



# YWCA Darwin Parenting Support Program

## An example of effective early interventions for young parents and their children.

YWCA Darwin has been providing services and support through early interventions to young parents and their children for over 17 years. The YWCA Parenting Support Program (PSP) understands that young parents are faced with an array of challenges during this period of their lives. “Young parents face the challenge of meeting not only their own developmental needs at a time of significant growth, but also the needs of their children”(Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2010, p.1). The PSP program has responded with a variety of interventions to the needs of both young parents, and their children and acted as a catalyst for growth and positive life outcomes.

<p><b>The YWCA PSP is sensitive to the needs of young parents when designing and delivering programs and services. These needs have been addressed through interventions such as:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitated a six week anger management course to increase the young mothers skills and knowledge to effectively communicate and understand anger.</li> <li>• Delivered a comprehensive program to support young mothers in gaining skills and knowledge to support them in their role as parents.</li> <li>• Provided and facilitated weekly play based activities which encourages, imaginary cognitive, social and emotional development.</li> <li>• Provided a range of activities to strengthen their parenting skills development, including peer support and community connections.</li> <li>• PSP has provided some young mothers and their babies with items such as clothing, disposable nappies, and feminine items to ensure their basic needs are met.</li> <li>• Supported parents to gain their First Aid Certificate</li> <li>• Providing transport for the young parents to attend educational and community events</li> <li>• Provide nutritional breakfast and lunches to the young parents who attended the Certificate II in Community Services course</li> </ul>
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PSP promotes a safe environment that encourages self-improvement and peer support, reflective of a strengths based foundation and as a result, highlights empowerment, which is also a vital element of the YWCA's vision.

<p><b>The PSP program works collaboratively with local groups, and other YWCA services including the Women of Worth (WoW) Program and the Domestic and Family Violence Centre (DFVC). Last year this collaborative approach delivered a structured six week Anger Management Program, incorporating a range of services results included:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influencing participant's willingness to engage in group discussions</li> <li>• Facilitated open informal conversations</li> <li>• Encouraged peer support and networking</li> <li>• Provided individual case management opportunities</li> <li>• Participants reported an overall increase of skills to effectively manage their anger and confidence in responding appropriately.</li> <li>• The participants developed their own individual safety plan and practiced mindfulness and breathing exercises.</li> </ul>
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### **DriveSafe NT – becoming more economically secure**

The PSP participants identified during the evaluation of “Young Mothers are Strong Mothers” that not holding a driver’s licence was a significant barrier in obtaining their individual vocational goals. The PSP also recognise that accessibility to services is a challenge for many young parents and a driver’s licence would assist them to access key services. In direct response to this, PSP consulted with the young mums and facilitated appointments with 10 young mums, providing transport, along with emotional support and covering the total cost for the application of the DriveSafe NT. This was well received by not only the young mothers but also by other Government and Non-Government agencies working in the area of vulnerable families and children.

<p><b>The DriveSafe NT Program supports learner drivers by providing an opportunity to develop the appropriate skills and knowledge to drive safely. The DriveSafe NT program provides participants with:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face to face learner driver education, assessment and licensing</li> <li>• Subsidised driving lessons with registered driving instructors;</li> <li>• Competency based driving behavior and skills assessment by registered instructors/assessors;</li> <li>• Incentives to encourage program completion and support supervised driving practice</li> <li>• Standardised contemporary driver training course and materials.</li> </ul>
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## **BABYFAST NT Program - strengthening pathways to safe and effective parenting**

The YWCA PSP identified a need and provided support for client to access BabyFAST NT. YWCA PSP supported 6 mothers and 8 children to access the community program at the TATA Centre in Karama. This support included logistical, emotional and practical support to the young mums so that they can fully participate in the BabyFAST sessions.

**The sessions were evaluated by the facilitator and all participants provided feedback. The summary of outcomes was:**

- 100% of parents interviewed reported high satisfaction with the Program.
- 100% of parents interviewed reported to have learned new things from attending the FAST program.
- 100% of parents interviewed reported positive changes in themselves and/or their families as a result of attending Baby FAST”
- “I now give my children activities to do at home which helps their brain development i.e singing, dancing, sports, body contact.”
- “My daughter used to only stick with me, but now she has learnt to share and play with others”

## **Young Mother are Strong Mothers – strong and successful connections to Education, Health, Child Care and Community**

The PSP partnership with the Department of Education, Department of Health, Batchelor Institute of Tertiary Education and Child Australia), in the “Young Mothers are Strong Mothers” project was highly successful and 11 young mums educational goals were actualised when they completed formal qualification in CHC20112 - Certificate II in Community Services.

YWCA PSP provided emotional, logistical support, which assisted in supporting the young mothers to build confidence while developing new concepts and skills.

The “Young Mothers are Strong Mothers” education program was tailored to meet the learner’s individual needs, so that the babies and toddlers could accompany their mothers, and also provided a healthy breakfast and lunch to the participants. The program staff provided a total of **75** hours classroom support to the young mums to access the Young Mothers are Strong Mothers program during this reporting period. A further **30** hours of logistical support was provided to assist the young mothers and their babies to attend the education program at the Palmerston Family Day Care Centre.

## Individual support Interventions

PSP provided 21 young mums and their children individual support Interventions between July and December 2016. A comprehensive case plan is implemented, monitored and reviewed in consultation with the clients to ensure their individual goals are met. The Case Workers provide effective interventions and recognises the challenges which can have considerable impact to a young person's life. The young women are faced with a number of adversities including disconnection to education and employment pathways and many have experienced trauma and domestic violence and social isolation and stigma. T

<p><b>The PSP staffs recognise and understand the extra complexity experienced by the clients who access the service and are committed to improving their capacity by providing advocacy, support and referrals. There were 102 referrals made to specialist services including:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community family services</li><li>• Other YWCA programs</li><li>• Child care agencies</li><li>• Centrelink</li><li>• Medical services including GP's, mental health services, child and maternal health care services.</li><li>• Services offering emergency relief funds</li><li>• Legal services</li><li>• Housing services</li><li>• Immigration service</li><li>• Financial counselling services</li><li>• Family and domestic violence services</li><li>• Alcohol and other drug services</li><li>• Employment and education services.</li></ul>
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The Parenting Support Program runs a successful weekly Peer Support Learning Group where young parents and their children come together in an inclusive and supportive environment.

After consulting with the parents the Parenting Support Program responded directly to their needs and during these group sessions an external service was invited deliver an information session aimed at this demographic and their specific requirements.

<p><b>The subjects that have been covered over the last 6 months include:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employment Opportunities</li><li>• Alcohol and other Drugs</li><li>• Child Health and Development</li><li>• Healthy Relationships</li><li>• Sexual Health</li></ul>
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During this time the Parents also completed a 123 Magic and Emotional Coaching Course. The children are offered a range of developmentally appropriate educational based play activities that include; imaginative play, singing, outdoor and free play and art and craft activities. The Program has received great feedback from these groups and parents have reported an increase in their confidence and skills in many significant areas.