

13 November 2024

Legislative Assembly Questions and ShoreTrack Responses

1. How long has the issue of youth crime been prevalent in your region and why do you think it's continued?

Youth crime has been evident in our region for the past 35 years, but from police reports there are less 'young people on the streets' thanks to the work ShoreTrack are doing. Young people have different learning needs and ways of learning. Those that engage in crime have often been victims of crime or come from a background of trauma, and without positive intervention will be very likely to be perpetrators of crime themselves.

Disengagement from school promotes feelings of failure and the time to be involved in negative behaviours and come to the attention of local police. By providing an alternative learning space which is safe and provides the opportunity to build positive trusting relationships these young people can reengage in learning which is relevant to the careers they want to pursue. With a positive future ahead they develop self-belief, self-efficacy and resilience which enables them to overcome past trauma and break negative cycles and change their lives.

2. With respect to any programs you deliver for young people for which you receive funding:

a. How many programs are you currently delivering and what is each program called?

b. What is the purpose and audience of each program?

First Tracks: focuses on primary program for 10–12-year-olds identified as being at risk of disengagement from school. Currently funded through local primary schools. These young people learn trades skills in small groups like the older students. 50% of this cohort are Aboriginal

Track Back: focuses on high school students who attend between 1 and 5 days per week depending on their level of need and school requirements. Funded by schools on a per person/ per day basis. Young people learn trades and employability skills and workplace expectations in a real work environment which includes time in our STeps social enterprise. 56% of this cohort are Aboriginal.

Certificate II Rural Operations or Agriculture Courses are delivered in collaboration with TOCAL or TAFE NSW provide pathways to employment for early school leavers, 56% Aboriginal. ShoreTrack deliver non-accredited learning in the STeps social enterprise and the RTO delivers accredited training via block or once per week on site at ShoreTrack. The Transition to Work program (Mission) provides a nominal amount of funding for those youth enrolled in their programs who attend ShoreTrack up to 5 days per week, otherwise grant funding or philanthropic donations are used to fund these participants. Currently 8 of these young people are employed as **trainees** by ShoreTrack in our STeps social enterprise as a pilot program to provide a supported, real world learning environment for young people who will transition into employment after completing their Traineeship. The Regional Youth Investment Program and DEWR are currently providing funding for this program. Driving programs focusing on providing P Licence driving hours are funded through the Transport for NSW Community Road Safety Grants Program.

Training Services fund **Industry specific training for school students** through their RIEP programs. These include Girls can Too, STeps to Childcare, and Trades Tasters and provide specific training in industry areas relevant to our local community's skills shortages.

TTW Kempsey: 5 jobseekers engaged in trades and employability skills development programs 1 day per week for 5 weeks. Funded by Mission TTW.

c. How many young people do you have on your books within each of the programs that you deliver?

- First Tracks: 4 this term
- Track Back: 12 this term
- Certificate II Rural Operations: 14 finished last term after a 12-month program
- Certificate II Agriculture: 13 participants for 12 months
- RIEP Girls Can Too: 10 Participants
- RIEP Girl Tradies of the Future: 10 Participants
- TTW Kempsey: 5 participants

d. How many full-time equivalent staff in each program?

Staff to student ratios are 5:1

We employ 6 full time tradespeople (who also provide, and are qualified to deliver, disability and cultural support), 3 part time tradespeople, and 1 part time teacher who work directly with young people.

e. How many days per week are you doing direct engagement with young people in each program?

First tracks and Track Back depend on the level of funding but generally First Tracks is one day per week for 10 weeks and Track Back is two days per week for the school year.

Certificate II participants attend 5 days per week for 40 weeks per year unless they are participating in work experience with an external business.

Trainees work 25 hours per week as per their award.

Industry specific training is either a 2-day intensive or 1 day per week for 5-10 weeks.

f. How many (if any) young people are on waiting lists or have been referred for each program but are not able to be supported at the moment?

Families or organisations without funding or the financial capacity to pay the nominal \$100 for First Tracks or \$120 per day for other programs meant that 35 young people who enquired directly missed out on ShoreTrack programs this year and are on our waiting list. A local school said that they had 50 young people they would refer to ShoreTrack if they had the funding.

3. In your evidence, you said: I just don't think that the school system, the education system, has the capacity to deal with these young people who don't want an academic pathway and they're not learning by sitting in a classroom listening.

What changes would you like to see made in schools and TAFE to meet diverse learning needs and engage at-risk cohorts?

Priorities would be:

- Smaller classes to enable positive, trusting, relationship building and feelings of safety
- Hands on learning, on country, in community.
- Meaningful learning that relates to future employment opportunities- at any age
- Wrap around support including transport, food and time to chat about things.

For TAFE, there is such a focus on compliance, evidence collection and completion of the qualification for funding sake that they forget about the needs of the cohort. TAFE was established for second chance learners who needed pathways to qualifications, the time to learn and build their confidence and then pathway into trades-based qualification when they were ready. The current Smart and Skilled funding model does not allow for this and young people wanting a trades versus academic pathway struggle to complete their courses. This can be compared to ShoreTrack outcomes for 2023-2024 for the Certificate II in Rural Operations we delivered in collaboration with TOCAL. 16 starters, 10 finished the qualification and 13 found work. This does not happen at TAFE.

4. What changes do you think need to be made to funding processes and structures to:

a. encourage collaboration between service providers?

Local organisations are constrained by funding and staffing limitations, and often lack the capacity to provide collaborative opportunities. Additionally, these organisations face stiff competition for limited funding, often competing against each other instead of working together to maximise resources for the community.

b. enable greater flexibility for regional service providers to meet community needs?

Additional funding opportunities that provide sufficient resources for each collaborator to cover their services or even better, funding over longer terms that covers the operational costs or the indirect costs of delivering programs. (see Pay What it Takes Research)

Please note place-based community organisations do work together with the limited resources they have but are frustrated when larger 'service' organisations are funded to outreach to our communities. This is an unsatisfactory arrangement as the outreach does not provide sufficient time or connection to address the issue or even meet all the young people needing this service. The place-based organisations are often the ones who have to address the issues without the necessary funding because they know the community, the kids and the issues.

5. Other stakeholders told the Committee that it's important for a young person's family to be actively involved in their education.

How do you engage with the families of young people you work with?

Because ShoreTrack provide transport to ShoreTrack each day for 90% of the young people attending, trusting relationships between staff and parents and or carers develop over time. We maintain transparent reporting with those people the young people trust to ensure we are on the same page with goals and career pathways and the level of support we can provide. If ShoreTrack, the young person and concerned adults work as a team we can achieve better results for the young person.

What impact does this have on outcomes for young people?

When families, community and ShoreTrack work together to help our young people reengage in learning, provide real work experiences and social and emotional support that is true wrap around support. Connections to employers and work experience opportunities are greater when we all work together.

6. You mentioned that support funding from schools to ShoreTrack 'has been reduced lately'.

Why is this the case and what impact has it had on your operations?

In 2023 the Resources Allocation Management equity funding, contributing to funding required to support our cohort of students to attend ShoreTrack, had been reduced at a State Government level to mitigate teacher shortage and some schools were concerned they could not continue to refer students to the ShoreTrack in 2024. This has come to fruition and has been exacerbated by the May 2024 decision by the NSW Department of Education to pull back education funding from schools and shift funding from school bank accounts to the Department centrally. This was hard felt at ShoreTrack, due to the reduced capacity of local schools to financially support the ongoing attendance of our most vulnerable students, disproportionately from Indigenous background. In terms of the number of disengaged school students referred to ShoreTrack this was seen as a decrease from 25 referrals in 2022 to 10 in 2024.

Yours sincerely



Jillian Ashley

CEO ShoreTrack