

EVALUATION – STAGE 2

To evaluate the success of the second stage of U-Turn – involving the transition from a pilot project to an ongoing project – Mission Australia engaged Suzanne Wheelaghan, a Consultant Social Researcher. As part of her evaluation, Suzanne conducted interviews with participants, family members of participants, representatives from referral agencies and program staff.

Some of the key findings reported by Suzanne include the following:

- only three of the fifteen participants interviewed had re-offended while on the program, and in each case only on one occasion;
- the majority of participants interviewed felt that their family relationships had improved while they were on the program;
- many participants reported that they valued the experience of the graduation ceremony and presenting a vehicle to a victim of motor vehicle theft;
- participants recognised the influence of peers on their behaviour, and had begun to reflect on how they might change this where the influences were negative; and
- completing the course raised the participants' feelings of self-worth and of being valued.

The following quotes demonstrate the impact the program can have on participants:

"It made me realise how bad you'd feel if you car was stolen." (Harry age 15)

"The program has helped me in staying focused on one thing, It's given me confidence to stay with a job once I start it." (Shane, age 16)

"If I'd not done the course I would still be involved in crime and drugs. I don't really associate with people involved in this anymore. I want to get a job, save up and get my own place." (John, age 18).

"He is really proud of the achievements he made, the certificate he got on the course. And I felt he got the support he needed while on the course." (Parent of Jim, age 15).

(NB: Pseudonyms have been used for the participants, not their real names.)

Although the evaluation report is generally very positive, a number of issues are raised for further consideration. These include:

- the length of the course and whether 10 weeks is sufficient time to effectively tackle entrenched patterns of crime and anti-social behaviour;
- the increasing number of participants in the younger age group, with a resulting loss of the benefits associated with having a mixed age range in each course;
- the need to engage more fully with the family members of participants to assist them with any

behavioural issues which are likely to continue after participants complete the program;

- transport problems experienced by participants living in isolated areas; and
- difficulties finding education and/or employment opportunities for some participants on completing the course.

The recommendations contained in the evaluation report are under consideration by Mission Australia and the U-Turn Steering Committee. The current trial of the 14-week course model provides an opportunity to assess whether an increase in course length is appropriate.

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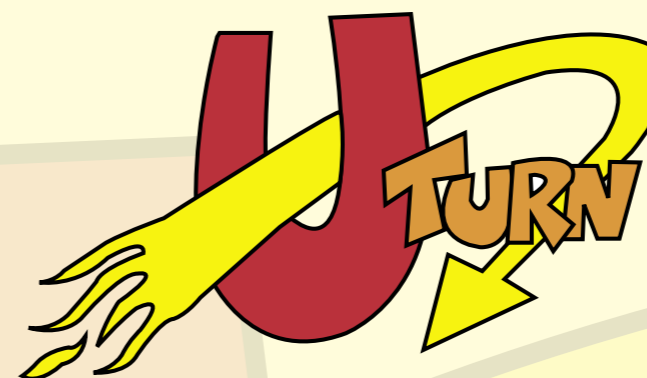
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U-Turn is delivered by Mission Australia under contract to Tasmania Police, and is funded by the State Government.



INTRODUCTION

The U-Turn program has now been in operation for four years, after commencing as a pilot project in February 2003. During this time, 16 courses have been run and 104 young people have graduated from the program.

This year promises to be an exciting and challenging time for the program, with the appointment of new staff members, the addition of a number of program enhancements, and the trial of a 14-week course model to incorporate delivery of the Certificate 1 in Automotive.

The best practice model on which the program is based clearly states that U-Turn is most likely to be effective for young recidivist car thieves who have an interest in cars and mechanics. Therefore, the U-Turn Steering Committee would like to see a renewed focus on the primary target group for the program, young people (male or female) aged 15-20 years with a history of involvement in motor vehicle theft.



A U-Turn participant welding.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROJECTS

At U-Turn participants are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour, and given the opportunity to turn their lives around. The participants work on a community-oriented project, such as repairing a car for presentation to a victim of motor vehicle theft. This enables them to learn about the impact of vehicle theft on victims, and give something back to the community.

At the graduation ceremony for Course 16 in December 2006, the participants presented Mrs Julie Latham with a 1998 Lantra sportswagon, as a replacement vehicle for her 1989 Toyota Lexcen which was stolen in September 2006 and recovered totally burnt out.

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Julie Latham receiving the keys to the Lantra from U-Turn participant Corey.

At the July 2006 graduation ceremony, the participants from Course 14 presented Mrs Kathryn Lazenby with a 1994 Toyota Camry as a replacement vehicle for her 1992 Nissan Pulsar which had been stolen and damaged earlier in the year.



Course 14 participants with Mr Ralph Doedens, Manager RACT Insurance, and Mrs Kathryn Lazenby.

U-Turn is very fortunate to have the support of RACT Insurance, particularly the manager, Mr Ralph Doedens, who is a member of the Steering Committee. Since U-Turn commenced in 2003, RACT Insurance has donated six vehicles to the program, including the Lantra and the Camry.

TARGA 2006

One of the most successful courses to date, in terms of the retention rate and level of enthusiasm, revolved around the entry of a vehicle in Targa 2006 in the non-competitive touring class.

During the event, the participants were responsible for navigating and acting as the support crew for the vehicle, with the U-Turn staff members driving. Four past participants, including one female, acted as peer support mentors for four new participants. Together, the eight young people prepared a Triumph Dolomite Sprint vehicle for entry in the event. The vehicle successfully completed the Targa course and the experience was very rewarding for all concerned.



The Triumph Dolomite in action during TARGA.



Course 13 participants with their beloved car.

PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS

As a 2006/2007 budget commitment, the State Government committed additional funding to the program to enable three enhancements to be made:

1. the appointment of two part-time youth workers/trainers to provide post-course support to U-Turn graduates;
2. the implementation of the Stepping Stones initiative involving the employment of a U-Turn graduate as a youth mentor/trades assistant for three months after each course (four placements per year); and

3. extending the supported accommodation service to accommodate four participants instead of three.

The State Government has also committed ongoing funding to the program until June 2010.

TRIAL OF 14-WEEK COURSE

U-Turn is currently involved in the trial of a 14-week course to try and incorporate delivery of the full Certificate 1 in Automotive, while retaining the challenging offending and life skills components of the course.

To assist with the delivery of the Certificate 1 in Automotive, Mission Australia has purchased the CDX Automotive Training Package. The CDX package is computerised and uses movies and step by step demonstrations to aid participants' understanding of workshop procedures before



A U-Turn participant using the CDX training package

they perform them under the supervision of the mechanical trainers. Assessment tools are built into the package, and the results are recorded electronically which enables the trainers to track performance.

STAFFING CHANGES

There have been some staffing changes at U-Turn.

The U-Turn team recently bid farewell to Troy Mason, the Program Manager, and Rick Goninon, the motor-mechanic trainer. Troy was with the program for nearly three years, and Rick was with the program for nearly two years. The two supported house carers, Mike and Elyse Tamplin, will also be leaving the program when they move to Brisbane in April.

The U-Turn Steering Committee and Mission Australia would like to acknowledge the contribution Troy, Rick, Mike and Elyse have made to the program. Working at U-Turn can at times be very challenging, and the importance of team work and commitment to the participants cannot be overstated.

In addition to the appointment of replacement staff for Troy and Rick, two post-course support workers have been appointed in accordance with the post-course support enhancement to the program.

The new staff members are:

Program Manager – Andrew Verdouw

Andrew has a Bachelor of Arts in Youth Studies from Victoria University, and has been working in the community services field for the past eight years. He has also worked with young people in various organised group volunteer capacities since 1983.

Andrew managed the Salvation Army's residential rehabilitation program for just under five years, and prior to that he worked at Colony 47 in HYPO Housing and Young People's Outreach, and the Colony Outreach Support Service.

Before making youth work and community service his full-time work, Andrew owned and worked in the earth moving industry for 12 years.



Andrew Verdouw, the new program manager

Bruce Phillips – Motor - Mechanic Trainer

Bruce moved to Tasmania 15 years ago from the Sydney area. Prior to moving here, he worked for Qantas and then retrained as a motor mechanic. His previous positions include working for Tassal, repairing all the motors used in the operation of the business.

Bruce has experience working with young people in various settings, including involvement with Operation Drake. This initiative follows the path that Sir Frances Drake took in his voyages with a group of young people from many nations. Bruce has also been involved in a youth training program for unemployed young people, with the aim of returning them to the work force.



The new automotive trainer, Bruce Phillips, pictured with U-Turn participant, Scott.

Cate Poole – Northern Post-Course Support Worker

Cate Poole has taken on the new position of post-course support worker for the North/North West. Cate's role is to provide post-course support to U-Turn participants from the North/North West after they complete the program. She also assists with the recruitment of program participants.

Cate has been working in the youth justice field for 10 years. Her previous positions in this field include: JPET Young Offenders Program, pre/post release Ashley Youth Detention Centre (2004-2006); Ashley Youth Detention Centre (2000-2004); and Inside Out (Victoria) pre/post release program (1996-1999).



Cate Poole, the Northern Post-Course Support Worker.

As transport for her new role, Cate is using a Holden Barina donated to the program by a member of the community. The vehicle was repaired by the participants on course 15.



Course 15 participants polishing the Holden Barina.

Quentin Jones – Southern Post-Course Support Worker

Cate's counterpart in the South of the State is Quentin Jones, who has been involved with U-Turn in various capacities for the past eighteen months. Quentin is an experienced panel beater/spray painter/car detailer, who also has training qualifications.