



BoysTown

BoysTown is a national not-for-profit organisation that delivers services and programs for marginalised young people and their families in order to improve their quality of life and level of social inclusivity. BoysTown operates in all States and Territories of Australia.

Published by:

BoysTown  
Unit 5 Cordova Street  
Milton QLD 4064  
Australia  
ABN 11 102 379 386  
Telephone: 07 3368 3399  
[www.boystown.com.au](http://www.boystown.com.au)

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## I. Summary

The BoysTown Inala Employment Service Indigenous Mentoring Program (IMP) funded by the Australian Government Department of Employment has now completed its second year of operations with encouraging outcomes for Indigenous young job seekers in the Inala region of Queensland. This report outlines the results of a second phase of a BoysTown funded program evaluation which initially commenced in July 2012. It offers both quantitative and qualitative evidence of the positive impact of Indigenous specific mentoring on not only sustainable job outcomes, but also on a range of psycho-social factors which influence the likelihood of increased job placement and retention.

The BoysTown Indigenous Mentor has focused on a broad model of case management service delivery, with proactive appointments made with Indigenous job seekers, offering significant levels of family relationship building and support where required and engaging with trainers and employers both pre and post placement. It would appear that there has been a focus in this second year on traineeship placements in the Indigenous specific traineeship sector with positive results for some clients.

### **Key Findings:**

Targets for BoysTown Inala Employment Services were set by Key Performance Indicators (KPI) within the Department of Employment Year 2 Deed of Variation. Despite the IMP not achieving all quantitative benchmarks by the time of writing (mid-May 2014), the results of the Inala IMP Year 2 strategy are highly encouraging:

**Key Performance Indicator 1:** *Deliver culturally appropriate mentoring to at least 60 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job seekers (a cumulative figure following a target of at least 30 in Year 1).*

**Met:** A total of 81 clients were commenced into project activities

**Key Performance Indicator 2:** *Eighty percent of total project commencements to be from Streams 3 or 4 (64):*

**91% of target met:** A total of 58 clients commenced were from Streams 3 or 4

**Key Performance Indicator 3:** *Sixty percent of project commencements to achieve an employment placement (48):*

**73% of target met:** A total of 35 clients were placed into employment

**Key Performance Indicator 4:** *Fifty percent of clients placed in employment to achieve a 26 week outcome (17):*

**100% of target expected to be met: 50% of target met at time of writing with a further 50% expected to be met:** A total of 8 clients had achieved 26 week outcomes at the time of writing. A further 8 were on track for 13 week outcomes and are expected to reach 26 weeks.

A fifth Key Performance Indicator was included with the intention of rating the quality of the project delivery with a benchmark of 5 on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 = Excellent and 1= Inadequate.

*It would be the assessment of this evaluator that information collected during the evaluation of the Inala IMP and reported in the following pages will lead to achievement of this rating.*

## **1. Introduction**

In May 2013 BoysTown Strategy and Research reported to the Department of Employment on a formative evaluation conducted on the BoysTown Employment Service Indigenous Mentoring Program (hereafter referred to as the IMP) delivered in Inala, Queensland over the previous 10 months. The evaluation aimed to explore the questions of whether the provision of dedicated intensive and culturally appropriate mentoring support achieved sustained employment outcomes for young Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander job seekers, and what the key drivers might be for this process.

Overall the evaluation's findings were that for a range of reasons the program was unable to achieve sustainable employment outcomes for program clients within the first 10 months of the Inala Indigenous Mentor's employment. This outcome was not unlike the experience of other Employment services seeking to engage Indigenous young people into the job market. A 2012 Australian Government review of Job Services Australia found Indigenous job seekers were 21% less likely to attend initial appointments and 26% less likely to attend engagement appointments than non-Indigenous counterparts when other job seeker characteristics were considered<sup>i</sup>.

Evidence from the Year 1 BoysTown evaluation report aligned with the JSA review in finding that key barriers to complying with JSA attendance, job search activities and with getting or maintaining a work placement included some quite pragmatic issues such as lack of access to reliable transport and telephone services. Addressing these issues were key activities on the part of the Indigenous Mentor in Year 1. As described in the Year 1 evaluation report<sup>ii</sup>, the Indigenous Mentor worked hard to connect with clients through providing practical assistance with the essentials of transport, driving lessons and drivers' licenses; even negotiating with the BoysTown Employment Services Inala office to pay for mechanical repairs and tyre replacements for clients having difficulties attending interviews and job sites.

However it was also noted in the Year 1 evaluation report that another key role of the Indigenous Mentor during the first year had been to spend significant time and energy connecting to the local Indigenous community and their other support agencies. This was a strategy designed to build bridges between families of an extremely disengaged young Indigenous cohort and the employment market. Building cultural connections with the local Indigenous community and providing intensive psycho-social supports to clients with serious mental health issues proved to be a very successful strategy at increasing trust in BoysTown Employment Services (evidenced in reported feedback from stakeholders). However it was evident that it also created an attendant expectation in the community that the Indigenous Mentor would be able to support Indigenous clients who were not work ready, with the consequence that the Indigenous Mentor's energy and resources were not always able to be focused on those clients who may have been more able to be placed into employment during that period.

The quantitative results of the first year's program performance were that although the Indigenous Mentor was able to engage with the required number of 30 clients, only 5 clients were able to be placed into employment and only one client was able to achieve a 26 week outcome. However the Year 1 evaluation report also referred to qualitative data demonstrating that critical foundational shifts were being made in attitudes towards

engaging with the employment market in the majority of BoysTown Inala IMP clients. Feedback referred to decreased “No Shows” for appointments, higher levels of job seeking motivation and increased job service pathways awareness in clients at the end of the first year. Satisfaction with the Indigenous Mentor and the BoysTown Job Service office overall, was high.

These early achievements were a beginning to a long-term strategy. The multi-dimensional nature of this cohort’s barriers to achieving sustained employment is frequently embedded over generations and requires complex service responses. It is widely known that Indigenous Australians are more likely to have higher rates of incarceration, and inadequate housing and accommodation than non-Indigenous Australians. They also lack access to those social networks (social capital) which may help to facilitate employment<sup>i</sup>. The Year 1 BoysTown evaluation report highlighted that improving the pathway to sustainable employment for a group with the level of disadvantage seen in Inala’s Indigenous youth was always going to require a strategy of stepped goals over several years.

With the outcome-focused benchmarks set by the Department of Employment’s Year 2 Deed of Variation in mind, the Inala BoysTown IMP Manager made a decision at the beginning of the second year to re-evaluate the IM’s caseload and only accept new clients into the IMP who were assessed as “work-ready” while hoping to capitalise on the intense support offered to Year 1 clients who were now far more engaged in the job seeking process. The goal for Year 2 was to focus on increasing the levels of employment placements by drawing on the Year 1 evidence of high motivation and increased levels of engagement with the BoysTown Inala Employment Service and its Indigenous Mentor.

A second evaluation phase was commenced in August 2013 with the aim of assessing not only the achievement of this new goal for Year 2, but to also commence monitoring change in other aspects of clients’ lives hypothesised as being impacted upon by support from an Indigenous Mentor. The following report explores the results of this Year 2 evaluation.

## 2. The Program

### Impact of Client Demographics

During Years 1 and 2 there was a total of 105 enrolments in the Pre-Employment program (79 clients unique to that program) and 45 enrolments in the Post-Employment program (35 clients unique to that program). In total there were 150 enrolments in both programs. Eighty one were unique clients. The disparity between enrolment figures and the number of unique clients demonstrates a phenomenon of "job placement cycling" that may relate to a number of demographic issues pertinent to the achievement of sustained employment for these young people and discussed later in this report.

In total, thirty three clients moved from pre-employment to post-employment with the assistance of the IM. Two clients commenced straight into post-employment activity.

### Socio-Economic Disadvantage

The first evaluation report referred to the high level of disadvantage experienced by unemployed young Indigenous people living in the Inala community<sup>ii</sup>. Of the 81 IMP clients enrolled over the past 2 years, 58 were assessed by Centrelink as Streams 3 or 4 because of the multiple barriers they faced to employment. Eleven clients had experienced either juvenile or adult imprisonment or both. Several studies refer to the impact of being arrested on Indigenous employment, with one study finding that having been arrested reduces the probability of being employed by approximately 18% for Indigenous males and 13% for Indigenous females<sup>iii</sup>.

### Age Barriers

However the specific issue most commonly voiced by staff working in BoysTown's specialist area of indigenous youth employment as leading to this cohort's greatest barriers to sustained employment is the characteristics of their adolescent and late adolescent developmental stage, with its corresponding limited capacity to think through consequences of actions<sup>iv</sup>.

Eighty nine percent (71) of IMP clients are between 15 and 26 years of age, with 46% under the age of 19 years. The accepted research is that there are critically undeveloped areas in this age cohort's executive functions (ie: the brain's capacity to control and coordinate thoughts and behaviour) such as in strategic planning and decision-making<sup>v</sup>. This research supports the IMP Manager's contention that extremely young clients' behaviours such as submission to peer or family pressures, or responding inappropriately to employers' non-Aboriginal communication styles, severely reduce their ability to maintain employment following placement. The Discussion section in this report will refer further to this issue in relation to the phenomenon of "job placement cycling".

**Table 1: Age and Gender of enrolled clients**

Age Group	Male	Female	Total	Age %
15-18	24	13	37	46%
19-25	17	17	34	43%
26-29	4	1	5	6%
>30	0	4	4	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100%</b>
Unknown	~	~	1	

### **3. Evaluation Methodology**

The focus of Year 2's evaluation activity was on determining whether there had been changes to a range of "employment-influencing" psycho-social aspects of client functioning during their time with the IMP. Over the course of the seven month evaluation, a mixed method survey was conducted 35 times at three timepoints with a sample of 24 IMP clients. Nine of the 24 clients interviewed had also been interviewed for the Year 1 IMP evaluation, however baseline measures for outcome indicators were not introduced at that time, therefore the Year 2 evaluation was only able to quantitatively measure change over the 7 month period August 2013 to March 2014.

Research suggests that measuring changes in aspects of human lives can indicate the success or otherwise of services provision and lead to predictions for such life domains as future sustainability of employment<sup>vi</sup>. For example, demonstrating improvements in the emotional wellbeing of a young person can indicate how successful they will be in transitioning to further education and /or employment<sup>vii</sup>. Emotional wellbeing may encompass psychological aspects such as decision-making, self-confidence, self-worth and the ability to face and overcome problems.

The survey tools used in this evaluation measured a mixture of social, emotional wellbeing and communication items. Scaled responses were recorded for a series of 21 statements relating to 5 constructs:

- Self Esteem,
- Social Networks,
- Decision-Making and Planning,
- Substance Use and
- Future Outlook

These items were adapted from widely known and validated psychometric survey tools including Rosenberg's *Self-Esteem Scale*, the *Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults*, the *Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey (ALLS)*, *Outcome Questionnaire (OQ45)*, the *Aspirations Index*, the *Interpersonal Agency and Personal Agency Scales* and the *Work Ready Scale*. Items were scored from Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Agree = 3 to Strongly Agree = 4. Statements in these tools can be worded in either a positive or negative manner to reduce the risk of respondents automatically or repeatedly selecting one end of the scale or the other.

In addition, respondents were also asked about the following: changes to job status, living situation, accommodation situation, past employment history and parent/ carer's past employment history, qualifications, past imprisonment as well as qualitative questions about the young person's level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the program, the types of assistance provided by the Indigenous Mentor, whether it made a difference to them that their Mentor was Indigenous and what, if any, changes they had seen in their lives as a result of that assistance.

Although attempts were made to ensure this sample was representative of the program's clients, the majority of clients interviewed were those who were attending their appointments at the Inala Employment Service office during the selected three week survey periods in August 2013 and March 2014. Base line measures (Timepoint 1) were taken with 11 clients who had spent between < 1 month and up to 3 months with the program. Timepoint 2 measures were taken with 17 clients who had spent between 4 and 12 months in the program and Timepoint 3 with 7 clients at >12 months.

Participant outcome results have been reported using a between-subject design (rather than a within-subject design). That is, the same group of clients contributing to the pre data results are not always the exact same group contributing to subsequent data sets. In this case, 11 clients were interviewed twice at different timepoints, however no clients were able to be interviewed at all three timepoints (see table 3 below).

Table 3: Client participation in IMP evaluation

<b>Client</b>	<b>Stream</b>	<b>Previously interviewed for Year 1 report</b>	<b>Length of time in program at TP1</b>	<b>Length of time in program at TP2</b>	<b>Length of time in program at TP3</b>
1	2			4-6 months	> 12 months
2	4	Yes		7-12 months	
3	3		1-3 months		
4	4		1-3 months	4-6 months	
5	4			4-6 months	
6	4	Yes		7-12 months	
7	4			7-12 months	
8	1		1-3 months	7-12 months	
9	2	Yes		4-6 months	
10	4	Yes		7-12 months	> 12 months
11	1		1-3 months		
12	3	Yes		4-6 months	
13	3			7-12 months	> 12 months
14	4		1-3 months	7-12 months	
15	2	Yes		7-12 months	>12 months
16	4		<1 month		
17	2	Yes	1-3 months	7-12 months	
18	4		< 1 month		
19	2			4-6 months	> 12 months
20	3	Yes			> 12 months
21	2		<1 month		
22	3	Yes			> 12 months
23	2		1-3 months	7-12 months	
24	4		< 1 month	7-12 months	
<b>Total</b>		<b>9 surveys</b>	<b>11 surveys</b>	<b>17 surveys</b>	<b>7 surveys</b>

Although there was a strong focus on gathering feedback from non-client stakeholders during the Year 1 evaluation, the focus of this second phase was on understanding what kinds of change had been occurring in clients' lives. To that end only three employers

were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews in Year 2 to “check-in” on the quality of their experience of having access to culturally appropriate support from an Indigenous mentor. A representative from one traineeship/employer stated that as their University department already had an Indigenous Mentor, the IMP was not really an additional benefit to them and declined to answer further questions.

One family member was also interviewed in this second phase to gain her perspective on the nature and effectiveness of the Indigenous Mentor’s family support casework. Open ended interviews were also conducted with the Indigenous Mentor and the Manager of the IMP.

### **Issues in Interpreting the Data**

There were several issues bearing on a clear interpretation of the results of this study.

1. The obvious limitation of a between-subject evaluation design is that it is not possible to interpret the results as a direct change in any one individual, but rather as an aggregate group only. In addition, significance testing on the results showed there were no statistically significant changes. Therefore, descriptive statistics have been used to offer an account of the story of change for this small sample of IMP clients.
2. The 4 point Likert scale used in this evaluation may be subject to distortion from several causes. Central tendency bias may lead to some respondents avoiding extreme response categories while a 26 country study showed that research conducted with scaled measures might simply reflect cultural-level characteristics such as power distance, collectivism, uncertainty avoidance and extraversion rather than picking up real changes felt by respondents<sup>viii</sup>. These findings may be particularly relevant to the use of Likert scales with those Indigenous IMP clients who referred in this evaluation to difficulties navigating their way through environments of “white business” language and concepts. References were made by them to the value of the Indigenous Mentor in breaking down language barriers for them:

*“He talks normal to me.”*

*“We’ve got the same style of talking and know what each other is going on about”*

The resulting mix of response styles may slightly affect mean score movement, however it is unlikely to have affected the choice of either positive or negative statement responses.

3. The generally high mean score achieved for items at baseline, given the barriers many respondents were experiencing in their lives, was a little surprising to the evaluator. This may have been an example of social desirability bias where clients may have been trying to portray themselves or the organization in a more favourable light. However high baseline measures create difficulty in creating quantitative evidence of change over the period of the evaluation.
4. A further issue to note is that the client sample at each timepoint was drawn from across all JSA Streams 1 to 4 (indicating a mix of levels of disadvantage in the labour market), plus across employed and unemployed clients - thus influencing results for individual survey items. As the sample was small it was not useful to analyse change

within Streams and across time, but some more detailed analysis was carried out within employed and unemployed groups across time where warranted.

### **Missing data**

Although 35 surveys were conducted in total, there is a small amount of missing data for some items. Interviews with scaled response statements were introduced shortly after the commencement of the Year 2 evaluation, resulting in one Timepoint 1 survey and three Timepoint 2 surveys with missing quantitative data. In addition, a few clients felt unable to choose either Agree or Disagree to a couple of statements and so analysis has been restricted in those items to subjects with complete data.

### **Evaluation Respondent Demographics**

Of the 35 surveys conducted, 19 (54%) were conducted with clients who had been allocated to Streams 3 and 4 by the Department of Employment, with the remaining 16 (46%) allocated to Streams 1 and 2.

### **Living Arrangements**

Respondents lived with a range of people. The most common was with a single parent (33%), and with extended family such as grandparents or siblings (21%). Only 12% lived with both parents. The remainder lived either alone, in foster care, with a partner or in share housing arrangements.

Fifty six percent lived in public housing, while 28% were in private rental accommodation. Nine percent were in unstable accommodation such as caravan parks or hostels. Another 9% were in privately owned homes.

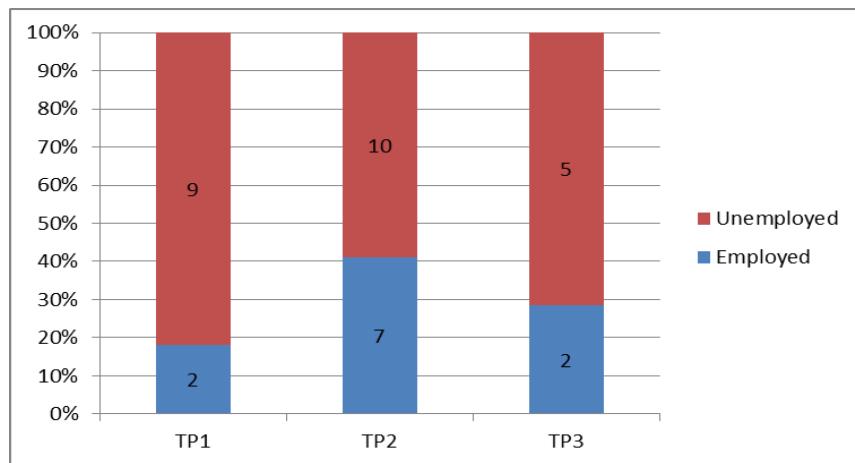
### **Imprisonment**

Six percent had experienced either juvenile or adult imprisonment or both.

### **Employment**

Eleven surveys were conducted with clients who had been placed into employment at the time of the survey and 24 with clients who were still looking for work. The graph below shows the percentage of unemployed and employed at each Timepoint of the survey.

**Graph 1: Employed vs Unemployed at each Timepoint**



Types of employment included dentist assistant, eco-market sales assistant, factory hand, truck driving, fast food sales assistant, administration, tiling and house painting.

#### **Culture of employment**

Fifty two percent of respondents reported that their parent or main carer had either not worked or had been in and out of work during their childhood. Almost half (42%) reported that they themselves had previously worked in a full-time capacity for an unstated period of time, while another 42% reported having worked in either a part-time or casual capacity in the past. Sixteen percent reported never having had a job.

## **4. Findings**

The focus of this evaluation was on measuring the continuing impact of the past 2 years of a case work oriented model of mentoring on young Indigenous job seekers. Thirty five out of 81 clients of the Inala IMP achieved an employment placement over this period, 21 of these in the past 12 months. At the time of writing, 8 clients had completed 26 weeks in a job and a further 8 were on track to complete at least 13 weeks. That there has been a 121% increase in post placement enrolments and a 700% increase in 26 week outcomes in Year 2 may indicate the next stage of progress is being achieved following the high motivation and increased levels of engagement demonstrated in the Year 1 evaluation. The data in this second phase of the IMP evaluation demonstrates that beyond the positive trend in employment placements and 26 week achievements, there has also been a range of psycho-social outcomes for sampled IMP clients which may position them to achieve sustained employment in even greater numbers in Year 3.

The results of the study are described in the following sections:

- i. Levels of casework activity and client perceptions of that experience
- ii. Satisfaction with levels of help
- iii. Changes in social and emotional well-being

### **I. Case Work Activity**

As per Year 1, the Indigenous Mentor continued in Year 2 to offer needs assessment and case management activities as part of the mentoring role. However there was clear evidence of higher levels of case work activity in Year 2 compared to Year 1 with a 58% increase over the number of case work events with pre-employment clients and a 151% increase over the number of case work events with post-employment clients (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Program Activity recorded in BoysTown Client Information Management System (BCIMS) between July 1 2012 and May 16 2014**

Activity	Count in Year 1	Count in Year 2	Count over 2 years	Proportional Change
Pre-Employment Program Enrolments	60	45	105	25% decrease
Post-employment Program Enrolments	14	31	45	121% increase
Pre-Employment Case Work Events	258	407	665	58% increase
Post-Employment Case Work Events	55	138	193	151% increase

NB: Contacts with family members and employers by the Indigenous Mentor are included in "Case work events".

## **Expectations of Mentoring**

When Pre-employment activity clients were interviewed at commencement about what had made them want to join the IMP, the majority referred to wanting more help and guidance about how to get a job than they had been previously receiving:

*"I was going nowhere on my own and I wanted to know if someone else could help"*

*"Simon will be able to introduce me to people I would not otherwise meet that may be able to help me with a job"*

Most respondents also stated that they wanted practical assistance with things like getting a Drivers License and money for transport to interviews.

Respondents also stated that they were looking for role models and guides:

*"The media offers us young Indigenous people such poor role models and Simon is someone who is doing something with this life"*

*"Someone to talk to about my problems- I don't usually talk about my problems to other people"*

Several referred to the Mentor's aboriginality as being an important engagement factor:

*"I was with a different JSA but my family influenced me to come here for the Indigenous Mentor. His aboriginality is important because he can completely understand where we're coming from and our circumstances"*

*"I feel more connected to Simon because he's Indigenous. I get on well with all the other staff, but with Simon- we talk the same and it's just a bit different"*

When asked what the experience had been like so far, clients who had been in the program longer than 3 months were very positive about the areas where the Indigenous Mentor had helped to keep them motivated and on track, listing a range of practical activities (such as job hunting tips and assistance with getting driver's licenses):

*"He's shown me lots of different kinds of jobs that I wouldn't have known about otherwise. He helped me to feel confident enough to apply for the army which I had wanted to do. I didn't get in this time, but he told me about things I could do in the meantime to build up my confidence to go for it again. I needed to build up skills and experience too, so that's what we're working on now"*

*"He got me into this painting course- it wouldn't have happened otherwise. He's helped me with getting a house, transport, a Go-card, work gear, food vouchers"*

*"I want to get my leg fixed and Simon's helping me with rehab. He's got me hooked up with the Broncos so I might be able to play professional footie again"*

*"It's hard when you're not getting replies to applications. Simon helps me with my resume and writing up applications"*

*"He helps me with knowing where to go cold canvassing- I think it's about half him and half me with knowing where to try now. I'm feeling a lot more positive"*

*about it since the last time we spoke"*

*"He helped me with getting a driver's license and now a Forklift license. Simon has been the one driving the process and encouraging me. Simon organised the dates for booking the test and paid for the test"*

*"He's guided me in the right direction about how to start my course and helped me with assessments"*

*"He helped me get my license"*

as well as emotional supports:

*"He's been like a father to me- helped me stay out of trouble. He's got me off the alcohol and comes to court with me. He reminds me about appointments - calls me up and then picks me up. He's just been there for me like a dad"*

*"He's like my safety net in case things go wrong"*

*"He gives 110% support. Always there in everything I've been through this past 18 months"*

*"He treats me respectfully and that makes me feel better"*

Feedback from both employers and a family member also described the Indigenous Mentor's mix of broad knowledge about the labour market environment plus a deep commitment to the clients' greater welfare as key to keeping clients engaged in the job market:

*Mainstream counselling services just didn't want to know about (client's name), but Simon looks for all avenues for my kids. He has access to information that we don't have...He's the pinnacle of knowing things - so many resources available to him" (Family member)*

*"Simon is very valuable as an Indigenous Mentor. He's great with the kids. I know he's been able to expose them to opportunities that they'd never have had otherwise" (Indigenous traineeship co-ordinator for commercial company)*

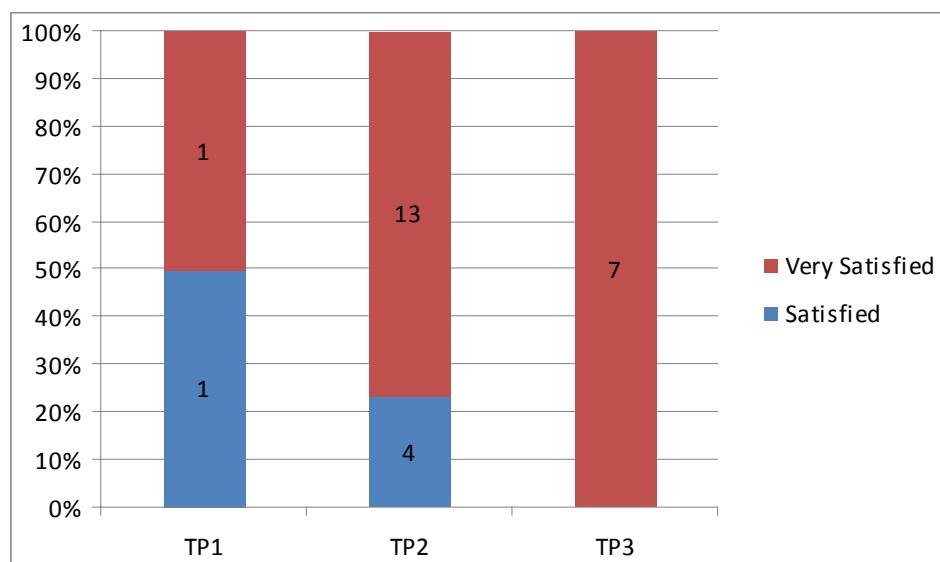
*"I had several catch ups with Simon... and they were very useful because he knows (client's name)'s family situation and so was able to explain her family commitments when they impacted on her work. He was also able to help her to get driving lessons and a Drivers License, transport to work and Go Cards - things that we couldn't help with. Also helped her with Centrelink clarifications- all out of our scope" (University Department Head running Indigenous traineeship)*

## II. Satisfaction with levels of help

One hundred percent of clients (n=26) who were asked about satisfaction with the level of help they were receiving from the Indigenous Mentor with the things that made it hard for them to get or keep a job said they were either Satisfied (20%) or Very Satisfied (80%) at all points in time.

There was an increasing likelihood of feeling Very Satisfied the longer a client worked with the Indigenous Mentor, with levels of Very Satisfied at 100% for TP3 respondents compared to 50% at TP1 and 77% at TP2.

**Graph 2: Satisfaction with level of help**



Fifty percent of respondents also reported having told their friends about having an Indigenous Mentor, and 95% said they would recommend getting an Indigenous Mentor to their friends who were struggling to get a job.

*"He's always keeping onto stuff and doesn't leave things and then forget them. He's really good at what he does. He communicates with me a lot - keeps me informed straight away of anything that comes up"*

*"I reckon if there were more people like Simon out there, so many more Indigenous people would get jobs"*

Furthermore, all family and employers interviewed expressed satisfaction with the IMP and rated it as Very Effective in meeting their expectations.

*"(Simon) is tremendous. He speaks to them on their level. He knows what their life is like. He's been there in younger life....he's got more experience with them than a white person would have because he's been there" (Family member)*

*"As an employer we help as much as we can, but it's limited. But Simon goes the extra mile for them so they actually complete things. Every one of the kids I've had have had nothing but good things to say about how out of his way he goes for them" (Indigenous traineeship co-ordinator for commercial company)*

### **III. Changes in Social and Emotional Wellbeing**

As noted earlier, positive self reports for each item were surprisingly high at baseline TP1. This may have been as a result of many of the clients having already experienced effective support from BoysTown programs under the Queensland Government Skilling Queenslanders for Work (SQW) program prior to commencing in the IMP. It may also be a case of the social desirability bias discussed in the section on data limitations. Higher baseline measures mean that it is very difficult to demonstrate quantitative evidence of change over the period of the evaluation. However there were a number of domains where the quantitative results are instructive to review and strong qualitative feedback supports the evidence that change was occurring for respondents in most psycho-social aspects.

Mean scores have been calculated by aggregating the total scores for each item (with Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Agree = 3 and Strongly Agree = 4), and then dividing by the count of respondents at each Timepoint.

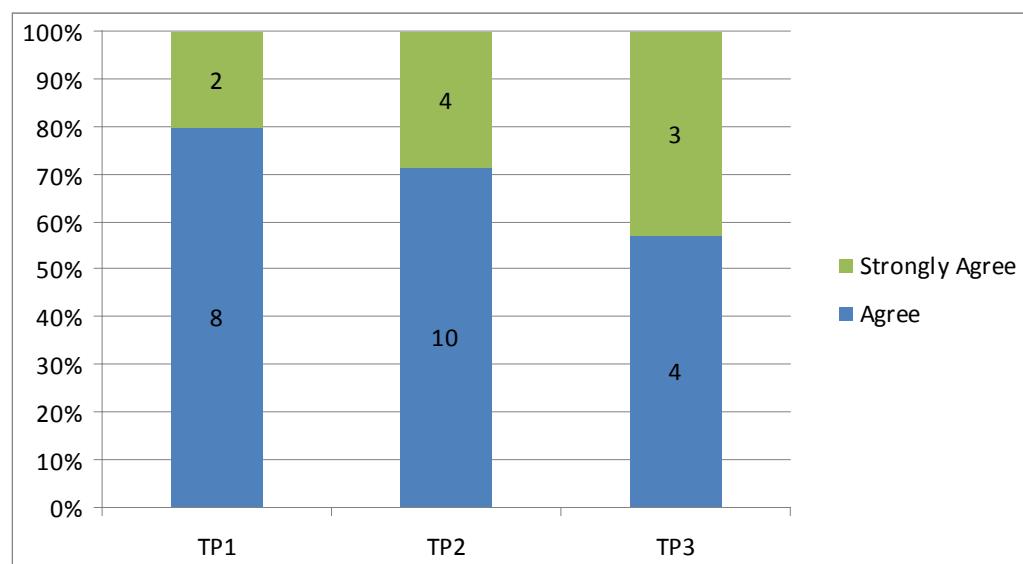
#### **Self Esteem and Belief in their own Communication Skills:**

Overall, small improvements were measurable in most items relating to Self Esteem:

##### **1. Self Worth**

Although all respondents either Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the statement "*I feel I am a person of worth*" at each Timepoint, a higher proportion stated they Strongly Agreed at TP3 (43%) than at TP1 (20%). The mean score moved from 3.20 at TP1 to 3.43 at TP3.

**Graph 3: Self Esteem: Sense of Self-Worth**



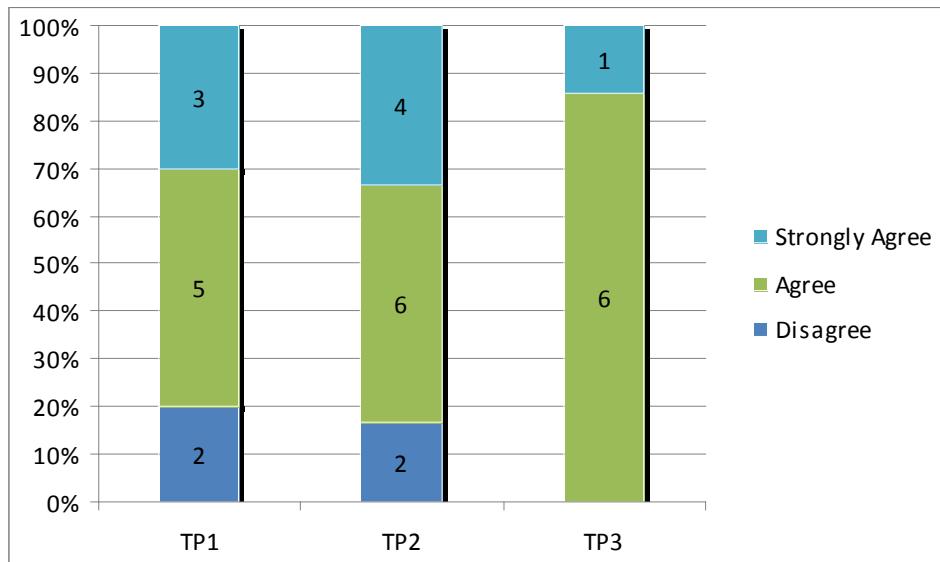
*"Things have been changing for me already. Since Simon's taken me to get anti-depressant tablets and counselling I've been feeling a bit better. I would agree now I'm a person of worth. I would have used to Disagree Strongly, but now I'm just getting happier"*

*"I'm more mature now, more independent. I look forward to getting up out of bed"*

## **2. Confidence in Communication Skills**

Between TP1 and TP3 there was an improvement in "*I feel confident talking to new people*" from 80% to 100% of respondents either Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing. The mean score moved from 3.10 to 3.14.

**Graph 4: Self Esteem: Confident talking to new people**



*"I'm getting better at talking to new people"*

*"Simon taught me how to speak up, how to communicate properly. Normally I just hand my resume in, but he's taught me to speak about it when I hand it in and say things like "I'm keen to work- I've done this and this in the past"*

*"Since I've been with Simon I'm more ready to hand out resumes, and talk to them - I never used to do that before. And now I have more confidence on the phone"*

*"(Simon)'s given me interview tips - I'm pretty bad at interviews normally"*

*"(Simon) helps me prepare my speech when I'm handing out resumes... and "prep's me up" mentally"*

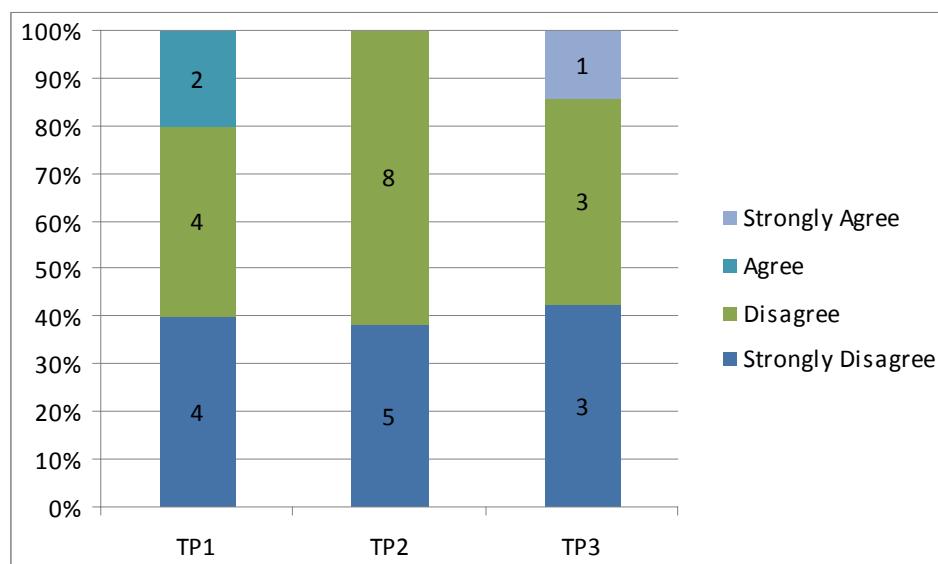
*"I'm more confident in speaking"*

*"Doing volunteer work has improved my communication skills and this has led to me feeling more motivated to keep going"*

### 3. Self Pride

There was overall improvement in the item: "*I don't feel I have much to be proud of*" over time from 80% either Disagreeing or Strongly Disagreeing with this statement at TP1 increasing to 86% Disagreeing or Strongly Disagreeing at TP3.

**Graph 5: Self Esteem: Feelings of self pride**



NB: One older client with a chronic physical disability who was interviewed for the first time at TP3 reported Strongly Agreeing to this item, negatively impacting on the Mean score for this indicator

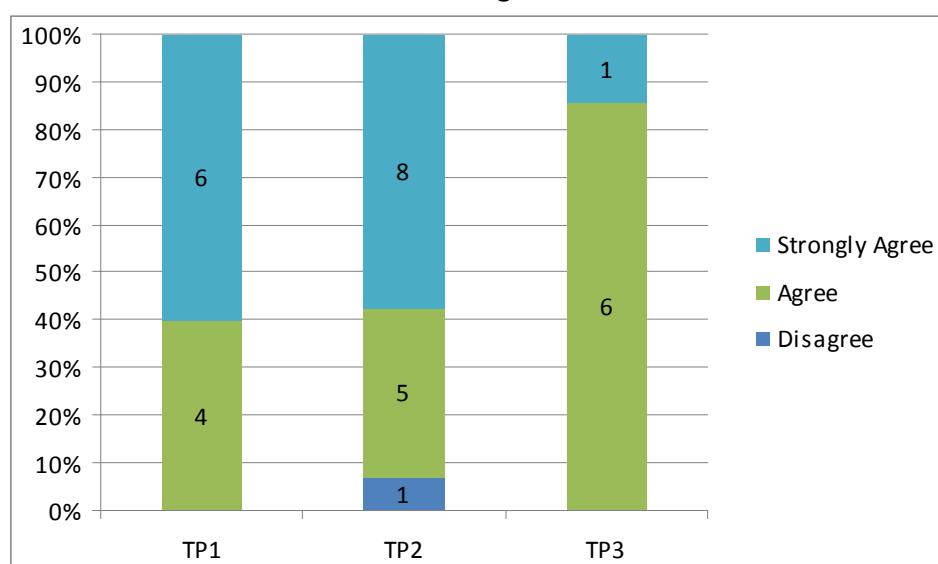
When responses from only those clients who were employed at the time of the interview were analysed, all clients either Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed at all Timepoints with the statement that they did not have much to be proud of.

*"Having a job means I'm not ashamed now. I'm proud to talk about myself instead of in the past where if people asked me what I did, I'd have to say I didn't work. Simon helped to boost my self esteem. I feel like my old self again"*

#### **4. Confidence in having the necessary work skills**

One hundred percent of respondents felt confident that they had the right skills for work at the commencement of their contact with the Indigenous Mentor, with 60% reporting Strongly Agree. Although Strongly Agree dropped proportionally between TP1 and TP3, all respondents still Agreed or Strongly Agreed at TP3. When responses from only those who were employed at the time of interview were selected for further analysis, confidence seemed to rise at mid point and drop away at TP3, possibly indicating that their experiences in the workplace were challenging their self belief. An analysis of those who were unemployed at the time of interview but had experienced employment at earlier stages showed similar patterns of increasing confidence at TP2 followed by a decrease by TP3.

**Graph 6: Self Esteem: Confident I have the right skills for work**



Comments from respondents nevertheless suggested they had clear work-oriented goals for skill attainment:

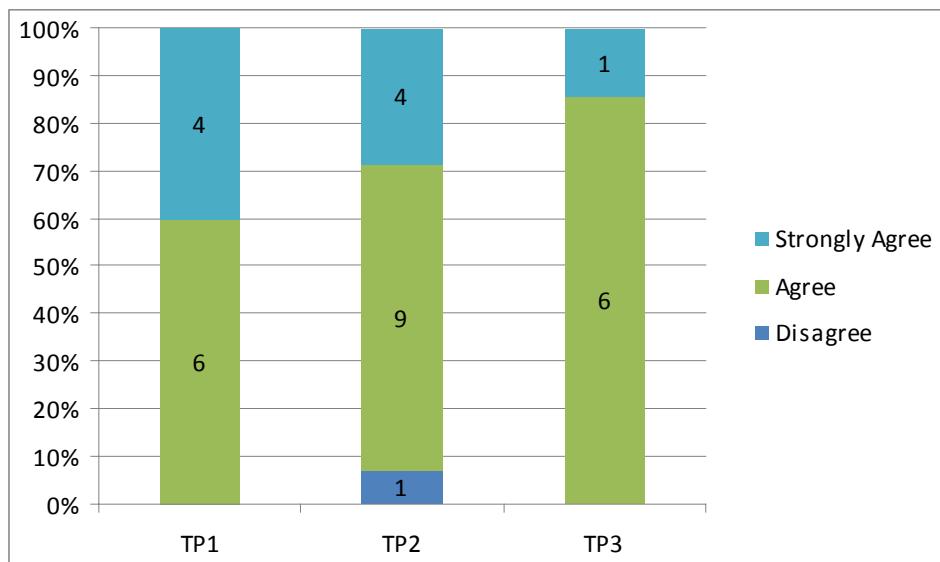
*"Now I get out of bed and do volunteer work to get the experience I need to join the army. I wouldn't have done this without Simon"*

*"I'm in full-time study now in the area I always wanted to work"*

#### **5. Taking care with appearance**

Although there was no change to 100% of respondents continuing to either Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement *"I take care with my appearance"* over the course of the evaluation, the proportion of those Strongly Agreeing decreased from 40% at TP1 to 14% at TP3. The mean also decreased slightly from 3.40 to 3.14.

**Graph 7: Self Esteem: Take care in my appearance**



Comments from respondents indicate this was an area raised by the Mentor on occasions:

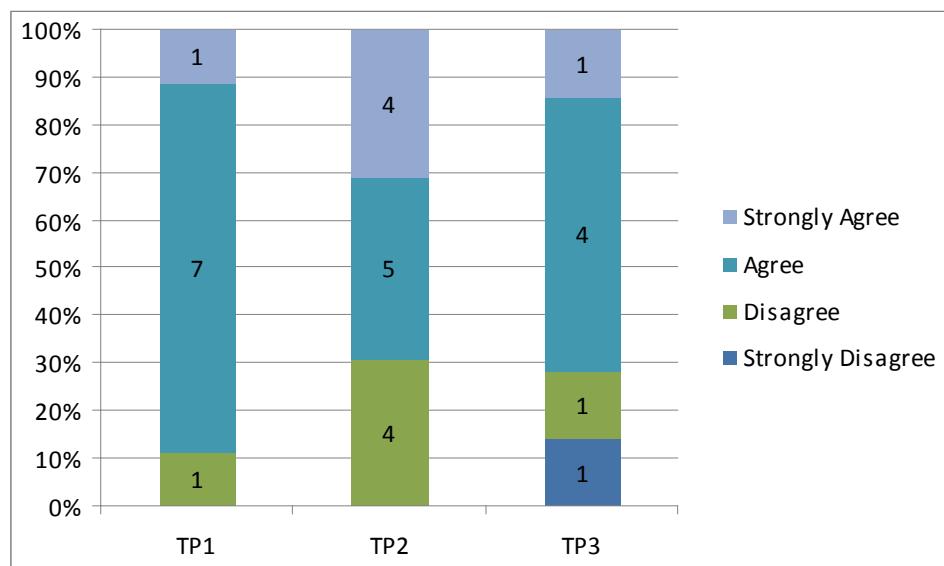
*"(Simon) helps me with guidance about how I look – like "Do your top button up"*

*"(Simon) says things like "Walk in with a smile", "Stand up straight", "Do your hair" when I'm going in for interviews"*

#### **6. Ease of self expression**

Despite respondents' reporting increased *confidence in talking to new people* over time, their belief that "*I can express myself easily*" deteriorated over the course of the year. The mean score decreased from 3.00 at TP1 to 2.71 at TP3. As per feelings of confidence in *having the right skills for work*, this decrease may have been a result of negative experiences in the workplace. When responses from those who were employed at the time of the interview were analysed separately, overall agreement with this statement decreased from 66% to 60%. However for those who were unemployed at the time of interview but may have cycled through an employment placement earlier, overall agreement decreased more steeply from 89% to 67%.

**Graph 8: Self Esteem: I can express myself easily**



If this result is indeed a feature of clients' experiences of finding it difficult to negotiate meeting their needs in the workplace, it may indicate an area for stronger focus in Year 3 of the IMP.

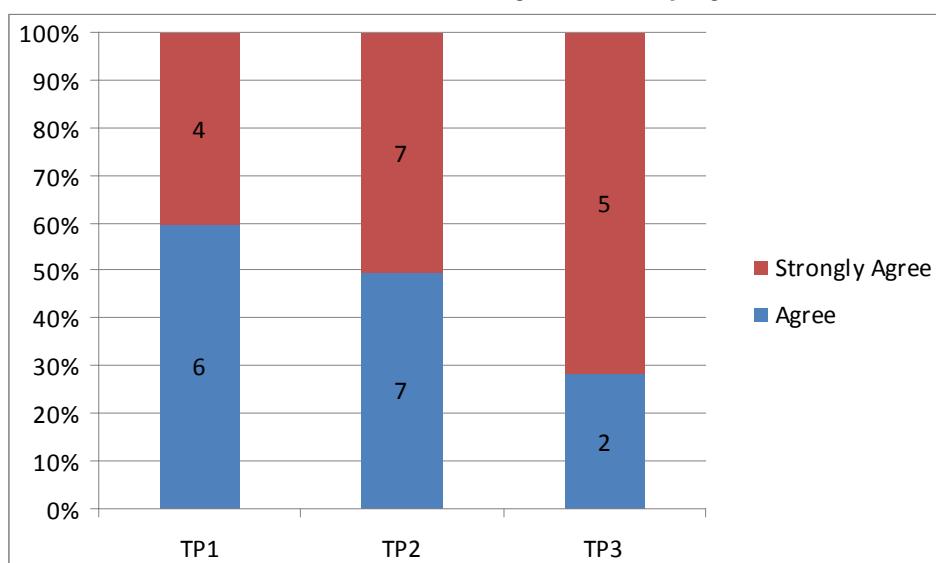
## Social Networks

Perceptions of feeling supported over time varied, depending on the source of support.

### 1. Connection to BoysTown Employment Service

Although 100% of respondents either Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the statement "*I feel connected to BoysTown Employment Services*" at all timepoints, the proportion of Strongly Agreed increased from 40% at TP1 to 71% at TP3. The mean score increased from 3.40 to 3.71. This is a strong indicator that mentoring support has continued to be successful at increasing engagement with employment pathways for young Indigenous people in Inala in Year 2 of the program.

**Graph 9: Social Networks: Connection to BoysTown Employment Service**



Qualitative data supports this premise:

*"Getting a job is a job in itself- you need money to get a job as everything costs so much, like transport and work equipment. Other JSA's have been a bit slack at helping me, but (BoysTown) Inala has been great"*

*"Jobs come in your head when you walk through the door. They know your name and yell it out- it's all good- really friendly"*

*"It's a safe place- everyone knows me and says "How're going (client's name)?" If I need to tell anyone something that's happened, I can tell them cause they know what's going on for me"*

*"The whole place works together – the communication between my Employment Consultant and Simon and me is the biggest thing"*

*"My quarrel is with the whole system. Travelling to the office is hard and expensive but you have to do it. But at least at Inala I always come away*

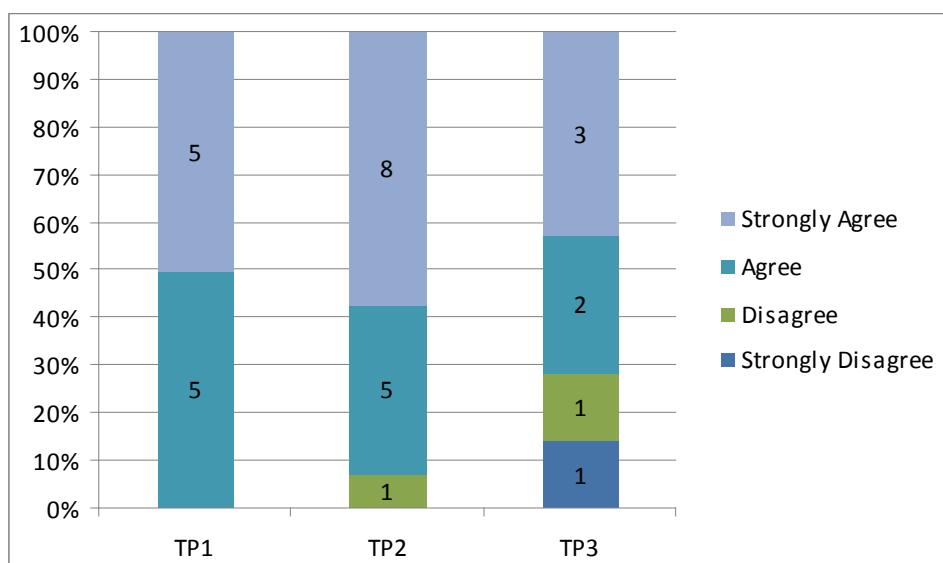
*"with some new knowledge about where the jobs and traineeships are or some new job hunting skills. I never feel my time has been wasted"*

## **2. Able to depend on family**

*"I can depend on my family for support in looking for or keeping a job"* deteriorated from 100% either Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing at TP1 to 72% either Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing at TP3. The mean score decreased from 3.50 to 3.00. It is unclear why this deterioration occurred, however it is possible that this result may be a factor of the small sample of clients with differing family backgrounds being interviewed at TP1 and TP3. It also may indicate the need for the Indigenous Mentor to focus more time on working with clients' families in Year 3 once work placements have occurred.

The quotes below are indicative of the responsibility many young employed Indigenous people feel towards supporting their families, rather than feeling supported themselves.

**Graph 10: Social Networks: Family support**



*"Family business can make it hard to keep a job"*

*"Mostly (Simon) supports me with taking care of my family. Like if one of my siblings has a job interview and I can't get her there, he'll take her. He has also talked to my employer and negotiated with them when I had a family crisis and didn't go to work"*

*"He gives me intensive support with keeping my job in really difficult family situations"*

*"It's not easy to keep my job because of family responsibilities. My mother just died this year and I'm raising my siblings and their children"*

*"I'm mostly just relieved about (no longer having) my family responsibilities"  
(client working away from Brisbane)*

*"(Simon) has helped me with personal stuff about my family"*

## **Decision-making and Planning**

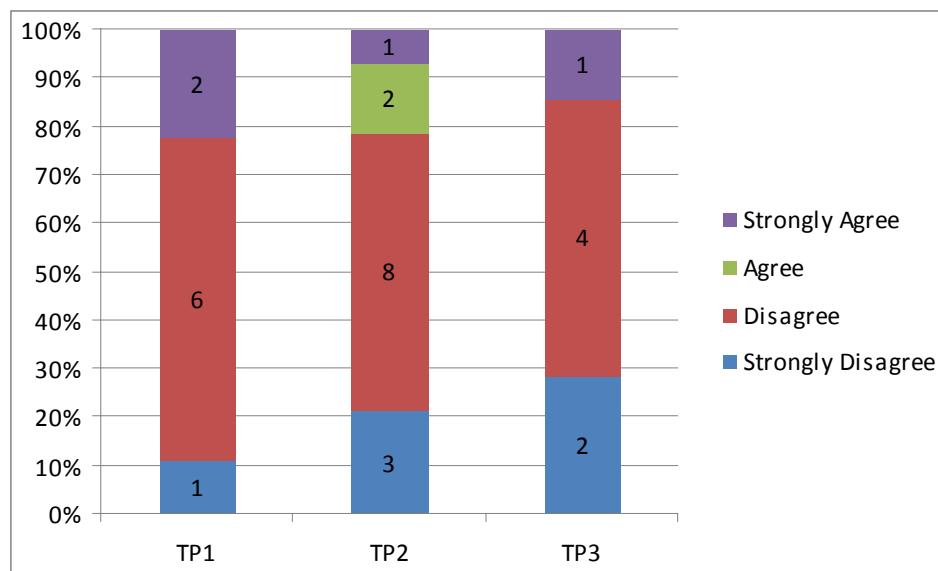
There were small improvements to most items relating to decision-making and planning.

### **1. Problem Solving**

There was a small improvement reported in respondents' ability to solve problems from 78% at TP1 either Disagreeing or Strongly Disagreeing with the statement that they had "*trouble solving problems*", to 86% either Disagreeing or Strongly Disagreeing at TP3. The mean score also improved from 2.33 to 2.00.

This increasing self-belief in their ability to solve problems is encouraging given a contrasting general statement from the IMP Manager who noted that young Indigenous clients appeared to experience difficulty resolving issues in relation to workplace expectations in particular, without considerable external support. It is of distinct interest then that a further analysis of this item shows 100% of respondents employed at the time of interview either Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed they had trouble solving problems at both TP2 and TP3. This may have been as a result of feeling strongly supported by their mentor.

**Graph 11: Decision-making and Planning: Problem solving**



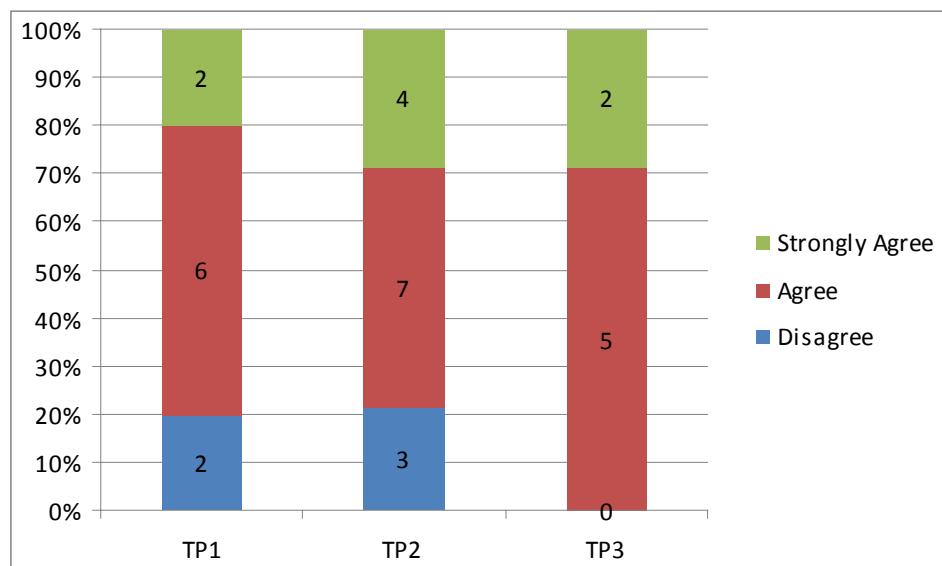
*"I get reassurance when I'm trying to make a decision. (Simon)'s teaching me decision-making skills- how to look at the positives and both sides"*

*"I make better decisions now because I have someone to talk things through with"*

### **2. Achieve goals by knowing when to ask for help**

There was improvement in response to the statement "*I achieve my goals by knowing when to ask others for help*" from 80% at TP1 either Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing, to 100% of all respondents by TP3. The mean score improved from 3.00 to 3.29.

**Graph 12: Decision-making and Planning: Knowing when to ask for help**



*"Before Simon I wasn't aware of what was available because I didn't ask. He made me more aware of what help I was entitled to"*

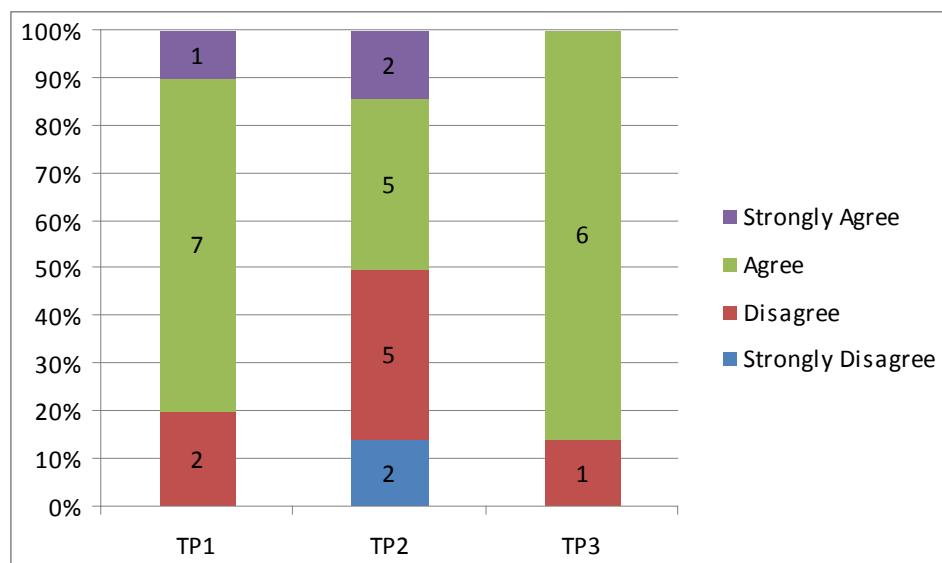
*"I've been asking (for help to achieve my goals) a lot lately"*

*"He's given me more confidence knowing I have that support in case I need it - There's peace of mind knowing he's there if I'm stuck in some predicament that I wouldn't otherwise know how to get out of"*

### 3. Making a budget

There was a slight overall improvement in responses to the item: *"I make a budget to help me with my money"* from 80% at TP1 either Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing to 86% at TP3.

**Graph 13: Decision-making and Planning: Budgeting**

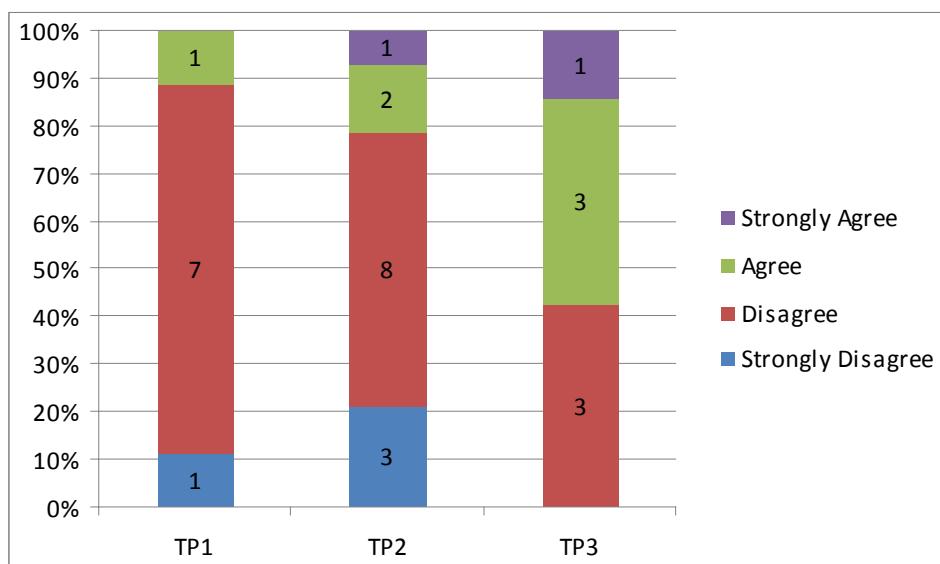


*"(Simon) helped me with budgeting and then kept ringing me to check up how I was going with it"*

#### 4. *Difficulty starting tasks*

This item was the only area within this construct where there was no evidence of improvement over time. Agreement or Strong Agreement to the statement “*I have difficulty starting tasks*” actually increased from 11% at TP1 to 57% Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing at TP3. The mean score increased from 2.00 to 2.71.

**Graph 14: Decision-making and Planning: Difficulty starting tasks**



It is not clear why the results in this item deteriorated. However there was some qualitative commentary that suggests this was an area the Indigenous Mentor focused on with some clients, and may be an indicator for more intense support in Year 3.

*“He gave me confidence to get out there and do what I have to do to get a job- cold canvassing/ handing out resumes/ whatever”*

*“(Simon) knows so much about what’s out there for me to do, so he keeps me really motivated to keep going for it”*

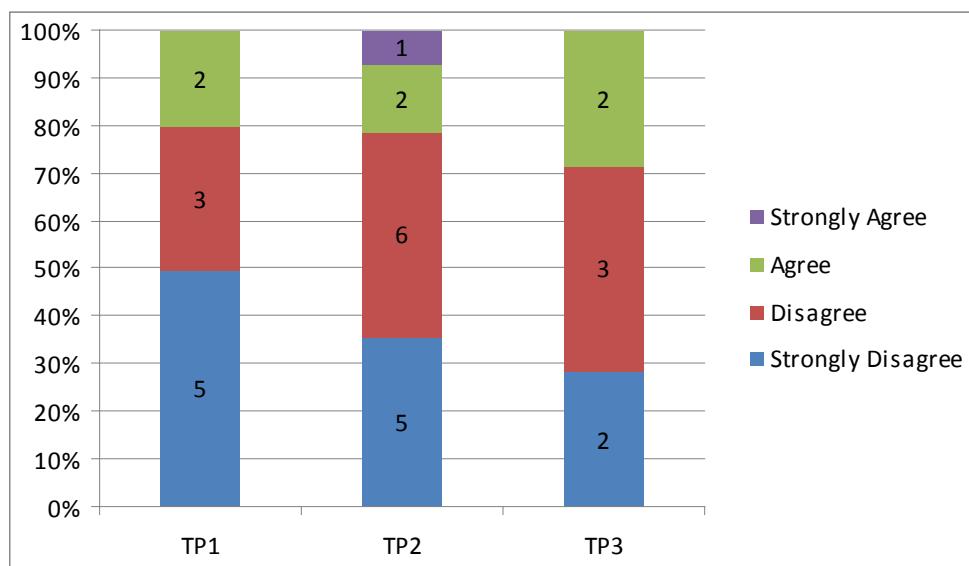
*“He’s been really helpful-focuses me on the things that I want to do”*

## Substance Use

### 1. Trouble with drugs or alcohol

There was a slight increase in the proportion of respondents Agreeing they had “trouble because of drinking or drug use” from 20% at TP1 to 29% at TP3. The mean rose from 1.70 to 2.00. Although IMP clients with drug or alcohol issues are regularly referred to a specialist counsellor provided by the Inala BoysTown Employment service, this result may be an indicator not only of an increased willingness to acknowledge addiction issues following mentoring support, but also of the long term treatment required, even in clients as young as the IMP cohort.

**Graph 15: Substance Use**



There was positive qualitative feedback to suggest clients were addressing their alcohol abuse issues with the support of their mentor :

*“A couple of times I’ve told him I was thinking of going back to South Australia where I had bad drinking problems and he’s encouraged me not to go”*

*“Back in the day all I used to want to do was go to the bottle shop - Now I have so much to look forward to”*

*“I was an alcoholic and Simon told me I had to quit for 2 months and then he’d help me get a job. So I did that and that’s when I got the job. Now I only drink socially”*

## Future Outlook

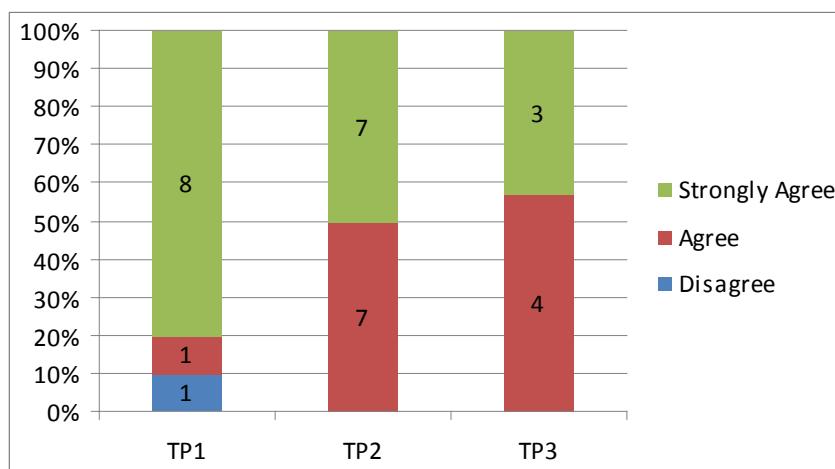
These measures were intended to establish the level of hope for and confidence in the future felt by IMP clients. There were mixed responses by clients to items under this construct with respondents reporting:

1. strong and increasing levels of a) value attached to and b) confidence in attaining a good job,
2. strong and unchanging levels of a) openness to new learnings and b) excited anticipation of starting work,
3. strong but slightly decreasing levels of a) value attached to and b) confidence in feeling in charge of their lives,
4. strong but slightly decreasing levels of goal setting, and
5. mild but increasing pessimism about the future.

### 1. a) *A good job is important; and b) I think I will have a good job in the future*

Although the mean scores for both these items decreased slightly between TP1 and TP3, they were both commencing at high baselines with 80% of clients reporting they Strongly Agreed with both statements. There was still a slight overall improvement in the total proportion of respondents stating they either Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the statements "*Having a good job is important to me*" and "*I think I will have a good job in the future*" from 90% at TP1 to 100% at TP3 for both indicators.

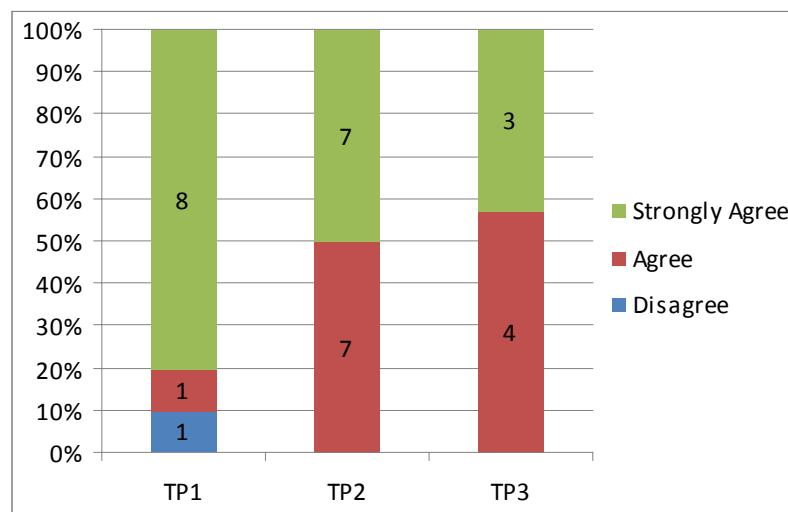
**Graph 16: Future Outlook: a) Having a good job is important**



*"I used to not care about looking for work, but now I'm more motivated"*

*"I still have a job! This is a change for me cause I have never been able to keep a job before"*

**Graph 17: Future Outlook: b) I think I will have a good job in the future**



*"Eventually I think I will (have a good job)"*

*"This new job would never have happened without Simon. I've had other opportunities in the past that I didn't take up, because I wasn't aware of the assistance (including financial) I could get to make the change"*

*"I'm more confident about looking for work"*

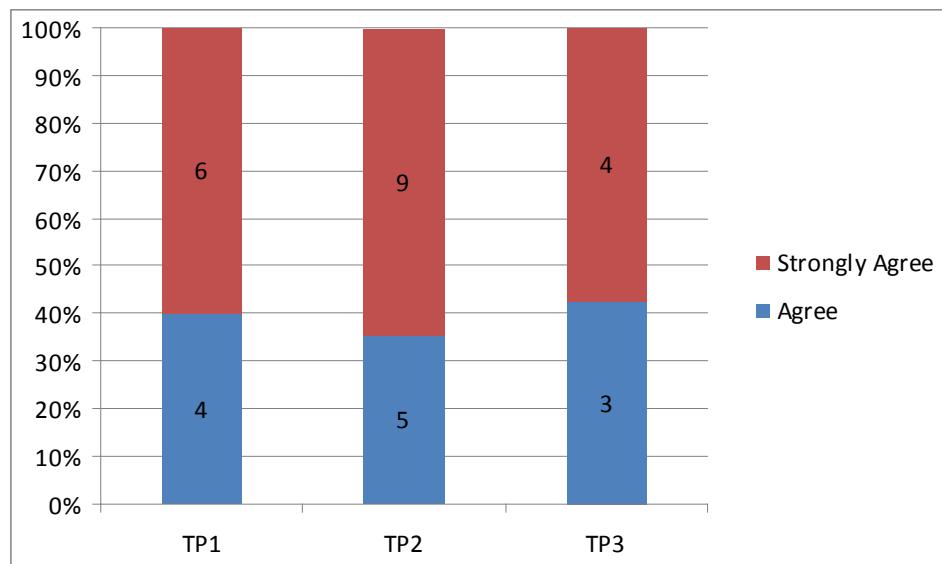
*"I'm more confident to try for jobs"*

## 2. a) Open to learning new things; and b) Can't wait to start work

Clients reported no change over time in responses to the above two statements with 100% reporting they either Agreed or Strongly Agreed to both at TPs1 and 3. There was also minimal movement in the mean scores of 3.60 and 3.70 at TP1 to 3.57 and 3.71 at TP3 respectively.

Once again, these are strong indications that clients are already highly motivated at the time of commencing in the IMP although some commented (below) that the Indigenous Mentor was strengthening this value.

**Graph18: Future Outlook: a) Open to learning new things**

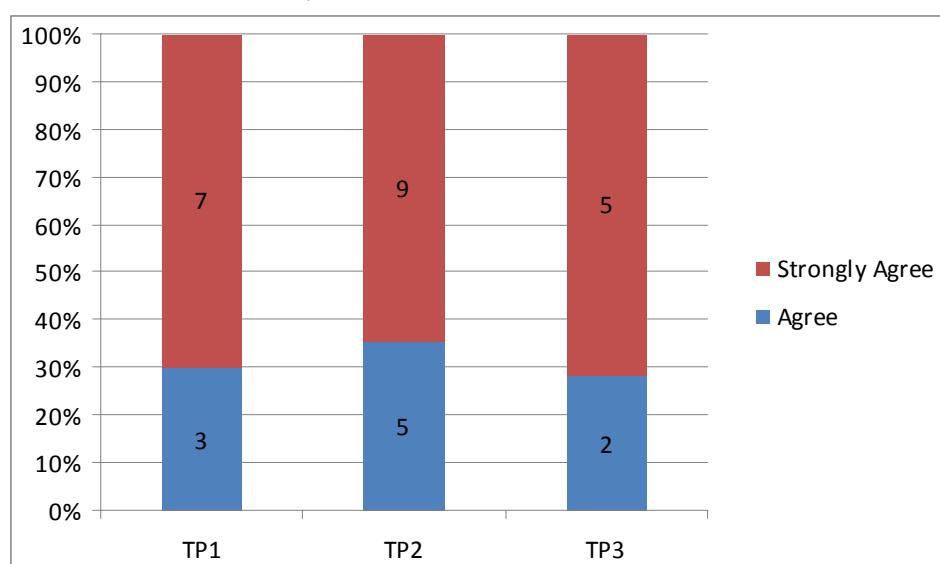


*"I'm not as scared to apply for jobs that I don't necessarily have the skills for as I used to be...I'm more willing to be "out there" for new ideas of jobs"*

*"I didn't want to do this traineeship, I thought it would be boring. Simon pushed me to want it, but then I loved it there, I have to say. I asked them if I could stay!"*

*"I'm about to start a full-time course. I'm actually trying to "get out there" now"*

**Graph 19: Future Outlook: b) Can't wait to start work**



*"I've got a lot more job interviews now - Simon gets your confidence up because he's always so positive"*

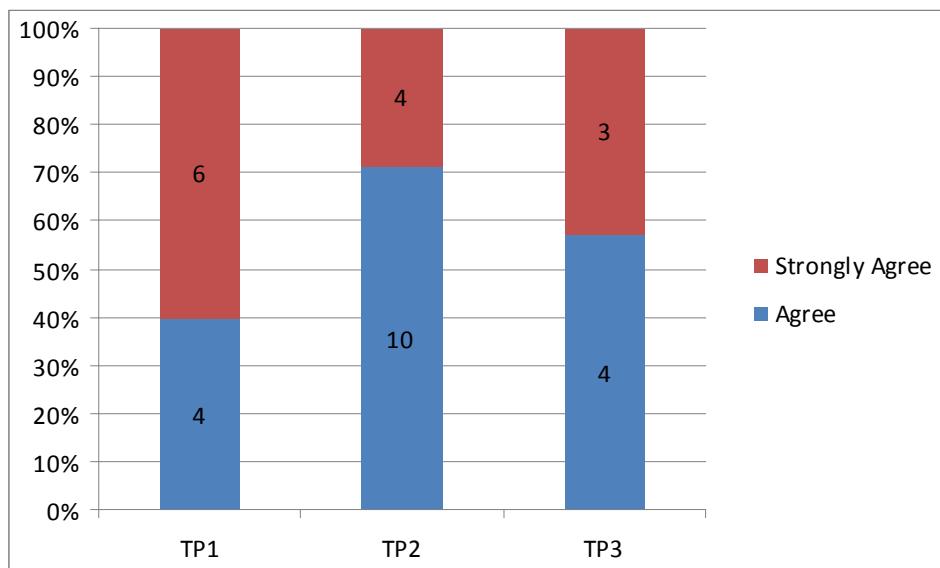
*"Simon helped me through my knee injury which got me depressed - I never wanted to work when I was depressed, I didn't feel like doing anything- just wanted to stay home. I'm happier now - I have a new job too! I can't wait!"*

*"I am still feeling really good in myself... even though I still don't have a job. That's a plus"*

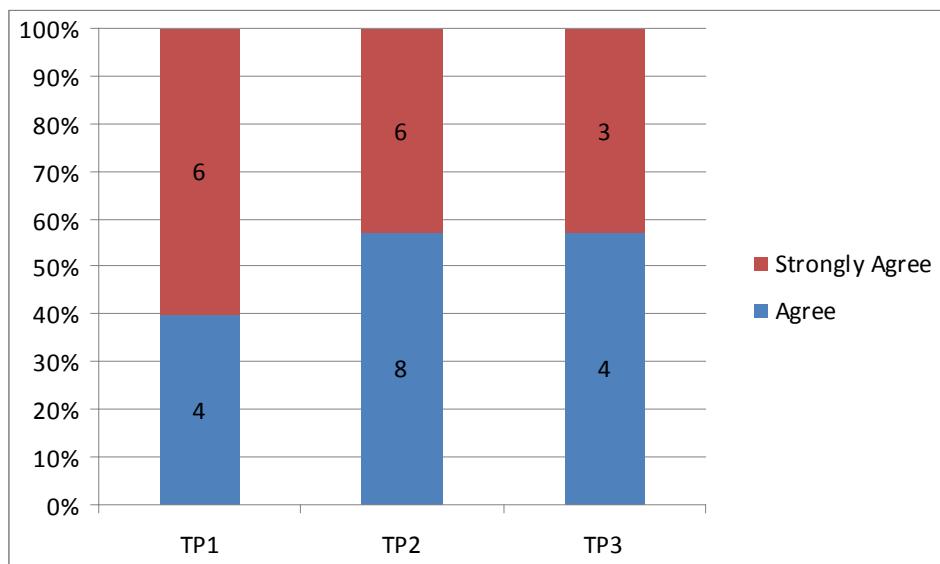
**3. a) Being in charge of my life is important; and b) I think I will be in charge of my life in the future**

Both items remained stable with 100% of respondents either Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing to both statements, although the mean score decreased from highly positive self reports of 3.60 at TP1, to 3.43 at TP3 for both items.

**Graph 20: Future Outlook: a) Being in charge of my life is important**



**Graph 21: Future Outlook: b) I think I will be in charge of my life in the future**

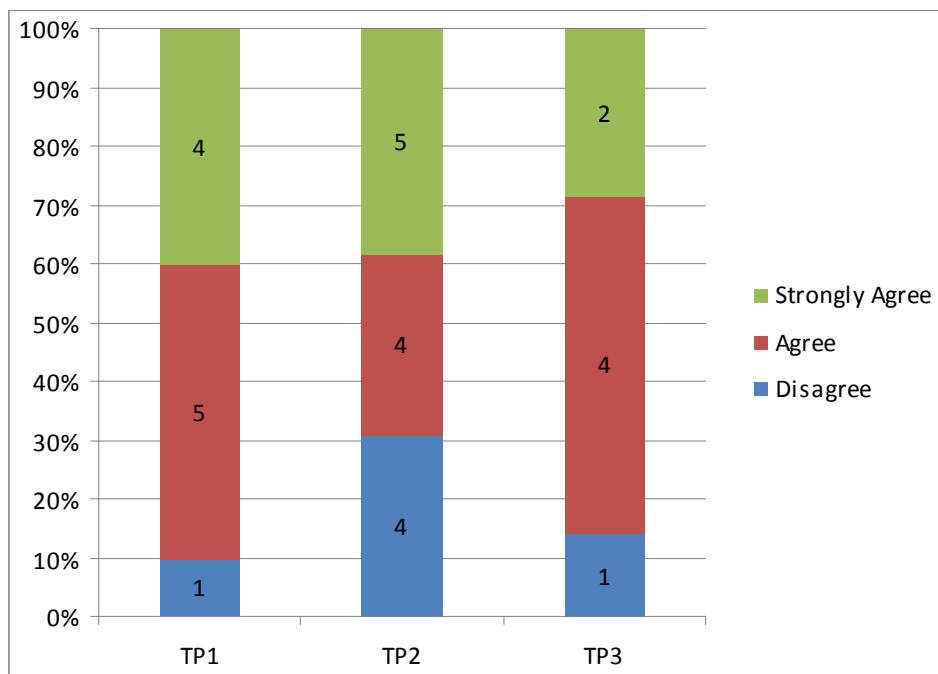


*"I don't **think** I'll be in charge of my life in the future- I **know** I will!"*

#### **4. I have goals for the future/ I know what I want to do**

There was a slight proportional decrease in clients reporting they had “*goals for the future*” from 90% either Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing at TP1 to 80% either Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing at TP3. The mean score dipped from 3.30 at TP1 to 3.08 at TP2, but recovered to 3.14 at TP3. It is not clear why this result occurred but given the majority of the dip at TP2 was reported by those clients who were unemployed at the time of interview, it may reflect the broader difficulty experienced by young people trying to make plans for their future life without the foundation of a job to launch their dreams.

**Graph 22: Future Outlook: Goals for the future**



*“I’m more goal-oriented and make better decisions”*

*“(Simon) always told me “You can be anything you want to be...no-one can tell you to give up your dreams”. That’s really important...no-one can touch your dreams”*

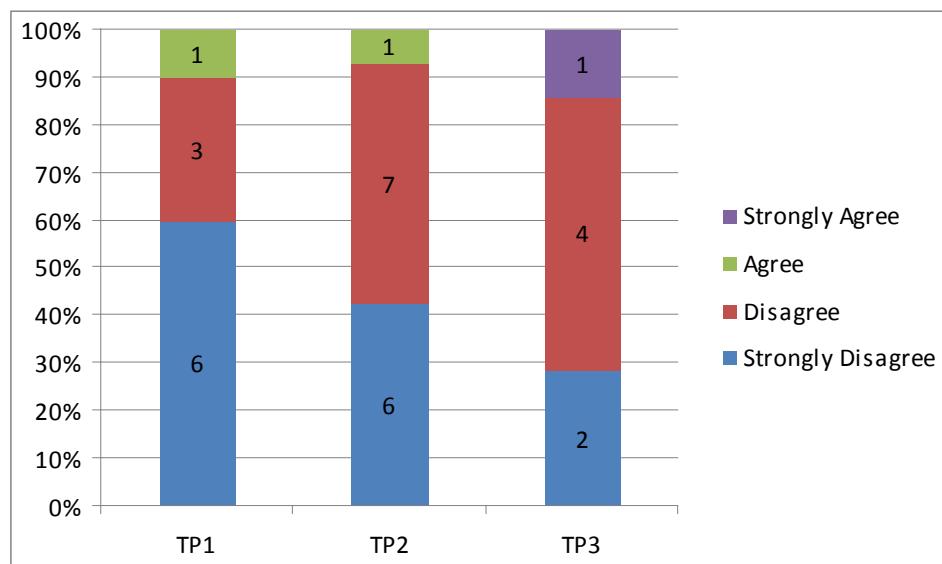
#### **5. Feeling hopeless about the future**

The quantitative data results imply that on average, respondents felt slightly more hopeless about the future by TP3 with an increase from 10% either Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing with the statement “*I feel hopeless about the future*” at TP1 to 14% at TP3. The mean score increased from 1.50 to 2.00 over this time.

However it is important to note that the same client suffering from a chronic physical disability and who solely affected the otherwise 100% of respondents replying in the negative to the statement “*I don’t feel I have much to be proud*

of", was also the only person to respond in the affirmative to the statement "I feel hopeless about my future", also swinging this result away from 100% of respondents Disagreeing or Strongly Disagreeing at TP3.

**Graph 23: Future Outlook: Hopeless for the future**



The qualitative feedback given during interviews also tells a story of clients who believe they have more to be hopeful about since working with their Mentor.

*"I have more enthusiasm now. I'm more socially outgoing"*

*"I'm more optimistic. Lots of things have changed. I feel like I'm moving forward"*

*"(Simon) makes me not want to look back- makes me want to look forward. I go to sleep with a smile on my face and say to myself- yep- I did that today, and I can do it again tomorrow"*

## **6. Discussion of Program Enablers and Challenges**

Key ingredients in the successes of the past two years have been identified as:

- Consistent and intensively individualised approaches to identifying client needs and selecting appropriate resources,
- Building strong relationships with local Indigenous communities and other support services,
- Proactive and ongoing communication with client family members, and
- Employing skilled, authentic and well-respected Indigenous mentors

However, although the data is promising in relation to increased job placements and improved psych-social functioning as a result of these strategies, there are a number of challenges ahead in Year 3.

### **Job Churning**

The disparity between the number of post-placement enrolments compared to the number of 26 week outcomes achieved by IMP clients invites discussion. The following 2 tables show the overall outcomes for both the 35 unique clients and their 45 enrolments in post-placement activity as of 23 May 2014. Of note is the high proportion (29%) of short term work contracts as the cause of clients' employment placements ending.

**Table 3: Post-Placement Outcomes from 45 Enrolments**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Number of enrolment outcomes</b>	<b>% of total post-placement enrolment outcomes</b>
Cycled back into pre-employment activity	19	42%
26 weeks employment achievement	8	18%
Continuing enrolment	8	18%
Exited from the IMP for reasons of geographical relocation, inappropriate enrolment or for other unknown reasons	9	20%
Imprisoned	1	2%
Total	45	100%

**Table 4: Post-Placement Outcomes for 35 Unique Clients**

Outcome	Number of clients	% of unique clients enrolled in post-placement activity
Short-term placements-between 2 and 6 week only contracts	10	29%
Still employed – on track for 13 weeks achievements	8	23%
Achieved 26 weeks employment	8	23%
Moved regions	2	6%
Dropped out of work	4	11%
Asked to leave by employer	2	6%
Went to gaol	1	3%
Total clients	35	100%

The concept of “churning” or job placement “cycling” has been a feature of this program over the past year. An Australian longitudinal study conducted over the past 15 years<sup>ix</sup> would suggest that this is not unusual for young people with the level of disadvantage experienced by IMP clients, finding evidence to suggest an association between “churning” between low-skilled jobs and unemployment and young people under 20 years of age and/ or those with no post-school qualifications.

The extreme youth of IMP clients has already been noted in this report with 58% under the age of 20 years. Young people’s developmental stages may limit their skills in understanding and complying with workplace expectations as well as negotiating their needs being met, leading to premature decisions to leave employment or encouraging employers to end placements. Moreover, of those sampled for the evaluation, although 79% had completed some form of post-school education, 71% had only a Certificate One or Two, which assess minimal knowledge and skill sets for qualified work. The Australian Qualifications Framework actually designates Certificate Two as merely a pathway to further learning as they only require graduates “to demonstrate autonomy and limited judgement in structured and stable contexts and within narrow parameters”<sup>x</sup>.

The BoysTown Indigenous Mentor noted that despite the temporary nature of the outcome, there was still value in short-term employment placements. It was suggested that short-term placements play an important role in building a young person’s credibility as a potential long term employee and that they can:

- increase the content and value of a resume,

- expand the level of skills and knowledge relating to the particular employment area,
- increase employability skills such as learning the importance of getting out of bed on time, budgeting for transport costs and communication skills with employers, and
- give potential employers a contact for references.

However a comparative report prepared for the European Monitoring Centre on Change found that longitudinal studies in several countries show less than 30% of people on temporary contracts translate to permanent employment within one to two years<sup>xii</sup>. Other European research found that short-term or temporary working patterns tend not to facilitate access to permanent jobs for young people, and are much more likely to trap them in precarious “in-and-out-of-work” trajectories<sup>xiii</sup>. Some of the complexity of the situation is that part time and temporary staff may not get sufficient training from companies because they only have short term contracts and therefore they remain under-skilled because they never gain job stability with the training this encourages.

However the nature of work today means that many low skilled positions are short term only<sup>xiv</sup>. This then reinforces the cycle between low-skilled jobs and not working, as short-term jobs can create job insecurity and stress and lead to lower morale and lower productivity<sup>xv</sup> and reduce motivation to continue in the labour market.

For these reasons it would seem important for the Indigenous Mentor to increase the focus on longer-term quality job placements in Year 3. This may also include increasing the level of reverse marketing to potential employers plus actively searching for companies aiming to meet equity and diversity recruitment strategy targets. An opportunity to source longer term employment placements through the recently developed BoysTown Vocational and Educational Training Centre (VTEC) (created under an Indigenous Employment Program funded by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and based in Logan, Queensland) may give the Inala IMP a timely boost.

### **Support Networks**

A common theme once more expressed in this year’s evaluation is the responsibility that Indigenous clients with jobs feel towards their families. Despite the quantitative data in this report indicating that most clients feel supported by family, there were frequent references to family related stressors and the “relief” experienced by those who found jobs in mining regions away from their family homes. For Indigenous young people in particular, the experience of strong cultural expectations to support non-working family members across a range of physical, emotional and financial situations can frequently impact on work responsibilities and set up an exhausting and perpetual dilemma. This predicament adds even further pressures and may impact on the perceived benefits of work, leading some to leave the labour market completely.

The Year 1 report found the same theme of culturally dominant family commitments negatively impacting on job placements and discussed the need for mentors to spend time with family members yarning about how these powerful expectations can decrease their working member’s desire to stay employed. It may be useful for the mentor in Year 3 to not only continue to hold these discussions with family members, but to also raise this quandary with community elders in an effort to determine culturally appropriate ways to address the issue.

### **Communication and Problem Solving skills**

This evaluation noted two possible areas for training and specific mentoring support that may increase the length of employment placements. Despite clients generally reporting strong levels of problem solving skills, the Manager of the IMP noted much time was spent assisting clients to clarify problems and determine possible consequences of alternative actions and/or solutions. The evaluator was informed that common informal performance appraisal discussions and “off the cuff” comments made by employers and other non-Indigenous staff could also frequently lead to misunderstandings and unmet expectations, exacerbated by difficulties on the part of clients in expressing their needs and negotiating accommodations around unexpected non-work related situations. To avoid frustrations over these issues causing clients to leave a job, the IMP may wish to consider expanding in Year 3 on resources currently offered to both employers and employees to address these skill and knowledge deficits.

### **Strong cultural attachments**

The Indigenous Mentor maintained a strong focus during Year 2 on discussing Aboriginal history and culture with Inala clients and encouraging them to learn more about their culture by attending Indigenous specific events, as well as to consider taking up Indigenous specific traineeships and employment opportunities.

*“He has a lot of connections. I want to work in Indigenous employment and it’ll be good for me cause I’ll learn more about my culture”.*

*“Simon helps me to understand my own culture- about the trauma. Even though I don’t look black, being Aboriginal is part of my culture. So it made it hard for me going to an Aboriginal school, feeling my culture deeply, but being bullied for looking white”*

*“There’s the shame factor- he doesn’t make me feel embarrassed. I was ashamed that I was unemployed for so long- I always used to work. But Simon understands the impact of family loss on me and so I wasn’t ashamed around him”*

A positive association has been found between high levels of cultural attachment (categorised as participation in cultural events, cultural identity, language, and participation in traditional economic activities) and labour market participation in Indigenous Australians<sup>i</sup>. A report for NCVER<sup>xv</sup> found that in urban areas Indigenous Australians who participate in cultural events are more likely to have better labour market outcomes and educational achievement. It was suggested that motivation to access the resources that these cultural networks bring may also contribute to successful outcomes.

These reports would strongly reinforce the Indigenous Mentor’s focus thus far on facilitating clients’ own interest in cultural attachments, and support the need for encouraging flexibility in employment placements so that Indigenous employees can have time to attend to some of their cultural obligations.



## **Assessment of Achievement of Key Performance Indicators**

A range of quantitative and qualitative evidence has been documented in this Year 2 evaluation report to indicate the desirability of the BoysTown Inala Indigenous Mentoring Program being rated as a 5 for the quality of their service in engaging young Indigenous Inala people with the labour market.

High levels of connection to the BoysTown Employment Service have been demonstrated in both Years 1 and 2. Twenty one clients have been placed into employment in Year 2 compared to 14 in Year 1. Eight clients have achieved 26 week outcomes this year compared to one in Year 1, with a further eight on track to achieve the 26 weeks in the near future. The trajectory of these achievements indicates the potential for an increasing trend in this community of Indigenous young people becoming not only work-ready, but sustainably employed over the years to come with the support of Indigenous Mentors placed into established youth oriented Employment Services.

Further evidence of the likelihood of this trend occurring has been offered through reporting on the results of IMP client surveys using adapted widely known and validated psychometric tools measuring a range of psycho-social aspects of client functioning associated with sustained employment outcomes. In addition, almost all of the 24 clients interviewed offered their own compelling statements of confidence in their ability to gain employment and their newly found or continuing excitement in envisioning positive futures for themselves.

## **Challenges for Year 3**

To support continued growth in the number of clients succeeding in the employment market a number of areas have been identified during this evaluation for attention by the IMP in Year 3 including:

- a stronger focus on the quality and length of job placements to limit the negative impact on clients of “churning”,
- a stronger focus on reverse marketing with larger companies to identify when companies are aiming to meet agreed government targets for equity and diversity compacts
- development of close links with the BoysTown Vocational and Educational Training Centre (VTEC) created under an Indigenous Employment Program funded by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and based in Logan, Queensland.
- liaising with local indigenous elders to develop culturally appropriate mechanisms to support employed young people with challenging family responsibilities,
- a stronger focus on building understanding between clients and employers in relation to each party communicating their needs effectively and resolving miscommunications,

- addressing the commonly reported difficulty of starting tasks through provision of workshops/ training in overcoming procrastination, and
- a stronger focus on increasing clients' attachment to their culture

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## **Appendix**

BoysTown Employment Services  
Inala Indigenous Mentor Program Evaluation Report Year 1; May 2013