THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by - Timothy Dooley - 2008 Churchill Fellow

To study youth intervention residential care programs for at risk youths aged between 12-16 years- USA, Canada.

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Signed

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INTRODUCTION

The Fellowship enabled me to travel to Canada and the USA in order to visit youth intervention residential care programs that deliver and provide services to at risk youth (12-16 years of age). It also afforded me the opportunity to visit police agencies and examine what intervention programs are currently run by those agencies.

I extend my gratitude and appreciation to the Churchill Trust for the support and assistance given prior to, and during, the completion of this Fellowship. The experience provided a wealth of information and firsthand knowledge of the current practices used in the facilities and agencies that were visited. It also established a strong network of contacts that will enable further exchange of information to occur and be shared within Australia.

I am also indebted to my family, friends, colleagues and Tasmania Police who have supported me in this endeavour. Without such support this would not have been possible.

Special thanks to Mr Mike Duval-Stewart, who has the vision and compassion to recognise the value of investing time and energy into ‘building’ our youth, and recognising them as the future leaders.

And finally, by way of illustrating of the kinship and camaraderie amongst Churchill Fellows, I advise that I was contacted by a former Fellow following some local media content that was generated whilst I was in Ontario, Canada. She then collected me, and took me into the family home for a lovely evening meal and meaningful conversation. I was made to feel welcome and relaxed, and I later left feeling privileged and amazed that such a network exists, and that I was able to benefit from it, despite being alone and so far from home.

Thank you Jeny and Bijan.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Timothy Dooley
C/O – City Police Station, 47 Liverpool Street, Hobart, TAS 7000
Inspector – Tasmania Police
(03) 6230 2111  timothy.dooley@police.tas.gov.au

The fellowship travel was undertaken between 28th August and 15 October 2009. The purpose of the fellowship was to visit youth intervention residential care programs that deliver and provide services to at risk youth (12-16 years of age). It also afforded me the opportunity to visit police agencies and examine what intervention programs are currently run by those agencies. In both cases, I was able to visit practitioners, supervisors and managers of the programs and police services, running programs in a variety of contexts such as schools, farms, and small communities.

Highlights:
- ‘Teen Challenge Farm’, Lambeth, Ontario, Canada. I spent several days speaking with nearly all staff, and was supported and assisted by Chris MacDonald.
- London Police Service, London, Ontario, Canada. Members of the agency were friendly and very supportive of my visit, with extensive access being provided, from Chief Murray Faulkner through to Constable Dennis Rivest.
- ‘Berkshire Union Free School District’ in Canaan, New York, USA. The support and access provided by Superintendent James Gaudette was outstanding.
- Sharing in the enlightening experiences of Trace Embry, the founder of ‘Shepherd’s Hill Farm’ at Martin, Georgia, USA.
- Witnessing the work of staff at the ‘Community Service Foundation’ in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, USA.
- Benefiting from the wisdom, counsel and generosity of Ed Shipman, co-founder of ‘Happy Hill Farm and Academy’ in Granbury, Texas, USA.
- Sharing in the knowledge and experience of staff at ‘New Haven’, Spanish Fork, Utah, USA.

Major Lessons/Conclusion:
- USA and Canada have a proliferation of facilities that deliver key services to ‘at risk’ youth, based on either public or private (and not for profit) funded models.
- The delivery of services to youth in public funded models appeared to be reducing under the stress of the current economic situation in the USA, whilst privately funded models reported limited reduction.
- All providers utilise fundamental key philosophies and practices such as providing a safe, secure and consistent environment for youth; a strong emphasis upon codes of conduct and behaviour, accountability and responsibility, including peer review; strong emphasis on problem solving and decision making; self discipline and respect; use of restorative practices and principles; and use of positive reinforcement (privileges) in place of negative reinforcement (punishment).
- Consistent with the experience of the public funded programs, policing agencies have seen a reduction in the number and diversity of youth programs utilised, due to a reduction in funding occurring.

Implementation / Dissemination
- The experience, information and knowledge gained during the Fellowship will be shared amongst the Australian community through the pursuit and ongoing activities of the Steering Committee as we continue towards establishing the concept facility ‘Main Chance Farm’ in Tasmania.
- The experience, information and knowledge gained will also be shared amongst the Tasmanian community, agencies and bodies through use of media and direct contacts.
- The findings from the report will be the subject of a separate report to the Tasmanian Commissioner of Police, and a paper will be prepared for the Australian Police Journal.
- A media opportunity is currently being developed to highlight the purpose and findings of the trip, with appropriate acknowledgement to the Churchill Trust.
FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

29th August – 4th September, Ontario, Canada
- London Police Service (London)
- Teen Challenge Farm (Lambeth)

5th – 12 September, New York, USA
- New York Police Department (New York City)
- Berkshire Union Free School District (Canaan)

13th – 18th September, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, USA
- International Institute for Restorative Practices
- Bethlehem Police Department

19th – 26th September, Georgia, USA
- Atlanta Police Department (Atlanta)
- Shepherd’s Hill Farm (Martin)

27th September – 4th October, Texas, USA
- Dallas Police Department (Dallas)
- Happy Hill Farm and Academy (Granbury)

5th – 13th October, Utah, USA
- Salt Lake City Police Department (Salt Lake City)
- New Haven (Provo)

15 October - Return to Tasmania, Australia
Teen Challenge Farm, Lambeth, Ontario, Canada

Shepherd’s Hill Farm, Martin, Georgia, USA

Berkshire Farm Center, Berkshire, New York, USA

Happy Hill Farm, Granbury, Texas, USA
Youth Facilities/Centres visited

With the exception of the IIRP in Pennsylvania, which functions solely as a school environment for youth, all other centres offered 3 key elements that were common;

- Delivery of standardised education curriculum for all students.

Typically this curriculum was that of the state or province, and afforded appropriate review of delivery of the curriculum by Education Department staff; allowed for students to transition in and out with ease; was recognised and understood clearly by teachers and parents; and provided standardised accountability, governance and reporting for the Education Department, teachers, parents and students.

- A residential environment that provided rigour, discipline, and accountability.

Each centre provided a firm, consistent and secure environment for the residents. The environment provided a solid framework for the residents to live within, yet also demanded that they were accountable for their actions, attitudes, behaviours etc. Ground rules and expectations of behaviour were set and established, and were the acknowledged and embraced by residents. Whilst this was reinforced by staff, typically most of the accountability occurred amongst peers in a formalised process. In a practical sense, the development of individual responsibility and establishment of a work ethic amongst residents occurred through programs such as animal husbandry, equine therapy, and completion of chores and duties associated with such programs.

- Capacity building and development of self esteem amongst residents.

Each centre provided a range of opportunities to assist and support the development of self esteem amongst the residents. In some cases counselling services were provided, but in all cases, elements of physical education, sports, or adventure therapy were apparent. They were regarded as critical in terms of self esteem development, but also instilled other attributes of team building, mutual respect and healthy outdoor activities and lifestyles.
Funding
The six centres provided very useful insight into how funding was provided and sourced, with some innovative practices evident.

The six centres can be broadly classified into self-funding (user pays), self funding (philanthropic/sponsored), or government supported/funded (referrals, education and/or justice placements).

*Self-funded centres (user pays)* were predominantly operated through participant contribution (typically family). Of the two centres that operated on this model, participants were required to pay for services that included education, residency, and support services. These centres were expensive to access, though it was apparent that they still had good occupancy rates. One included two residents from Australia. The programs ran from 10 – 12 months and ranged in cost from $70,000 - $110,000 US. Those that accessed this type of centre generally came from affluent backgrounds.

*Self-funded (philanthropic/sponsored)* centres were run largely through generous corporate support underpinned by tax concession availability. This included sponsorship and support during construction stages, but was also ongoing in terms of annual running costs. One centre had established a healthy support arrangement with a large state sporting entity which produced a range of opportunities, including financial support, enhanced media profile, and mentoring for residents of the centre by high profile sportspersons. The centres received significant donations from food suppliers that were significant in reducing residency costs for the centres. Both centres of this type reported that pursuit of funding was an ongoing struggle that has been made more difficult due to the economic situation in the USA, and globally.

*Government supported/funded (referrals, education and/or justice placements)* centres were reliant upon referrals to the centre from agencies such as education, justice, health etc. In such cases, the referring agency would fund for the component provided by the centre (e.g. education would pay for the schooling, whilst justice would pay for the residency costs, and health may fund counselling services). In all cases, the funding would merely be a reallocation of the funding that would have been provided to the agency to deliver the service
themselves. The centres that operated under this model reported that referrals had decreased dramatically as state agencies had funds reduced to combat loss of state revenue.

**Establishment**

All centres reported that establishment was a critical time, with the first 2-3 years as a struggle to make ends meet. Beyond that, and notwithstanding the ongoing issues associated with sourcing sponsorship/funding, all centres maintained that once the establishment phase was completed, they were able to sustain themselves without any significant ongoing support.

**Staffing**

All centres reported that staff selections were fundamental and critical to the success of all programs. All reported a strong need to employee staff that were highly committed to working with youth, over and above a mere employment arrangement. Selections and appointments were regarded as key to the success in the establishment phase, with selections seen as critical in terms of a staff members ability to establish rapport and win a legitimate trust with residents. Ongoing monitoring of staff performance was also seen as critical to the longevity of the centres. Staff must act consistently and clearly in order that residents operate in an ordered and secure environment that provides them with reassurance. Key appointments were seen as staff that are responsible for operations, such as the residential manager, the education coordinator, and adventure therapy/sports coordinator. Of course, the key appointment is the Director/CEO who must have vision and drive, along with the capacity to review and ensure that the staff maintains the direction that has been set for them, and that practices are being adhered to at all times.

**Coordination**

A critical factor in the success of all centres is the capacity to seamlessly coordinate all aspects of the centre (education, residency, sporting, animal husbandry etc) and to ensure that all aspects have clear and open lines of communication. Regular meetings occurred for this exchange to occur, generally in the morning and at the end of each day. This eroded
any potential for ‘silo’ effect and ensured that all staff were aware of any issues that may have occurred at any particular time on any particular day. The requirement to keep accurate and concurrent records also underpinned the verbal exchanges.

**Police Services visited**
Of the police services that were visited, some common observations were made –

**Federal Programs**
Nearly all police services participated in (or had access to) Federal Programs. Typically, these programs were aimed at tackling significant problems that had been identified at a national level as requiring action and were supported with funding and access to resources. These programs were well established, were well publicised, and generally well resourced. They focussed upon significant issues such as drug/alcohol use and abuse, and gang involvement and activities.

**State/County/Jurisdiction Programs**
Many of the police services ran programs that were common to states, or in some cases, to Counties/jurisdictions. These were typically driven by local needs, and appeared to be well connected with their local communities. Programs generally involved officers working with small local communities, and in particular working with schools (teachers, parents, students) to deliver timely services to deal with real issues as they occurred.

Although such programs were not well funded or resourced, their appeared a greater level of connectivity with the community, with all members of that community reporting a high degree of success with the programs – this was ordinarily done by many different members of the community citing personal examples of how the programs had worked to provide real results. A key feature of these programs was that the officers directly involved had to be committed to such work, and had to make significant investment into the communities. For example, many officers had taken on additional responsibilities such as coaching sports teams or assisting after hours and on weekends, which was un-paid work completed of their own volition.
In nearly all cases, funding was a significant issue for such programs. Many programs had been reduced significantly in terms of activities, capacity, and staffing. In some cases, programs had been reverted to fulfilling solely enforcement functions in communities, with no pro-active strategies being pursued at all. This appeared to be a function of organisations that are driven by tangible results (such as reported crime figures, arrest rates etc) as opposed to understanding that programs that have intangible results can also bring significant benefits. Unfortunately, it was apparent that funding was provided on the basis of service delivery with outputs being delivered. In other cases, budget reductions had led to a reduction in police officers, which again had been felt immediately in the youth service/intervention areas.
CONCLUSIONS
The main conclusions that I came to as a result of the Fellowship were that the USA and Canadian practices revealed the following key attributes –

- Discipline / accountability / responsibility and peer review (where other students challenge inappropriate behaviours and support positive peer culture) is critical to the success of any program;

- In many cases, youth had become lost in an education system that could not deal with the complex issues that they presented with. The centres were filling the gap in this regard;

- Safety and security for troubled youth can be found in providing rules and boundaries/structure for youth;

- Establishing a work ethic in individuals is key to building purpose, self worth, and self esteem in the individual;

- Strong linkages and communication between all centre staff, irrespective of their roles (teacher, house manager etc), is also fundamental to a successful program;

- Strong counselling practices by trained staff are critical to ensuring that progress is continually made through the program and in order to deal with past, current and future issues;

- Opportunity for positive change appears to be best in the age range 11-14 years, before strong attitudes are formed, and cannot be altered;

- Programs that appeared to have increased success demanded and attained family support and direct involvement in the program, designed to re-build relationships and establish a healthy, ongoing and sustainable relationship between the individual and other family members;
• The response, program, staffing etc to deal with behavioural/delinquency cases vs. therapeutic (drug/alcohol/mental health issues) cases are vastly different and must not be confused. This is important in determining who should access what programs and why; and

• Influencing change takes considerable time, hence the proliferation of lengthy programs that are linked to education and removed from negative influences / peers.

It is my intention to complete a television media opportunity with a local media producer in early 2010. That opportunity will detail the Churchill Fellowship and the findings from the Fellowship.

I will also complete a report for the Tasmanian Commissioner of Police detailing the Fellowship, with a particular emphasis upon observations about police service programs.

I will write a paper and submit it for publication in the Australian Police Journal in 2010.

I am continuing my work with the steering committee to further develop the concept of Main Chance Farm, a residential facility within Tasmania. The Fellowship will provide much information for the development of that concept, and will be shared with various state and federal agencies.
RECOMMENDATIONS

I shall continue to use opportunities within my profession to raise awareness about such facilities and their benefits.

The work to develop the concept of Main Chance Farm, a residential facility for Tasmania, will continue with the findings from the Fellowship supporting and informing the progress of the concept.

I will utilise existing networks to raise awareness about the benefits of such facilities for youth in Australia, particularly amongst other professionals in the youth justice, health and education fields.

I will utilise new networks from the USA and Canada to maintain a dialogue and continue to gain current information about developments in this field.

I will explore opportunities for the development of facilities within Australia using contacts and resources from the USA and Canada.

The Fellowship identified several areas where improvements should occur in Australia. These include –

- Recognition that education needs to provide flexible, workable options for some youths, in order to support the youths remaining in education. The failure to continue with education presents as the single most significant risk to youth;

- Alcohol and drug abuse is a key area that requires significant education. Within Australia there has existed a culture of binge drinking amongst youth and young adults. Culture change is achievable, but it requires strong leadership over a long and sustained period;
• Programs designed to effect long lasting and significant change take time to implement. Changing an individual requires patience, diligence, commitment and character. Programs are therefore long-term and require ongoing funding and support, not short-term injections of cash to run pilot programs; and

• The establishment of programs should be done collaboratively and be evidence based in terms of the market they intend to service. Selections of candidates to participate in programs need to be appropriate, acknowledging that different programs provide different support, counselling etc, and therefore different outcomes.