



YOUTH MENTORING NETWORK

Mentoring Matters: Towards a Sustainable Mentoring Strategy



Mentoring Matters: Towards a Sustainable Mentoring Strategy

Summary

There is wide agreement that mentoring makes a substantial contribution to the social and economic outcomes for young people¹. Mentoring helps young people develop the confidence and the skills they need to make informed choices, and lead fulfilling and productive lives. It is a proven strategy for helping young people to reach their potential in life.

The Youth Mentoring Network (YMN) works with 107 youth mentoring programs across the country, of which approximately 16,000 young people are being assisted by a mentor. However, evidence strongly suggests that by the end of the 2007-08 financial year, 47% of the mentoring programs registered on the Youth Mentoring Network national database will no longer have funding². Funding for another 10% of the programs will have ceased by December 2008³. The evidence unequivocally demonstrates that now is the time to act and for mentoring in Australia to launch from a solid and carefully constructed base, to a widely recognised and successful practice.

To achieve this, a shared commitment needs to be made by a range of stakeholders, both government and non-government. A coherent approach to the ongoing development of youth mentoring is needed to ensure that we maximise the benefits that high-quality and effective mentoring programs can produce.

This proposal has been prepared by the Youth Mentoring Network (YMN). YMN was established eighteen months ago and has played a major role in building stronger mentoring practice, and performance in the field. It is the result of a rare partnership in which four national organisations – The Smith Family, Job Futures, Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia and the Dusseldorp Skills Forum – developed the initial proposal and having committed their own funds invited the Australian Government to come on board as the fifth partner in the group. It provides a national base of collaboration, support, guidance and expertise which ensures that young people are participating in high quality programs.

Government support will need to be comprehensive, rigorous and help build the capacity and sustainability of mentoring programs in order to continue to support young people and to adequately respond to demand. The current Federal Government through the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs have supported mentoring and the work of the Youth Mentoring Network. This support will need to continue and grow to ensure a greater number of mentoring relationships prosper, endure and lead to quality outcomes.

A public commitment of close to \$47M over five financial years is needed to ensure that Australia develops a pool of flexible, high quality mentors, and has the organisational capacity to entrench mentoring as a mainstream practice in our schools and broader society. The follow on effect is that more young people will benefit from the support provided by quality programs. This will assist young people with their personal development, guide them through critical transition phases and engage them in further education, skill development opportunities or the workforce.

Mentoring works!

Mentoring plays a crucial role in supporting young people, and their families to participate as active members of our society. It is a particularly effective strategy to assist young people from vulnerable and 'at-risk' families or disadvantaged backgrounds.

Research has shown that 'a well planned and organised formal mentoring program can provide strong individual support, advice and guidance for the young person and help in practical ways at important transition points in their life'⁴.

Research has also shown that mentoring plays a key role in improving the learning, social and emotional outcomes for a young person: "mentored youth have better attendance and are more connected to their school, schoolwork and teachers."⁵

¹ Dubois, D.L and Karcher, M.J, (2005) 'Handbook of Youth Mentoring', Sage California, USA

² Youth Mentoring Network, (2007) 'Understanding Australian Mentoring Programs', copy in possession of the author.

³ Youth Mentoring Network, (2007) 'Understanding Australian Mentoring Programs', copy in possession of the author

⁴ Hartley, R (2004) Young People and Mentoring: towards a national strategy Young People and Mentoring: towards a national strategy. <<http://www.thesmithfamily.com.au/index.cfm?pageid=2608&pid=2535>>/

⁵ MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership USA - <http://www.mentoring.org/take_action/other/no_child_left_behind.php>

A major study from the US found young people with mentors are:

- 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs
- 27% less likely to begin using alcohol
- 52% less likely to skip school
- 37% less likely to skip a class
- more confident of their performance in schoolwork
- one-third less likely to hit someone
- getting along better with their families⁶

Mentoring is not a stand alone solution to supporting youth. It is a complementary program that becomes part of holistic approach to supporting our young people. There is no “one size fits all model” nor should there be. However, there is evidence that a ‘well planned’ program will contain particular ‘effective elements’ in order to provide a high quality program⁷.

How has the YMN contributed to the success of mentoring in Australia?

- Eight networking forums held across Australia aimed at providing solutions, knowledge sharing and resources on key mentoring issues¹

Networking Forums

Launceston	Perth	Brisbane
Sydney	Melbourne	Adelaide
Newcastle	Gold Coast	

- Five more forums planned for the remainder of 2007
- Over 120 mentoring coordinators trained through the NRGize- *kick-start and strengthen your mentoring program* workshops in 2006
- 90 more mentoring coordinators will be trained in 2007
- 107 youth mentoring programs registered on the YMN national database
- Of which approximately 12,000 young people are engaged in a mentoring relationships
- Over 800 individual members registered on the YMN national database
- Over 500 individuals participated in the review and consultation process of the national youth mentoring benchmarks

⁶ Tierney, J.P., Grossman, J.B., and Resch, N.L. (1995) *Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures

⁷ MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership USA - <http://www.mentoring.org/program_staff/design/elements_of_effective_practice.php>

- YMN works with six locally based (but independent) practitioner support networks promoting collaboration and information sharing amongst local programs and youth services.

Through the website [www.youthmentoring.org.au], organisations and practitioners access quality tools, resources and the latest mentoring research. The Network is a one-stop-shop for quality youth mentoring. It promotes standards and benchmarks to assist programs achieve the best quality service in a safe and nurturing environment.

Website Statistics August 2007

Over 34 000 visitors

40% of visitors use the site more than once a month

Over 800 individual members

107 registered programs

Over 15,000 documents downloaded

The national youth mentoring benchmarks were recently reviewed by a team of experienced practitioners and researchers before being submitted to a public consultation process. Over 500 people from the youth and mentoring fields participated in the process. The benchmarks are evidence that the Australian mentoring sector is maturing and consolidating its place within an established international community.

Regional Networks:

Victorian Youth Mentoring Alliance (CBD & Regional Vic)

Hunter Youth Mentoring Collaborative (NSW)

W.A Mentoring Alliance (Perth based)

Macarthur Youth Mentoring Network (Western Sydney)

Gippsland Mentoring Alliance (Regional Victoria)

South Australian Mentoring Network (Metro Area)

What needs to be done to improve youth mentoring practice and ensure that mentoring achieves its full potential?

After eighteen months of extensive work in the field, YMN believes there are four key issues that must be addressed if youth mentoring is to assist more young people in achieving their full potential:

1. Support for quality mentoring - while mentoring programs rely on volunteers, they need to be underpinned by quality training, systems and support to achieve results
2. Communication frameworks - current communication between organisations involved in mentoring needs to be improved to ensure shared expertise, quality standards of practice and quality program delivery.
3. Monitoring tools - current arrangements for research and evaluation are inadequate.

Increased rigour in research and evaluation will ensure that Government investment goes where it can maximise impact.

- Administration of Funds –the current funding needs to be strengthened to allow for sustainability of programs and the opportunity to work collaboratively.

The Australian Government investment needed over the next five years

In order to progressively recruit, screen, train and coordinate 20,000 mentoring pairs over the next five years, four elements are required:

1. Mentoring Development Costs

Financial support for mentoring development [based on costs @ \$1,500/ per matched pair which includes recruitment, screening, training, travelling, independent assessment, matching process according to the Australian Benchmarks, assessment of the young person,

policy development]. (Does not include coordinator costs)

2. Program Development and Delivery Fund

Annual grant program for professional coordination and sustainability of mentoring programs [\$5M pa].

3. Research

Increased research and evaluation of mentoring to determine maximum impact opportunities for assisting young people and developing best practice [\$100K pa].

4. Grant to YMN

Support for the further development of the Youth Mentoring Network, consistent with the YMN's strategic plan [\$250,000 pa]. Including a provision for a National Conference [one-off grant of \$250,000 in 2008-09].

Financial Year	Number of New Mentoring Pairs	1.Mentoring Development Costs \$'000	2.Program Development and Delivery Fund* \$'000	3. Research \$'000	4. Grant to YMN \$'000	Total \$'000
2007-8	300	450			250	700
2008-9	1,700	2,550	2,500	100	500	5,650
2009-10	4,000	6,000	5,000	100	250	11,350
2010-11	8,000	12,000	5,000	100	250	17,350
2011-12	6,000	9,000	2,500	100	125	11,725
TOTAL	20,000	30,000	15,000	400	1,375	46,775

* Funding in addition to existing Mentor Marketplace funding commitments to June 2009.

A broad range of models are included within this proposal: School-based, work-based, community-based, long-term and medium-term, Indigenous focus, etc.

Why should Government contribute?

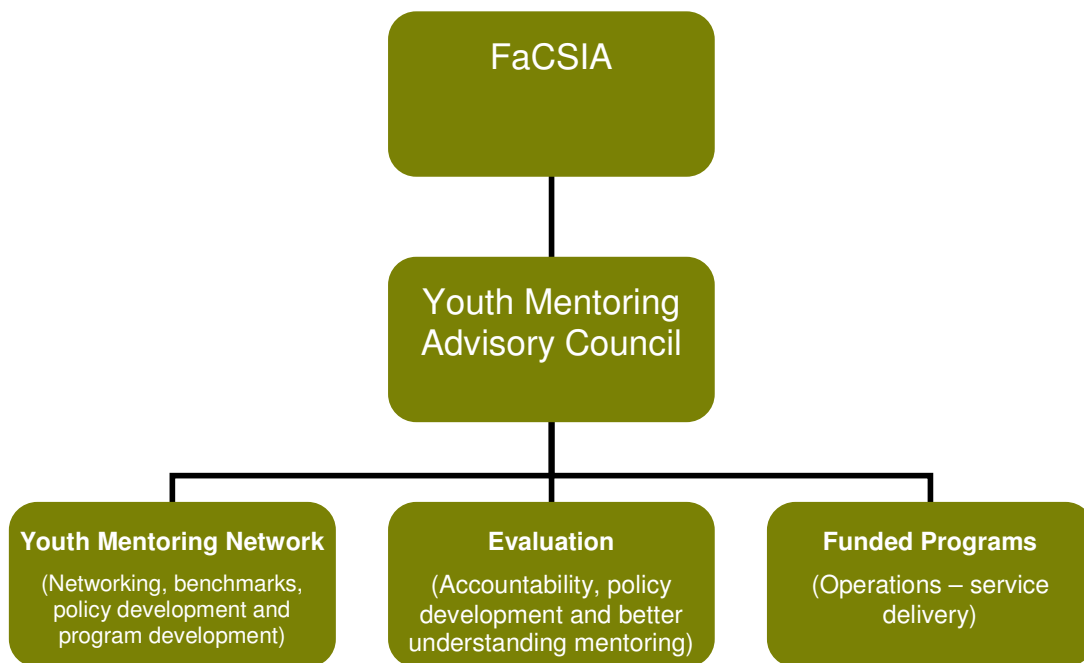
- “In today’s knowledge society, mentoring plays a critical role in supporting disadvantaged young people and their families to participate as active members of our community. The opportunity to provide knowledge and experience has also proven extremely rewarding for the mentors themselves.” **Elaine Henry – CEO The Smith Family**
- “Social cohesion is looming as a major social issue confronting Australia over the coming years. Mentoring tackles this issue head on. Mentoring is able to respond to the individual needs of young people and provides a legitimate and effective response to feelings of isolation, loneliness and rejection. Such intervention requires a whole of community response including governments, organisations, business and individuals. Governments’ supportive role in this is essential.” **David White – CEO Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia Ltd and Chair of the National Youth Mentoring Partnership**
- “Too many young people lack the personal support they need to make their way through education, training and into satisfying work. Mentoring can help young people navigate these pathways so that they don’t disengage. Mentoring is as important to our economic future as it is to each individual who benefits.” **Lisa Fowkes – CEO Job Futures**
- “Mentoring is one of the more valuable ways in which a young person can be personally supported in understanding the life choices available to them and acting upon them. It is particularly important to those young people at risk of leaving school early.” **Jack Dusseldorp – Executive Chair, Dusseldorp Skills Forum**



Administration of proposed 'Program Development and Delivery Fund'

It is proposed that the Mentoring Development Program will be administered by FaCSIA as a re-vamped Mentor Marketplace funding structure. The proposed model would see FaCSIA being advised by a National Advisory Committee on the appropriate distribution of funds. This structure would encourage collaboration, support, guidance and expertise across the field.

Proposed management structure for the Program Development and Delivery Fund



This document was created by the non-government partners of the National Youth Mentoring Partnership. The non-government partners would like to acknowledge the support of FaCSIA, the fifth member of the partnership, towards the Youth Mentoring Network and its work.

Pictures courtesy of Big Brothers Big Sisters Melbourne