.g., family, class).

Follow-up

The Follow-up role is to see how they’re going and to see if the program has made a little headway. You’re not going to change anyone in nine days but hopefully there’s a couple of things in these nine days that these kids have taken in, whether it’s just one thing (hopefully more) that helps these kids to deal with their issues little bit better. These programs are a good idea, but you need follow-up because kids at this age keep needing reinforcement. It is a chance for the lead facilitator to check in and see how they are going. Two of the girls have already asked if they can come and help volunteer at PCYC. Hopefully they can get the group together once a month. It might not work. But it will be up to the group, it will be their choice. Every branch is different. If you put in an application to do the program you need to be prepared to follow-up the kids.

Program outcomes
It all depends on the individual. One of the girls that has had issues from the word go still doesn’t get it. She’s still negative and in denial that she’s got issues. With other kids you can see there’s a little bit of a breakthrough, they have written goals, they might not speak in a group, but in talking with them one-on-one, they’ve set some goals. One individual didn’t want to talk to anyone from the beginning of the Lead-in. She has learnt how to trust people, to let them in, to let people help her.

Their social skills involve them still saying shut-up to each other and going ra-ra. It is a hard one. A couple of the boys are starting to think about others. One was a group leader today and decided to let the group have five minutes to deal with an issue before jumping in and telling them what to do.

The group processing techniques, “shins-in”, “pow-wow”, and “fish to fry” have helped to teach and deal with social issues and develop social skills. They felt safe to say to stuff. Kids that don’t normally have anything to say have felt able to.

None of the physical stuff was an issue for the boys, but the girls have all struggled, but some have complained more about it than others. Some are struggling, but you wouldn’t know about it.

Mental health has been brought it out into the open, but at least they’re not bottling in all in, so we know about it. That’s a starting point. It’s when we don’t know what happening that it’s a problem. This program has got them saying it out loud.

Every one of the participants has had all of their emotions brought out, good and bad. For some of them the program has helped them to handle their emotions. In chatting with some of them, they have thought more about their emotional responses.

The PCYC youth worker hopes the program will impact on participants’ school attendance. It is hard to say until she spends some time with the participants after the program.

For some of them, it is has improved their outlook on the future, for a couple no, for one of them s/he is still in denial. Hopefully some of them in the future can try a bit harder.

Recommendations

The PCYC youth worker didn’t have any recommendations for the program. She hadn’t ever done a program like this before. The instructors were good, caring people. A lot depends on the dynamics of each group.

Other comments

The program was really good. It was tough physically, but not so much emotionally for the youth worker. Most of the kids are here because they have issues, but they’ve all had a go and impressed her. It is a hard program and it does push you out of your comfort zone. 9.9 have given 100%. Even the most difficult participant has tried. This participant got defensive because of the physical challenge (she didn’t know how to handle it) but that might give a strength for working other stuff out.
Teacher [Spinnifex (Mt Isa)]

Background to the program

The deputy principal send an email to staff inviting interest in the program which this female teacher expressed an interested in. An info package from PCYC was received. She liaised with the Year 9 coordinator and the chaplain to identity students who might be suitable. Students in Year 9 were rated against the key selection criteria. She also asked the Year 9 teachers and got their feedback about any students they wanted to nominate. She also spoke to the Year 9 students at an assembly about the program to see if there were any students who wanted to be nominate themselves. From there, there was a list of 40 to 50 students. She then looked up the One School data with the chaplain and narrowed the list down to 15 students with Jai (from PCYC Bornhoffen). There were some last minute changes immediately prior to the program start.

Prior to the Lead-in, she phoned the parents of the 15 students to let them know that their child was on the short-list and to get verbal permission to share some general background information about their child with Bornhoffen. Once there was a list of 10, she phoned the parents again to let them know what was going to happen and held an information session for parents at the school to clarify any question that they parents might have and to clarify what students could and couldn’t bring etc.

For some students, they need self-confidence and perseverance. One female participant had a tendency to throw in the towel when things get hard (e.g., wags class when things get a bit hard) and hopefully she’ll be able to transfer greater perseverance from the program to school. Some participants tend to be followers and need to learn how to stand up for themselves. Some participants needed to learn how to control their emotions.

Program experience

The program has gone quite well. Initially, she unsure about how it was going to work. The program is student-directed rather than adult-directed which works well; participants aren’t used that. In some ways, the emphasis on the team dynamic has worked well, but some participants were challenged by this and needed to learn not to just focus on themselves.

The tent set-up has been challenging, particularly for the girls, in terms of who carried the tents and who was in the tent with who, but this was part of the learning experience.

Showers would be lovely.

The teachers and leaders are just there to make sure the program runs safely and the kids run it themselves is unique and its good.

Lead-in

The Lead-in was really important because on the first day there was nothing extreme done, it was just a whole bunch of little getting to know each games because a lot of the participants knew of each other, but don’t know each other and it was good for the staff to get to know the kids, to get an idea of the group dynamics, how the kids operate together, and whether these kids were going to be a safe risk to take on the Expedition. The first day involved get to know each other games and then lead into more difficult things like a relatively full day of canoeing to get to know how they would handle endurance activities like hiking for seven hours.

Highlights included abseiling; for some participants just getting to the edge was progress. For some of the boys, canoeing was the highlight. One participant had a great deal of satisfaction from holding the entire
group up. Canoeing techniques were a learning curve and abseiling was a learning curve. The first day was about learning about how the kids interact together in a group.

**Expedition**

The Expedition has gone well; it has had its ups and downs. It has been challenging, particularly the hiking.

**Follow-up**

The teacher was keen to see the Follow-up, to see how the “catalyst” has transferred into other areas of their lives. She had been talking with the PCYC youth worker about what other support they can provide.

**Program outcomes**

One of the girls has come a long way personally in terms of dealing with conflict, not playing the victim as much, finding her voice, and connecting with her teacher so that she knows she is available to support her back at school.

For some of the participants they’ve learnt about not just focusing on themselves but that they need to think outside of themselves.

One of the participants has developed a better idea about her strengths. She had a significant realisation about how her behaviour (gossiping) affected others; she apologised and indicated that she had started to realise how much her behaviour affected others.

Another participant was really following another participant and not standing on her own two feet. Now she’s happy to not let others hold her down as much.

There’s been a few tears. For some of the girls it has been about finding that extra strength or courage in themselves. For some of the boys they’ve had to deal with waiting or being patient with others and dealing with their emotional responses.

One of the participants has been very reactive towards things that have annoyed him previously. There were many times during the expedition when he was expected to react but didn’t.

One of the female participants will hopefully transfer her thinking before acting (because it affects others) back to school and home.

For a lot of them, there is hopefully going to be positive change with transferring new awareness about the consequences of their actions and having more confidence in not just following others.

For one of the students who tends to wag classes when things get difficult, she struggled on the Lead-in and Expedition, but she’s learnt to suck it up (e.g., going down a 30m abseil in the rain when she didn’t go near the 10m abseil in the Lead-in) and get the job done. She has hopefully learnt that when things get hard she doesn’t have to give up. Hopefully she can apply this to her school classes as well. With one of the boys who was very reactive towards things that aggravate him, has hopefully been given a few more strategies to make more proactive choices around things that aggravate him.

Some participants hadn’t even really considered their future; in a way they’ve started to think about that. Some of them have said they really want to finish school. One of them expressed an interested in going to university during the Lead-in but there wasn’t much support at home. Being part of this has highlighted to her that if she wants to do that she needs to identify what the barriers are and what she can do about that.
There’s been a lot of challenges in the program, but they’re there because they need to be there because they put the kids in a situation where they have to think outside of themselves or they have to pull that little bit of inner strength that they didn’t know they’ve had in them, so she wouldn’t change anything, she’d keep it as it is.

**Recommendations**

There was a lot of information emailed to the teacher. It’s great to have a lot of information, but sometimes having too much information can be just as difficult as not having enough. She had to sift through all of that and get her head around it so she could relay the correct information about what makes a participant suitable. A one page of pointers for teachers about “this is what you need to do and get” would be more effective than just passing on a whole heap of documentation because her time is tight and she’s had to take it away from other areas.

She would love more of her students to be able to do the program.