



# The Way Forward

*"making a difference"*



A Young Women's Leadership Program



## YOUNG MOTHERS FOR YOUNG WOMEN

» November 2002 to June 2004



young women's  
Leadership  
Program.



YOUNG MOTHERS FOR YOUNG WOMEN  
An activity of Micah Projects Inc



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### The YWL reference group comprised of:

Karyn Walsh, Micah Projects  
Adele Renwick, Micah Projects  
Libby Moreton/Pieta Sephton, Young Parents Program (YPP)  
Andree Stark, Community Renewal (Policy)  
Mary Stacey, Southside Education Centre  
Emmy Surman/Cait Calcutt, Children by Choice  
Wendy Lynch, Brisbane Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (BDVAS)  
Renee Jones, Young Women's Program (YWP) Carole Park  
Sharon Hine, Albert Park Flexi School  
Natasha Schuller, Youth and Family Services (YFS) Logan  
Jacki Grozinger, Mabel Park High School, POWER program  
Liz Deplater, Community Health - Ipswich  
Alison Burns/Nicole Kelly, Deception Bay Community Youth Assoc.

### YWL PROGRAM GUEST CO-FACILITATORS:

Jeannie Elliot  
– Jade PEAR  
Andy Compton  
– Advocacy Consultant  
Betty Chapel and Nadine Kmita  
– ISIS  
Franceska Lejeune  
– Kids Helpline  
Sophie Morson  
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## YOUNG WOMEN'S WISDOM

*The decision to parent is often a difficult choice for any of us as young women.*

*We rely on our networks of family, friends and professionals to support us in our decision.*

*Our ability to support, nurture and protect our children often depends on the quality of our ecosystem – which can be strained by our decision and the implications of parenting.*

*We are young and we are parents. We may or may not have a supportive partner, family, friends or professionals we can trust.*

*We may have the ability to access services, or we might not even know they exist.*

*Each individual woman and her child has a different network of formal & informal relationships and experience to assist them in the care and protection of their children.*

*As young women who are parents, our primary relationships with family and friends change.*

*We still consider ourselves as children in one family, and at the same time are expected to be independent and adult in a new family unit with a baby. Sometimes we have no family or other supports at all. Dealing with mixed reactions, different opinions and circumstances can be really difficult and can feel for us like 'being pulled in two directions'.*

Young Mothers for Young Women (YMYW) is a peer support, education and advocacy service for young women under 25 years who are parents and their families. The YMYW network emerged from a group of young women's initial participation as co-researchers in a study of the links between gender and violence in the lives of young mothers. YMYW further developed responses to prevent domestic violence through peer education strategies focusing on healthy relationships. Since 1994, YMYW has undertaken numerous pilot projects ranging from research projects, developing models of outreach & peer support and producing a series of peer education resources.

***In October 2002, Young Mothers for Young Women received Commonwealth funding from the Stronger Families and Stronger Communities – Potential Leadership in Local Communities Initiative. This funding was for an 18-month project to develop a Young Women's Leadership (YWL) program, incorporating peer leadership training with young women who are parenting in four locations – Brisbane, Ipswich, Logan and Deception Bay.***

*The purpose of the project was to implement leadership training, initiate community development projects & networking, and provide mentoring support to the young women who are peer leaders.*

## YOUNG WOMEN'S WISDOM

*There are a number of strategies that we adopt to respond to the circumstances of our lives. The major strategy adopted by most of us has been to seek support.*

*Often we have sought support from family and friends, and on occasion we have turned to professionals. The kind of support we are seeking involves someone listening to us and helping us to make decisions about our own lives without trying to make the decisions for us.*

*We have felt supported when people have been able to offer us information that is useful to understanding our experience and making decisions about the future.*

*It is critical that the person supporting us respects the decisions we make about our own lives.*

*Sometimes we need the support people to be actively assisting us to follow through on the decisions that affect us; it is also essential that they can recognise that at times we are unable to reach out for support.*

*The opportunity to be part of peer support groups has decreased our vulnerability and increased our companionship and our self-confidence.*

*When faced with crisis we have sought professional help. We benefit most when professionals are respectful of our privacy and our circumstances, flexible in their approach and have the ability to spend time with us and offer us options and choices.*

*Partnerships between skilled professionals and trained peer leaders have worked well for many of us in providing the combination of skills, knowledge, resources and relationships that assist our personal ecological system to work for us.*

Overall the project engaged intensely with 20 young women who are pregnant & parenting and their combined 31 children. Each young woman who participated, facilitated further contacts with at least 150 additional young women who are young mothers, within their local community utilising both formal and informal processes. This network was sustained & resourced by the project worker over the duration of this project.

The project findings consistently found a strong willingness and enthusiasm from young women to participate in the young women’s leadership program and project development. This willingness is significant when evaluating the number of factors that potentially hinder young women who are pregnant and parenting in their capacity to participate in community engagement processes & programs. Such factors include:

- Experiences of poverty
- Unstable housing arrangements
- Family & domestic violence
- Family Sickness
- Lack of accessible, affordable local transport options
- Mental health issues eg. depression
- Lack of motivation or sense of purpose
- Low self-esteem
- Social, cultural & geographical isolation
- Lack of accessible, flexible & affordable childcare
- Limited opportunities to re-enter education, training and employment, past exclusions/ experiences of formal education
- Experiences of discrimination and being “judged”
- Access to family support

These factors suggest that young women who are pregnant & parenting and their children may be at significant risk of psychological, social and emotional problems because of the major disadvantages they experience in their lives. The psychological profile of young mothers shows more identity diffusion, less autonomy, more depression, and lower self-esteem than non-pregnant adolescents (Lovell & Littlejohn; 1997).

The other significant influencing factor on degrees of participation is the young woman’s own personal development and life experience, and whether or not she feels supported to identify alternative pathways for learning & development and empowered to “actively participate”.

This program flexibly responded to the young women by meeting them where they are at personally, by developing partnerships, and supporting & encouraging the young women to participate to their capacity.

## Young Women’s Wisdom

*The implications of risks & hazards in a young woman and her family’s life are that the ecological system shatters, and breaks down. Young women are then living in a void of social isolation.*

*Professional and peer interventions need to focus on both the personal and the social factors which increase the risk of harm to children and women.*

*Strategies need to be developed to bring back the supports and resources needed to prevent total family breakdown.*

### Poverty, Gender, Violence

*For many of us we have lived with the experience of violence and abuse in our lives both as children and as young adults.*

*These experiences impact on our relationships with ourselves, our children, our partners, professionals and the community.*

*Many of us have experienced emotional, physical, financial and sexual violence from intimate partners, strangers, fathers, mothers, and friends.*

*For many of us violence in our lives has not occurred as an isolated event. These experiences have contributed a lot to the social isolation that we sometimes find ourselves overwhelmed by.*

*As young women who are mothers we are vulnerable because of:*

- a lack of respect for our human rights,
- stereotypes about young mothers,
- our gender and
- our poverty.

*We are often the subject of political debates and the media contributes to constructing images of us as women and young mothers that give people permission to judge and use power over us as women.*

*These stereotypes fail to take in to account the full context of adolescent and young parenting.*

*(Ref: ‘I’m Always Waiting for Something to Happen’ YMYW)*



## Key achievements of the YWL program:

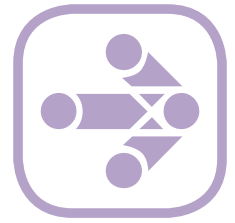
- Facilitation of HELP: a young women's forum - over 80 young women attended
- Facilitation of a 40 week peer leadership program
- Resourcing & sustaining of a network of young women who are pregnant & parenting to provide social support to each other and initiate project responses
- Production & launch of 'the Jungle Guide' resource book
- Production & launch of a series of peer education booklets
- Development & launch of a film documentary and radio documentaries eg. Airplay on Radio National – Life Matters
- Media skills development - Young women liaising with media, resulting in news articles published and radio interviews
- Resourced and supported the development of over 10 young parents groups in the Brisbane & surrounding areas
- Hosting of a youth week event "A Day in the Park"
- Facilitation of other advocacy projects & contributed to research papers & policy forums
- Production of a regular newsletter 'Wonder Women'
- Facilitation of the development of networks across local regional areas to respond to needs of young families eg. Deception Bay Young Women's Action Group

This report – 'The Way Forward' intends to expand on the themes of community leadership, participation & empowerment, peer support and the intersection with professional interventions that address social isolation, domestic violence and family support. Each leadership activity reciprocally benefits the young woman's own sense of well-being & fulfillment, and their families' while also benefiting the broader community.



***"In establishing pathways for participants, both personal development opportunities and the conditions of their social disadvantage in the community need to be addressed simultaneously so as to create opportunities for participation and empowerment" (YMYW, 2003).***

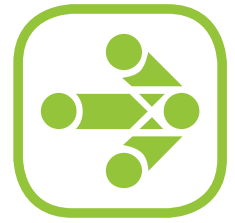






## SECTIONS

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## 1

# The Context

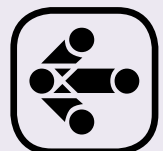
working together to  
support young women  
and their families



ON PEER WORK ...

*"It's important to meet regularly with peers and especially to find out about other's relationships, and to know some things are OK and healthy and others are not."*

*"It is a comforting first point of contact if there is a problem, someone to help meet your support needs."*



# WHAT YOUNG WOMEN & THEIR FAMILIES NEED

## - being young and being a parent ...

***“never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has...” - Margaret Mead***

### A CREATIVE & SUSTAINABLE ECOSYSTEM

#### evidence & research

*An ecological framework suggests that human development will be influenced by families, neighbourhoods, peer groups, social networks, social policies as well as factors as broad and diffuse as culture, gender, prejudice and discrimination.*

*The challenge of integrating micro, meso and macro level spheres of intervention has perhaps never been more urgent.*

*Research indicates that ...*

***“Families require environments which support and strengthen their ability to serve as healthy care giving systems”***

- *the determinants of child and family well-being are environmental and community centred,*
- *the helping profession must continue to work with people in crisis but also work towards preventive aspects of intervention; the most powerful and long-term impacts require attention to holistic interventions that respond to individuals, communities and systems,*
- *to maximise their effectiveness the human services should continue to build upon personal strengths, community development strategies and social policy to create long-term change.*

(Family Services Canada)

Literature and experiential research studies widely agree that the determinants of adolescent pregnancy are multifactorial and complex. Influencing factors for early pregnancy and parenting include biological factors such as age and sexual maturity, as well as psychological, sociocultural and community aspects. Some of the identifying characteristics of adolescent pregnancy commonly include a family history of adolescent pregnancy, low socio-economic status, early school leaving, homelessness and a prior history of sexual abuse (Lovell & Littlejohn; 1997).

***Young Women who are pregnant and parenting have specific needs, it is important to recognize the significance of the adolescence context in which becoming a parent takes place.*** In order to support young parents and their families, a needs based approach should be adopted. It is important to understand young women who are pregnant & parenting not only in their context of being a parent but also in their experience of being a young woman, and how the personal, the social, and the economic all impact on their lives

Many young women and their families face a range of social disadvantages such as poverty, lack of stable housing, isolation and discrimination that can have detrimental effects for themselves and their children. Social isolation has also been linked to violence in the lives of young women (Healy 1997). Access to positive social integration and informal support networks which offer support through personal relationships, have been found to be seriously deficient for many families already accessing child welfare and other services and for young families already experiencing significant social disadvantages (Cameron and Vanderwood 1997, Healy & Young Mothers for Young Women 1996). The psychological profile of young mothers shows more identity diffusion, less autonomy, more depression, and lower self-esteem than non-pregnant adolescents (Lovell & Littlejohn; 1997).



## BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH PEER & PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

The impact of early parenting causes a disruption to the course of adolescent development. For many young parents there is a great tension between the pull towards “normal” adolescent behaviour and the restriction and responsibility that comes with being a parent.

“Adolescents, striving to integrate a new image of self and new experiences of relationship struggle to span the discontinuity of puberty and renegotiate a series of social connections. The effort at renegotiation engages the adolescent voice in the process of identity formation and moral growth” (Gilligan 1988: 143).

Recent evaluative research has concluded that positive social integration, including successful social role performance, close friendships and being embedded in larger and diverse social networks contribute to the development maintenance and reconstruction of positive social identity and sense of psychological well-being. Such social integration is believed to be an important step to confronting and counteracting the negative experience of socially disadvantaged groups. (Cameron and Vanderwood 1997).

**Social and peer groups play an important role in socialisation and learning. During adolescence peer groups can play an increasingly influential role in a young person’s life. There is now recognition that peer groups can act as an integral part of learning strategies. This is because of shared empathy and similar life experiences.** Studies conducted by Young Mothers for Young Women have also identified that young women find out about

### evidence & research

#### Resilience Despite the Odds (Angie C. Kennedy, University of Illinois Chicago)

*Characteristics contributing to resilience of young women:*

- An ability to connect with others,
- Strong goal orientation and motivation to succeed,
- Problem solving ability and planfulness,
- Insights and the ability to make meaning,
- Independent and action oriented stance.

*Carol Gilligan in ‘Mapping the Moral Domain’ identifies that there are gender differences in young people’s approaches to problem solving.*

*Flexibility is highlighted as being a strength, which is more evident in girls’ development than in boys.*

*Development theory discusses the ability to grow and connect with others in an autonomous way, and the ability to be able to operate both independently and inter-dependently. For young women the capacity to care for others and to receive care from them becomes a part of rather than antithetical to self-definition. Defined in this context of relationships, identity is formed through the gaining of voice or perspective, and self is known through the experience of engagement with different voices or points of view.*

*For psychological theories of ego and identity development, a relational concept of self – the self in relation to others – is central to self definition.*

*There is also a need for psychological research to reflect the centrality of attachment in human development and interpersonal interactions.*

*This means research should focus not just on the individual but on both members of an interacting unit eg. mother & child, friend & friend*

information on issues they are concerned about firstly from other young women (Healy and the Young Mothers for Young Women 1996).

In order to prevent child maltreatment more effectively, strategies such as ‘developmental prevention’ are required that focus on both reducing risk factors and strengthening protective factors that foster resiliency. Most prevention initiatives have taken a problem focused approach, where the objective is the prevention of a social ill and a reduction in risk factors than the promotion of positive, life enhancing strategies protective factors, such as good interpersonal relationships, appropriate parenting support and pro-child policies (Tomison & Wise, 1999).

While the structural factors affecting pregnant and parenting young women have an enormous impact on the experience of being a young mother, the influence of their age, stage of psychosocial development, and social network must all be considered when planning programs for young pregnant & parenting women (Lovell & Littlejohn, 1997).

YMYW first formed as a network as an outcome of a number of young women’s individual experiences in a participative research project exploring the links between gender and violence in the lives of young women who are pregnant & parenting. This research found that young women themselves identified peer support, both formal and informal as an effective strategy to

break down the barriers for young women accessing services and in responding to their disclosures of violence within intimate relationships.

The peer-based model of support run by YMYW has offered support to young women through a drop in day, by advocacy, education, one on one support, through meetings and phone contact. A peer model is about providing role modeling, developing new skills and positive relationships. *The peer support model has been integral in moving towards breaking down the experiences of isolation that young women who are parenting in the community face (YMYW 1999).*

Peer support approaches are highly appropriate to reducing young women's vulnerability to violence and to enhancing participation in education and employment. (Healy, 2001; 23).

Potentially peer support initiatives can also offer specific benefits for

young women in regional & rural areas including;

- Improving access to support despite the absence of formal services;
- Improving access to responsive and locally responsive services, that is services shaped by their users;
- Directly addressing social isolation, a major concern of the majority of the young rural women interviewed for in the research for this project;
- Promoting pathways to learning that are absent in many rural areas.

For peer support programs to effectively reach young women it is vital that:

- Young women are actively involved in the design of peer support programs;
- There is partnership with professional workers. (Community service workers can play a crucial role in linking

young women to peer support and providing ongoing support to peer support initiatives);

- Programs are recognized as complementary, rather than as a replacement for comprehensive service access;
- Peer support programs are integrated into local communities, particularly in rural areas, and that they draw upon existent resources in these communities (Healy 2001);
- There is a huge demand for peer support services from young women, and also from service providers looking for support options for their clients.

Over the period that the YWL program has been operating – over 100 referrals were received for which no service or group had the capacity to respond.

In addition to lobbying for recurrent funding for family support programs, YMYW also seeks one off grants to sustain the network of women. Opportunities to bring the network members together are invaluable and provide social support and renewed networking, as well as increased awareness and access to services and information.

Peer support has been an integral component of the YWL program & has supported the social integration of young women through:

- Providing transitional pathways for young women to access life skills and knowledge as well as formal learning options. For example, peer support training programs have been found to foster young women's interest in further learning;
- Creating opportunities for peer members to become role models/ learners as well as receivers of assistance;
- Contributing to a high sense of solidarity and identity among young pregnant and parenting women;
- providing a forum for young women to learn about healthy relationships in a non-threatening environment;
- providing a forum for the dissemination of accurate information, such as education and employment options, to young women and young families.



# Risks, Hazards & Implications

## Community Leadership & Empowerment

Creyton argues that a contemporary view of community leadership is defined by leaders being represented as those that can facilitate effective action, those who can voice concern, those who can build effective networks and those who can find common ground in the community while maintaining values of fairness and social justice – people who are willing to take initiative and make a difference.

Leadership is often defined as the power of creating, capturing and promoting a collective vision (Creyton 2002). Having a purpose, and a passion for that purpose, is certainly essential, yet communities appear to be seeking practical visionaries who create pathways for leadership and participation within the community “Leaders are inevitable role models. People judge you on what you do” (Creyton, 2002).

The Young Women’s Leadership Program has provided a catalyst to encourage and assist in the creation of young women as community leaders and provided the linkages through community engagement. In order for this to happen the project worker & other workshop facilitators engaged, also demonstrated their leadership role by providing mentoring support and an awareness of themselves as a role model.

Traditional approaches to leadership have often focused on the needs of the community rather than on the capacity of the community to solve these problems. Effective and sustainable communities need to recognize and utilize all of its people’s capacities. A strength-based approach is required where with the support, time, resources

and assistance people can act on their own behalf. “The expert becomes a resource that the community can use, not the one who sets the direction to tells us what to do” (Creyton, 2002:3). Potential community leaders seek opportunities to identify issues of concern and need, and to embrace strategies, which enable them to feel empowered, and to effectively access pathways to affect change.

According to Shields, leadership can be defined as a willingness to think about the group as a whole and to offer some direction and influence in helping the group meet their goals. The group facilitation role demonstrates a model of leadership, acknowledging the responsibility and power dynamics involved, and the potential of the support group to be a microcosmic representation of the broader community of young women

### evidence & research

*There is an URGENT need for the creation of Family Support Programs which clearly understand the context of the lives of young families, recognising the impacts of poverty, age and gender as well as the extent of experiences of violence and abuse which impacts on the family and personal functioning.*

**Principles adapted from Family Service Canada 1999 and YMYW – Opportunities and Choices...**

#### **Sense of Community**

*Focus on the building of interdependencies between members of the community and family unit and professional interventions.*

#### **Resources and Support**

*Building and strengthening informal support networks of families rather than depending solely on professional support systems by creating sustainable peer leadership models.*

#### **Shared Responsibility**

*Partnerships between parents, peers and professionals as a primary mechanism for supporting and strengthening family functioning should be recognised.*

#### **Protecting Individual and Family Integrity**

*Resources and support should be provided to families that encourage, develop and maintain healthy and safe relationships whilst recognising the impact and dynamics of violence on the lives of individual family members.*

#### **Strengthening Family Functioning**

*Resources and support should be available to individuals within the family that will maximise their control over decision-making and promote self-determination by processes aimed at increasing the capacity of young women and their partners to make informed choices about their relationships, parenting and access to health, employment, education and social services.*

#### **Human Service Policy and Practice**

*The delivery of services to families should ensure that a broad range of family support programs exist so as to create pathways for families through crisis and isolation to connection, support and access to resources which can address the barriers created by poverty, age, gender and the broad range of health, housing and social issues which impact on disadvantaged and vulnerable families in the community.*

who are young mothers. There are opportunities for mentoring, modeling, learning and growth.

Community development practices, such as the facilitation of informal networks of peers also encourage the participation of people in group activities and their reflection upon shared realities. Such networks create connections that realise new experiences and can open up new areas of roles and responsibilities for members personally. They create opportunities for peer members to become leaders as well as receivers of assistance. In terms of the peer network members, personal attributes and willingness to participate, rather than formal or professional training are characteristic strengths.

Community development helps people identify their needs, obtain resources and collectively empowers people to have more control over their lives. The key ingredients are sharing of power, grassroots involvement, democratic participation and empowerment of people. The rationale of community development interventions is to alter the way things are done, to change structures of society which render people powerless at many different levels eg. Gender, class, ethnicity, age (Ife, 2002).

YMYW repeatedly demonstrates that partnerships are critical, that is the relationship between young women's personal & psychological development and experiences of community, and between professionals & peer workers. When engaging with young women in community development opportunities there needs to be an accompanied commitment of resources to personal development through providing professional support to respond to issues such as unstable housing & homelessness, domestic violence, sexual assault

and capacity to parent. The experience of YMYW has been that peer workers receive many requests for support including the disclosures of violence, therefore a supportive relationship with professionals ensures that appropriate referrals & interventions occur.

***Empowerment, life experience and personal development are core factors that determine degrees of participation when working alongside young women who are pregnant & parenting.***

Simply put, empowerment aims to increase the power of the disadvantaged (Ife, 2002). This program flexibly responded to the young women by meeting them where they were at and supporting them to participate to their capacity

Empowering each other is a way to build community. People living in modern, western, particularly urban societies need to engage in this building intentionally. Unless we are fortunate enough to grow up in a fairly intact community, most of us are easily alienated from each other. It is evident that

clear barriers to participation were connected with feelings of isolation and being “disempowered”. In this isolation young families are very susceptible to the conditioning of powerlessness with which our society relentlessly bombards us. In connecting young women with support networks, pathways open which encourage rebuilding solid connections with other people based on genuine respect for the young woman's life experience and acknowledgement of her psychological stage of development and personal experiences as a young mother and as an adolescent young woman. When trust is present and relationships bloom, a new sense of self that “belongs to something bigger” and responds by making proactive choices in life, emerges. A growing network of people offers a positive opportunity to learn from each other through the richness of diversity, appreciating different ages, cultural backgrounds, life experiences and talents. A sense of community & personal growth is the beginning point for creating, initiating and co-operating on projects together.



## Economic Needs – Pathways out of Poverty - from welfare to work...

There is much evidence that demonstrates that women who begin parenting in their teenage years tend to be more socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged than women who do not become teenage mothers (Healy & Young Mothers for Young Women 1991). Many women who are parents, due to the absence of accessible and sustainable work and educational opportunities are likely to rely on income from the government, such as parenting payments, and for some women this is their main source of income.

Young women who are pregnant and parenting experience a combination of factors which contribute to their opportunities in accessing

further education and training opportunities, such as incomplete secondary education, narrow range of employment training opportunities and access is also constrained by inadequate access to child-care support.

Young women who are parents often face additional challenges given the disruption that parenting commonly brings to this transition into exploring education /training/ employment options, and the subsequent additional demands on their time and energy. It is also interesting, however that parenthood also seems to frequently bring a renewed interest in education, employment and training for the women, that is often connected to their desire to provide a better future for their children (Flannery & Irwin; 2004)

Programs that focus specifically on young women who are pregnant & parenting and promote transitional pathways for young women demonstrate many positive

outcomes such as the benefits of developing support networks, building confidence and self-esteem and promoting the young women's capacity, connection and contribution to their community. Such positive outcomes contribute to the development of personal resilience and encourages greater participation in education and training opportunities, a renewed motivation and capacity to explore employment opportunities, and a personal openness to the exploration of future goal-setting both personally and with their family. *Young women's economic participation also appears to have many positive flow-on effects for their children. It is natural that the relationship between young women and their children benefits from the young women themselves feeling happier, more fulfilled and more in control of their lives generally.*



# 2

## Project Overview



ON PEER WORK ...

*"This is just a drop in the ocean to what is out there to gain from your peers."*

*"I guess it is working with your peers, breaking down social isolation, getting people involved in the community and sharing parenting skills with a similar age group."*



# YOUNG WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP PROJECT

## - an introduction

In October 2002, Young Mothers for Young Women received Commonwealth funding from the Stronger Families and Stronger Communities – Potential Leadership in Local Communities Initiative. This funding was for an 18-month project to develop a Young Women's Leadership (YWL) program, incorporating training with young women who are parenting in four locations – Brisbane, Ipswich, Logan and Deception Bay.

The **objectives** of the Young Women's Leadership Program are:

- To build a network of skilled young women who are able to foster improved capacity of young women in their families and community;
- To increase the capacity of young women to have healthy, positive relationships with their families and prevent family breakdown;
- To increase the capacity of the organizations and communities to respond to, and to be inclusive of, young parents and families;
- To improve connections within the community for young families; and
- To improve pathways for learning, skill development, employment, community participation and leadership for young women who are parents

*The “working” purpose of the project was to implement leadership training, initiate community development projects & networking, and provide mentoring support to the young women who are peer leaders.*

*The program was offered with the hope that at least 16 participants (who are under 25 years and parenting) will implement the skills learned by supporting other young women who are parenting in their local area.*

*In order to complete the leadership training program, participants were required to attend 40 weeks of training session held between 10am and 2pm during school terms. Sessions were held at Coolock House in Dutton Park, with participants paid \$30 to attend each week with travel costs also reimbursed. The young women were supported to bring their children along where they received access to free supervised children's activities on-site. The session also included time for lunch and informal networking.*

The intentions of the project development were consistent with the set of eight principles which underpin the Stronger Families & Communities strategy. The project met each principle as outlined below:

### → Working together in partnerships;

-The YWL program facilitated partnership development through the involvement of key agencies in the reference group, engaging guest facilitators in delivering workshops and sharing resources

while building community capacity. Eg. Visible Ink, Office of Youth Affairs

### → Encouraging a preventative and early intervention approach;

-YMYW has continually been advocating for dedicated funding for family support services and community participation programs. -By sustaining the YWL network, YMYW have encouraged an early response to emerging support needs of the young women participating in the YWL program

### → Supporting people through life transitions;

-Throughout the duration of the program, YMYW has supported the participants through various life transitions from re-entry into employment & education, throughout the duration of their pregnancies to the birth of their children, and supporting young families while moving house. -The project worker & women within the network have encouraged & supported each other throughout these life transitions and provided timely information, referrals and interventions.

### → Developing better integrated and coordinated services;

-Facilitated action networks & project responses between





-Measuring the social & economic benefits which are achieved through young women participating actively in their local communities

## METHODOLOGY

*The methodology utilised by the project worker included a number of clear developmental phases to the project. The methodology was process driven and framed by group facilitation techniques, community development process, based on principles of social justice, valuing participation and empowerment, action reflection and participatory process.*

*Each phase built on each other, however the bulk of the project worker's energy was focused on implementing the series of peer leadership training workshops and the subsequent follow-up resource and mentoring support to assist project development within local communities.*

The YWL program intended to create an optimal learning environment by empowering young women who are pregnant & parenting. In order to create this a safe and empowering environment with opportunities for leadership, good facilitation is essential.

Young women who are parents are not a homogenous group. A great diversity of needs and interests exist amongst young women who are parents and therefore there are challenges arising when programming for everybody's needs within one group.

Finding the right balance between structure and flexibility, formality and informality is an evolving process that will change according to the individual style and preferences of the facilitators and the participants.

An effective facilitator should be asking the following questions of their process:

young women and local service providers & networks  
 -Contributed to policy development and information sharing across non-government & government services

### → Developing local solutions to local problems;

-Connected with Community Renewal & other existing programs to respond at the local level eg. Formation of D-Bay Young Women's Action Network  
 -Supported existing, local support networks for parents and developed new project responses collaboratively

### → Building community capacity;

-Resourced and supported the YWL participants to coordinate & initiate community projects which respond to the needs of young families  
 -YWL participants encouraged to mentor and connect with other young women who are pregnant & parenting to respond to community need both formally & informally

### → Using the evidence and looking to the future; and

-Documentation of learnings via final report & feedback, facilitating tangible outcomes which have a life beyond the project duration i.e. the Jungle Guide resource book  
 -Developing strategies to sustain the YWL network; linking young women into existing networks and community services  
 -Using program learnings & documentation to assist with future submissions for dual family support & community participation program intervention

### → Making the investment count

-Sustaining the network; encouraging ongoing skill development and transference of skills, economic participation  
 -Supporting participants to develop their own pathways towards goal setting, learning & growth into the future eg. encouraging the transition into further education options  
 -Tangible project outcomes eg. Jungle Guide Resource Book, film documentary

- What would happen if key people were to leave the group?
- What roles could be rotated and what else could the group do to spread leadership?
- What are you doing to encourage leadership skills in the members? ..to encourage each member's creativity and talents?
- How do you support people who exercise leadership in the group?

The success of the program demonstrated the importance of the following qualities in good facilitators, such as:

- Neutrality. Though they may contribute to the discussion and make suggestions, they should not manipulate the meeting to bring about a particular outcome.
- Good listening skills including reflective listening and strategic questioning.
- Respect for the participants and confidence that cooperative decision making can be reached and good solutions found

- Interest in what people have to offer
- Assertiveness that is not overbearing – to know when to intervene decisively and give some direction to the meeting
- Clear thinking and observation of the whole group. This requires a split attention to the content of the discussion and the process (i.e. how this is affecting group members).
- An understanding of the overall objectives of the group, Shields (1991: 95)

The following is a summary of the themes covered in the peer leadership-training program. The training program was based on "The Peer Helping Training Course" used in high-schools in America and was especially useful for the interpersonal & communication skill development and self-awareness workshops.



# YOUNG WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

**The following workshops (weeks 1 – 11) were based on the ‘Peer Helping Training Course’: Joan Sturkie & Maggie Phillips (1994) Resource Publications, Inc.**

<b>Week 1:</b>	Developing Social Ease
<b>Week 2:</b>	An Introduction to Active Listening
<b>Week 3:</b>	Using Active Listening
<b>Week 4:</b>	Sending Effective Messages
<b>Week 5:</b>	Sending Effective Messages & Introduction to Developing Self-Awareness
<b>Week 6:</b>	Developing Self Awareness
<b>1 week BREAK</b>	
<b>Week 7:</b>	Relaxation & Growth & Helping Skills
<b>Week 8:</b>	Helping Skills
<b>Week 9:</b>	Values Clarification ( <i>Guest facilitator from Kids Help Line</i> )
<b>Week 10:</b>	Decision Making
<b>Week 11:</b>	Review Decision Making & Starting and Ending A Helping Relationship
<b>Week 12:</b>	Clay work ( <i>guest community artist from Fusions Gallery</i> )
<b>Week 13:</b>	Clay work
<b>Week 14:</b>	Introduction to Drugs & Alcohol ( <i>Guest facilitators from Micah, BYS, Amend</i> )
<b>2 weeks break; resume 15th July 2003</b>	
<b>Week 15:</b>	Welcome Back & ‘Stress & Coping’. <i>Guest facilitator: Sophie Morson - Child Youth &amp; Mental Health Service</i>
<b>Week 16:</b>	Intro to Project Planning.
<b>Week 17:</b>	‘Stress & Coping’ part 2. <i>Guest facilitator: Sophie Morson Child Youth &amp; Mental Health Service</i>
<b>Week 18:</b>	Empowerment & Creative Arts Play
<b>(For the following weeks; the group was divided into smaller groups to enable greater focus and a more supportive learning environment)</b>	
<b>Weeks 19 - 20:</b>	Computer Training 1/Project Planning
<b>Weeks 21 – 22:</b>	Computer Training 2/ Intro to Mental Health Issues <i>Guest facilitator: Sophie Morson – Child Youth &amp; Mental Health Service</i>
<b>Weeks 23 – 24</b>	Computer Training 3/ Cultural Diversity <i>Guest facilitator: Ally Wakefield – Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture &amp; Trauma (QPASTT)</i>
<b>Week 25:</b>	Eating Issues workshop facilitated by workers from ISIS & QUT Human services student doing placement with YMYW
<b>Week 26:</b>	Working in Groups & Project Planning
<b>Week 27:</b>	Systems Advocacy <i>Guest facilitator: Andy Compton – Queensland Association of Mental Health</i>
<b>Week 28:</b>	Project Planning
<b>Week 29:</b>	break!
<b>Weeks 30 &amp; 31:</b>	Models of Peer Work/ Computer competency training with Infoxchange
<b>Week 32</b>	Project work and guest facilitator: Rachel from ‘Talking Realities’ program
<b>Week 33</b>	‘Nurturing Yourself Naturally’ facilitated by Perfect Potion, followed by Mosaic Making
<b>Week 34</b>	End of year Christmas Party & Celebrations!!

## 2004 Monthly WORKSHOPS

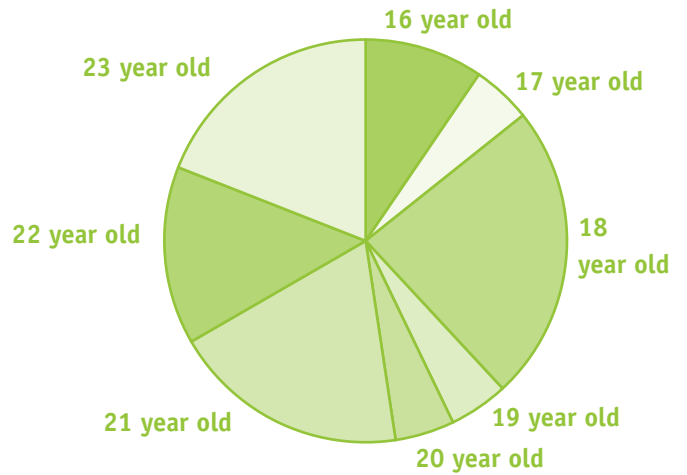
- Media Skills
- Jewellery Making
- Writing a Funding Submission
- Facilitation & Group Work skills



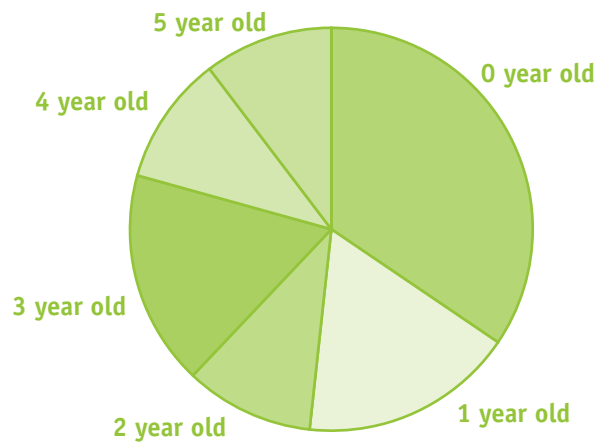
# PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

## Age Range of YWL participants enrolled at beginning of program:

Age range 16 years old – 23 years old  
 Total of young women enrolled in beginning: 21  
 Total number of children present at beginning = 29 & older kids and births during program  
 Total number of young women that graduated: 17



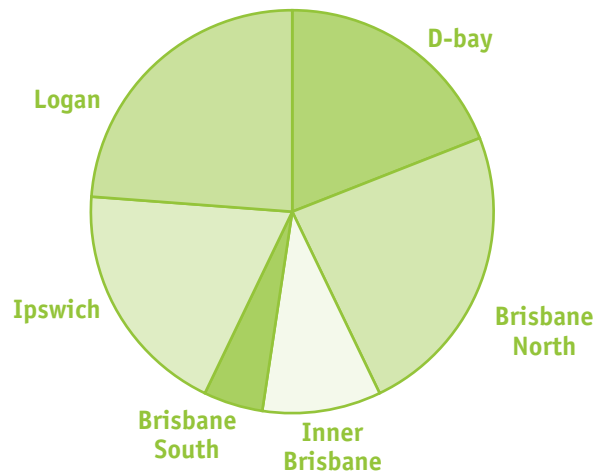
## Age range of children 0 - 5 years old



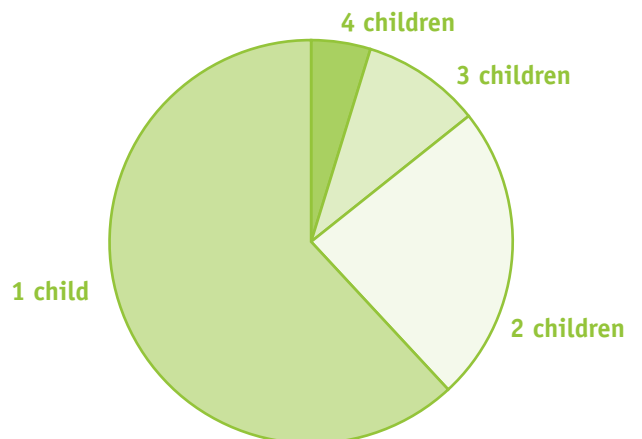
## Geographical snapshot

Young women travelled from the following regions to participate in the program:

- Logan
- Deception Bay
- BRISBANE - Inner City
- BRISBANE - South
- BRISBANE - North
- Ipswich















## Number of children for each young women








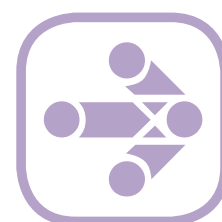
# OUTCOMES & YWL PROJECT RESPONSES

## According to FACS PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicator	Project Response
<p><b>TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS</b></p>	<p> The YWL program engaged intensely with 21 young women who are parents and their combined 31 children; and a further 150 connections were made with young pregnant &amp; parenting women in their local regional &amp; urban communities</p> <p>The breakdown of the range of participants includes the following FACS target groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families with children 0-5 years</li> <li>• Families with children 5-18 years</li> <li>• Families living in remote areas</li> <li>• Young People</li> <li>• Communities facing challenges eg. Women experiencing poverty, domestic violence, homelessness, mental health support needs etc..</li> <li>• Indigenous, Ethnic Families &amp; communities</li> <li>• People with Disabilities eg. Literacy support needs</li> <li>• Pre-school age children</li> <li>• People of workforce age on income support</li> <li>• Young Parents</li> </ul> <p> YWL participants worked together with the project worker to facilitate a number of meetings, focus groups, working groups and workshops with a common purpose of supporting project and skill development</p> <p> Liaison &amp; networking with over 100 non-government and government agencies.</p> <p> Evaluation &amp; feedback forms have been distributed quarterly to each YWL participant</p> <p> Face to Face interviews have also been conducted regularly with evidence suggesting an overwhelming satisfaction with the program</p> <p> An average of 70 percent of participants responded to the main feedback mechanisms</p> <p> The percent satisfied with the overall outcomes of the project is 100 percent; suggestions and improvements for program have been documented.</p> <p> The percent satisfied that this project represents a model of working with young women that meets community need is 100 percent; however there is also evidence that there is support from the yw for more funding to resource similar programs to ywl in order to meet the huge unmet community need</p>
<p><b>PARTNERSHIPS</b></p>	<p> At least 15 agencies/individuals have participated in the YWL training program as guest facilitators</p>

Performance Indicator	Project Response
<p><b>PARTNERSHIPS</b> <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p> Partnerships have developed with each of the agencies represented in the YWL reference group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mabel Park High School</li> <li>• Albert Park Flexi School</li> <li>• Deception Bay Community Youth Association</li> <li>• Young Parents Program</li> <li>• Ipswich Community Health</li> <li>• Community Renewal</li> <li>• Children by Choice</li> <li>• Brisbane Domestic Violence Advocacy Service</li> <li>• Youth &amp; Family Services - Logan</li> </ul> <p>Other partnerships include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visible Ink/Brisbane City Council</li> <li>• Office of Youth Affairs</li> <li>• Infoxchange</li> </ul> <p>No. of government partners - 10 eg. Office for Women, Community Renewal</p> <p>No. of business partners - 5 eg. Rapid Offset, VideoData</p> <p>No. of non-government partners -12 eg. Kids Help Line, Deception Bay Community Youth Association</p>
<p><b>COMMUNICATION &amp; NETWORK DEVELOPMENT</b></p>	<p> YMYW network development includes up to 6 new networks including the agency networks &amp; interagencies eg.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAYWARD network</li> <li>• Linked with various youth/community interagencies eg. Via Brisbane City Council</li> <li>• Initiated networks in local areas in order to support young women who are pregnant &amp; parenting in their local areas eg. Deception Bay – Young Women’s Action Group</li> <li>• YWL reference group</li> </ul> <p> It is estimated there are approximately 10 young parents groups that the participants from the YWL program have initiated and participated in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picabeen young mums group</li> <li>• Ipswich young parents Group</li> <li>• Leichart young mums group</li> <li>• Zillmere young mums group</li> <li>• Logan YFS groups</li> <li>• Inala young mums</li> <li>• Young Mums playgroup</li> <li>• YMYW drop-in day</li> <li>• Young Parents Program</li> <li>• D-Bay Action group</li> </ul>

Performance Indicator	Project Response
<b>LEADERSHIP</b>	<p><b>LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES &amp; EVENTS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> No of participants in activities = 150 including 20 peer leaders and additional participants linked in from each local area.</li> <li>Over 11 projects were completed. See Young Women’s Reflections &amp; Achievements for details.</li> </ul>
<b>TRAINING PARTICIPANTS</b>	<p><b>FACILITATION OF PEER LEADERSHIP TRAINING WORKSHOPS &amp; YWL PROGRAM</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Facilitation &amp; delivery of 40 weeks of peer leadership training</li> <li> Additional 4 skill development workshops delivered in 2004</li> <li> Resourcing, mentoring and assisting ywl participants with project development &amp; responses</li> <li> Computer training in partnership with Infoxchange – delivery of             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. PC &amp; Internet Essentials</li> <li>2. Communications &amp; Documentation</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p>Other training initiatives include skill development meetings, workshops, focus groups, forums in each local area.</p> <p>No of peer leaders who completed training = 17</p> <p>No of peer leaders who participated in structured training program = 20</p>
<b>COMMUNICATION THROUGH RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT &amp; COMMUNITY EDUCATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Production of “Wonder Women” newsletter</li> <li> Mail-outs/emails/website</li> <li> The Jungle Guide Resource Book</li> <li> Getting What You Want peer education resources</li> <li> YWL training notes, booklet &amp; flyers</li> <li> Film documentary</li> <li> Radio documentary/ CD ROMs</li> <li> Conferences &amp; forums</li> <li> Preparation &amp; presentation of YMYW research papers</li> <li> YWL final project report</li> <li> Postcard Advocacy Project “Please don’t forget – Young Women Care too”</li> <li> Art works produced including “mosaic coffee table”</li> </ul>



# 3

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## Young Women's achievements & reflections

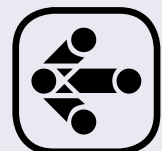


YOUNG WOMEN ON LEADERSHIP ...

*"It's given me self esteem and a bit of a boost."*

*"It's empowering – makes me feel connected."*

*"Ummm... Guiding people in the right direction for information and other things they're looking for."*



# YOUNG WOMEN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

## leadership projects

### 1. HELP – A Young Women's Forum

was organised so that young women who are pregnant & parenting across Brisbane & beyond could have the opportunity to have their say. Over 85 young women attended the forum held at the Brisbane Exhibition & Convention Centre. A combination of valuable networking and articulating issues and concerns was the focus of the day, with recommendations from the day being documented and forwarded to government decision makers.

*Concerns & Issues identified include:*

- *Employment & Education*
- *Health & well-being*
- *Poverty & Centrelink*
- *Family & personal Support*
- *Child care*
- *Housing & Transport*
- *Community & public messages (see appendix for details)*

The day assisted the development of a database of contacts of young women in Brisbane, Deception Bay, Ipswich and Logan.

### 2. Supported Events held in the Women's sector eg. Anything Goes Sports Day

Participants from the YWL program participated in this day which provided the opportunities for networking & teambuilding and a fun day out, and encouraged young women to participate in fitness and group sports. Other events: Reclaim the Night, International Women's day events & celebrations and rituals eg. Remembrance Day ritual – for survivors of Domestic Violence

### 3. Youth Week 2004 "Day in the Park" Event & working group

Young women who are participants in the YWL program identified the opportunity to apply for funds to the Office of Youth Affairs to organize a youth week event and target young women who are pregnant & parenting. This was identified as an opportunity to highlight the needs of young parents, as a target group to the Office of Youth Affairs.





The project worker supported the peer leaders to write the submission and it was successful. A working group then formed to organise the day.

In addition to the planning & development being done by young women in the lead up to the event, young women also held key responsibilities on the day and had the opportunity to facilitate small group discussions as part of the program on the day. Training, support and supervision were provided as needed.

As part of the “Day in the Park” program a ‘Discussion Hour’, kids festival, the jungle guide launch and a BBQ lunch was facilitated.

#### 4. ‘The Jungle Guide’ Resource Book Project

As part of the Young Women’s Leadership program, each of the 20 young women were supported to respond to project ideas that were emerging, and develop plans together with peer and community support. One of the working groups formed to develop a young women’s resource book, promoting access to supportive information & options for young women who are pregnant and parenting. ‘The Jungle Guide’ was collated, developed and designed by young women for young women. Over 500 copies have been printed and the resource is receiving much interest from services providers and young mothers alike.

It was discussed that Youth Week would be a timely opportunity to ‘Launch’ the completed resource. The “Day in the Park” not only provided an occasion to showcase the talents, energy and abilities of young women in project development but also a great opportunity to promote the resource book with the extended YMYW network who participated on the day. This day provided an opportunity to visibly celebrate the positive contribution of young people participating in their local community.



#### 5. A film documentary about the experiences of young women who are pregnant & parenting – 360o

This idea emerged as the project developed. A project team formed and resources were allocated, a series of workshops & interviews were conducted to gain the raw footage needed for the film doco; an editor was contracted and the creative design work on progress. Integral to this project was the commitment of the young women involved and the partnership with BCC – Visible ink space. The launch of the film doc was also organised by a project team and occurred on June 23 2004.



## 6. Deception Bay – the formation of the Young Women's Action Group

One of the young women was supported by the project worker and DBCYA to organize a BBQ for International Women's Day. Over 30 people were present and links were made with local services.. the next week 3 young women accessed their gym/weights program at the community centre, the next week up to 8 and this increased to capacity.....links were also made at this point to Boystown service. Sustainability of this network is the challenge.



## 7. Resourced and supported YWL peer leaders in their leadership within other young parents groups in their local communities:

- Picabeen young mums group
- Ipswich young parents Group
- Leichart young mums group
- Zillmere young mums group
- Logan YFS groups
- Inala young mums
- Young Mums playgroup
- YMYW drop-in day
- Young Parents Program



## 8. Radio doco & other community raising awareness strategies

YWL participants have been supported to participate in media interviews, talks in schools, presentations at forums, workshops to produce a radio doco recently aired on Radio Nationals- Life Matters.



## 9. Getting What You Want peer education resources

- Peer Guide to Healthy Relationships
- Peer Guide to Parenting
- Peer Guide to Education, Employment & Training
- Peer Guide to Group Facilitation

Peer leaders have scoped their local communities and have set dates for "Getting What You Want" workshops in their local areas.





## 10. Talking Over Toast – women in leadership BREAKFAST & graduation

### OBJECTIVES OF ‘TALKING OVER TOAST’ EVENT:

- launch the “Getting What You Want” peer education booklet series
- celebrate the achievements of the participants of the Young Women’s Leadership (YWL) Program & presentation of certificates
- participate in dialogue between young women and women in leadership within the community



## 11. Provision of computers & printers and paid internet access to each YWL participant...

to enable ease of communication among project worker & participants, greater access to information and skill development opportunities

### Other future projects - priorities identified:

- First Aid training
- Supporting partnership between YWL, YWL participants and Young Parents Program to deliver ‘Healthy eating on a budget’ project.
- Series of arts based workshop “birthing stories”
- Advocating for family support strategies to be funded & resourced



# Young Women's Learnings & additional outcomes:

## 1. Young Families – Unmet Support Needs - Why are programs funded in a way that is NOT sustainable?

There is an urgent need for recurrent funding for early intervention & prevention programs that focus on family support services and dual program development to benefit young women and their children.



## 2. Links between young women's experiences of empowerment and our capacity to engage in community leadership activities

In order to participate actively in peer leadership/community leadership activities there needs to be appropriate individual outcomes in terms of family support, education and training, experiences of empowerment, confidence building and individual growth & personal development and a willingness for professionals to meet us as young women "where we are at" on our journey. This is challenging with such a diverse and large sized group.



## 3. Peer support & supportive learning environments

The YWL project experience of group process – overwhelmingly suggests an experiential /action-based process was positively received & effective in engaging with young women and enabling a healthy group culture to form. It is widely documented that the key elements that need to be present when working with us, as young women who are pregnant & parenting, and can be attributed to maintaining the group cohesion and active participation are:

- maximum *flexibility*,
- creating a *positive environment* which encourages openness, relationship development and
- an *absence of discrimination* and judgment
- Peer leadership
- Professional support
- Budget provisions of childcare, catering and travel re-imbursments
- Network of outreach support and appropriate referral options
- Age appropriate program development



The peer workers have contributed to developing a model of good practice. This has been done through reflective practice and application of relevant theoretical frameworks from education, social work and health. In doing so the young women have contributed to a body of knowledge in the community welfare and social justice arenas. They have also acted as role models for other young women who are managing the challenge of being a young woman and pregnant & parenting.

YMYW adopts a valuing model of participation by allocating resources to enable young women to be acknowledged through receipt of payment, provision of travel re-imbursements, provision of supervised children's activities, and by providing appropriate training, supervision & organizational support for peer workers.



#### 4. Some of the Individual Benefits & Personal Development experiences

- Increased sense of self identity & feeling empowered
- Increased confidence/ self-determination/self-esteem
- Learning new skills & increased access to information and resources to assist with stressors in life
- Benefit of accessing a computer, printer & paid internet access
- Increased community networks, and network of peers
- Exploring pathways to further education, training & employment
- Flow-on positive benefits to young families and individual relationships with their children



# LEARNINGS, STORIES & REFLECTIONS

Networks formed  
 Relationships formed  
 Loved the guest speakers  
 Interactive  
 Respectful Environment  
 Helpful & informative  
 Great support network  
 Keep up the good work! Kristy

Learning  
 Education  
 Adventure  
 Determination  
 Energy  
 Research  
 Socialising  
 Home  
 Independence  
 Patience

Shellene

Learning to better ourselves and  
 Experiencing new people and scenarios  
 that help change our  
 Attitude and perspectives of the  
 community's workers  
 Deciding what to do when we finish up  
 and wanting to  
 Expand our brains, thirst for knowledge  
 and finding great  
 Resources, becoming a part of a  
 Safe and empowering network with the  
 Hope to continue on this journey with the  
 community services work, to stop women  
 Isolating themselves and empower them  
 so they feel the  
 Power we were given.

Hannah

## Comments from some of the YWL participants!!

"I liked finding out about the mental health problems for children and finding ways to cope with stress."

"A highlight has been getting to know everyone better and learning great peer helping skills."

"I liked the relaxed environment."

"A highlight for me is the friendships I've made and the way I have related to others outside of the training. Just the training has been a highlight."

"The first impressions within the group have worn off so it's now easier to understand where people's views are coming from."

"I like the way it is gradual and allows us time to agree on certain techniques."

The influences of the group affect the women in many different ways:

One young woman said, "I felt out of control, my child was pushing me to the limit, I felt like I might hurt him, so I asked for support from my mum and for a bit of time-out"

"I didn't think I could feel like this..but I remember someone from the group said they experienced the same thing... I thought back on that & realized I'm not crazy....others feel like this too..but the most important thing was I knew when to seek help....".

Courier Mail 20/12/02



STRUGGLING . . . Vicky Thompson, 16, with daughter Kimberly. Picture: Glenn Barnes

## Bitter pill for young mums

Michelle Hele

WOMEN'S ISSUES REPORTER

AFFORDABLE medical treatment and medicine is a major issue young mothers would like addressed.

A dwindling number of doctors who bulk bill has led to Vicky Thompson, of Morayfield, in Brisbane's outer north, changing medical centres twice in recent months to seek treatment for her five-month-old daughter Kimberly.

Miss Thompson, 16, said people who thought young mothers lived a life of luxury on welfare had no idea how hard it could be to find \$40-plus for a doctor and the money to fill a prescription.

Although she gets some

benefits, her healthcare card has expired and she cannot buy reduced-cost prescription medicine until a new one is issued.

Even over-the-counter preparations such as infant paracetamol could be expensive and she suggested the health care card system could also cover this.

"She (Kimberly) is teething at the moment and she is going through Panadol like it is cordial."

Although living with her partner, Miss Thompson said she was not getting ahead financially.

Dirty looks were not uncommon from people who knew nothing about her situation, except that she was young and with a baby.

"I just want people to understand that just be-

cause we are young parents at least we have taken on the responsibility and taken care of our baby," she said.

Miss Thompson is about to study for her high school certificate by correspondence and hopes to become a childcare worker.

She was one of about 85 mothers aged 15 to 24 at a Brisbane Convention Centre forum this week organised by Young Mothers for Young Women.

The Federal Government has funded the organisation to run a program to train young mothers to be community leaders, particularly in Logan, Ipswich, Deception Bay and Brisbane.

Yesterday's workshop was the first event, with people discussing issues such as the cost of medical treatment.



# The Ipswich Advertiser

Part of Your Community Since 1978

Tuesday, May 04, 2004

## Young parents band together

A GROUP of young parents, with their kids in tow, met last week to renovate a house in Ipswich that will be the setting for a new playgroup.

The Marsden Parade playgroup was established as a joint initiative of Mission Australia and the Queensland Government, directed at helping local parents aged under 25.

Every week, a young parents' support group meets to share experiences and learn new skills, in a supportive but relaxed environment.

Leichardt mother Erin McCorrison, 24, said the group was an important network for young parents, who often find themselves alienated from their existing social groups by parenthood.

"The friends you had at the same age are now doing different things. You need other people sharing similar experiences for support," she said.

■ Continued: P9.



Isaac Brighton, left, and Lachlan O'Brien at play with Lachlan's mum Erin McCorrison, of Leichardt.

Photo: Mark Straker/AP30045B

ALBERT + LOGAN NEWS - JUNE 11 2004

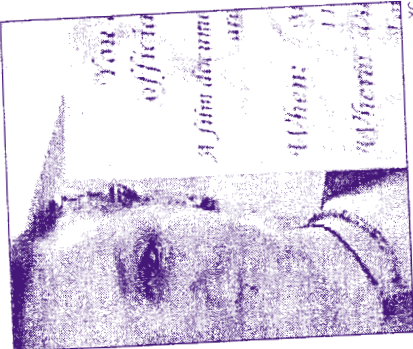


## Shorten gap between ages

YOU can be seen by the community as a gang up to no good when you are innocently walking with your friends. Why? Because the few teenagers who misbehave set a stereotype for our age group and as a result the rest of us are looked upon negatively.

Many Logan teenagers feel this way. There is a generation gap between adults and youth and I think it's time we shortened the gap by getting to know the community, respecting each other and ourselves. After all, we are the future!

— By Shantel Herron



■ Hannah Edwards

# Enough talk, time for action

BY HANNAH EDWARDS

KURT Cobain once said "wanting to be someone else is a waste of the person you are". So I'm trying to figure out what it is in life I want to do, that is really a "me" thing and isn't influenced by anyone else. I'm passing a few milestones. I'm leaving my teenage life behind and becoming an adult. I am having my second baby and I'm about to launch my first documentary.

The documentary is called *360 degrees*. It gives young mums a voice and is about what we want and need in our community. The

film was made with support from Young Mothers for Young Women. They gave me the opportunity to voice what I had to say. I think there is a real need for society to stop pretending that everything is fine and face up to the facts that sometimes something needs to be done.

*360 Degrees* is being launched on June 21 at Visible Ink, 139 Constance Street, Fortitude Valley. I am inviting as many people as I can who have the power to make a change in the community. Together we can make a difference - we need to stop talking and start doing.

originally part of the program, with 20 more being invited to join. Loganlea State High is the only school in south-east Queensland participating in the program.

The original aim of the program is to influence the aspirations and self-beliefs of students planning to leave at the end of Grade 10. Loganlea High Principal Elena Itsikson and social justice head of department Jenny Shale were



■ Yprint is created by young people as part of the YFS YMedia project. For more information, phone Adam at YFS on 3208 8199.

make powerful decisions about their future. Fifteen schools were

youth speak out

## What's hot

**Big Heavy Stuff: Dear Friends and Enemies (CD) - reviewed by Diane Leyman**

One of Australia's most underrated bands, Big Heavy Stuff, have made a triumphant return with their fourth album. Everything here has its place, be it the slow-building rock songs, the unique CD packaging or the inspired lyrics. An absolutely stunning indie if you like intelligent Australian indie rock, definitely check this out.

**Eternal Sunshine, Eternal Bliss (film) - reviewed by Anna Masci**

*Eternal Sunshine of a Spotless Mind* is Charlie Kaufman's latest collaboration with director Michel Gondry, succeeding again in confusing audiences' perceptions and dealing with issues in a way that is brutally honest, yet elegantly beautiful. Like Kaufman's previous film, *Being John Malkovich* (1999), *Eternal Sunshine of a Spotless Mind* is largely set in the mind of the main character, Joel Barish (Jim Carrey). Kaufman deals with the generally hard-to-portray issues of love and pain, disillusionment and despair and the inability to communicate. By travelling through one's mind, Kaufman reminds us how difficult understanding our own thoughts can often be.

**Avril Lavigne: Under My Skin (CD) - reviewed by Aslam Abdus-Samad**

A few weeks ago Avril Lavigne released her second album *Under My Skin*. Her new album is entirely different from her first, with a lot more computer and guitar work. Avril has successfully shown us that she can be different and still come out on top. This album is a must buy!

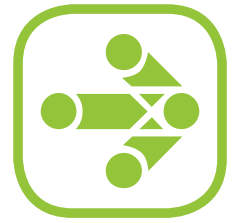
# Powerful future outlook

both recently invited to attend Beacon's conference held in Melbourne.

They were confident the current programs at Loganlea will support the goals of the No Dole program. The launch of the program at Loganlea will take place in term three.

For more information visit the web site: [www.beaconfoundation.net](http://www.beaconfoundation.net) and click on the No Dole link.

— Jafar Abdus-Samad



# 4

## Young Women's guide to policy makers



ON INFORMATION & COMMUNITY NETWORKS ...

*"If I wanted to change something in the community ... I would find out who to speak to about it, work with them and whoever else and do something about it."*

*"Finding information is difficult because of a lack of clarity about who does what."*








# YOUNG WOMEN'S ADVICE TO POLICY MAKERS

To make a difference Politicians need to allocate:


1. *Capital infrastructure for age appropriate children's care and learning in disadvantaged areas;*
2. *Programs which address barriers to education & employment; early intervention & prevention means a hand up not a hand out.*


- Do you collect data on young families presenting to government & community services?*
- Do you have a profile to inform policy and program development?*
- Are young women and their families engaged with government?*


## Young Women's Advice to policy makers


-  That non-government and government agencies increase their awareness of the full context of young parents lives and adopt a flexible and professional approach to their work with young women. This involves a commitment from service providers to challenge their own values, beliefs & assumptions and respecting young women who are pregnant & parenting in their decision to become parents and as a diverse group of women.
-  That the Commonwealth and State Government initiate policy development which will create flexible packages of funding for service provision to young parents which integrate social support, education, training and employment options.
-  That the relevant government departments work together to create policy and programs that recognize formal peer support, training and employment programs and meaningful participation processes as an effective and valuable pathway in achieving social and economic outcomes for young women who are pregnant & parenting.
-  That all levels of government allocate resources to continue research into good practice and valuing processes to appropriately engage with young families in regional and urban areas
-  That government & non-government agencies develop more understanding of the specific needs and developmental stages of young women in order to understand the complexity and the competing demands experienced by young women in the care and protection of their children.




- 

That the Department of FACS and relevant state government departments acknowledge the value and effectiveness of the peer support model of service delivery and fund agencies accordingly to implement this practice in partnership with professionals.
- 

That government departments resist funding short term projects and assist the development of sustainable, recurrently funded dual programs that support young families (ie parents and children) and offer a combination of service provision & community development programs.
- 


That there are re-current resources allocated for the development of drop-in support programs/ resource spaces for young mothers. To offer, a meeting place, information and social & outreach support to young women and young mothers.
- 


That the Commonwealth and State departments responsible for Education, Employment and Training create flexible programs which give young pregnant and parenting women further opportunities to acquire education through a combination of both community-based learning and better access to formal educational institutions. Increased access to community education opportunities, such as leadership programs, parenting courses, and creative opportunities for learning and developing new skills assists with identifying & building on individual strengths and creates a pathway towards future education, training and employment opportunities. To maximize young women’s access to these initiatives, it is vital that transportation and child-care options are incorporated into program design.
- 


That stronger links be made between the prevention and intervention strategies addressing domestic violence, strengthening families, child protection, early intervention mental health programs and crime prevention. These linkages are used to make available the combination of resources and expenditure required to make a difference and achieve outcomes, which will reduce violence in young women’s lives.



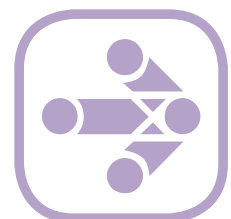
## For young women...

- 

*Hang in there....there are many support people out there that you can talk to, keep making the most of opportunities to educate the community and service providers about your needs and ways that you feel comfortable to provide input into family support & community participation strategies. It is great to contribute to meaningful processes – but it is also OK to ask for something back especially when it comes to valuing your time and energy and seeing “real” changes in your community.*
- 

*Be political!... talk to your local member of parliament about what help you need for you and your family*
- 

*Celebrate your achievements – be a confident role-model for others!*



# 5

## Evidence of Need

### Statistics - Brisbane Region

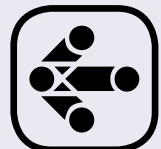


*"It has created huge challenges to remain friends after our relationship breakdown – we had different lifestyles ... I had a baby and he had his partying."*

*"When I was 17 everyone would stare at me, looking at me and the baby as if I am not the parent – now that I am older with two kids people don't really comment."*



*"I had in-home visits from the community nurses with the first, I felt judged and asked them not to come back!!"*

*"Over the time I have been participating in the training, I have moved seven times ... had many moves in and out of safe houses because of the violence. Now I have permanent housing with the Department."*







# EVIDENCE OF NEED –

## STATISTICS Brisbane region

- 
 Within the Brisbane metropolitan area many young families who are disadvantaged are 'hidden' within the suburbs. Effective information and referral mechanisms have proved useful in drawing young parents out from social isolation that they can easily find themselves in.
- 
 According to the Brisbane Domestic Violence Advocacy Service data in 2004, out of 204 clients referred, 33 of those (16%) were young women who are pregnant & parenting and under the age of 25 years. This is cause for ALARM.

The statistics & information following provides local evidence of the urgent need for dedicated family support services for young families in the Brisbane region. We have provided an extra pocket for statistical information/evidence of need to be collected.

### Attached data includes:

- 
 Comparison tables of developmental tasks for Adolescent, Mother & Baby.
- 
 Registered Births to Mothers aged 25 years or less in South East Queensland, breakdown by regions
- 
 Wonder Women - HELP Forum summary report
- 
 Number of births by facility and mother's age, Queensland



# Comparison of developmental tasks and characteristics for adolescent, mother and baby

These tables have been adapted from Senn, M.J. and Solnit A.J. (1968). *Problems in Child Behaviour and Development*. Lea Febiger, Philadelphia.

**REFERENCE:** Starting Out: Effective Services for Pregnant & Parenting Young Women

## 1. PHYSICAL – Tasks and Characteristics

<i>ADOLESCENT</i>	<i>MOTHER</i>	<i>BABY</i>
To adapt to physical changes associated with puberty. Extremely self-conscious and sensitive about physical appearances and any deviation from “normality”. Peak growth age is 12 for girls and is characterised by a virtual doubling of growth velocity.	To sustain baby and self physically and pleasurably. To adapt to physical changes related to ante and post partum periods.	To adjust physiologically to extra uterine life.
Heightened physical power, strength and coordination.	To provide healthy emotional and physical climate.	Body needs urgent. Reflexes dominate.
Preoccupation with adjusting to new physical growth and developing sexuality.	Provides favourable feeding and handling. Gets to “know” baby.	Is completely dependent for physical care. Copes with mechanics of life (eating, sleeping etc..)

## 2. FAMILIAL – Tasks and Characteristics

<i>ADOLESCENT</i>	<i>MOTHER</i>	<i>BABY</i>
To separate from parental figures and attain independence from the family.	To adapt to new role as a parent and form attachment/bond to baby.  To reunite with family of origin as an adult parent ie. Separate and independent.	To bond and attach to primary caregiver.
Highly ambivalent towards parents. Hostility and rejection of parental values.	Develops good working relationship with baby.	Initially has biological unity with mother. Establishes symbiotic relationship with mother. Later, begin to differentiate self from mother.
Anxiety over loss of parental nurturing. Needs for security.	Promotes sense of trust.	Develops trust in caring adult.

### 3. RELATIONSHIPS/SEXUALITY – Tasks and Characteristics

<i>ADOLESCENT</i>	<i>MOTHER</i>	<i>BABY</i>
To develop a sexual identity and the capacity for intimacy and interdependence with another person.	To provide unconditional love. intimacy with baby.	To bond and attaché to primary caregiver.
Fear of intimacy (early adolescence). Fear of being overwhelmed/consumed. Develops capacity for intimacy and interdependence (late adolescence)	To give and get emotional gratification from nurturing baby.	To establish image of primary love object (6 months – 18 months).
Eagerness fro peer approval and relationships. Peer group acts as stepping stone away from family. Need to be valued.	Comfortable with 'new family' created ie mother, (father), infant.	Is completely dependent.
Inconsistent, unpredictable and paradoxical behaviour. Irrational, may be verbally aggressive. Need for stability.	Derives satisfaction from serving baby well. Shows pleasure in baby. Has tolerance for baby.	Minimal patience, tolerance.

### 4. IDENTITY – Tasks and Characteristics

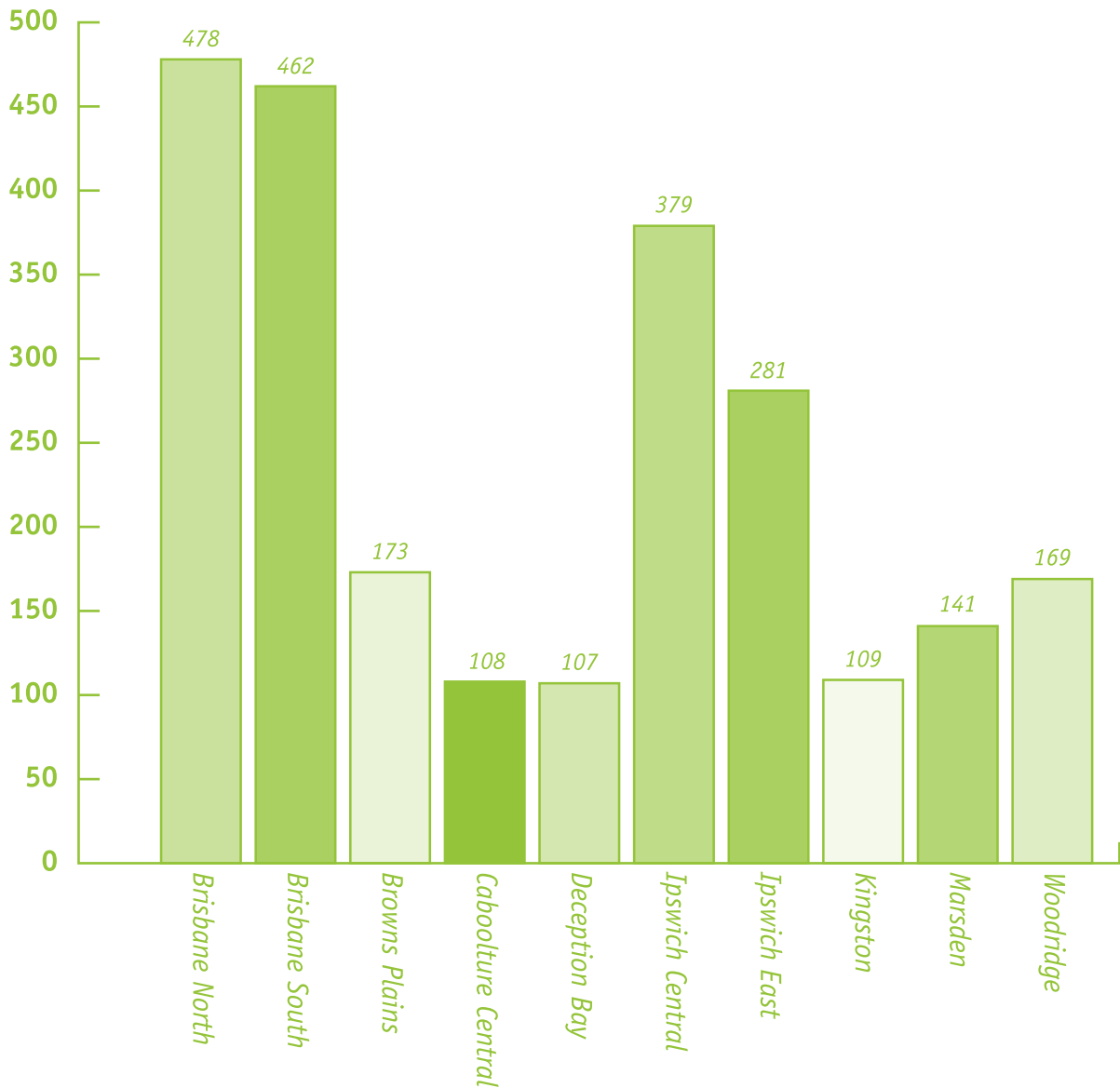
<i>ADOLESCENT</i>	<i>MOTHER</i>	<i>BABY</i>
To establish and confirm sense of individual identity. To consolidate personal values and establish a career or work role.	To develop identity as a parent and mother.	To begin to differentiate self from mother.
Exploration and experimentation with self and world.	Derives satisfaction from serving baby well. Shows pleasure in baby.	Develops discernible social responses; Joyful, angry.
Self absorbed Strong moral and ethical perceptions; idealistic. Need to be self-determining. Critical of self and others, self-evaluative. Tries out different identities. Needs room to explore.	Preoccupied with baby.	Identifiable temperament.

## 5. COGNITIVE – Tasks and Characteristics

<i>ADOLESCENT</i>	<i>MOTHER</i>	<i>BABY</i>
To utilise enriched intellectual competencies. Transition from concrete operational thought ('present oriented') to formal ('future oriented').	To understand, appreciate and accept baby and respond appropriate to baby's developmental needs.	To make developmental progress.
Egocentric. Need for instant gratification. Develops capacity to postpone gratification and make considered, rational choices.	Able to put baby's needs first and delay personal gratification.	Functions egocentrically. Minimal patience, tolerance with gradual increase in capacity to postpone gratification and accept substitute.
Limited ability to integrate principles with practical reality or actual behaviour.	Aware of baby's inborn reaction patterns. Keeps pace with baby's advances.	Is non-cognitive at first; expresses needs instinctively. Later beings to "expect".
May have an ideal view of parenthood and fail to recognise complexities of being a parent.	Encourages baby's development. Has reasonable expectations of baby.	
Belief in the omnipotence of the individuals – immunity to consequences of actions.	Responds appropriate to baby's signs of distress. Learns baby's cues. Applies learning to management of baby.	Increased verbality, play and sensory motor behaviour.

# Registered Births to Mothers aged 25 years or less, according to suburb of usual residence

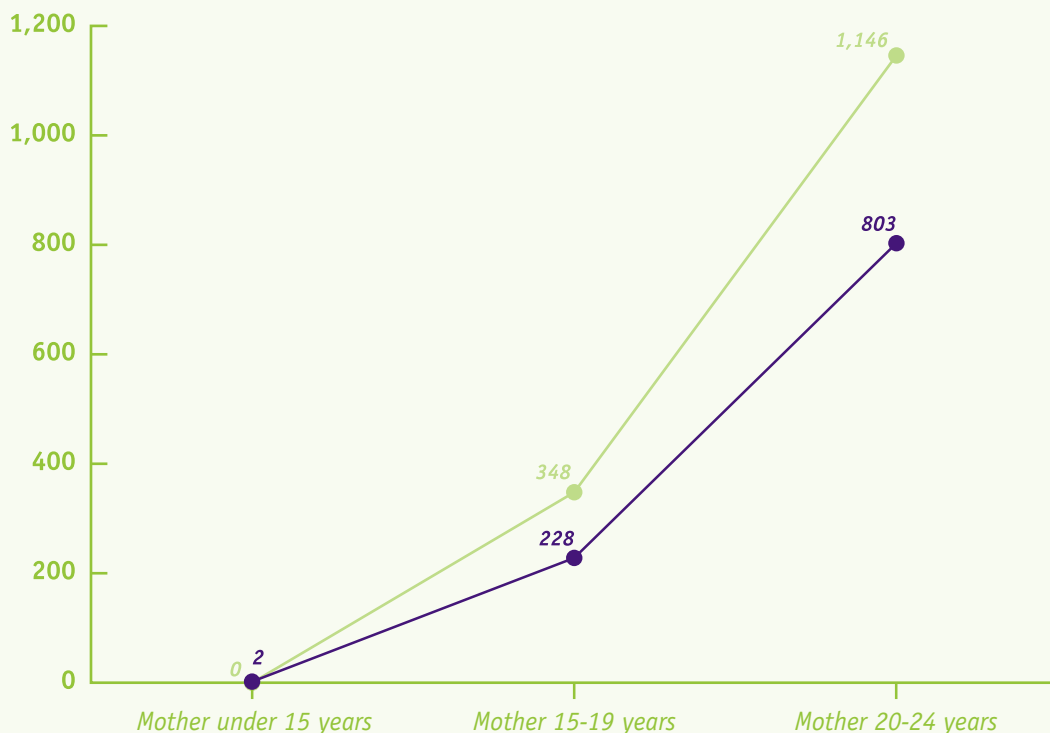
The graph below records the highest incidents of birth to young women who are pregnant and parenting, in greater Brisbane area, including Logan city, Deception Bay and Ipswich.



**SE Queensland TOTAL 7,390**

Source: ABS Births Register, 2003, unpublished data

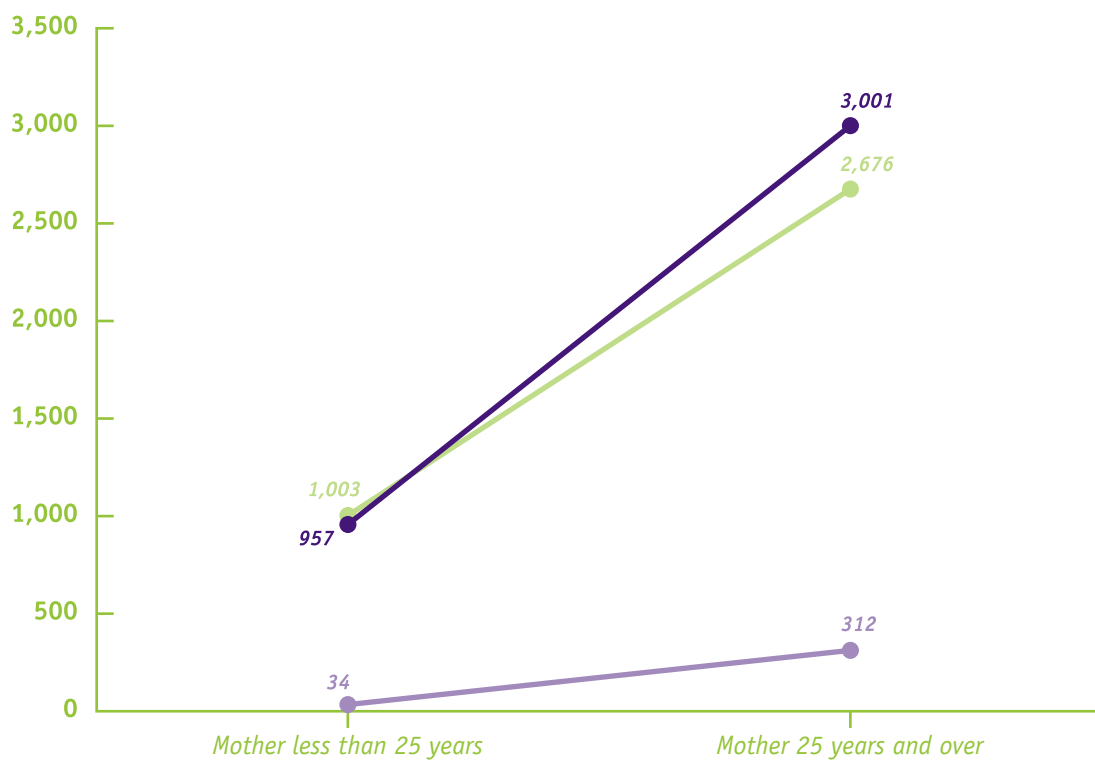
## Number of births by Facility and Mother's age (years), Queensland, 1998



- Mater Misericordiae Mother's Public
- Royal Women's Hospital

TOTAL	Mother under 15 years	Mother 15-19 years	Mother 20-24 years
	2	576	1,949

## Number of births by Facility and Mother's age (years), Queensland, 2003



- Mater Mother's Public
- Royal Women's Hospital
- Women's Birthing Centre

TOTAL	Mother less than 25 years	Mother 25 years and over
	1,994	5,989

Source: Perinatal Data Collection, Queensland Health

# 6

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# The ESSENCE represented as 'Rainbows of inspiration'

→ Relationship building

→ Positive environment

→ Flexibility

→ Patience

→ An environment free of  
discrimination & judgment

→ Peer Support

→ Valuing participation

→ Childcare

→ Self-awareness

→ Attitude of learning for life

→ Encouragement and someone  
believing in you...



**YOUNG MOTHERS FOR YOUNG WOMEN**

**P.O. Box 3449  
South Brisbane 4101**

**Ph - 07 3844 4866  
Fax - 07 3846 5207**

**Email - [ytyw@merivale.org.au](mailto:ytyw@merivale.org.au)  
[www.ytyw.merivale.org.au](http://www.ytyw.merivale.org.au)**