

**ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE BY YOUTH ACTION AT LAW AND SAFETY
COMMITTEE HEARING, 8 MAY 2018**

Question:

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Can you give me some examples of programs that have failed for that reason—programs that we have funded but we no longer fund because there has been a lack of an opportunity to evaluate their effectiveness?

Ms ACHESON: In the diversionary space, not off the top of my head. I think in the employment space there are a number different ones I can think of. I would be happy to look at some of the pilot projects that did not continue because the funding stopped. It is such a consistent thing—it is a regular cycle. Every three years something starts, it is great and then it goes away and then somebody else starts one and it is great and then it goes away.

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I would like to see some examples.

Response:

I'm happy to provide three examples of programs that were not evaluated before they were defunded. We would certainly embrace a model where evaluation funding is included as a component of overall funding for a program. Robust monitoring and evaluation has long been desired by Government and is supported by the sector, NGOs and service delivery agencies. We must ensure that if evaluation funding is included in overall program funding then there is consistency of the measures used to evaluate programs and funded agencies have the training, tools and resources to effectively carry out the evaluations.

Historically, there have been very few programs where the sole focus has been youth crime prevention and diversion in NSW. Commonly the 'diversion' component occurs through early intervention work that can be simultaneously targeting homelessness, mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence or sexual abuse. As a result, not all of the examples I will provide are singularly diversionary or crime-prevention in nature.

Diversionary and early intervention programs come in many shapes and sizes in terms of goals, KPIs and evaluation. For example, Reconnect, run by the Federal Department of Social Services essentially provides an annual fee to a qualified worker to pay for a car and their wage and does minimal evaluation. On the whole it is considered very effective, but evaluation is not really considered part of the setup. Making sure the program will benefit from evaluation is a key consideration from the outset.

Example 1, The Pasifika Support Program NSW – This program was aimed specifically at at-risk young people from a Pacific Islander background between 2005 and 2009. At the time the rates of criminality in that population was very high. An external evaluation of the programs showed that it was largely effective. 65% of participants did not reoffend within 12 months of completing the program. The program drew from local community members who were part of the Pacific Island community and had training, or worked in combination with other trained youth workers. The program was funded by the NSW Department of Community Services but was only funded for four years. Few reasons were given for defunding other than the four year contract ending. Mission Australia have modelled another program - the Youth Crime Prevention Program (YCPP) - in Campbelltown on the successful Pasifika model.

Example 2, Youth Off The Streets - New Pathways Program (Illawarra) – A two year program delivering psychological support to young people aged 13 - 16 year who have suffered sexual abuse or have exhibited problematic sexual behaviours. The program was defunded due to shifting to new model of operation with the Department of Family and Community Services. Between June 2012 and June 2014, 12 young people accessed the program. Four completed the program, four left the program early and four were still in the program. For those involved in administering the program and by anecdotal reports, the program was a good support and dealt with extremely complex cases. The program provided approximately \$288,000 per year per child. There was no formal, external-facing evaluation of the New Pathways Program prior to defunding.

Example 3, Youth Drug Court - Defunded in 2012. The NSW Attorney-General cited evaluations that showed it was not effective, however none of the evaluations were made public and many who were involved with the running questioned whether they happened. The dollar cost for the program was high and it was difficult to tell the value or effectiveness of the 178 young people who graduated from the program over 12 years. An in-depth or external facing evaluation could have shed more light.

There are similarities in each of the three examples. In all cases, defunding was not based primarily on rigorous program evaluation, at least some in the community or the agencies running the program anecdotally thought they were very successful and funding ended due to shifting priorities within Government or a contract simply terminating.