The Murri Youth Sector in Queensland

March 2011

Cover artwork by Gavin Tyson

The Murri Youth Sector in Queensland
FINAL REPORT AND YOUTH SECTOR DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Contents

Foreword

AS THE PEAK body for the youth sector in Queensland, Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ) has been advocating for a systemic approach to the development and maintenance of our workforce. This report outlines the first steps we have taken to bring together youth workers, employers, government and education/training providers in order to explore youth sector workforce issues. This research will provide the youth sector with the opportunity to collaborate with other key stakeholders in the implementation of the recommendations ensuring a vibrant and sustainable youth sector that protects and promotes the rights of Murri young people.

YANQ undertook extensive lobbying to ensure that this project could focus solely on Murri organisations and Murri workers who work with young people. YANQ acknowledges the unique Murri cultural approach to working with young people. We are interested in learning more from the Murri community by facilitating processes which will allow all youth work to be informed and shaped by the strength of Murri cultural values and practices.

YANQ is committed to making sure this report remains alive and is utilised by youth workers, employers, government and education/training providers in planning processes at all levels. Further validation of the report's findings will need to take place across Queensland to ensure regional variables are identified and to engage local level partners in shaping local action plans.

There is an urgent need for further discussion and debate within the youth sector and with government decision makers so that various issues identified in this research can be appropriately responded to. YANQ is committed to facilitating these discussions so youth work can get the recognition and support it deserves amongst the community service sector and in the broader community.

YANQ would like to thank the Department of Employment & Training for funding this research project. YANQ would also like to acknowledge the various Murri communities that we visited during the research, our Murri project interviewers, survey respondents, youth workers and managers who attended focus groups, forums and various youth inter-agencies who helped the research group in so many ways. Special thanks also to the project Steering Group and the Industry Reference Group both of who provided guidance and assistance to YANQ throughout the project.

As well as providing a starting point and benchmark for the sector, this reports sets the scene for further discussion and collaboration on youth sector workforce issues. The report provides the evidence needed by the youth sector to seek further resources to support its development at a state wide level. YANQ will also use the research findings to form partnerships in regional Queensland and begin the task of reshaping the youth sector across Queensland.

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The Murri Youth Sector in Queensland
FINAL REPORT AND YOUTH SECTOR DEVELOPMENT PLAN

youth affairs network qld

THE *MURRI YOUTH Sector in Queensland* report outlines the conduct and findings of a significant research project undertaken with Murri youth services in three parts of Queensland. It presents a summary of themes and draws attention to some of the possibilities for future actions and research that have emerged from an evidence base that has not previously been documented on the profile and demographics of this sector.

The Youth Services Workforce Skilling and Training project explored workforce development issues and topics with the Department of Communities and Reconnect funded youth services workforce in south west and south east Queensland. The Murri project complements this report by focusing on the Murri youth sector services in the Central, North West, and Brisbane and Cherbourg areas of Queensland. *The Youth Sector in Queensland* was published by YANQ in February 2010 containing the data and findings from general youth services and presenting a broad youth sector development plan.

This report captures the data and findings generated from engagement and research with Murri youth services across the last 2 years and covers:

- **Findings** - presents data gathered
- **Key Themes** – outlines the major themes that have emerged as recommendations from the evidence
- **Youth Sector Development Plan**- captures recommendations and strategies that can be validated with other regions across the state.

Youth Affairs Network of Queensland Inc (referred to as YANQ throughout this report) has spent several years advocating in relation to the need for a youth sector development strategy in Queensland and lobbying for funding towards this end, supported by the Health and Community Services Workforce Council, and based on the need for strategic and systemic approaches to developing the workforce at a sector and industry level. Eventually funds contributed by the Department of Education (referred to as DET throughout this report) and topped up by the Department of Communities, Office for Youth were provided to YANQ in early 2009 for the Youth Sector Workforce Skilling and Training Project that resulted in the report entitled *Youth Sector in Queensland*. Despite funding limitations, the project outcomes go a long way towards the goal of addressing systemic workforce development needs by creating an evidential platform to build and support a vibrant and sustainable youth sector workforce that protects and promotes young people's rights that can be presented to other regions across Queensland for validation or adaptation.

YANQ also received funding to conduct a second project, the *Murri and Torres Strait Islander Youth Sector Skilling and Training Project* referred to as the Murri project throughout this report. Data generated through that project forms the basis of this report. Respecting the diversity within Murri cultures and between Murri people required designing, structuring and resourcing appropriate participation models that inform engagement strategies and influence how individual people are valued. Collection and analysis of qualitative data was required to complete the picture for this part of the workforce.

In May 2009 an Industry Reference Group was formed comprising youth sector workers, Peaks, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and Universities to act as a think tank for the projects, providing guidance and advice regarding the methodology, implementation and final report. A sub committee was also formed to provide direct advice and guidance regarding the Murri and Torres Strait Islander project.

A major outcome of the project has been to gather data that creates a profile of the Murri youth sector workforce. While not all regions across Queensland were targeted due to funding constraints, the information generated has created an evidence based picture that has never existed and that acts as a platform to inform workforce development strategies at a skilling and policy level and as a benchmark to measure their effectiveness.

The Murri Queensland youth sector workforce has more males at 53% than the highly feminised general youth service sector with over 70% females and they are slightly older. Murri workers and managers have been
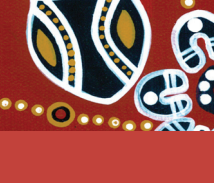
Executive Summary

in the youth sector slightly longer than non Murri workers with 40% of youth workers identifying they have been in the sector for two years or less compared with 50% of workers in general youth services however the number of people with qualifications is less and the number with Bachelor degrees or higher is greatly reduced at 12% compared with 50% in the general project. As with the general project, managers in Murri youth services are quite experienced with all managers indicating they have been in the sector for 5 years or more creating a wonderful solid and sustainable platform on which to build workforce development strategies and opportunities that can be readily implemented in workplaces.

Leading and being part of change in the community is a strong driver for workers and managers when choosing positions in the sector. Providing culturally appropriate youth work is a key driver for workers in the sector as is working with their 'own mob' in many instances. Values are a key driver in recruitment decisions and in attracting workers to the sector however wage levels create the greatest barriers to both recruitment and retaining staff along with career paths and attrition of staff to government and the private sector. Workers anecdotally report that access to appropriate training delivered by Murri trainers and in consultation with local communities is limited or non existent and any future skilling strategies need to successfully incorporate these factors. Future themes for young people do not veer far from current issues and problems of homelessness, drug and alcohol and mental health issues.

Key themes and recommendations:

From the data generated and through advice and direction from the Industry Reference Group (IRG) and Murri sub -committee a number of key strategies emerged that sit within the broad recommendations already outlined in the Youth Sector Development Plan. The recommendations that will contribute to and support development of the workforce in the general and Murri youth sector are:

• Strengthen youth sector strategic capacity for workforce development
• Strengthen partnership with government
• Create a responsive training and skilling system
• Define and promote the youth services sector
• Design and implement attraction and retention strategies
• Develop cultural awareness
• Develop sector capacity to work with mental health matters.

Strategies that will contribute to implementation of recommendations have been drafted into the Youth Sector Development Plan that appears at the end of this report. Some strategies relate to both the general and Murri youth sector, while some specific topics have been developed through the course of the Murri project.

The strategies will be used as part of the basis for validation processes with a Murri subcommittee and in other regions across Queensland. YANQ will lead engagement processes to allow youth sector members and other stakeholders in regions across Queensland to compare workplace profile findings against their own regions and develop the remainder of the youth sector development plan relevant to their regions and based on existing projects and possible alliances. The end result will be a Murri Youth Sector Development Plan with regional appropriate strategies that has been developed and is owned by the sector.

Both projects, while limited in scope and findings, position the Queensland youth sector to implement strategies that will build the current and future workforces. The health and community services sector is the third largest employer in the state and meeting current and future workforce needs is at times complex and difficult due to the varying drivers for skilling such as funding, policy and regulation. Current federal initiatives under the COAG reform agenda, Skilling for the Future and the Award Modernisation process outline priorities in workforce management, planning and skilling and, in particular, meeting needs of Murri and Torres Strait Islander people towards closing the gap. Q2 provides aspirational targets within Queensland to support growth and lead the smart state agenda with major goals including an increased uptake of higher education and VET

qualifications and skilling priorities for Murri and Torres Strait Islander people. While issues identified are not isolated to the youth sector alone, the outcome from these projects inform specific strategies to grow the state's youth sector in line with these initiatives and as it intersects with other sectors such as the community mental health and homelessness sectors.

There is still work to be done in developing a sector wide understanding of workforce planning and development including with government however these projects have initiated this process. It will be important to initiate and implement activities identified through this project to draw on the energy created through its implementation and continue to develop this understanding building on a sense of partnership and collaboration to ultimately provide quality services to young people. The apparent division between the non-government service delivery sector and government as policy makers and drivers seems to be exacerbated by the view that government is able to attract experienced workers away from the sector and an artificial divide is created that must be overcome to achieve quality outcomes. Working together on strategies emerging through these projects provides a vehicle for such collaboration.
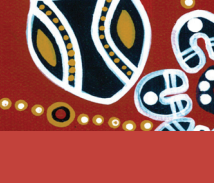
How to Navigate this Report

This report is divided into three main sections that mirrors *The Youth Sector in Queensland* report. While the data and discussion contained within can be read as standalone information it can also be compared and contrasted to the general report where useful and relevant.

Section One: provides an introduction to the project and describes the methodology and project limitations, setting the context for the findings from this report.

Section Two: details the findings from the Murri youth sector project in Queensland. It includes data and analysis from the workforce profile survey, interviews and forums. This section has been broken into eight parts to arrange connected topics. The first three parts 1-3 cover broad workforce data, parts 4-7 cover specific key topics and the final section 8 identifies future trends and themes.

Section Three: summarises the key themes that have emerged and contains the recommendations and broad strategies for the Youth Sector Development Plan that will be further developed through an engagement and validation process across Queensland.

Acknowledgements

The consultants

John Flanagan and Tracey Acton were contracted by YANQ to design and implement the projects in conjunction with the Industry Reference Group and the Steering Group. Both John and Tracey have extensive experience working in the youth sector in Queensland, in team and organisational development, writing training and learning resources and implementing workforce development initiatives.
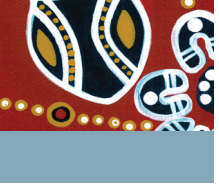
Introduction

SINCE 2006, YANQ has been working with the Health and Community Services Workforce Council to advocate and lobby for funding to develop a Youth Sector Workforce Development Strategy for Queensland that would recognise the vital and unique role played by this sector in supporting young people across Queensland and assist in preparing the sector for the future through targeted skilling and other development strategies.

In early 2009, Department of Education and Training provided funds directly to YANQ to conduct, the *Murri and Torres Strait Islander Youth Sector Skilling and Training Project* referred to as the Murri project throughout this report. Data generated through that project forms the basis of this report. Respecting the diversity within Murri communities required designing, structuring and resourcing appropriate participation models that inform engagement strategies and influence how individual people are valued. Collection and analysis of qualitative data was required to complete the picture for this part of the workforce.

Further DET funds were contributed to the Office for Youth, Department of Communities to enable YANQ to receive funding support to undertake a *Youth Services Workforce Skills and Training Project*. The level of available funding was less than that sought to implement an effective two year workforce development strategy and impacted on the time frame and scope of the project. Capacity was limited to the inclusion of only two regions within Queensland and only those youth services funded by Department of Communities and Reconnect services impacting on the depth of data that could be considered in the timeframe.

However both projects go some way towards the goal of addressing systemic workforce development needs by creating a platform to support initiatives towards a vibrant and sustainable youth sector workforce that protects and promotes young people's rights.

The Queensland Government *Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland* platform with its 2020 vision for the state contains five key areas of focus; strong economy, smart, green environment, healthy and fair communities. This statement provides the framework to inform government priorities and initiatives towards 2020 and provides the policy guideposts in which to situate workforce development initiatives such as this project. 'Three out of four Queenslanders will hold trade, training or tertiary qualifications by 2020' provides a key message and avenue for workforce development initiatives in the area of 'smart' Queenslanders (www.thepremier.qld.gov.au).

Identified strategies to meet this target include funding and delivering flexible, high quality, post-school training, matching the provision of training places to the skill needs of particular regions and increasing the number of vocational education and training places available to Queenslanders. Recommendations and strategies that relate to skilling and training for a 'smarter' youth services sector that support healthy and fair communities have been identified through the recommendations developed during the projects outlining key government roles in working towards these goals and the place of industry and organisations to support workforce skilling.

In addition, the *Queensland Compact: Towards a fairer Queensland* recognises the contribution of the Non-Profit Community Services Sector to a "Fair Queensland", in delivering services to vulnerable people, and promoting opportunities for Queenslanders to contribute to their communities through volunteering. Both of the Youth Sector Development Plans contribute directly to implementing aspects of the Compact through each of the four goals. In particular, improving engagement and in planning and policy through participation and engagement of service providers and evidence based decision making through the provision of information about the youth sector and improving the sector's capacity and sustainability towards a strong and competent workforce.

Relevant Australian Government priorities that are evident through the COAG Reform Agenda and the Productivity Agenda include the national commitment to close the gap on Murri disadvantage including a newly agreed on target of halving the gap in Murri employment outcomes within a decade. COAG discussion on further measures to overcome Murri disadvantage and the importance against the background of the global economic and financial crises have included bolstering education, training and re-training efforts. Vocational

education and training reform currently features in a COAG workplan which includes increasing the level of investment in nationally-accredited training and ensuring the training system, and the products of the training system, are responsive to the needs of individuals, businesses and industry.

The Australian Government has also re-affirmed the importance of young people and the youth sector through re-establishing a youth portfolio through the Office For Youth within the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and appointing a Minister for Youth. The role of the federal Office For Youth is to ensure that there is a coordinated approach to youth affairs across government. A major initial priority as announced on the DEEWR website is to establish baseline data that will capture policies and programs that are youth-specific and those that are not specific to youth but have a significant impact on young people. This process will present a comprehensive picture of efforts and resourcing being directed to youth affairs across the Government and assist to identify potential gaps and areas for future attention. A Melbourne based group has recently been contracted to commence a national youth workforce development project.

An evidence base that has not previously been documented on the profile and demographics of the Department of Communities funded youth services workforce and parts of the Murri youth sector has been created through these projects. The findings provide insight into parts of the Queensland youth sector and the strategies in the resulting Youth Sector Development Plan have been geared towards compatibility with broader state and commonwealth government goals.

This report provides a summary of the data gathered, key themes that emerged and recommendations that can be used to inform skilling and workforce development initiatives. Service providers in project target regions have been engaged to provide information and insight about the sector and suggestions about future needs, considerations and directions. A crucial next stage involves YANQ leading a sector engagement process to allow regional review and comparison of data to enhance the evidence base and create the opportunity for regional stakeholders to validate workforce development strategies.

The Report and Youth Sector Development Plan:
- develops a baseline picture of the Murri youth sector workforce for the identified target groups against which capacity and future workforce development strategies can be measured
- identifies important issues that impact on the development of the youth sector workforce
- identifies areas for further research and discussion towards systematic development of the youth sector
- provides a picture and strategies and recommendations that can validated across all regions in Queensland to strengthen the rigour of the data and ensure regional variations and characteristics can be integrated into the plan.

The project involved:
- **researching literature** about youth workforce skill development and vocational education and training requirements and products across Australia as well as internationally;
- **collecting some data** on the current skills, competencies and qualifications of Murri youth workers
- **projecting future skills** needs in line with young people's needs, government priorities and contemporary practice frameworks;
- **beginning to identify preferred models** and potential alliances to support skill development.

The project was designed to create opportunities for the respective targeted youth services' workforce to be engaged through surveys, workshops and discussions about the viability and sustainability of a vibrant youth sector in Queensland. This approach is based on the premise that sector engagement will ensure that a plan is developed by the sector, for the sector, paving the way for successful implementation of the plan. A key starting point was to gather data and create a profile of the sector in order to level further research and initiate projects that will work towards sustainable outcomes based on a clear and current benchmark.
To maximise potential outcomes, the project was designed to consider youth sector development needs in the broader context of workforce development. Contemporary concepts of workforce development
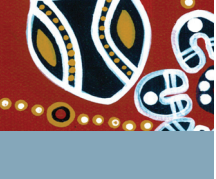
provide a framework for organisations, industry and the government to systematically approach industry or sector wide development. While workforce development typically incorporates the traditional focus of developing a workforce through training and professional development opportunities, it locates these type of strategies within a broader organisational and system approach that takes into account the range of factors that can impact on workforce capacity and effectiveness including, but greater than the individual and their development needs in their current role, to building capacity of the sector overall. Typical workforce development approaches consider systemic issues such as social, cultural, political and economic context, status and profile of the sector, size and organisations of the sector, job role and design, recruitment and retention, along with training and professional development and focus on both current and future workforce.

A hybrid systems approach to workforce development takes into account aspects of a number of models by considering both current and future workers across individual, organisational and system layers to analyse the situation and then develop strategies and planning for the future for individuals, organisations and the sector. Listed in the table below are some of the areas contained within each layer as they apply to current or future workforce.

Workforce Development Areas			
	System	**Organisational**	**Individual**
• **Current and Future Workforce**	• Policy • Legislation • Funding • Criteria for employment • Resources • Links with education providers • Research and evaluation	• Development of organisational policies, procedures and culture that support quality service delivery • Organisational capacity to recruit, retain and support staff • Career paths • Job design • Supervision • Mentoring support • Induction and orientation	• Motivation • Stress and burnout • Job satisfaction • Individual capacity and competency • Access to professional development • Access to effective team work
Underpinning Values: good practice, effective strategies and sustainability			

The project have gone some way towards identifying issues and themes more broadly than training needs and attempted to capture sector development needs of both current and future workforce.

Impact of Timeframe Parameters

It is widely acknowledged in similar community sector workforce development projects that genuine engagement of stakeholders in dialogue about workforce planning needs takes some time as busy people connect with and understand the broader workforce development agenda. Coupled with the desire to implement a culturally appropriate process in gathering data, this has had an impact on the overall project time frame.

It is the view of the consultants that the sector needs to 'warm up' to providing detailed, well thought through information about skilling and training particularly in relation to existing and required skills and competencies that are based on organisational, programs sector and industry requirements not immediate day to day operational needs. This data also needs to be considered and provided in the context of a broader understanding of the sector overall and projected future trends.

Time frames have been extended in the Murri project to allow greater data collection and depth to emerge providing a better picture of the state of play in the youth services sector in this area. The project has provided an important step towards engaging with and preparing the sector for more detailed research and discussions to provide detailed information in some areas.

Target group and definition of the youth sector

The general project target group was defined through both funding program and geographical boundaries. The limited funding, timeframe and project scope as defined through the funding agreement meant that only two geographical locations in Queensland have been included in the data and profile. While they encompassed urban, metropolitan and regional areas, both were located in the south of the state.

The target group for the Murri project was less defined in that it included Murri specific organisations providing services to young people; however the origin of the funding was not a defining characteristic and project interviewers assisted in identifying the target group services through local knowledge and contacts. A 'final' number of target group services was not reached in order to compare number of participants against overall target group however a reasonable number of services were engaged in order to provide some data on which to build. Definition of the youth sector also takes on an added dimension given the cultural consideration of working with family and the concept of youth.

An issue raised in the IRG also related to the 'narrow' definition of youth service providers created through this definition given the broad range of organisations providing services to young people that are funded through other means and government departments. Ongoing discussion has occurred at the IRG level about who is the youth sector, how this is determined and what it means for a systematic workforce development strategy. It was identified that the term young people and with whom youth workers can work is becoming more and more defined by funding agreements (constraints) with the effect being the loss of the 'generalist' youth worker and a move towards specialisations that may actually be contributing to a reduced sense of a 'youth sector'. The question was raised in relation to the layering of terms over time to describe the current realities and if it is perhaps more accurate to refer to youth work as youth centred practice and that the target for workforce planning is those who engage in youth centred practice. While a defining characteristic remains those who work for the benefit of and towards outcomes for young people, the importance of talking about and identifying defining characteristics of the 'sector' was highlighted.

Qualitative vs Quantitative

In choosing a heavily qualitative approach the intention was to engage directly with as many services and workers as possible to reveal existing experiences and practices in the youth sector workforce. This approach provides insight and thematic 'grabs' however it is of course impossible to generalise the experiences of all workers in the youth sector. An emphasis of this research design, and the subsequent analysis, is that diversity matters and targeted mechanisms may provide voice to some key areas that may not emerge through a generalised quantitative approach. The outcome however remains a somewhat subjective picture. The strength of the projects and the approach utilised is that we have now developed a benchmark or picture from which to engage across the whole state, to make comparisons with other sectors and to revisit the state of the youth sector at points of time into the future.

Methodology

THE METHODOLOGY FOR this project was designed to actively engage service providers through the collection of data from youth service providers and other key stakeholders in the target group regions creating a workforce profile that includes workplace demographics, information about existing skills, competencies and qualifications, current skilling needs and projected future need. The intention was to strengthen ownership and buy in to the project recommendations through the processes used for data collection congruent with the *Queensland Compact* goal of improving engagement in planning and policy.

This project target group was youth workers employed in community based Murri and Torres Strait Islander services. At an initial meeting of the Sub Committee it was determined that the research phase of the project would be conducted in four regional areas in Queensland- Greater Brisbane, Central Queensland including Woorabinda, Cherbourg and North West Queensland. Design elements were implemented in this project to provide a more culturally appropriate approach to gathering and analysing data.

Changes were made to the methodology as this project was implemented in response to services ability to engage and participate within the project timeframe to improve the response rate, number of services that engaged with the project overall and depth and validity of the data collected and recommendations developed. These changes are documented below.

Industry Reference Group and project sub committee

At the outset of the project an IRG was established to provide guidance and advice about project implementation and project outcomes. Terms of Reference were developed that outlined the group's role in acting as a 'think tank' for project ideas, insights and debate. Membership was invited from a wide range of categories including youth services, education providers (TAFE and universities), peak bodies and government departments. An underlying premise of establishing this group is to encourage and support the sector in initial development and ownership of an ongoing industry reference group which ultimately leads to ongoing sustainability, sector ownership and management.

The IRG met four times during the project providing advice about the overall project methodology, the survey instrument, issues and dilemmas in conceptualising a workforce development strategy for the youth sector and workshopping possibilities and themes as they have emerged from the data for the final report of the Youth Sector Development Plan.

A project sub committee was formed as part of the IRG for the overall project to provide culturally specific guidance and recommendations about the design and implementation of the Murri project including direct guidance and advice relating to which regions to include in the research and how to best implement the project. Membership of the sub committee includes key Murri service providers and government representatives. The sub committee met once at the beginning of the project and was invited to participate in both the methodology workshop and the data analysis and recommendation workshop held after the initial data collection phase. It is intended that the sub committee will meet again to consider the Murri Youth Sector Development Plan and initiatives arising from this.

Existing Workforce Data

Recent Queensland community services workforce data has been included where directly relevant to strengthen and highlight themes emerging and to inform the overall profile that is being developed.

Data has been included from:
- Queensland Community Services Workforce Profile Project commissioned by the Health and Community Services Workforce Council from Rimfire Resources (referred to as Community Services Workforce Profile)
- Child Protection Skills Formation Strategy

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Methodology Workshop

To implement this project YANQ contracted the services of culturally appropriate staff as project interviewers to assist in developing communication and engagement strategies specific to Murri communities. An Expression of Interest was distributed throughout Queensland using the YANQ email bulletin, Health and Community Services Workforce Council regional networks and other email groupings. Ten project interviewers were engaged to work across the regions based on their connection with those particular areas.

A one day workshop was conducted with project interviewers and some members of the sub committee to detail the methodology for the project including developing the tools to be used, discussing the best way to collect information, what should be asked and in what form eg survey, interviews, focus groups and which services need to be included. Strategies were specialised according to the characteristics of a particular region or area to ensure they are the most effective approach within the timeframes available.

Outcomes of the workshop included a draft set of interview questions, a forum process and questions, a set of principles about engagement, and a draft media release to promote the project locally. It was identified at the workshop that appropriate engagement is a key cultural consideration and that attention and resources need to be dedicated to this aspect of the project. A media release was drafted for local use and resources were established in regional budgets for time for project interviewers to connect personally with services.

Interviews

Thirty-six (36) interviews were conducted in total.

Aim

Interviews were the major data collection tool utilised in this project. Face to face semi-structured interviews provided an avenue to discuss experiences of working in the youth sector, future trends and needs and possible strategies to support workforce skilling. Interviews were either individual or small groups, depending on the individual services and what is most appropriate and in many cases managers of services were interviewed separately to staff to provide opportunity for both groups to provide their perspectives. The aim was to collect information about both managers experiences of developing and supporting the youth services workforce and youth workers experiences of entering and remaining in the youth services workforce.

The aim of this approach was to provide deeper insight through detailed experiences of individuals and created the opportunity to tap into a greater sense of person or place, locating people in their community and their particular work situation to gain a better contextual understanding of their story in a workforce development framework.

Process

Project interviewers directly contacted all identified services to invite them to connect with project workers through individual and/or group interviews. In depth interviews were conducted in person with project interviewers asking questions and recording responses.

Interview questions were formulated during the methodology workshop and then compared against those used in the general project to maintain consistency of data collected. At the methodology workshop it was identified that project interviewers had a role as 'cultural navigators' and that questions may be formulated and posed differently to get the same type of information dependant on the target audience and what would hold meaning for them.

Participants

Target group lists were finalised at the methodology workshop by using contact details of services identified through the general project target group as Murri and then adding additional contacts known by project interviewers through local connections. Participants were primarily from services that have been identified as specific Murri organisations providing services to young people.

Summary of Services Interviewed		
Location	Service	Number of participants
CHERBOURG	BACCA	4
	YACCA (board member)	1
	Jundah Women's' Shelter	2
	Barambah Medical Centre	1
	Beemar Yumba Hostel	1
	Cherbourg Shire Council	1
	South Burnett CTC	2
TOTAL	7 services	12 interviews
GREATER BRISBANE	Kurbingai	1
	Kids, Youth and Community (KYC)	2
	Link-Up	1
	Children of the Dreaming	1
	Bahloo	2
	Murri Youth health Service	1
	Deception Bay Youth and Community service	1
TOTAL	8 services	9 interviews
NORTH WEST		
Mornington Island	PCYC	3
Normanton	NWQPHYC	1
	Normanton Justice Group	1
	Oxfam Gulf Regional health Service	2
Mount Isa	Mount Isa Community City Safe	1
TOTAL	5 services	8 interviews

CENTRAL	Reconnect	3
	Darumbal Community Youth Service Inc	2
	Juwarki	2
TOTAL	**3 services**	**7 interviews**
OVERALL TOTAL	**23 services**	**36 interviews**
Rockhampton * a Group Forum was conducted in Rockhampton with 22 participants in total	Career Employment Australia Education Department Rockhampton Regional Council Dept of Economic Development & Innovation Central Qld Murri Development Ltd Career Links Capricornia Training Company PCYC x 2 participants Milbi x 3 particpants Bidgerdii Youth Justice Services Blackwater Youth Development Project Qld Health Department of Communities ATSIS Anglicare Reconnect	

Survey

Aim

While not the primary data collection tool, the survey was designed to capture a workforce profile snapshot of the existing youth sector workforce as with the other project and both managers of services and youth workers were targeted in two separate surveys.

Process

As with the general project, the survey was made available to all managers and youth workers in identified services on the target group lists developed in the methodology workshop except in North West Queensland. The survey was introduced by a letter about the project and followed up with personal contact by project interviewers to encourage services to complete and return the survey. The survey was accessible online as well as a hard copy being provided for managers to copy and distribute to staff. Project interviewers encouraged workers to complete surveys in their direct contact with services. In North West Queensland project interviews informed services about the service during face to face contact.

Collated survey results provide a quantitative snapshot of the current workforce context as well as enabling comparison with the general project where relevant.

Participants

Services on the target group lists generated at the methodology workshop were targeted.

Eleven managers surveys were returned, fourteen youth worker surveys where the manager had also completed a survey were returned. While it was optional to identify by name, respondents were asked to identify their services to assist with cross referencing of manager and worker surveys so that survey data could

be appropriately collated to create the whole picture. That is, where youth workers had completed surveys but managers had not, these figures were added to the total workforce demographic information as they had not previously been counted.

Forums

Aim
At the methodology workshop, it was identified that forums may work better than interviews in some locations as they provide an opportunity to get a group of people together to 'yarn up' promoting dialogue and debate about what youth work is, the values underpinning it, what is currently happening in the sector and future workforce needs to maintain a vibrant and healthy youth services sector.

Process
Both Central Queensland and Brisbane were identified as regions to conduct forums. Forums were organised and promoted by email, mail, and fax and through personal contact with services. A forum process outline was developed along with a set of questions to gather data.

Participants
Forums were promoted in Rockhampton and two in Brisbane, one north and one south of the river. A short lead in time amongst other variables meant that the Brisbane forums did not go ahead and instead individual surveys were conducted with a number of services in this area. The Rockhampton forum attracted 22 participants from a broad range of services in the area.

THIS SECTION OF the report presents the data and findings as a result of conducting the Murri Youth Sector Workforce Skilling and Training Project (referred to as the Murri project). Where useful comparisons with results from the Youth Sector Workforce Skilling and Training Project (referred to as the general project) have been included. Murri data has not been broken into regions as not enough data has been generated through the Murri project to provide a clear theme or picture within each region. Interestingly no specific data stood out as distinctly different or opposing across different regions. Readers are cautioned that information as presented is indicative of the youth sector workforce only and local/regional validation strategies are important in checking the relevance of findings to that locality.

1. Workforce Profile

This section of the report provides a summary of workforce demographic data, creating a picture of the Murri Youth Sector in Queensland and raising some interesting questions and themes that have fed into recommendations and strategies in the Youth Sector Development Plan. The information presented in this section comes from the collated survey data from managers' surveys and from surveys of youth workers where a survey was not completed by the service manager. It is augmented by data provided at interviews and forums.

1.1 Gender, Age and Cultural Representation

Table 1.1.1 Gendered Workforce breakdown

Gender	Murri project	General project
Female	57%	71.59%
Male	43%	28.40%

Gendered Workforce in Murri youth sector
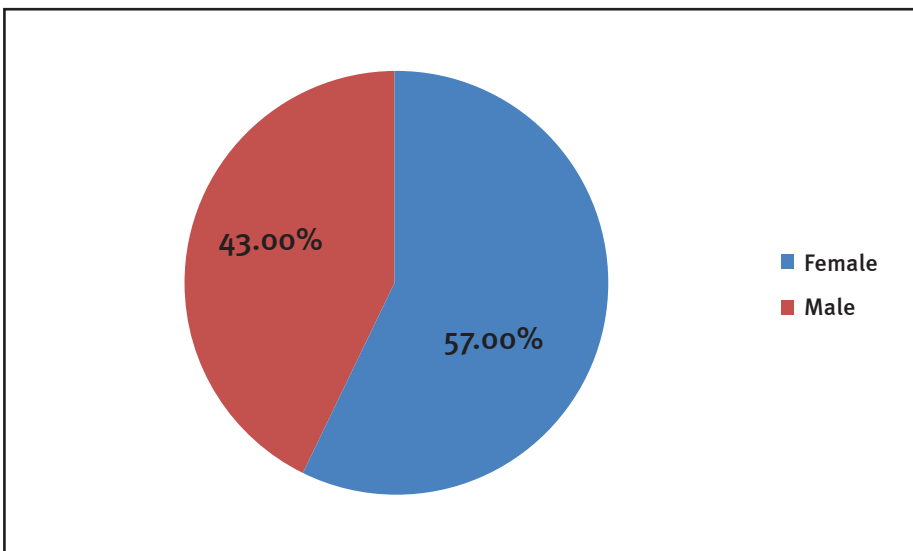
From this information it is clear that there are a higher proportion of males within the Murri youth sector workforce than the general youth sector workforce with 43% male staff.

In the general youth services project, the focus group addressing working with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse young people noted the importance of how trust is established when working with these communities and differences that exist for workers of different genders, emphasising the importance of the role of male workers in some communities. It is likely that this is also the case in Murri communities and the gender ratio of the workforce is indicative of this.
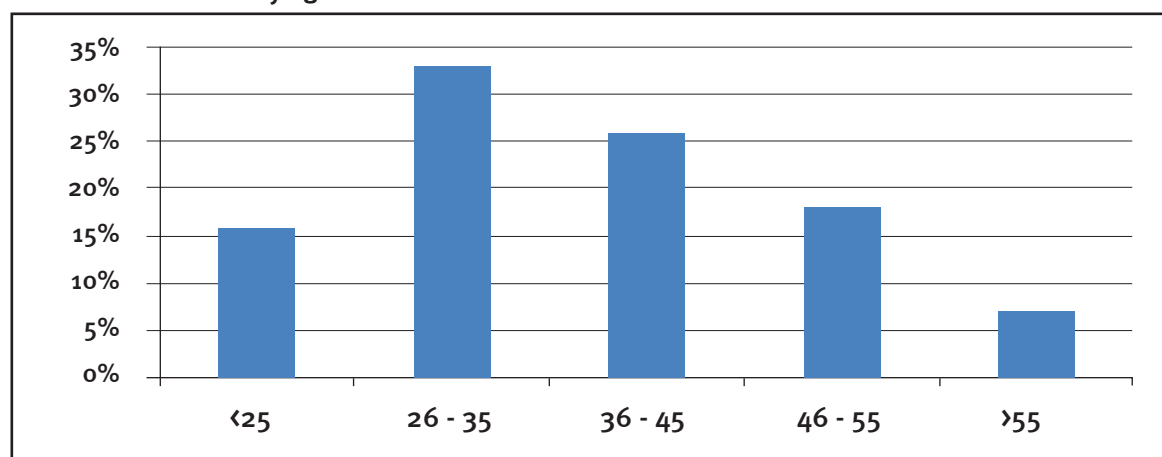
Workforce Profile

Table 1.1.2 Workforce by Age

Age Range	<25	26-35	36-45	46-55	>55
Murri Project	16%	33%	26%	18%	7%
General Project	13.33%	46.19%	28.26%	11.41%	1.08%

Table 1.1.2 Workforce by Age

Generally speaking comparative data across the two projects shows that workers are older across the Murri youth services sector than in the general sector. Anecdotally Murri workers suggest that a challenge ahead is to attract young people into the sector.

Table 1.1.3 Cultural Background of the Workforce

Cultural Background	Murri Project	General Project
CALD background	2.8%	4.81%
Murri	77.%	1.2%
Torres Strait Islander	7.4%	1.2%
South Sea Islander	7.4%	4.21%
Other	5.4%	n/a

As may be expected from the regions examined in the Murri project, a large percentage of respondents identified as coming from a Murri background. The 5.4% that identified as 'other' reported that they came from an Anglo Saxon background.

The minimal response to this question by the general youth sector workforce either indicates that very few workers are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background or Murri, Torres Strait Islander or South Sea Islander decent or that this information is not collected in any systematic way by organisations in order to allow managers to provide this detail. Given the apparent small number of Murri people in the general youth services workforce, initiatives such as the Murri and Torres Strait Islander Youth Services Workforce Skilling and Training project are paramount to understanding their specific workforce development needs and ensuring appropriate and effective strategies are developed.

The importance of cultural awareness training and developing organisation's competencies in working cross-culturally in an integrated workplace approach rather than through a one day training event was emphasised in both projects. This has been further explored in the Key Themes section of this report.

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1.2 Experience in the youth services sector

The level of experience within the Murri youth services sector is an important consideration in terms of the sustainability, health and depth of skills and knowledge that are available within the sector to influence quality of services provided to young people and quality of management skills and practice to support the sector.

Table 1.2.1 Experience in the youth services sector

	6 mths	1 yr	2 yrs	3 yrs	4 yrs	5 yrs	5-7 yrs	8-10 yrs	>10 yrs
Murri project	7.78%	21.11%	11.11%	10%	7.78%	5.55%	17.78%	8.89%	10%
General Project	14.28%	23.33%	13.81%	8.57%	7.6.2%	5.71%	8.57%	9.52%	8.57%

Responses indicate that approximately 40% of workers in the Murri youth sector have been in the sector for 2 years or less. This is similar to responses in the general project indicated that 51% of workers have been in the youth services sector for 2 years or less. These response rates suggest that there is considerable inexperience specifically in relation to the youth services sector. Notably however responses also show that experience in the Murri sector is spread much more widely with a small spike at 5-7 years.

Project participants reported a distinct need to nurture, develop and harness leadership across the sector to increase sustainability of the sector through sharing of skills, knowledge and practice wisdoms and the 'youth sector narrative', providing an infrastructure that also contributes to other workforce development strategies such as retention of staff and status of the sector.

Experience in current organisation

Respondents were next asked to indicate how long they had been employed at their current organisation to demonstrate capacity at this level.

Table 1.2.2 Experience in current organisation

	6 mths	1 yr	2 yrs	3 yrs	4 yrs	5 yrs	5-7 yrs	8-10yrs	>10 yrs
Murri project	10.39%	14.29%	13%	7.79%	9.1%	14.26%	18.18%	6.49%	6.49%
General Project	16.66%	26.78%	20.83%	10.12%	7.74%	2.97%	7.73%	7.14%	2.97%

Table 1.2.2 Experience in current organisation
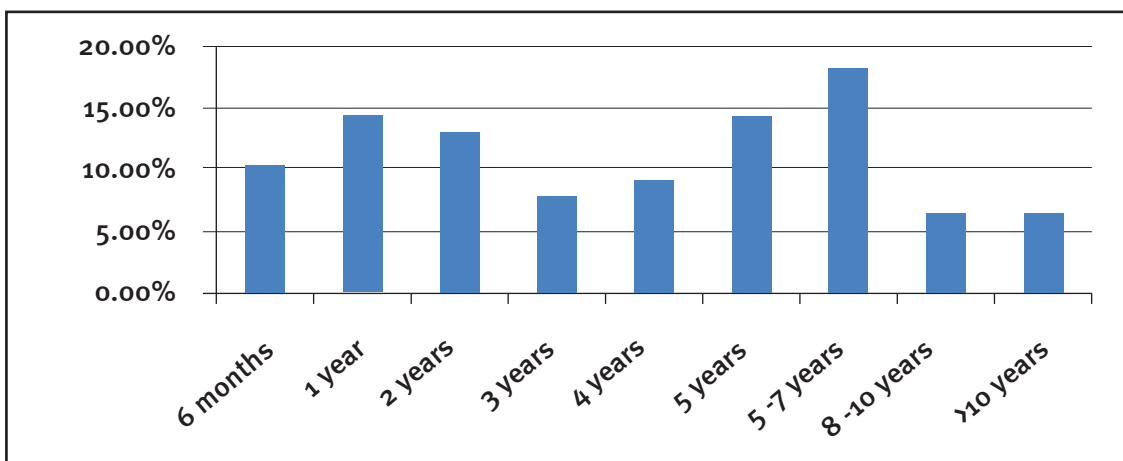
Workforce Profile

Responses again show that experience in current organisation is spread much more widely in the Murri youth sector.

While findings show that 38% of respondents have been working in their current service for two years or less, 45% have been in their service 5 years or longer compared with 21% of workers in general youth services. This result suggests that Murri workers remain longer in their services when compared with the Community Services Workforce Profile project which showed that 46% of general community services workforce surveyed had been in their roles for 2 years or less. The further implication being that staff turnover is less of an issue in Murri services than general youth services.

1.3 Qualifications

Table 1.3.1 Highest relevant qualification in the workforce

Qualification Level	Murri Project	General Project
No Qualification	27.27%	11.20%
Certificate	38.64%	16.80%
Diploma	19.32%	16%
Advanced Diploma	2.27%	4%
Bachelor Degree	9.09%	47.20%
Post Graduate Degree	3.41%	4.80%

Experience in current organisation p25
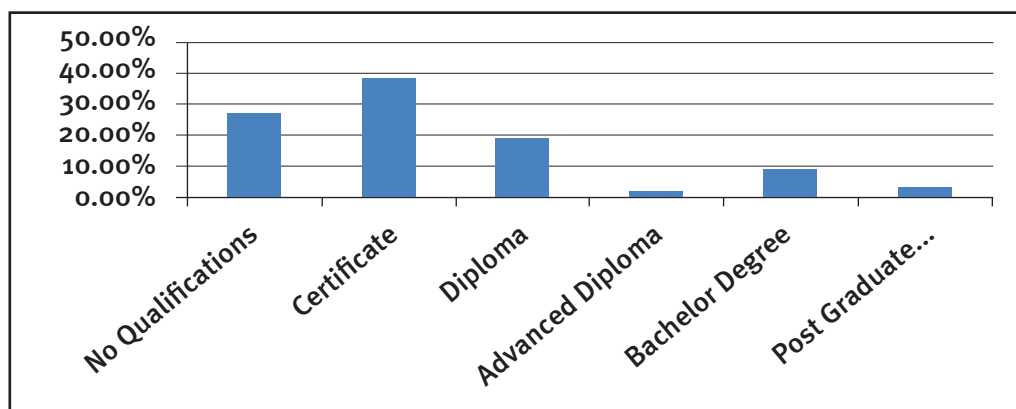
As can be seen from the data above there is a greater number of qualified staff in the general youth sector and these staff have higher levels of qualifications than those in the Murri youth sector. Interestingly about 88% of the Murri workforce has VET level qualifications. Further investigation is required to determine what articulation pathways exist between VET qualifications and higher education and if it is useful for these to be promoted and supported more effectively to increase Murri participation in higher education.

Table 1.3.2 Content area of highest qualification
The content area of staff's highest relevant qualification identified the following:

Content Area	Murri Project	General Project
Youth Work	42.86%	26.5%
Social Welfare/Community Work	25%	29.35%
Social Sciences	1.4%	2.8%
Human Services	0	6.4%
Social Work	2.8%	12%
Psychology	5.56%	8.25%
Nursing/Health	2.8%	2.5%
Administration	13.89%	4.6%
Other-including education, trade and theology	2.8%	7.5%

1.4 Employment profile

Table 1.4.1 Employment status

Employment type	Murri project	General Poject
Permanent Full Time	53.41%	62.36%
Permanent Part Time	13.64%	23.6%
Casual Full Time	3.41%	0%
Casual Part Time	11.36%	7.3%
Contract	1.14%	7.74%
Voluntary	17.05%	0%

Table 1.4.1 Employment status
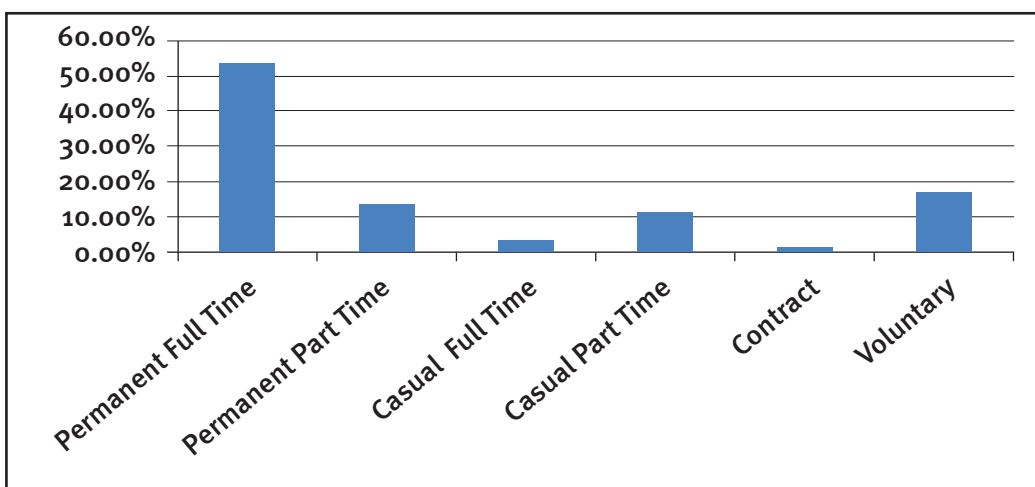
Workforce Profile

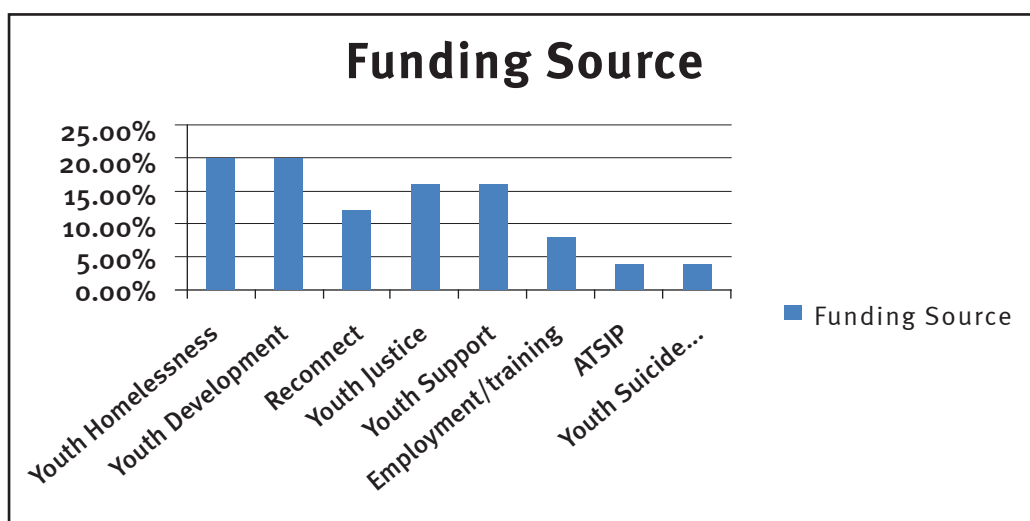The majority of workers in the general youth services sector, 85%, have indicated that they are permanent workers either full or part time. This is significantly lower in Murri services at 53%. It is notable that 17% of Murri staff are voluntary while no general youth services that responded to the survey used voluntary staff. This may be somewhat attributed to the fact that voluntary management committee members in Murri services sometimes are also involved in and considered part of service delivery staff.

Anecdotal information provided by project participants suggests that this employment type is chosen based on permanency for the funding agreement period i.e. services funded under three year funding agreements, however the accuracy of this perception was not tested through this survey. Issues regarding services and employees knowledge and understanding of the industrial relations area, their employment status and hence any potential benefits such as redundancy were not canvassed.

1.5 Organisational profile

Table 1.5.1 Funding Source
Managers were asked to identify their major funding source as a way to depict scope of respondents in this report. These tables depict the major funding program areas for the services that responded to the survey showing a cross section of youth service types

The Murri Youth Sector in Queensland
FINAL REPORT AND YOUTH SECTOR DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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2. Recruitment and Retention

THIS SECTION EXPLORES aspects of recruitment and retention with the view to understanding what it is that makes the youth sector appealing and what it is that keeps staff or that drives staff away. The intention is to inform the development of future strategies for recruitment and retention both as a whole of sector and also within organisations.

2.1 Barriers to attraction and recruitment

Respondents were asked to prioritise aspects that made it most difficult to attract and recruit staff from a list of nine options, with the capacity to offer other factors. The factors included:

- Public perception of youth work
- Career pathways within youth sector
- Education and training
- Professional development
- Wages
- Nature of work
- Employment conditions
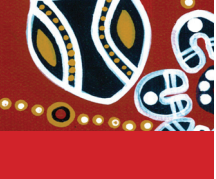- Remoteness
- Compatibility with lifestyle

Limited data was provided by Murri services during the project, however key points raised in relation to attracting staff identified wage levels as the main factor, lack of experience and training, literacy skills and importantly a drainage of Murri workers to government agencies, reducing the available pool of skilled staff. A number of people interviewed noted that the biggest attraction to the position was "to be able to work with their own mob."

In the general project wage levels were the primary factor impacting on recruitment identified by 78% of all respondents. The lack of parity between non government and government pay rates is well documented and the loss of skilled and experienced personnel to the government sector along with their accompanying sector knowledge was often raised in the Murri project. Additionally the impact of the private sector and in particular mining companies in attracting Murri staff through ability to provide better wages and conditions was also raised a key issue in recruiting staff.

### 2.1.2 Priority areas of consideration when recruiting

Respondents were also asked to rank in priority order the areas they consider most important when recruiting new staff from a list of six options, with capacity to list other factors. The options included:

- Skills
- Knowledge
- Values and attitudes
- Relevant qualifications
- Compatibility with the team
- Knowledge of applicant

Recruitment and Retention

Table 2.1.2 Priority Areas when recruiting
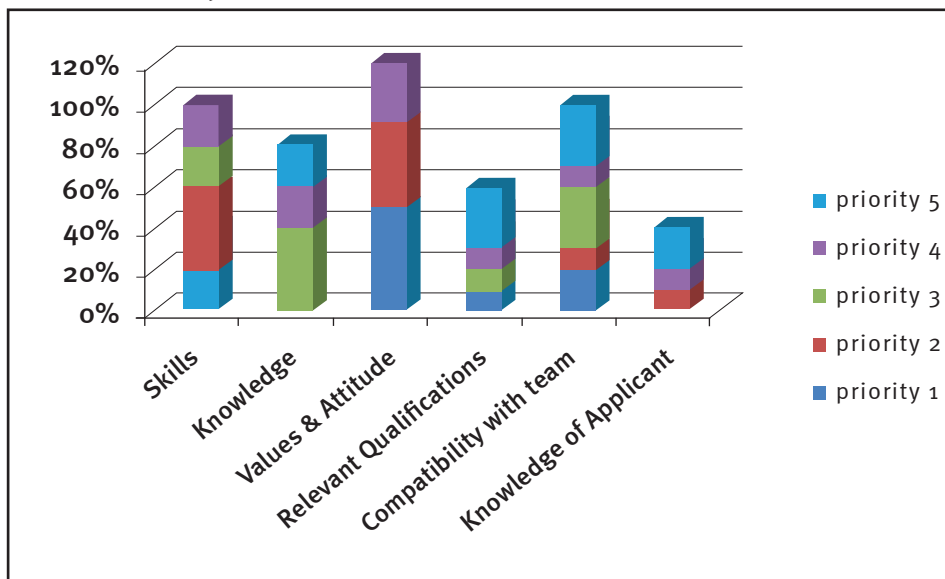
Responses indicated that values and attitudes are the main priority when recruiting with 40% of respondents identifying this as the main factor. Skills and compatibility with the team rated closely as the second priority. Culture and integrity were also identified as important as other factors. Relevant qualifications were not ranked as of particular importance.

Skills and values/attitude proved to be the most significant considerations for managers when recruiting in general youth services as well.

Some data has been collected through the project that identifies both the key skills and core values and attitudes (see below and the knowledge, skills and values section) providing some further insight into what may be meant by each area.

Given the high rankings and the difficulty for some services to recruit staff, it will be important to further articulate which skills and what values and attitudes are important and to identify:

- whether these areas are being addressed in youth training and education accordingly to prepare people for the sector and
- if they are 'packaged' accurately and effectively in recruitment information and service recruitment processes and decision making.

2.1.3 Core youth work values and attitudes sought when recruiting new staff

Respondents were asked an open ended question about the core youth work values and attitudes they are seeking when recruiting. These have been collated into the lists below.

Murri Youth Services	
Value young people	Grass roots approach
Willingness to learn	Love and care for young people
Passionate	Social justice
Valuing of cultural learning, protocols and engagement processes	Humour
	Wisdom
Willing to be part of a team	Patience
Dedication	Sense of pride/knowing who you are
Family connections and kinship	Reflective learning
Creativity	Integrity

The lists have not been prioritised in any way as there were a wide range of responses and not enough data was provided to enable such depth of analysis. No conflicting values or attitudes were identified. Murri and non Murri services listed similar values and attitudes (although language varied as can be seen below) with the addition of family connections and kinship, creativity, patience and sense of pride.
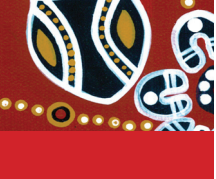
As noted on the previous page, given that values and attitudes are the major factor of consideration during recruitment it is critical to start articulating and defining what this means; which values and attitudes are critical to work in the youth sector, how these are included in a youth work framework and how it is put into practice in recruitment practices in the sector. This list provides a point for further discussion in the validation process and beyond.

General Youth Services	
Empathy and compassion	Proactive
Respect for cultural differences	Sincerity
Creativity and flexibility	Teamwork
Valuing partnerships and networks	Relationship based
Client focused	Passion
Engagement driven	Transparency
Social justice	Ethics and professional boundaries
Participation	Non-judgmental
Honesty	Integrity
Respect	Reflective

2.1.4 Minimum training or qualification requirements

Murri services did not generally identify minimum training or qualification requirements. Some services noted that they offer on the job training and some stated that all they need 'is passion and commitment'. In-service accredited training was identified as preferable in many services as being Murri is a more important criterion than qualification in the first instance.

In the general project, 79% of managers indicated that some form of qualification is a minimum requirement for employment, with approximately 30% indicating that they seek some form of Bachelor degree. Where

general youth services specified a minimum qualification a broad range was identified. Data from this project suggested that the development of a youth sector career map or guide showing youth work entry and exit points and qualifications or training against position types including movement opportunities across sectors would be of value to enhance and target recruitment. This type of approach is likely to benefit the Murri youth sector as well in relation to their career pathways and retention of staff.

Joining the sector and intention to stay

In order to add to the picture of stability and sustainability, respondents were asked about why they joined the sector, their intentions in relation to length of tenure and likely reasons for leaving.

Table 2.1.5 Reasons for joining the Youth Sector

Respondents were asked to choose their main reason for joining the youth sector from a list of alternatives including the option of identifying other reasons

Reason	Managers	Youth Workers
I want to make a difference in young people's lives	26.67%	47.1%
I want to improve services in my area	20%	0%
I want to serve my particular community in youth work	0%	23.5%
I want to support young people to fit better into society	13.3%	5.9%
I want to help bring about social change to meet young people's needs and rights	26.7%	23.5%
Other - included involved in community development, want to have the opportunity for young people to speak for themselves at the highest level of government	17.64%	1%

Table 2.1.6 Reasons for choosing current employer in general youth services

Reason	Managers	Youth Workers
The organisation's purpose and value statement align with my beliefs	22%	44.4%
The organisation's service is directed to areas where I have particular expertise	22%	5.6%
The organisation is active in the community in leading change	44%	22.2%
The organisation offered work / life balance which suits my family	0%	5.6%
Employment conditions	0%	16.8%
Limited availability of positions in this area	11%	5.6%

Interestingly, almost half the managers that participated in the project identified their driving reason for choosing their current employer as the organisations role in the community in leading change while the same amount of youth workers identified their drive as the alignment of the organisation's purpose and values with their own.
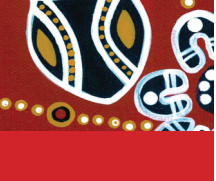
Table 2.1.7 Reasons for choosing current role

Managers were also asked to comment on the reason for choosing not only their organisation but their management role. Responses corroborate the desire to lead change either at an organisational or community level.

I want to manage a team of people	22.22%
I want to lead the change in the organisation	16.67%
I want to lead change in the community	22.22%
Employment conditions	5.55%
Limited availability of positions in this area	5.55%
Other-	27.78%

Other responses included the following:
- Wanted to work in the private sector/community sector
- Experience in management
- Occurred through professional development
- Able to continue counselling as well as management

2.2 Barriers to Retention

Prioritised difficulties in retaining staff

Managers were asked to prioritise aspects that made it most difficult to retain staff from the same list of nine options provided as reasons that impacted on recruitment and attraction of staff.

Responses indicate that wages were by far the major factor in retaining staff from the managers' perspective with 77% of managers prioritising this issue as number 1. This data also corresponds with the factors identified as barriers to recruitment and attraction.

Interestingly a range of other issues were identified at a similar frequency such as career pathways, education and training, public perception of youth work and life and work balance.

Funding and competition for Murri workers across the community sector and government was also raised with higher wages offered by government and private sectors also an issue. This was particularly evident in regional Queensland where the mining industry strongly competes for workforce labour as noted earlier in the recruitment section.

Of particular note however is the development in some Murri organisations of highly planned comprehensive in-service accredited training linked to career development and succession planning. Where this does exist, issues of retention are reduced.

In the general youth work project, responses also indicate that wages were by far the major factor in retaining staff from the managers' perspective at 68% with career pathways ranked as the second. General youth services also reported anecdotally that staff are often lost to the government sector due to better wages.

Intention to stay in youth sector

This section of the survey provides a picture of the likely rate of turnover or attrition by asking people how long they intend staying in the sector. A sense of intention is created to project stability and sustainability into the future. Almost 50% of managers indicated they did not know how long they were likely to remain in the youth sector with almost 90% of youth workers indicating that they are either likely to remain in the sector for one year or indeed that they do not know how long .

While this data does not necessarily demonstrate high turnover rates, the declared lack of intention of staff to stay raises questions and concerns about stability of staffing and knowledge and practice wisdom in the youth sector into the future that warrants further investigation.

Table 2.2.1 Managers intention to stay in Sector
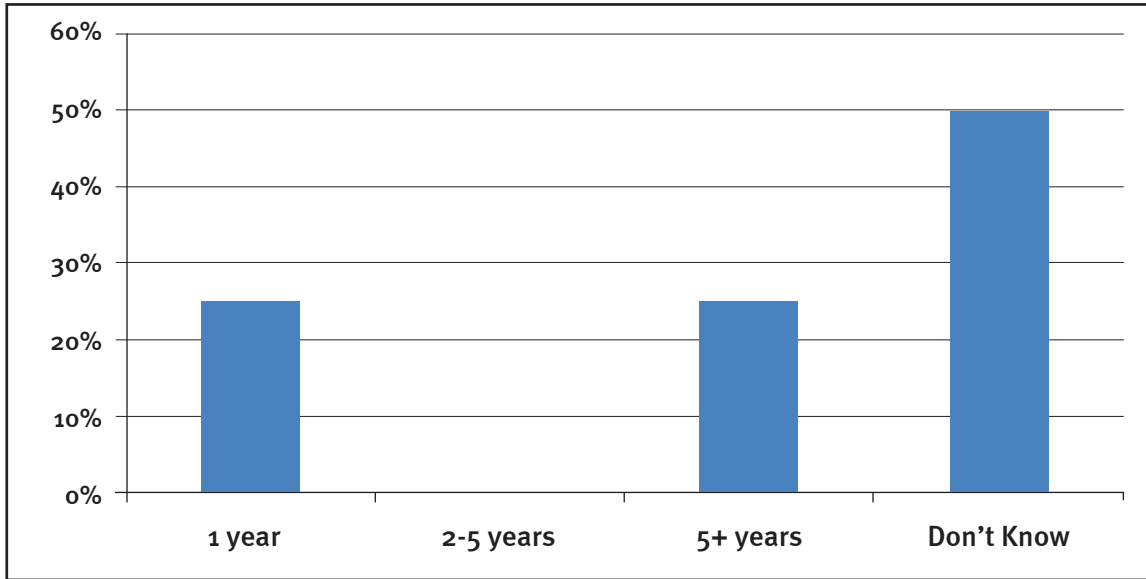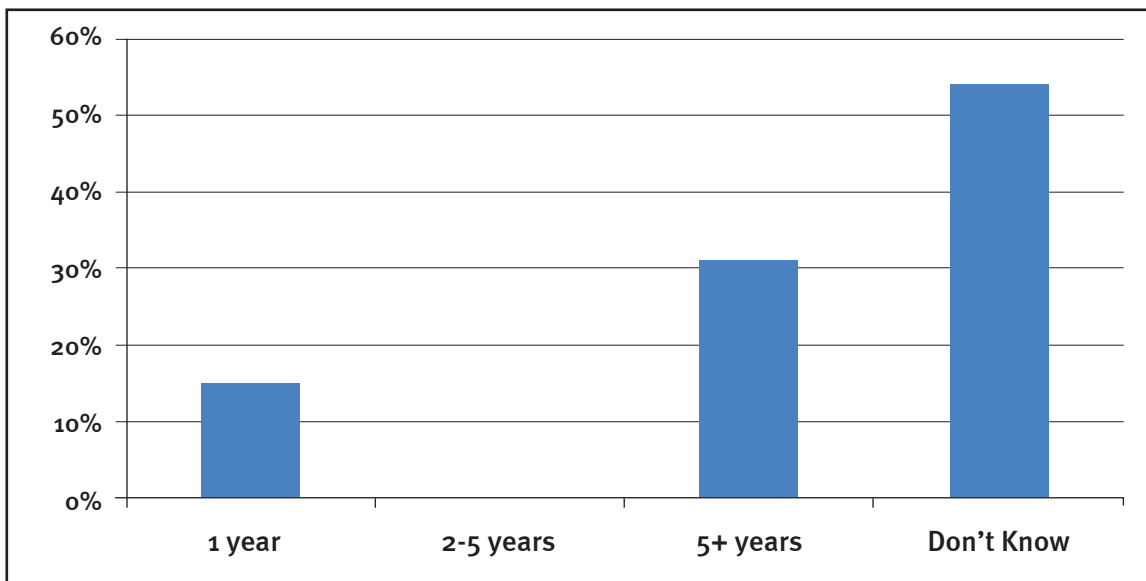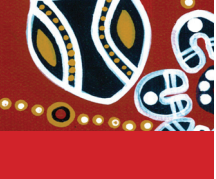

Table 2.2.2 Youth Workers Intention to stay in the Sector

To further add to the picture regarding movement within and from the youth sector respondents were asked where they would most like to go when they leave their current position and why - the likely reason for leaving.

Table 2.2.3 Managers preferred next position
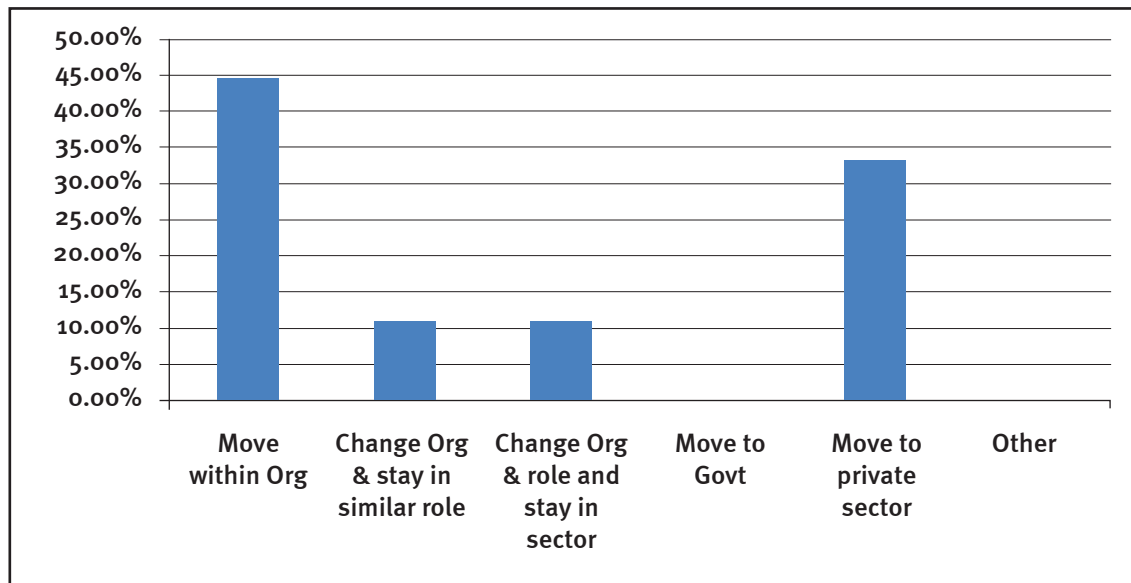
Interestingly close to 45% of managers indicated that they would likely move within the organisation which may be attributed to the specific aspects of the Murri sector context where managers may move into Board positions or where services are part of a bigger Corporation where other career opportunities may be present. The interest in moving to the private sector is demonstrated in the 33% of people who gave this as a preferred next move.

Table 2.2.3 Youth Workers preferred next position
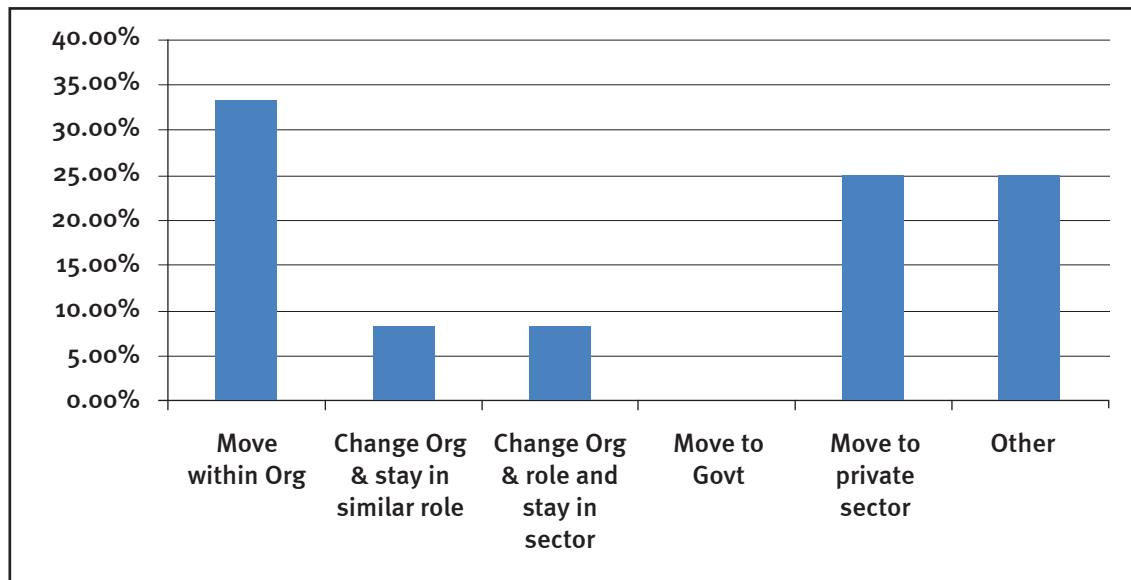
As noted above the interest in moving to the private sector is again demonstrated with 25% of respondents giving this as their preferred next position. Other options included going to university, moving away, retirement and don't know.

Table 2.2.5 Managers likely reasons for leaving the youth sector

Other includes lack of funding and retirement.

Table 2.2.6 Youth Workers likely reasons for leaving the youth sector
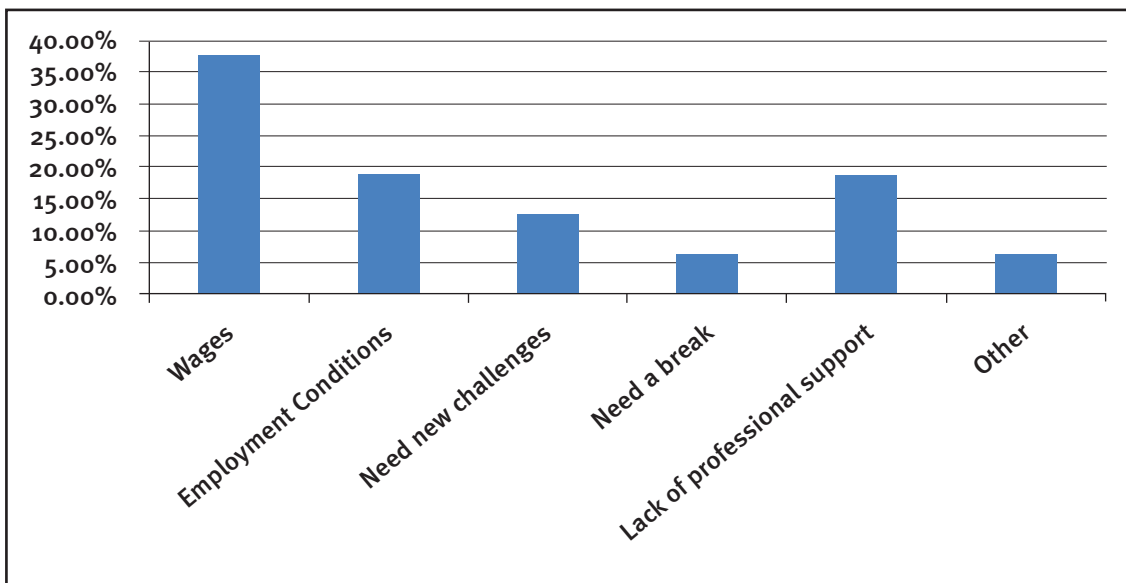
Youth workers indicated that wages would be a key factor in a decision to leave the youth sector at 35%. This is interesting coupled with the fact that 30% of youth workers also indicated they 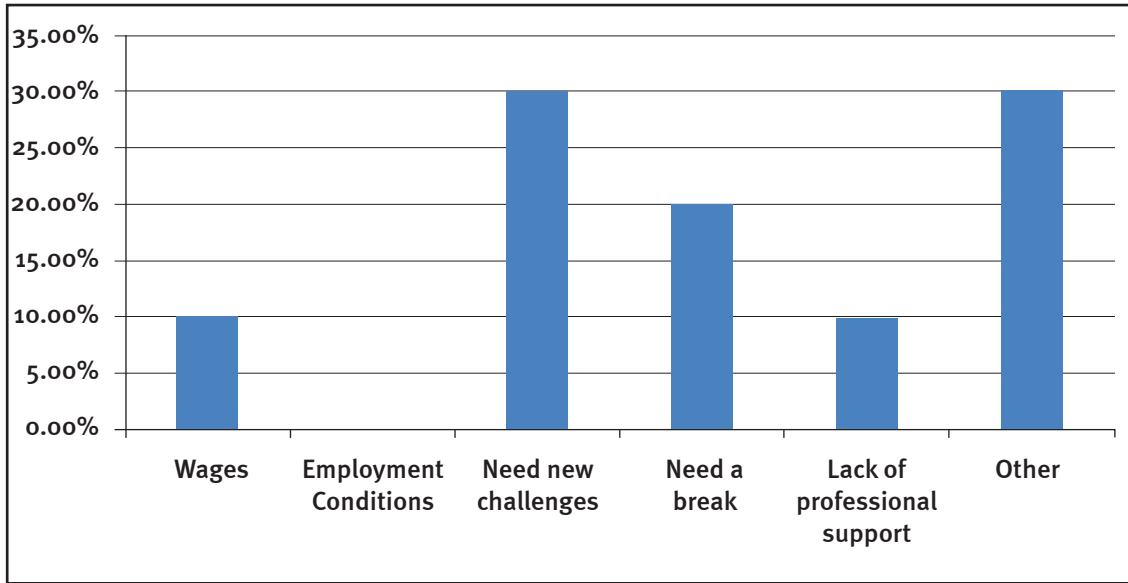intended to stay in the youth sector for 5 or more years and that almost 35 % also indicated they would like to stay within their organisation. This seems to suggest that career pathways that encompass change of job role and wage increases are important retention strategies. Managers identified the need for new challenges at 44% as their most likely reason to leave.

Key findings in the Community Services Workforce Profile project indicated that there is general dissatisfaction with remuneration levels with only 2.36% of participants in their employee review reporting that good salary packages are offered with 54.22% of respondents indicating that inadequate salaries are offered to staff. The Community Services Workforce Profile data showed that while employees stay in their jobs due to reasons

other than salary, when they do leave it is mainly due to salary offered. They do not stay in positions due to salary packages or the role their position may have on career progression.

In this survey, employment conditions did not factor as the main reason for leaving for either youth workers or managers.

3. Sector Profile

THIS SECTION OF the report adds to the developing picture of the youth sector in Queensland further exploring the youth sector by looking at work roles that make up the youth sector, what is culturally appropriate youth work for Murri services and who is managing our services.

3.1 Work Roles

As noted earlier, definition of the 'youth sector' has emerged as a key point of dialogue during the projects and the need to explore what constitutes youth work practice, who is in the youth sector, and the framework for youth centred practice. This is confirmed through the scope of information provided by services when asked to identify direct service delivery work roles in their organisation.

Primary client group/s worked

Services were asked to identify the primary target group with whom they work as a way of gauging the spread and scope of services that have participated in the survey. The number of times the client group was identified is listed in the second column

Client description	Number of services that identified this group
Murri youth justice	2
Murri child safety	1
Youth homelessness/youth at risk	2
Secondary School students	1
Volatile substances and misuse	1
Youth physical activities	2
All Murri young people	7
Murri youth accommodation	1
Murri young women's accommodation	1
Murri young people with disabilities	1
Young people and family support	3

These responses demonstrate the diverse language used to describe work in the youth area as well as the range of service types that exist.

3.2 Culturally Appropriate Youth Work

During interviews with Murri service providers, youth workers and managers were asked to describe aspects of culturally appropriate youth work practice to assist in understanding what may be unique about Murri youth work.

Youth workers saw that they have a major role in keeping culture alive and respondents identified the key components as workers knowing who they are, understanding their family and kinship background and connections and being able to articulate and share their cultural identity with young people they are working with. From this basis, using respectful and meaningful engagement processes with appropriate communication was seen as a key aspect of youth work.

In smaller communities working with 'your own mob' was a strong driver for people doing youth work and was informed and culturally appropriate by workers having good understanding of their family background.

A strong sentiment emerged in the projects that while non Murri services can and do provide services to Murri young people that this was not the most culturally appropriate way for this to happen and that more emphasis needed to be placed on developing Murri services to do this work. Culturally appropriate services were described as being localised, understanding the context from where the young person is coming, and having capacity to bring it back to family and work outside of the confines of the '9am-5pm agency model'.

As a result of initial data and themes emerging from this project that highlight the importance of values in all youth work, YANQ has initiated further exploration and articulation of what youth work actually means in Murri culture. The discussion paper authored by Melissa Lucashenko (2010) *"Which Wei? Values in Youth Work a Murri Perspective"*, *http://www.yanq.org.au/our-work/2611-qwhich-wei-values-in-youth-work-a-murri-perspectiveq*, explores why values are important in Murri youth work, and what difference it makes to youth work to have these Murri values in mind. The paper links back to key values identified through during the research and provides insight into how all youth workers can better understand the importance of values for the Murri community and then apply these in their day to day work.

3.3 About Managers

Creating a picture of who is managing our youth services is critical in the sense that sector development initiatives will focus at the organisational level as well as at individual workers and at government and more broadly. Given the implicit role of organisations to support, implement and initiate workforce development strategies, understanding who is managing our youth services is very important as responsibility for implementing some strategies will fall to managers.

Gender and age

Data collected in this project confirms a similar breakdown of males and females in manager roles within the youth services sector as across the entire community sector workforce. The Community Services Workforce Profile data also showed that females occupy the majority of positions generally in the community services industry however the percentage of males increased in more senior management roles to 31% at the Executive level from 16% of professional direct support (which includes youth workers).

Data collected in the Murri project demonstrated a similar ratio of females to males as in the general project.

Table 3.3.1 Gender breakdown of managers

28.60%
71.40%
Female
Male
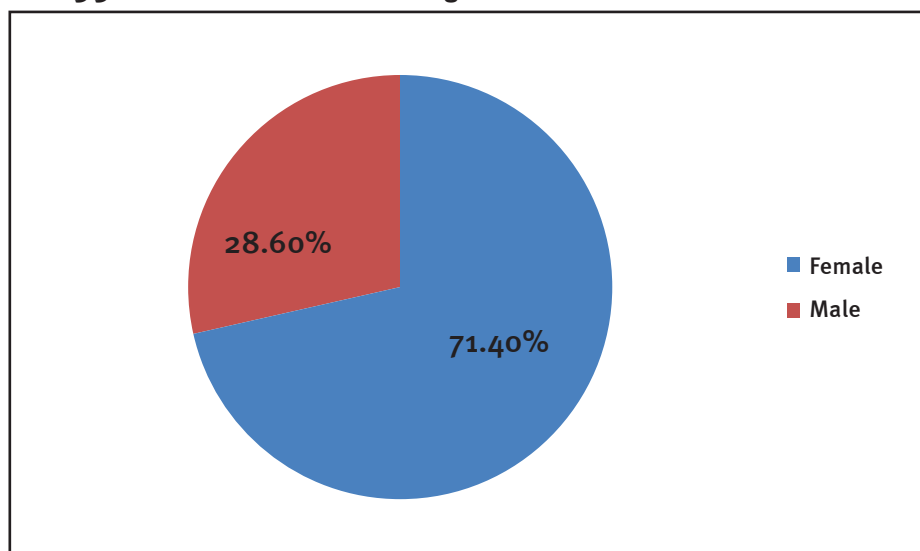
Table 3.3.1 Age breakdown of managers
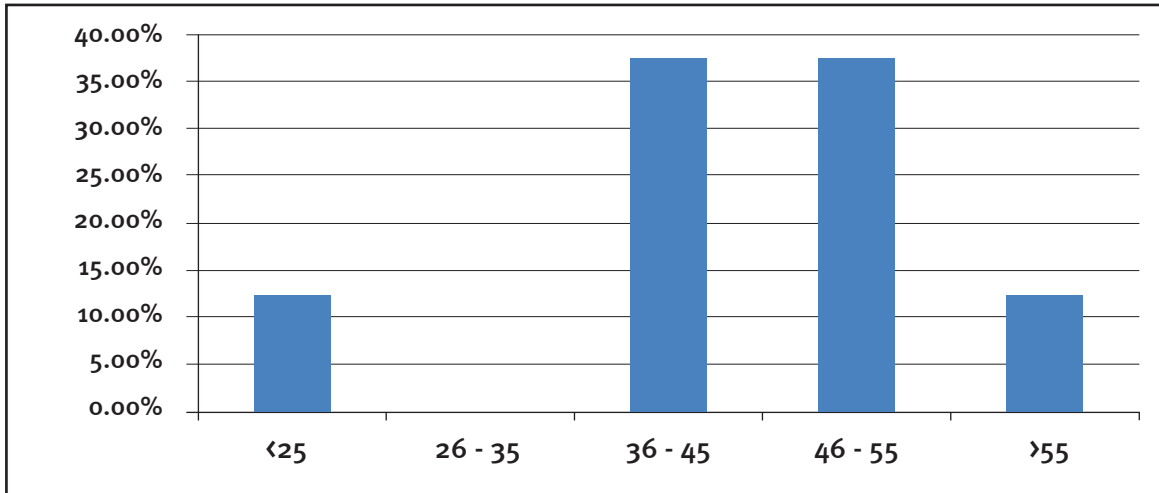
As can be seen above, almost 70% of managers are aged 36-55 year correlating with data from the general project where similarly almost 65% of managers were in this age range.

Table 3.3.3 Manager's employment status

Permanent Full Time	Permanent Part Time	Casual Part Time	Contract	Other
75%	12.5%	0%	0%	12.5%

It is interesting to note that 75% of managers indicated that they are permanent full time compared with 55% of managers in the general project. The other category represents voluntary board members.

Table 3.3.4 Manager's experience in the youth sector
Managers were asked to indicate how long they had been in the youth services sector.
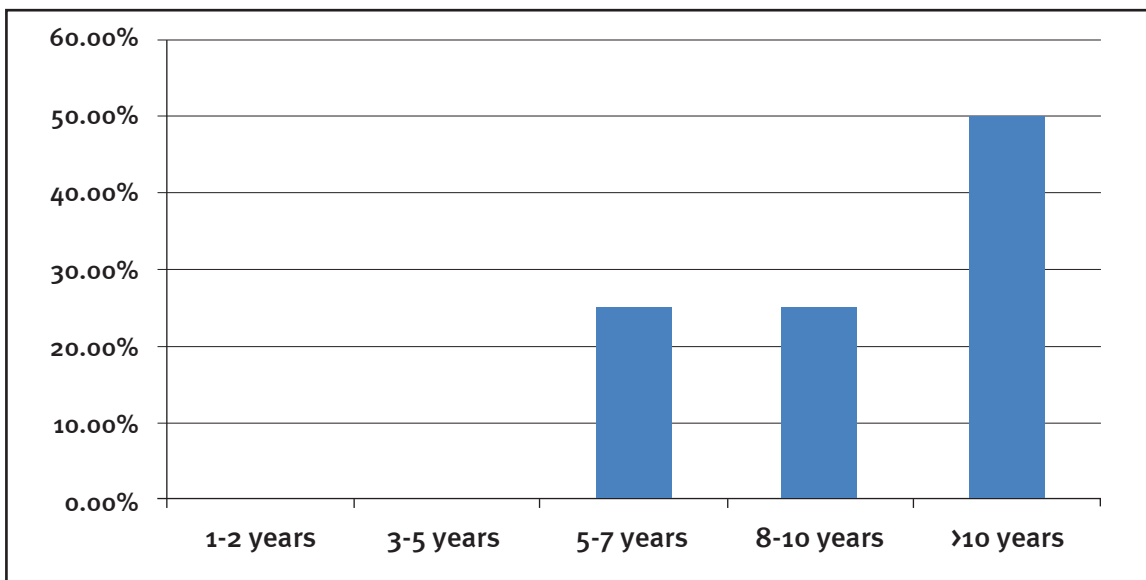
The level of experience of managers in the youth sector is an important pointer towards the longer term sustainability of skills and knowledge particularly given that findings in relation to the general workforce showed that 40% of the respondents had been in the workforce for 2 years or less. Results from managers showed that over 100% of managers had been in the youth sector for 5 years or longer with 50% having been in the sector longer than 10 years. Data below indicates that 60% of managers had also been working in their current organisation for 5 years or more.

Table 3.3.5 Manager's experience in current organisation

Table 3.3.6 Manager's experience in current position

The Murri Youth Sector in Queensland
FINAL REPORT AND YOUTH SECTOR DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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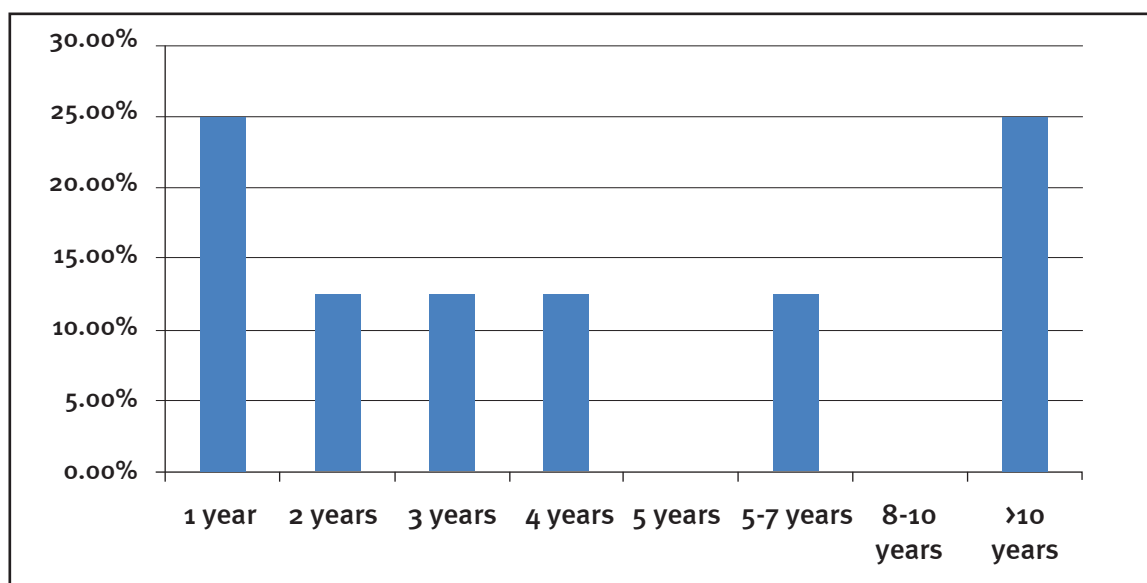
When asked about how long they had been in their current position, that is a manager position within their present organisation, responses showed a more even spread indicating that respondents had most likely progressed to manager level since being with their organisation .

3.3.7 Manager employment contracts or other written agreement with employers

- 83.33% of managers surveyed were on employment contracts
- 57% of the managers with employment contracts are reviewed every year with other reviews tied to the length of the contract
- 55% of managers with employment contracts have reviews that are tied to a performance appraisal
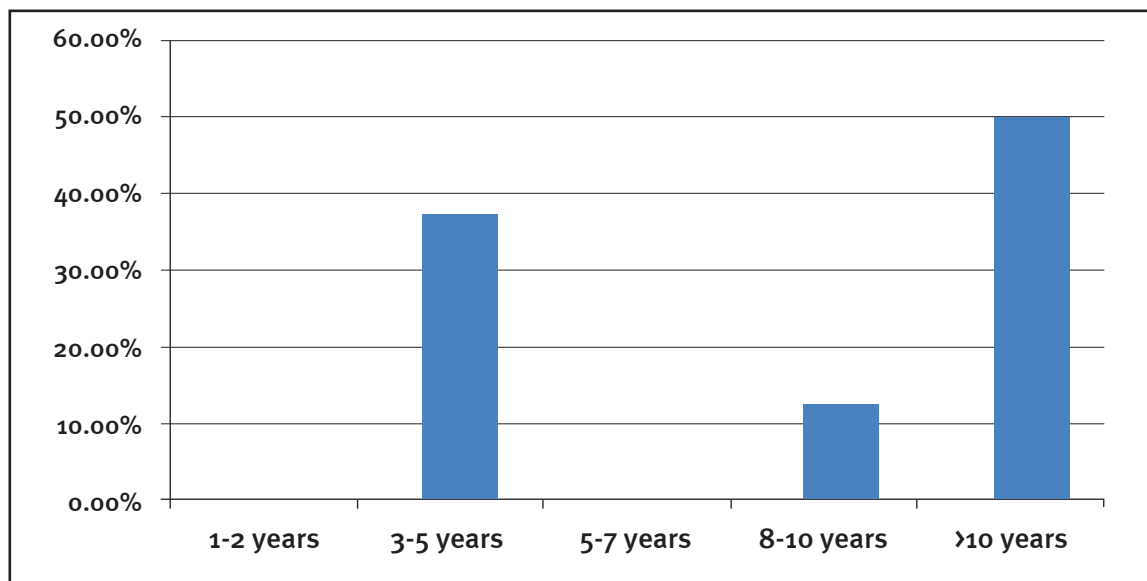- 91% of youth workers surveyed have employment contracts
- 100% of youth workers with contracts are reviewed, generally annually (84%) and this is tied to performance appraisal.

Table 3.3.8 Manager's highest qualification

	No Qualifications	Certificate	Diploma	Advanced Diploma	Bachelor Degree	Post Graduate Degree
Murri Project	0%	37.5%	25%	0%	37.5%	0%
General project	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%	0%	64.7%	17.6%

All managers possess a Certificate level qualification or higher however 27% of the general workforce had no qualifications. While 13% of the overall workforce possessed Bachelor level qualification or higher this figure rose to 37.5% amongst managers.

Table 3.3.9 Manager's occupation before joining the Youth Sector
Managers were asked to indicate their profession prior to joining the youth sector in an attempt to understand implications for attraction recruitment and skill development.

Responses were limited however those received indicated that managers came form a range of different occupations prior to joining the youth sector including social services, corrective services, admin, private sector, student and health.

3.4 Human resource practices

3.4.1 Recruitment practices that proactively seek to employ people from specific cultural backgrounds

In order to provide some insight into existing human resource policy and practices that support the development of cultural competency, managers were asked a series of questions.

Managers were asked if they actively seek to employ people from specific cultural backgrounds.

As may be expected, 100% of respondents in the Murri project indicated that they actively employ Murri and Torres Strait Islander workers. In the general project almost 60% of managers indicated that they do work actively in this area, however other data provided in relation to the general workforce indicated that only 10% of the workforce is from either a CALD background or from Murri, Torres Strait Islander or South Sea Islander backgrounds.

3.4.2 Necessary skills in managing staff from different cultural backgrounds
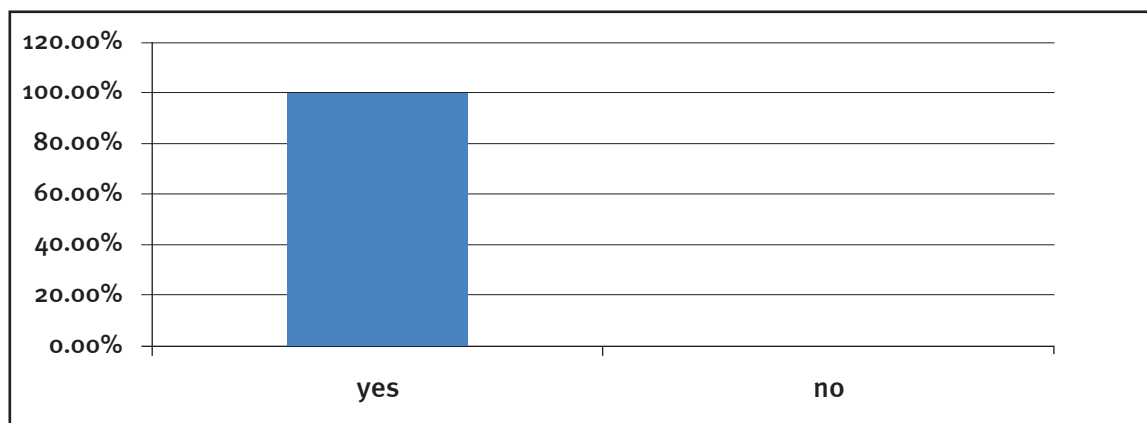
Again, 100% of managers indicated that they felt that they had the necessary skills to manage staff from different cultural backgrounds. When asked to provide more detail in this area managers described their approaches, experiences and training in this area including:

- As a Murri CEO, I value cultural diversity and the impact that people from different cultural background can bring to our service and our clients
- Learnt from good local people
- Look for relevant work experience, excellent knowledge of cultural protocols, experience of youth industry and good networks.

Difficulties raised in managing staff from different cultural backgrounds included:

- Balancing recruitment processes, mentoring and support staff pathways as community elders and leaders
- Issues around younger females managing older males.

Table 3.4.3 Organisational human resource policy to support cultural inclusion
All managers indicated that their organisation has human resource policies that support cultural inclusion .
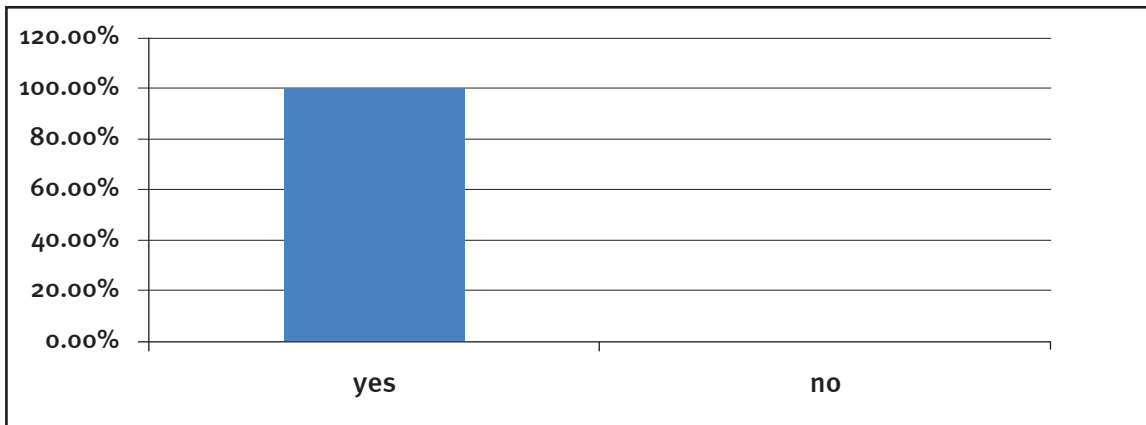
Policies and procedures that support cultural inclusion were identifed as:

* Cultural Work Plan that captures our beliefs based upon Murri principles of Caring and Sharing.
* Compliance policies and procedures
* Significant professional experience
* Service review policy
* Policies such as sorry business
* Dedicated HR Officer.

Table 3.4.4 Provision of student placements
Student placements provide critical on the job learning opportunities to assist in preparing people to enter the sector while also providing an informal recruitment pathway. Managers were asked about whether they provide student placement opportunities as a gauge of the activities in this area. 60% of managers indicated that their organisation provides student placements from a range of educational institutions and courses including TAFE Youth Work students, Job Network, local secondary schools, QUT, Community Workforce Solutions, BSW Deakin University, students in cultural education courses.
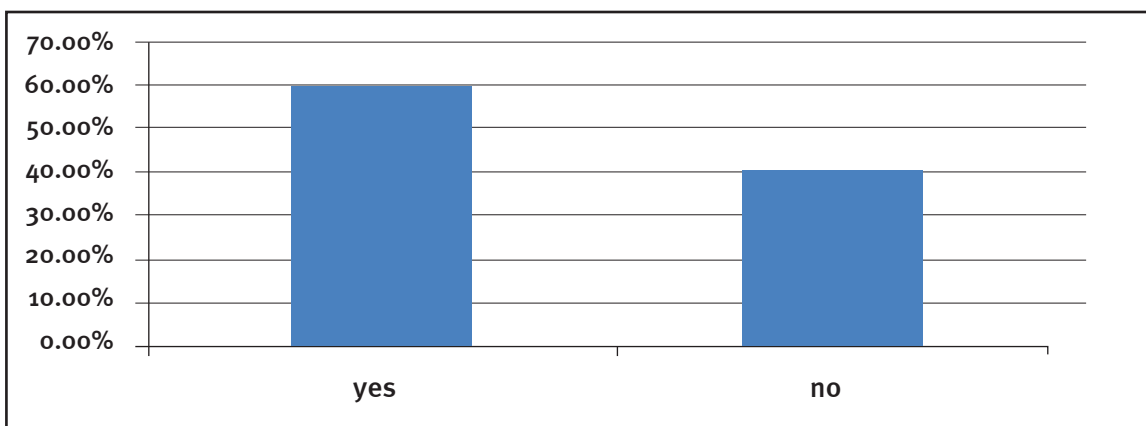
Sector Profile

Table 3.4.5 Organisational Approach to Student Placements
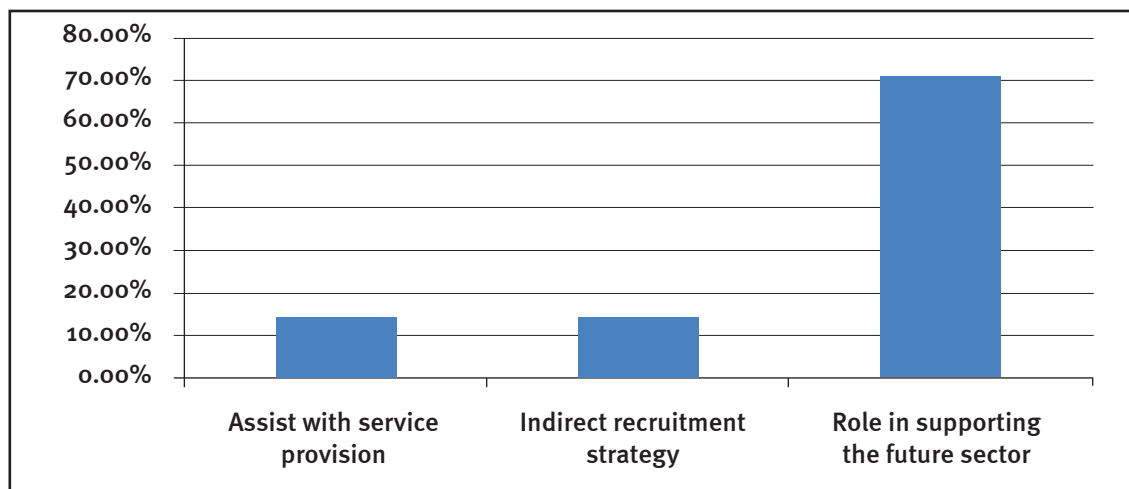
Managers clearly identified that organisations have a role in supporting the future sector through the provision of student placements when asked which statement best describes their approach to providing student placements. Managers also noted that they need to have time to support students and that confidentiality can create barriers in providing workload for students impacting on clients coupled with the short term nature of placements.

At focus groups with TAFE staff and students the importance of vocational placements in preparing students for work in the sector was identified as a major workforce development strategy; however the lack of resourcing of training providers to provide this function and support students and services effectively to enhance learning during the placement process was noted as a major issue and barrier in relation to placements.

Table 3.4.6 Policies and procedures guiding the development of staff
90% of managers responded in the affirmative to having policies and procedures that guide the development of staff.

Types of organisational policy and procedures seen as guiding staff development in organisations
• Strong training philosophy which is supported by our key documents
• Commitment to developing skills and knowledge of staff high priority
• Training and study leave
• Policies and procedures are based on benchmarks and compliance from funding organisations such as Department of Communities
• Training and recruitment, board and management training in governance
• Training in house and through Department of Communities when relevant eg SAAP data training
• Policies and related budget
• Comprehensive training, supervision, performance review and planning

One organisation noted that they presently had policies under development in this area.

Most respondents nominated training and professional development as key policy and procedure areas, activities that are associated with traditional notions of staff development. While many organisations probably have other policies and procedures that contribute to the development of their staff the challenge is to assist

managers within organisations to think more broadly about what they do or could do to support ongoing development of their workforce. This could include policies and procedures that enshrine mentoring, peer support, job swapping across agencies and opportunity to act in other internal positions.

3.4.7 Professional Memberships
To extend the picture of current or possible locations to initiate and implement workforce development strategies or where development may be supported people were asked to indicate membership of professional associations, unions and peak bodies.

Professional Association	Managers	Youth Workers
Professional Assoc	25%	0%
Union	12.5%	18.2%
State or National Peak Bodies	25%	18.2%

Membership of all professional associations and peak bodies was higher by managers than youth work staff as may be expected. This is expected in that often the organisation is the member of peak bodies and the manager by default is the contact member. Interestingly, only 12.5% of Murri managers identified as members of a union compared with 53% of general youth service managers. Coupled with only 18 % of youth workers this provides for only a small worker base from which to access support in the areas of wage levels and employment conditions through the industrial system.

Information and Communication Technology

4. Information and Communication Technology

A BRIEF SECTION on information and communication technology was included in the survey to better understand to what extent organisations utilise technology, in what form and if there are any areas that require additional skilling, resourcing or supporting

Table 4.1.1 Forms of communication technology used in day to day operations

Type of Communication Technology	General Service usage	Murri Service usage
Individual email	68%	100%
Group/network email	68%	100%
Online Chat	0%	8%
Skype	0%	0%
Web Forum/online group	22.6%	36%
Collaborative tools	12.9%	32%
Wikis	6.5%	12%
Blog	6.5%	12%
Twitter	3.2%	4%
VOIP	0%	0%
Facebook	3.2%	4%
My Space	0%	0%

Respondents could chose as many types of technology as relevant to their day to day work hence results do not total 100% and not all respondents completed this question. However the clear indication is that email is the main form of technology used. Both individual and group emails were rated as the communication technology that worked best for youth services. It is noted that a larger percentage of people used web forum/online group and collaborative tools than in general youth services.

4.1.2 Organisational Websites
70% of Murri services have a website that are update between daily or weekly for some services and bi monthly to ½ yearly for other services. The main purpose of the organisations' websites is to provide information about service delivery and programs to the community, consumers and other services. This compares with only 57% of general youth services indicating that they have active websites that are regularly updated.

Almost 100% of all respondents also indicated that they used one or more means of accessing resources and information such as internet searches, government website and other networks.

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4.1.2 Reason for not using other technologies

When asked what is stopping them using other technologies, the responses were as follows

Reason for not using other technologies	Murri project	General project
Lack of knowledge	40%	36.67%
Lack of time	48%	16.67%
Lack of need	24%	26.67%
Lack of money	40%	16.67%
*Other	16%	13.33%

*Other includes lack of infrastructure, security, risk of viruses, lack of need, internal policy guidelines about internet usage, availability, risk of viruses and abuse of technology, impersonal nature of technology in a people profession.

Skills, Knowledge, Values and Training

5. Skills, Knowledge, Values and Training

THIS SECTION CONTAINS information drawn from both managers and youth workers regarding skilling and training provision, opportunities and needs.

5.1 Training and skill development opportunities

Table 5.1.1 INTERNAL training and skills development activities offered to staff
Respondents were asked to identify which training and skilling opportunities were offered internally by the organisation from a list of possibilities, with an option of other provided.

Type of skilling	Yes	No
Accredited training	32%	68%
Non-accredited training	48%	52%
Conference/Seminar attendance	52%	48%
In House Training	60%	40%
Regular Supervision	44%	56%
Informal Supervision	64%	36%
Mentoring	60%	40%
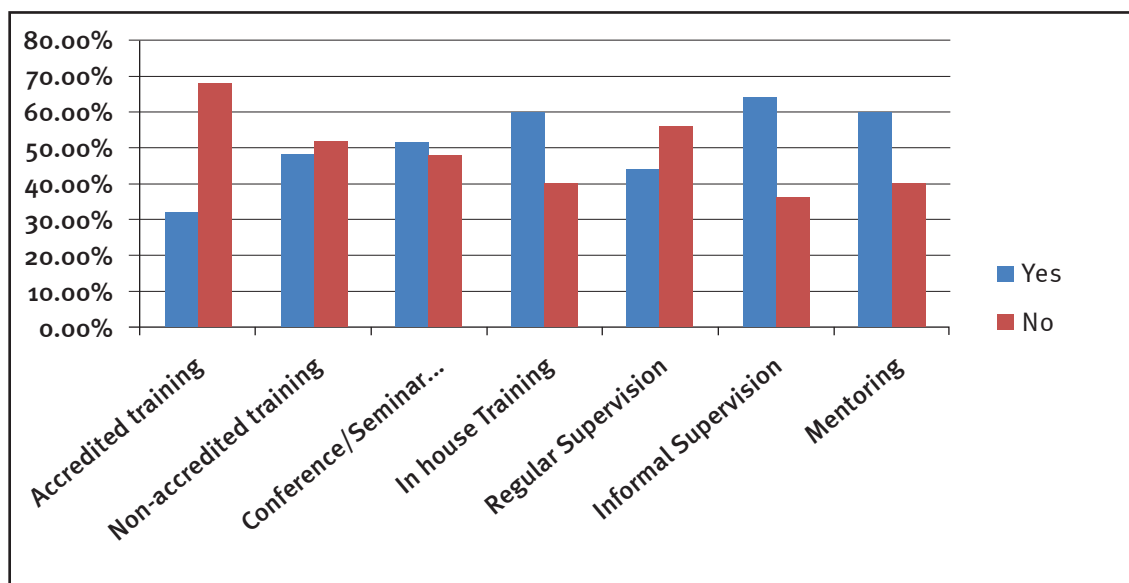
The primary sources of internal training are inhouse training , informal supervision and mentoring, however there is quite an even split across a range of internal development opportunities. Interestingly, mentoring was indicated as an internal stratgey by 60% of respondents compared to 33% in the general strategy suggesting that this is an important workforce development strategy in Murri services.

Given the nature of the work in the youth sector and the increasing complexity of young people's needs the fact that 56% of respondents do not have access to regular supervision is a matter requiring attention. While informal supervision has rated well at 64% it can be argued that this is likely to encapsulate processes such as case consultation or problem solving and managers with an 'open door' policy where staff can drop in for advice rather than a formal scheduled supervision process where staff are provided with feedback against work perfomance objectives, allowing structured and planned opportunity for professional development and growth.

Table 5.1.2 EXTERNAL training and skills development activities offered to staff
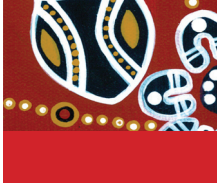Respondents were asked to identify which training and skilling opportunities were offered externally from a list of possibilities, with an option of other provided.

Type of skilling	Yes	No
Accredited training	68%	32%
Non-accredited training	60%	40%
Conference/Seminar attendance	68%	32%
In house Training	24%	76%
Regular Supervision	20%	80%
Informal Supervision	28%	72%
Mentoring	24%	76%

Access to external training and skilling opportunities appears to be reasonable for most services with almost 70% of respondents reporting access to accredited and non accredited training and conference and seminars. Supervision both regular and informal rates fairly poorly at 20% and 28% respectively. As noted above, this raises concerns about the support and development of staff where they have opportunity for feedback against work perfomance objectives, allowing structured and p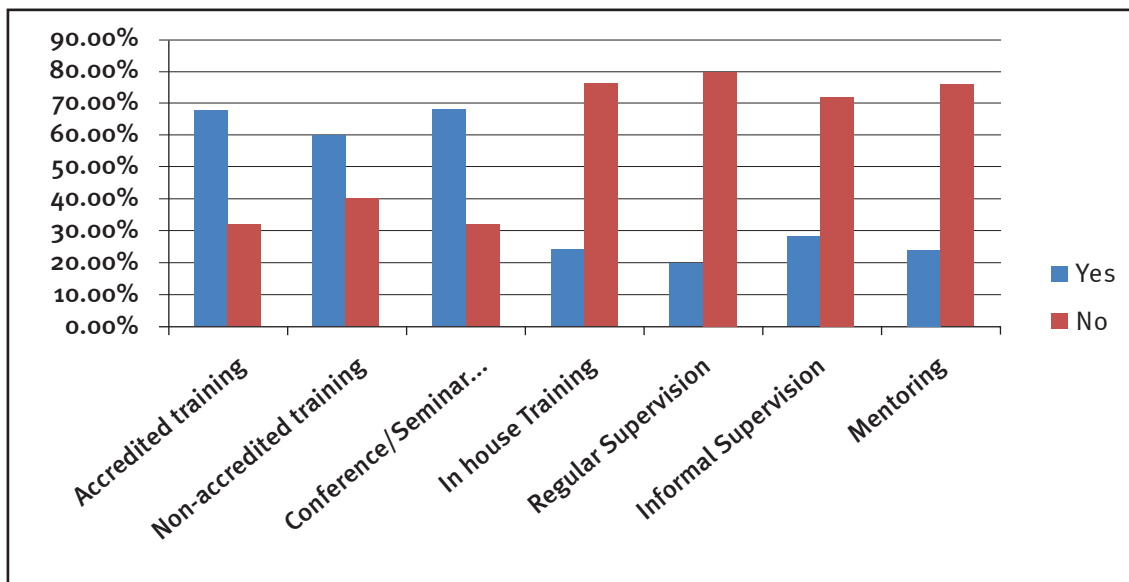lanned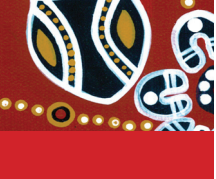 opportunity for professional development and growth. Recent work in the Child Protection area has focused on increasing resilience within the workforce and has identified supervision as a key workforce strategy in this area (Dickinson 2009).

Skills, Knowledge, Values and Training

Table 5.1.3 Preferred model of acquiring skills and knowledge

Managers were asked to identify their preferred method for staff to acquire skills and knowledge, what they thought would be staff's preference and staff were asked to identify their preference in order to gather some understanding of whether managers and staff share views in this area.
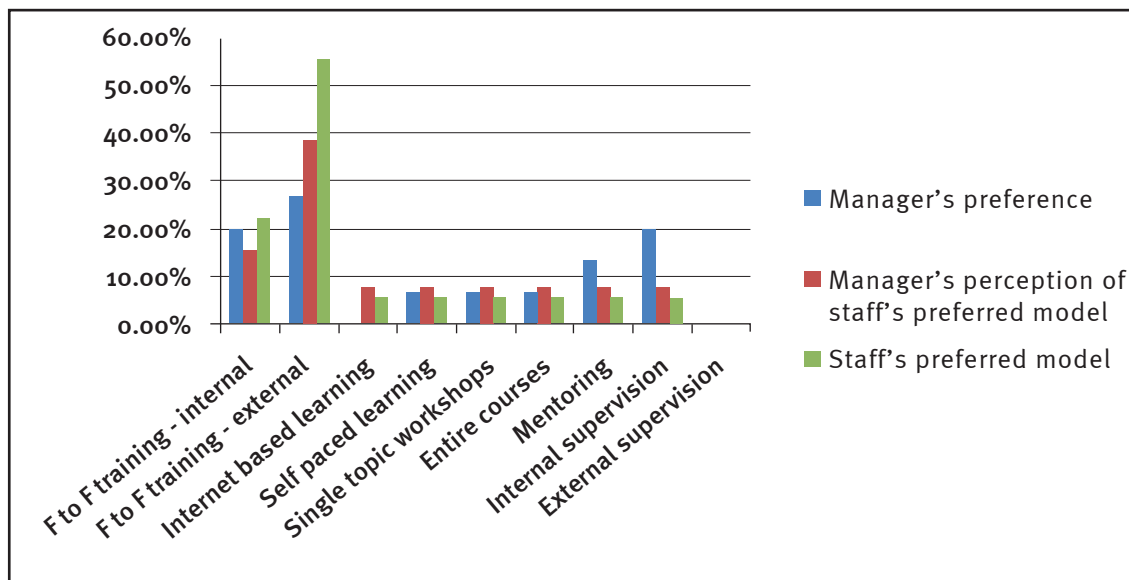
Youth workers clearly identified a preference for face to face training at 55% compared to managers preferred way of staff accessing training and skilling at 25%. During interviews and forums face to face delivery was further explored as a tendency towards residential style delivery completed in blocks of time. This seems to be attributed to both preferred learning style and that a number of services that are more regional or remote would prefer to get the training completed because of travel involved. Supervision rated poorly as a preferred way to access skills and knowledge at 20% for managers and less than 10% for staff. Recognition of prior learning was also identified by some respondents as a particular avenue.

Table 5.1.4 Barriers to staff participation in training and skill development
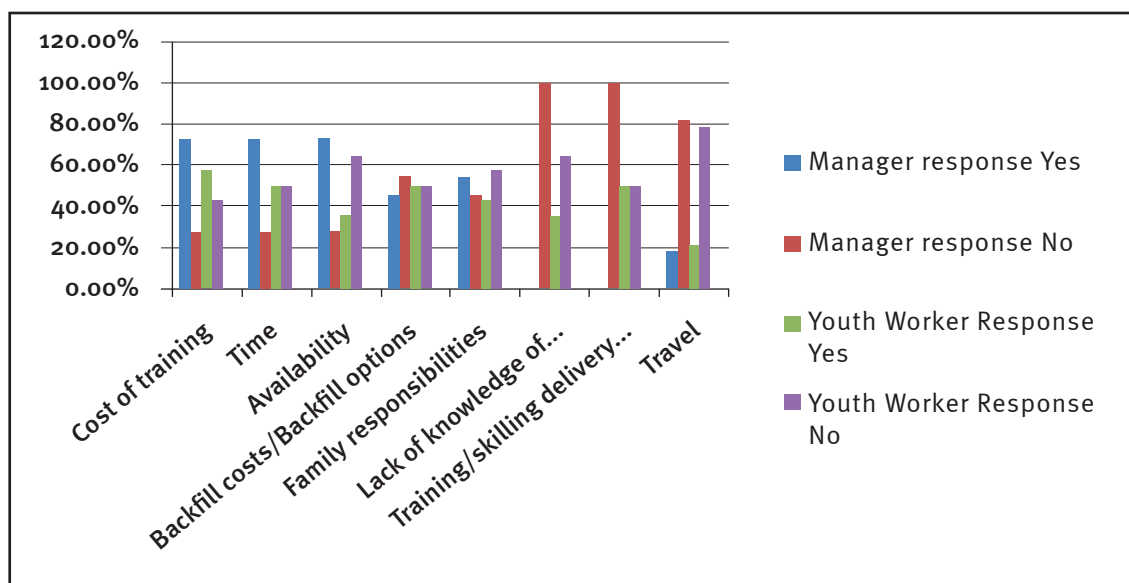
Both staff and managers were asked to identify barriers to participation in training and skilling. As evident from the table above both staff and managers commonly identified the same barrier with much the same level of impact on participation. Cost, time, backfill and family responsibilities all rated highly by both staff and

managers in relation to barriers to participating in training and skilling. Given the importance of family and kinship connection within Murri communities it is of little surprise that family responsibilities ranked highly as a barrier to participation. Interestingly travel did not rate as a key barrier to accessing training and skilling.

Table 5.1.6 Preference for staff to attend accredited or non accredited training and skills development
In order to identify the importance of access to accredited training, all respondents were asked about their preference in relation to accredited and non accredited training.

Type of Training and Skills Development	Managers	Youth Workers
Accredited Training	36.4%	57.1%
Non Accredited Training	0%	0%
Combination of both	54.5%	7.2%
No Preference	9.1%	35.7%

Accredited training is clearly valued by both youth workers and managers, with managers seeking a combination of both accredited and non-accredited to skill their workforce.

5.2 Critical Knowledge and Skill Areas

5.2.1 Critical knowledge and skill areas required by youth workers
In order to provide some defining aspects to the notion of the youth service sector, staff and managers in the survey instrument and at forums and focus groups were asked to identify the critical or core knowledge and skill areas for youth services staff.

Responses have been collated and prioritised into key topic areas based on the number of times they were identified. Six clear topics areas emerged:

Priority Order	Skill and Knowledge Area
1	Practical cultural awareness and competency- this appeared to relate to both Murri and non-Murri workers in that not all workers are from the local community and hence culturally competent in relation to that community as well as personal awareness being critical to good youth work as noted above
2	Communication skills - this includes engagement, negotiation skills and Murri language skills, counselling techniques
3	Management and governance
4	Program development - in terms of developing programs to respond to young people's needs at an agency level and potentially beyond at a whole of community/sector level underpinning an appreciation of complexity.
5	Leadership and mentoring
6	Mental health – skills and knowledge in responding to issues such as substance abuse

Skills, Knowledge, Values and Training

Other topics included:

- Crisis intervention
- Counselling
- Knowledge of community issues and extended family structures
- Building resilience
- Knowledge of key and critical youth concepts
- Keeping up with technology, innovative and creative in dealing with youth issue
- Employment and training initiatives
- Ability to engage and cover a wide range of diverse and complex issues
- Family relationships and impacts of trans-generational trauma

5.2.2 Critical values and qualities required by youth workers

Those interviewed were asked what makes a good youth worker and about the personal values that drive their work and that impact on how they work.

Not surprisingly given the description of culturally appropriate youth work as outlined above, cultural identity and learning from your own life experiences and upbringing rated as the most important by being nominated by the most people. The others most commonly identified were:

- respect, open mindedness and listening
- patience, tolerance and compassion
- working from the grassroots and walking alongside young people
- providing leadership and being role models
- passion
- honesty

What these values mean in terms of how youth work is undertaken have been further explored in the discussion paper ;Which Wei? Values in Youth Work: A Murri Perspective" (Lucashenko 2010), *http://www. yanq.org.au/our-work/2611-qwhich-wei-values-in-youth-work-a-murri-perspectiveq*, developed as a result of the emphasis placed on working with this with Murri young people and the opportunity for the youth sector as a whole to learn from this experience.

5.2.3 Critical knowledge and skill areas required by managers

In order to highlight differing requirements of managers and youth work staff, managers were asked to identify the critical or core knowledge and skill areas they require.

Priority Order	Skill and Knowledge Area
1	Governance Skills - leadership, financial, attracting funding, industrial relations, risk management, asset management and maintenance, understanding the government funding system.
2	People management - nurture and support workers, processes to challenge for change, balance competing needs (staff, clients, organisational), training opportunities including the VET system, supervision of teams and individuals, nurture social spiritual and emotional well being in staff
3	Communication Skills - conflict management, compiling complex reports, cultural knowledge and resources
4	Youth work content - legislation that affects young people, best practice and models of practice, relationship based frameworks, youth technology

5.2. 4 Staff currently enrolled in a Youth Work or other relevant qualification

12.73% of staff in the Murri youth sector indicated that they are enrolled in youth work or another relevant qualification closely compared to 15.67% of current staff in general youth services sector although as highlighted above close to 30% of Murri youth workers report that they have no qualifications. Where nominated, the qualifications identified included a wide range of levels and content areas demonstrating the complex pathways into and across the youth sector. Responses included:

- Certificate III in Community Services
- Murri Counselling Course
- Counselling and Youth work Diploma
- Grad Cert in Public Sector Management
- Grad Dip in Psychology

5.2.5 Relevant course or qualifications

Staff and managers were asked to identify specific courses or qualifications that they see as the most beneficial or relevant to their work role in the youth sector to determine if a theme or trend stood out. However as can be noted from the comments below the responses were quite broad and specific to work specialisations. The number of times a response was made has not been recorded as this was not significant; rather the topics have been listed to show the scope of responses.

- Mediation training
- Cert 4 Youth Work (however required better access)
- Project management
- Data management and reporting
- Leadership/mentoring
- Program development
- Communication
- Cultural training

6. Mental Health

In 2007, the Queensland Alliance in conjunction with YANQ and other local services conducted a Youth Mental Health Summit at the Redcliffe Area Youth Space. The interest in the Summit from across Queensland indicated the intent of youth service providers along with other service providers to work with young people in their local communities to provide support including prevention, early intervention and crisis/ post crisis support. A series of recommendations were formed towards providing better service delivery in this area that included increased skilling opportunities for youth workers working with youth mental health issues and strategies to assist youth services and mental health providers to know about each other and connect and collaborate more effectively for better service provision.

Opportunity was taken during both the general and Murri projects to further explore the existing knowleentdge and connections between youth services and community mental health providers and the areas requiring additional skilling with additional resourcing from Queensland Alliance to support this process.

Two focus groups were conducted with a total of 39 general youth sector youth workers after they had participated in a half day training event about working with young people with mental health issues. Other information in relation to this topic area also emerged in general focus groups and forums.

As well, all of the 38 people interviewed for the Murri project were asked about what types of services and support they currently provide to young people experiencing mental health issues and if they would like to be able to provide more services or support in this area.

Types of service and support provided to young people experiencing mental health issues by youth services

The key areas identified were:
• Engagement strategies
• Referral processes
• Networks and coordinated/connected services
• Provision of navigational and implementation support
• Case management
• Advocacy

Youth workers distinguished between their role and that of mental health clinicians in that they described a significant role of their work in this area as utilising their existing relationship with young people and their services to meet other immediate needs of young people such as food, housing and general support so that they may be better placed to connect with mental health professionals. They said that they have a major role in referring to specialist services and then providing support to young people to navigate through the mental health system, demystifying aspects as required. Youth workers said that they work to engage young people and establish a relationship so that they can offer support and assistance in a non judgmental way. They also said that they contribute to ensuring a continuity of service through taking on a case management role across systems as this is essential for good quality services for young people. The major issue identified by Murri services in relation to where they need to provide support was substance and drug use, in particular alcohol, marijuana and petrol sniffing. Other issues requiring service support included depression and affects of abuse.

Services said that along with referring young people on, they provide specific services in this area such as:
- having guest speakers to share their life experiences with young people
- conducting weekly mental health clinics
- providing counselling and assistance in relation to substance and drug use
- mentoring programs for young people while accessing other services
- advocating for additional support and funding to government
- advocacy for young people in school and other areas
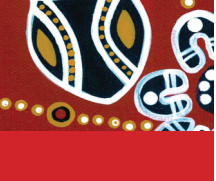- working with young people to write a recovery plan.

General sector workers in more regional and remote areas noted that while access to specialist services may exist that often the positions were not filled or the person changed regularly leaving them in the position of being the key person with a working relationship with that young person. In relation to Murri services it was noted that some remote services are well resourced to provide primary health care and with ongoing direct access to mental health services.

Provision of additional support to assist youth services to provide extra services
Workers were asked if they would like to provide more support and services than they do and, if so, in what area. Responses indicated not only that knowledge of services was important but the importance of existing relationships between services when making referrals and suggested that an increase in focused networking between youth services and the mental health sector would be very valuable. They also suggested that potential partnerships and collaborative efforts that draw on the qualities of both service systems need to be funded and supported. They commented that the funding cycle stifled service development in these areas through tight reporting requirements that did not allow for innovation as does the impact of funding changes once a program has been established.

Specifically, workers identified the need for the following strategies. These have been coded according to what can or should be addressed most immediately and what is most important to workers: green for immediate, followed by yellow and then red for those that require medium and longer term attention.

Strategies to increase youth services capacity to support young people experiencing mental health issues
Provision of additional skills in engaging young people experiencing mental health issues, building on existing skills in this area
Additional training at a tertiary education level in working with mental health issues
Cross sector professional development opportunities that will enhance relationship development and networking
Better articulate what youth workers do well in relation to working with young people experiencing mental health issues to affirm current practices
Access to professional supervision and development plans and funding that supports them to be undertaken and implemented
Regular and appropriate debriefing and reflective processes to reduce the likelihood of vicarious trauma and a burnt out workforce
Resources and infrastructure to support focused networking between youth services and mental health services towards information sharing, relationship building and case management
More flexibility in funding reporting arrangements to allow youth workers to respond in a flexible and adaptive way to emerging mental health needs
Opportunities to enhance learning and development through shadowing and job swaps that are embedded into workplans/professional development plans
Opportunities for youth workers to hear directly from young people with a lived experience of mental health issues.

Murri Specific

When Murri workers were asked if they would like to provide more support and services than they do and, if so, in what area, all services (except one child protection referral service) indicated they would be keen to provide additional services and support in this area to better meet the needs of young people and that this could be achieved through:

Additional funding that would both allow for further program development

Ability to resource appropriate training and skilling for workers to deal directly with issues

Approximately 90% of the services said that staff have no training in working with these issues.

Services also identified that there was a need for better linkages between organisations to create the system for a more unified approach with stronger referral and service provision networks. Specifically, workers identified the need for greater government recognition that Murri services can effectively deliver services in this area and the opportunity through funding amounts and funding requirements such as reporting processes and service models to be able to do this 'the Murri way". Workers stated that all Murri services offered supportive referrals for young people with mental health issues and that most offered practical support and follow up.

One specific strategy identified in the remote North West is to place more mental health outreach services for young people in places such as schools to provide an earlier intervention service.

7. Networking

TO SHED LIGHT on current participation rates and potential benefits of network membership, respondents were asked to identify if they regularly participate in networks and if so what type of sector development support was offered through this process. About 93% of workers attend networks and interagency meetings with the main stated reason being for peer support and mentoring with 63.64% of managers engaged in networks, with their main reason being peer support and information sharing.

Extending from the concept developed through this project about the congruency between youth work practice generally and culturally appropriate youth work, further exploration of the key aspects and strengths of Murri peer support networks would provide a valuable tool for informing and shaping how youth work networks are built and sustained over the long term to have most benefit to the workforce.

8. Future Trends and Skills

FINALLY, RESPONDENTS WERE asked to envisage future trends and issues likely to feature for young people and hence identify the skills and knowledge that youth workers will need to work effectively in the future.

Future Trends
• Trend towards case management
• Partnerships and collaborations
• Advances in technology
• More compliance, reporting and documentation
• Shifting to consultancy driven, negotiation tables
• Shared responsibility agreements
• Forced to compete against more resourced and established agencies for funding
• Changes in wages and the need for funding for this closing the gap policy undertaking a lot of child protection work with no recognition or funding
• Less Murri specific funding opportunities for community organisations
• Increased compliance and reporting
• Collection and analysis of data regarding service delivery
• Changes in the SACS Award and wages
• Funding for closing the gap policy
• Growing regions and infrastructure in Queensland

Future Issues for Young People
• More child protection work with funding and recognition
• Complex case management
• Mainstreaming risks
• Lack of resources and govt funds
• Cyber bullying
• Violence increasing with young people
• Lack of supported accommodation
• Funding arrangements that disconnect services from the community
• Increase in incarceration
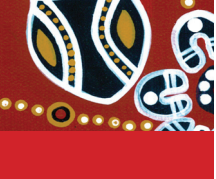
Future Trends and Skills

Respondents provided the following responses when asked to identify the knowledge and skills they think will be required into the future.

Youth Workers	Managers
Provide young people with the skills to speak for themselves	Cultural aspects of youth work
Counselling skills	Specific strategic directions coordinated by a lead agency or a working group
Advocacy	More qualifications
Technology skills to use social networking sites	More funding to support in-house training
Developing self identity	More understanding of how the system works
Cultural practical skills	
Accessible accredited training	

Key Themes

THIS SECTION OF the report summarises the key themes that have emerged and outlines some of the implications for the ongoing strategic development of the Murri youth sector in Queensland. While the findings are partial in the sense that they pertain to some regions in Queensland, they provide a clear picture from which to develop possibilities that will be validated in other regions to create and inform local and state-wide strategies.

Workforce development by its nature is undertaken in the context of broader framework of social, political and economic drivers. As a partnership agreement designed to guide the relationship between the non-profit community services sector and the Queensland Government to achieve better outcomes for Queenslanders, the *Queensland Compact: Towards a fairer Queensland* provides the framework for the Queensland Government and the not for profit community services sector to work together towards productive outcomes to benefit the community. Where possible, strategies that support the development of this partnership approach with government regarding future funding priorities and enabling capacity at a youth sector level have been identified.
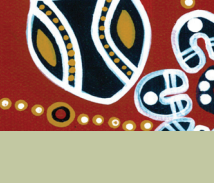
Strengthen Youth Sector Strategic Capacity for Workforce Development

Goal 3 of the *Queensland Compact* relates to improving the sector's capacity and sustainability and includes strengthening the systems and infrastructure for effective service delivery and development into the future (2008 p 6). An effective workforce development strategy requires not only an overarching framework to provide guidance and direction but the capacity within organisations and the sector overall to implement aspects of that framework as they relate to them to build current and future workforces. Therefore, the level of experience within the youth services sector is an important consideration in terms of the sustainability, health and depth of skills and knowledge available to influence quality of services provided to young people and quality of management skills and practice to support the sector. The capacity, willingness and support of key government stakeholders are also crucial factors that have been dealt with in Recommendation Two.

Survey results showed that 40% of workers have been in the youth services sector for 2 years or less, with half of these showing that they have been in the sector for approximately 1 year, indicating there is considerable level of inexperience amongst youth workers. However, importantly, survey results from managers showed that over 95% of managers had been in the youth sector for 5 years or longer with 50% having been in the sector longer than 10 years. This is a wonderful resource and strength on which to build and project participants report the need to share skills and strengths for sector sustainability.

Anecdotal reports indicate that the Murri sector has a specific issue in attracting younger workers into the sector where there are a higher percentage of workers in the 36 years and above age categories and direct competition with mining companies, other private sector and the government. While implications for services in relation to workforce management and sustainability of services are evident given staff turnover and reported difficulty in attracting and recruiting staff in some locations, the stability of managers in the sector provides a leverage point at which strategic capacity can be strengthened. Furthermore, in comparison to the general youth service sector, the Murri report shows that 45% of workers report that they have been at their service for more than 5 years.

It was noted by the IRG that people moving between services and sectors is not necessarily negative where infrastructure exists at organisational and sector levels to capture and manage sharing of knowledge, skills and information to provide a continually developing quality service to young people. The development of peer mentoring structures and leadership forums provides the environment and infrastructure for the development of the youth sectors capacity into the future, where practice expertise in all facets of the youth sector can be discussed, analysed and promoted and the opportunity for strategic thinking across the sector is created.

There is also opportunity to better utilise the strategic capacity of the sector by strengthening and formalising links between existing program-based networks and industry wide peaks such as YANQ and QYHC who are structured to provide broad advocacy services to inform discussion, debate and advocacy with government on a range of broader youth sector issues raised by network members. Genuine commitment to strategic planning as a whole sector requires effective state Peak bodies that can provide a systemic view of youth sector issues and corresponding workforce needs. In delivering this function to varying degrees for many years, YANQ has been an asset for the sector and Government providing the youth sector lead in this strategic planning process.

Existing funded networks such as YSC hubs, YACCAN and local government youth services provide support to a significant number of workers in the youth sector and offer an existing environment in which to situate expanded learning and support opportunities that will contribute to the ongoing development of the workforce. However, there are currently many workers who do not have access to peer support, funded or unfunded and the need for mentoring and peer support has been clearly identified through this project. Other networks are unfunded but may be able to provide a similar support function for their members rather than acting simply as an interagency if adequately resourced and supported to do so.

Opportunity exists to learn about and from the Murri youth services sector in their value driven approach to youth work and to consciously and intentionally import these strengths and skills across the youth services sector.

Finally, building skills and knowledge of current managers and future managers and improving career pathways within the youth sector through participation in training and skilling opportunities will not only provide greater individual levels of knowledge, skill and support but also develop a common shared experience and definition of management within the youth services sector. Training could be specifically developed or delivered against existing management competencies or qualifications in the Community Services Training Package.

Strengthen partnership with government

The resourcing and development of systems and structures that support direct youth sector input into broad strategic policy and practice initiatives such as the Compact Governance Committee will assist in both building capacity in the sector and increasing engagement in planning and policy. Utilising YANQ and other existing peaks to coordinate and collate sector input policy and funding discussions with government will contribute greatly to strengthen genuine partnership with government and meet *Queensland Compact* goals of building strong working relationships between the government and community sector and improving engagement in policy and planning.

Project participants report a distinct lack of 'strategic debate and discussion' with government about youth services sector. Development of the future workforce requires sound planning and preparation to bed down new funding initiatives or major changes to program areas. Connections that bring government and the sector together to engage in discussions and debate about emerging needs, issues, policy directions and other drivers will create an environment of proactive growth and sustainability.

While the level of government funding was raised specifically in relation to organisations capacity to pay wages at a commensurate level to government to attract and retain skilled and experienced staff, the way governments fund organisations was discussed in relation to the impact on broader sector development. The negative impact of competitive funding on collaboration and sector development was noted through surveys and in particular in the forums discussing future possibilities for the sector. Participants noted the difficulty for services that have traditionally competed for funding being expected to collaborate without infrastructure support towards this, including the development of skills and relationships and the time and capacity for strategic planning. Smaller services noted that large organisations had the 'luxury' of this through specific positions dedicated to these areas, suggesting that opportunities need to be created to support the input of organisations across the service range. Concern was raised about the ongoing commitment to funding specific Murri youth services and the move towards mainstreaming Murri youth services.

The short term nature of funding and inflexibility of service agreements and reporting arrangements were also reported as impacting on organisations capacity for innovative service delivery, role re-design and long term strategic planning. Murri managers and staff also report that the nature of their work approach is that 'work' occurs in a different cultural timeframe and takes longer to establish programs, relationships and do the work with young people and short term funding arrangements further impact on their ability to deliver culturally appropriate services. While much of this is outside the scope of the projects, strategies have been offered for further consideration that can go some way towards response in this area. The development and signing of the Queensland Compact and current government projects such as the Funding Realignment (Youth at Risk Initiative) project may provide the climate and opportunity to 'seed' some of these notions.

Create a responsive training and skilling system

Throughout the course of the project a range of immediate and future training and skilling needs have been identified both directly by youth workers and managers and as a result of the broader themes and strategies that have emerged. While it is widely noted in literature that a strategic workforce development approach requires more than a focus on professional development, skilling and training, this still remains a crucial factor in ensuring both the capacity of the current workforce and preparing the capacity of the future workforce.

The need remains to identify an agreed on list of core youth work competencies that underpin a youth work practice framework that is reflective of core Murri youth work values and culture. This will then allow a skills audit and gap analysis to be undertaken to identify capacity of current workforce. This tool could be utilised at an organisational, community or sector wide level as required and it would be useful for this work to be undertaken against existing qualifications to assess likely work readiness of new graduates when entering the sector.
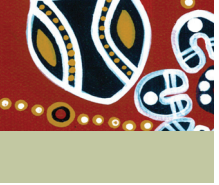
Six knowledge and skill areas were identified by project participants as core to youth work practice. It can be assumed that regular and ongoing training and skilling in these areas for existing workers will maintain a level of currency in terms of contemporary youth work practice with the current workforce. Importantly all project participants noted their preference for face to face workshop delivery to promote interactive group discussion, learning from each other and cross service networking.

A list of future trends was identified by managers that will impact on service delivery to young people and create corresponding skilling needs for consideration in the future to prepare our workforce.

Many topics noted are those that have already emerged as current training needs with the noticeable difference being the increased use of technology both as a form of communication and of harassment and bullying.

The integration of skills and knowledge back into the workplace once gained through skilling was also raised as an important factor when considering workforce capacity. Recent developments in peer mentoring such as learning circles in the Integrated Skills Development project were reported as assisting in this area. Knowledge and skill areas were identified by managers as critical to their development and growth and could be packaged into management training that builds internal organisational capacity to support and integrate learning, professional development and reflective practice. This could include offering training to managers and experienced workers in supervision and action learning and supporting this process through resources and tools on the YANQ website.

Most respondents reported reasonable access to training and skilling opportunities internally and externally however significant opportunities exist to enhance and consolidate existing processes that support skilling and training such as peer support networks that provide infrastructure for collaboration between workers. These 'Communities of Practice' provide a learning environment for information-sharing about good practice, networking, critical reflection and professional development activity. They assist new workers to fit into the broader youth service environment and provide support for workers who are isolated geographically or through attachment to non youth-focussed organisations.

The strategic provision of information to existing education, training and skilling providers and projects such as those of the Health and Community Workforce Council regarding emerging needs was identified as important to make the best use of information in a coordinated way.

Define and promote the youth services sector

Successful development of the workforce does not lie only in the hands of government or peak agencies but requires the interest, commitment and capacity of services to respond at the organisational level.

The status and profile of youth work was actively discussed in forums and focus groups. The lack of sector recognition and status within and across sectors was identified as a significant barrier to the sector's overall development and in particular service delivery outcomes for young people and retention of staff. In the general project, an immediate need identified was to define youth work, identify underpinning values and core competencies and articulate an evidence- based framework for practice that strengthens the core role of relationship based practice, developing trust and engagement and connecting young people with other services and structures.

Themes emerging through this project indicate that Murri youth service providers have a strong sense of place and community that enables them to better describe and articulate what it is they do and how they do it when working with young people. This was confirmed and detailed in a recent YANQ discussion paper entitled *Which Wei? Values in youth work a Murri Perspective* (Lucashenko 2010) *http://www.yanq.org.au/our-work/2611-qwhich-wei-values-in-youth-work-a-murri-perspectiveq*, based on initial findings about the place of values in youth work derived from this research project. As already noted,opportunities exist for the Murri sector to lead the way in providing ideas, information and strategies to strengthen the youth sector overall.

It was identified by participants in the general project that a hierarchy exists within the health and community sectors with youth workers viewed on the lower end of that hierarchy which, it is argued, has lead to a reduction of practice and policy influence by youth workers who often do not acquire a seat at the table where decisions are made either regionally or at a broader state level. It was suggested that the status and profile of the youth sector requires attention and improvement and opportunities to network and connect on practice issues, policy debate and formal learning and growth opportunities were identified as central to creating a sector 'voice'. Formalised youth sector networking opportunities through regular youth forums, policy symposiums, and youth conferences were suggested as ways to enhance connection and communication between services and stakeholders as well as offering a learning environment through peer supervision and sharing of knowledge and ideas.

Developing cultural awareness

Cultural awareness involves knowing about and understanding the potential impact of cultural difference in how we see the world in an ongoing process of learning and exploration. It also includes identifying and understanding the impact of the beliefs and values that shape the context in which we are operating at a project, organisational, governmental and broader social level in relation to participation of Murri people. Ongoing opportunities for connection, reflection, learning and changing practices need to be built into the day to day work of staff. The process of making sure what we are doing is connected to culture is critical and theory suggests the primary way to do this is through having the Murri community or people from other cultural backgrounds involved in our organisations and in leadership of our sector.

Demographic data shows that both Murri and Torres Strait Islander people and people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds are significantly underrepresented in the general youth sector workforce however both these groups make up part of the youth client group with large numbers in some areas. In accordance with the *Queensland Compact* goal to improve the sector's capacity and sustainability and encourage development and application of culturally appropriate approaches to work with Murri and Torres Strait Islander people and people from different cultural backgrounds a recommendation area has been developed to progress sector development in this area.

As would be expected, 91.8% of the workforce in this project identified as Murri, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander. The similarities between youth work values and those embedded in the way Murri services and workers, work in their own communities creates the possibility to increase learning opportunities and ways to connect better between the two parts of the sector and to ensure that underpinning values and core competencies of a youth work practice framework reflect the importance of diversity will support cultural competency.

Despite the high proportion of Murri young people who access general youth services the need for training and skilling in this area did not rank highly in the general project yet it was clearly identified as a priority in the Murri project.

The investigation and the implementation of skilling programs that can both develop individual's skills and knowledge in working effectively with Murri young people and their families along with managers and organisations capacity to integrate culturally appropriate processes into service delivery and human resource practices remains a high priority in this project as well.

Developing sector capacity to work with Mental Health matters
Participants identified the growing number of young people experiencing mental health issues and requiring support and intervention. Skills and training in this area also rated highly with survey respondents. When asked about provision of additional support to young people, youth workers from general and Murri services both emphasised the referral role they have, the necessity for effective collaborative relationships and networks to make this work and the ongoing role of support and case management they provide more broadly than the mental health system. Additional skilling and workforce development were identified for current workers and the increase of needs in this area was identified in future trends.

A number of strategies that grow sector capacity in this area have been suggested.
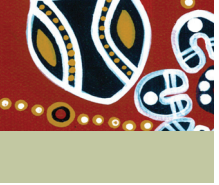
Where to From Here

Genuine sector development is a long term process requiring interest, ownership and buy in from those within the sector both to inform what is required and how this is possible and from government to work collaboratively with sector leaders and other key stakeholders to implement and evaluate strategies and initiatives. Working in partnership, short and medium term contributions can be developed while seeds are planted for long term sustainable development and support.

The next phase of the project involves the validation of both the data collected and the profile that has emerged with other regions across Queensland. This will create the opportunity to build in regional variations, identify regional specifics and increase interest and ownership across the sector and with government and other stakeholders at a local level. A Murri Reference Group will be established to support the further development of strategies and goals to direct effective and culturally appropriate and relevant outcomes.

Youth Sector Development Plan

Recommendation One:
Strengthen youth sector strategic capacity for workforce development

Strategies	Major Stakeholders	Regional considerations	Existing regional projects/strategies	Potential barriers
Establish a Murri youth sector reference group	YANQ			
Establish a Murri youth sector development officer position within YANQ	YANQ OFY			
Develop a strategic plan based on the youth sector Development Plan to inform and guide Murri youth sector development	YANQ Murri Reference Group			
Establish Murri specific peer support and mentoring structures	YANQ			
Strengthen and formalise links between existing program based networks such as YACCAN and industry wide peaks such as YANQ	Existing peer and other youth networks YANQ			
Development and delivery of leadership and management skills development for current managers and future managers	YANQ Workforce Council DET			
Integrate whole of sector development into needs analysis and skilling delivery processes	Workforce Council YANQ OFY			
Development of the YANQ Workforce Development website to provide a direct access point and portal for youth services to access information, tools, templates and articles	YANQ			

Youth Sector Development Plan
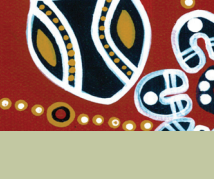
Recommendation Two:
Strengthen partnership with government

Strategies	Major Stakeholders	Regional considerations	Existing regional projects/strategies	Potential barriers
Develop and contribute to systems and structures that support direct sector input into broad strategic initiatives such as the Compact Governance Committee increasing engagement in planning and policy	YANQ OFY			
Bring together key stakeholders such as government, youth peaks and youth sector leaders in a 'think tank' process to engage in a genuine exchange about social policy and practice implications	OFY YANQ			
When considering future funding priorities and program areas and as part of the funding realignment process government considers the possibility of the inclusion of a 'designated capacity component' that provides: • resourcing towards initial and ongoing workforce development needs at a whole of sector level to prepare for and implement program initiatives • timely advice and resourcing to 'seed the project' and support the sector to assist in development of appropriate skills and knowledge within the current and future workforce to enhance the likelihood of successful and effective implementation of new initiatives • improved ongoing access to 'capacity enhancing possibilities' direct to services and codified in service agreements whereby services are able to effectively participate in and report on their participation in sector wide strategic planning and thinking through networks and other processes along with skilling and training opportunities	OFY			
YANQ to engage with government and advocate on behalf of the youth sector to inform service system review processes to consider the continuum of service delivery from prevention through early intervention to crisis management	YANQ OFY			
Support service capacity to make links between key strategic initiatives such as Queensland Compact and Community Services Standards, and day to day operations to position organisations and the sector for sustainable workforce development	YANQ			

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Youth Sector Development Plan

Recommendation Three:
Create a responsive training and skilling system

Strategies	Major Stakeholders	Regional considerations	Existing regional projects/strategies	Potential barriers
Ensure ongoing availability and accessibility of in-house accredited training and skilling opportunities in core knowledge and skill areas	DET Workforce Council			
Investigate training and skilling options in areas identified as future needs including mapping to national training packages and actively promote to the sector	YANQ Workforce Council			
Liaise with training providers regarding emerging needs to inform training and skilling development	YANQ Workforce Council			
Determine agreed-on youth sector core competencies from youth work framework and conduct a skills audit and gap analysis as a health check of the current workforce	YANQ			
Work to ensure that RPL processes and systems are culturally appropriate	DET YANQ			
Create closer linkages and clearer articulation processes between VET and University systems to improve access/movement from VET to Universities for Murri students	YANQ Workforce Council			
Enhance and consolidate existing processes that support skilling and training through peer support networks that provide infrastructure for collaboration between workers through additional resourcing and recognition	OFY			
Build internal organisational capacity to support and integrate learning, professional development and reflective practice through offering training to managers and experienced workers in supervision and action learning and supporting this process through resources and tools on the YANQ website	YANQ Workforce Council			

Youth Sector Development Plan

Recommendation Four:
Define and promote the youth services sector

Strategies	Major Stakeholders	Regional considerations	Existing regional projects/strategies	Potential barriers
Utilise the IRG, Murri Reference Group and other stakeholders to create a definition of youth work	YANQ IRG			
Engage Murri young people in discussing and defining the concept of youth work	YANQ OFY			
Promote the core skills and practices and outcomes of youth work	YANQ OFY			
Show case Murri youth services are good practice models across the youth sector	YANQ			
Engage the sector in the development and articulation of a broad evidence based youth work practice framework, including identification of core Murri values and competencies	YANQ			
Create formal youth sector networking opportunities through regular youth forums, policy symposiums, and youth conferences that can enhance existing networking and communication between services and stakeholders as well as offering a learning environment through peer supervision and sharing of knowledge and ideas	YANQ			
Undertake research and release a discussion paper about Murri culture and youth work and provide information to broader youth sector and government	YANQ			
Provide services and workers with access to an ethics training program to provide individual skilling and build capacity to contribute to the development/articulation of values based youth work practice and recruitment framework	YANQ			

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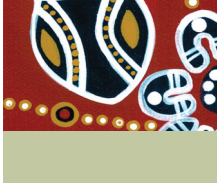
Recommendation Five:
Design and implement attraction and retention strategies

Strategies	Major Stakeholders	Regional considerations	Existing regional projects/strategies	Potential barriers
Assist services to better understand and implement industrial changes	YANQ			
Lobby and advocate for adequate funding to meet pay equity requirements and improved working conditions to assist in the long term retention and sustainability of the sector	YANQ			
Create a 'career map' that shows entry points and qualifications, opportunities to cross sectors and career pathways to promote the youth sector	YANQ Workforce Council OFY			
Further research existing career pathways including across services and service types to inform future possibilities	YANQ OFY			

Youth Sector Development Plan

Recommendation Six:
Develop cultural awareness

Strategies	Major Stakeholders	Regional considerations	Existing regional projects/strategies	Potential barriers
Investigate the implementation of skilling programs that can draw on skills and knowledge of Murri community to: • develop individuals skills and knowledge in working effectively with Murri young people and their families • build managers and organisations capacity to integrate culturally competent processes into service delivery and human resource practices	YANQ Murri sub committee Workforce Council			
Investigate the similarities between youth work values and those embedded in the way Murri services and workers work in their own communities to increase learning opportunities and ways to connect better between the two parts of the sector	YANQ Murri sub committee IRG			
Develop tools to assist organisations to conduct audits and analysis of their organisational cultural competence including strategies and processes they use to increase Murri participation with the view to integrating effective strategies into organisational business and culture	YANQ Murri sub committee Workforce Council			
Development of the YANQ Workforce Development website to support to integrate culturally competent processes into day to day practice can be further supported and resourced through this process as a follow up to training	YANQ			

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Recommendation Seven:
Developing sector capacity to work with Mental Health matters

Strategies	Major Stakeholders	Regional considerations	Existing regional projects/strategies	Potential barriers
Resource the systematic roll out of training for the youth sector to build confidence and capacity of youth workers in supporting and advocating for Murri young people experiencing mental health issues. This training is to include the voices of young people with lived experience of mental health issues	YANQ Qld Alliance DET			
Further training and capacity building in Murri young people and mental health in regional and rural Qld				
Queensland Alliance and YANQ are funded to develop a framework and process for work shadowing and job swaps to enhance learning and development between the youth sector and the mental health community sector	YANQ Qld Alliance Qld Health DoC			

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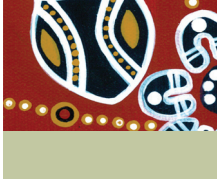The Queensland Alliance (2007) Youth Mental Health Summit

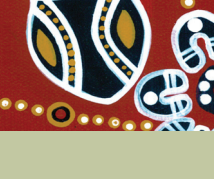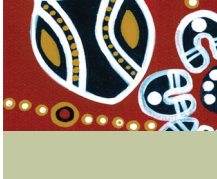YouthLink Scotland (2007) *Statement on the Nature and Purpose of Youth Work*. Glasgow

Acronym List

CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DET	Department of Education and Training
DoC	Department of Communities
IRG	Industry Reference Group
OFY	Office for Youth (Queensland)
QCOSS	Queensland Council of Social Service
Workforce Council	Health and Community Services Workforce Council
YACCAN	Youth and Community Combined Action Network
YSC	Youth Support Coordinators
YANQ	Youth Affairs Network Queensland Inc

The Murri Youth Sector in Queensland
FINAL REPORT AND YOUTH SECTOR DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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