



St Anthony's Family Care

Evaluation of the Refugee Youth Arts Project

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Abbreviations

The following is a list of abbreviations that have been used in this report.

Abbreviation	Meaning
CBD	Central Business District
IEC	Intensive English Centre
WWS	WestWood Spice

Executive Summary

St Anthony's Family Care currently provides a number of services and supports to families and children. With a strong interest in developing new services in areas of identified need, the Refugee Youth Arts project was developed as a pilot to explore the need for a youth focus in future programs. The project employed an experienced Youth Arts Worker to provide an 8 week program (spread over terms 1 and terms 2, 2011), targeted at up to 15 young people aged 12-16 years who were attending the Chester Hill Intensive English Centre. WestWood Spice was invited to conduct an evaluation of the pilot.

The major activity of the project was the development, recording and performance of two group songs and associated video-clips. The program included an excursion to the Powerhouse Museum to access technical video and recording production facilities.

The key aims of the project were to:

- Develop skills in literacy and oral presentation;
- Build confidence and self-esteem; and
- Provide opportunities for the young people to participate in activities they would not ordinarily access.

The evaluation activities were designed to give both pre and post project information. The data collection involved:

1. Focus groups conducted with participants in week 1 and week 8 of the program;
2. An interview with the Youth Arts Worker in week 1 and week 8 of the program;
3. An interview with the IEC Head Teacher in week 1 and week 8 of the program; and
4. An interview¹ with the Manager, Service Support and Development, St Anthony's Family Care at both the commencement and conclusion of the project.

There were a total of 14 students who participated in the project and between them they represented 7 different countries and 7 different languages. All were recent arrivals in Australia (ranging from 1-9 months) and all had a refugee background. Ages ranged from 12 to 18 years. A key indicator of the enthusiasm of participants for the project was that all 14 students completed the whole project.

At the beginning of the project, there were only 2 students who indicated that they had some confidence in spoken English with the remainder indicating that they were not at all confident. By the end of the project, most students agreed that the program had helped their English skills a great deal. This was corroborated by the feedback from the Youth Arts Worker, the Head Teacher and informal teacher feedback. Two bilingual teacher's aides commented:

¹ The initial interview was face-to-face and the follow-up was a telephone interview.

"I am amazed." Arabic Teacher's Aide

"They are so confident now and they were so shy. I still can't believe it." Farsi Teacher's Aide

The low starting literacy levels of the group influenced the shape of the activities used to develop the two songs and video, with early instruction needed on the concept of rhyming. The second song developed by the group had an English chorus but provided an opportunity for participants to sing their own individual verses in their native language.

Key factors which contributed to the success of the project included:

- The project went to the students;
- The project was integrated into the day-to-day programming of the school;
- The use of music as the "universal language" had created a common ground and laid the foundation for a connection between the language development of the students, the activities they were undertaking and the fostering of group cohesion; and
- The positive support of St Anthony's staff who were genuinely interested in what would make a difference for refugee youth.

The Head Teacher reported that the project had been very successful and had exceeded her expectations. Key benefits for the IEC were:

- Access to the music skills of the Youth Arts Worker;
- Access to the associated specialised music and video recording equipment;
- Stimulating and engaging for the students;
- Strongly grounded in the use of visual materials e.g. photos and video;
- Creating opportunities for more individualised attention to students;
- Giving students a voice and joy in their lives when many come from families facing major issues; and
- Clear educational focus in comparison to other mentoring projects which are grounded in welfare.

There was general agreement across the students, Youth Arts Worker and the IEC that a future project would be best timed to correspond with a complete school term. Other suggestions included:

- Increased integration with the educational program of the school, so that it is added into the curriculum on a class-by-class basis, rather than the "withdrawal from class" model which operated;
- Invite the Youth Arts Worker to participate in some of the English class lessons to facilitate weaving the words/ lessons from the curriculum into the program; and
- Production of a practice cd to allow students to work on their pronunciation in between sessions.

The findings of the evaluation of the Refugee Youth Arts project, (which became known as the Music Video project), demonstrated that the project had been a success. This view was shared universally across all of the stakeholders involved: the participants, the Chester Hill Intensive English Centre, the Youth Arts Worker and St Anthony's staff.

There were some particular aspects of the achievements of the project for some of the participants:

- Some students seeing themselves on video for the first time;
- Some students visiting the Sydney CBD by train for the first time;
- One student discovering that he had a real gift for singing;
- Some students who are illiterate in their own language gaining English literacy skills;
- Group cohesion and social supports and the development of playground friendships; and
- The self-esteem benefits of public performance.

Overall, the project fills a very important gap. It targets entry-level students with low levels of literacy who, by virtue of these literacy levels do not have access to other programs. It has a strong educational focus, whereas many other mentoring programs are grounded in welfare.

There is a clear need which St Anthony's could meet. The implications of St Anthony's satisfying this need would require:

1. Identification of a robust source of funding;
2. Careful attention to the skills and experience required of any staff to be appointed to the role of Youth Arts Worker;
3. Clear partnership arrangements with host IEC's to cover aspects such as:
 - a. Physical accommodation of the project on site; and
 - b. Linkages of the project to the IEC curriculum and structures including minimum duration of one school term per project and opportunities to link with school English classes; and
4. Identification of any specialist music and recording equipment needed and whether arrangements should be made for hire or purchase of these.

INTRODUCTION

Overview

St Anthony's Family Care is a charity operated by the Sisters of Joseph with a focus on the provision of supports to families and children. Current service offerings include:

- Flexible respite for children with a disability;
- Early intervention services for children with a disability;
- Services for children with autism under the "Helping Children with Autism" package of the Australian government;
- An early learning centre for children 0-5 years;
- Support to Sudanese families and migrants;
- Case management and family support; and
- Mobile community development and support services.

St Anthony's has a strong interest in developing new services in areas of identified need and in working in partnership with other agencies and organisations. In early 2011, the organisation decided to explore the need for programs focused on youth and the Refugee Youth Arts project is one of two self-funded pilot programs which have been undertaken. The second was a weekend camp for Sudanese youth and their dads. WestWood Spice was invited to undertake an independent evaluation of the Refugee Youth Arts project in March 2011.

The key objectives for the evaluation were to determine:

1. The effectiveness of the project given its stated aims;
2. The outcomes for participants and other stakeholder groups; and
3. Implications of the project for St Anthony's future work with youth.

Project description

The Refugee Youth Arts project involved the employment of a Youth Arts Worker to provide an 8 week program targeted at up to 15 young people aged 12-16 years who were attending the Chester Hill Intensive English Centre. The program was spread over terms 1 and terms 2, 2011.

The major activity of the project was intended to be the development, recording and performance of a group song and associated video-clip. In the event, two songs were produced.

Sessions were scheduled twice per week, and the program included an excursion to the Powerhouse Museum to access technical video and recording production facilities. Although the project concluded on 6 May 2011 with an assembly performance of one of the two songs which were produced by the participants, there is to be a showcase celebration of the outcomes at a whole of school assembly at the conclusion of term 2 on 1 July 2011, where all participants will also receive a certificate and a copy of their personal music-video on DVD.

Project aims:

Prior to the commencement of the project, the stated aims were as follows:

- To provide opportunities for the young people to express themselves through the medium of arts;
- To enhance the lives and experiences of young people;

- Give the young people a safe platform to discuss and work through issues, in a non-threatening manner;
- Provide positive experiences for the young people in a productive environment;
- Build confidence and self esteem;
- Develop skills in literacy and oral presentation;
- Allow the young people to challenge themselves and work outside their comfort zones;
- To assist the young people with their transition into mainstream school;
- Provide opportunity for the young people to participate in activities they would not ordinarily have the opportunity to participate in; and
- Harness the participants' potential and develop new skills.

METHODOLOGY

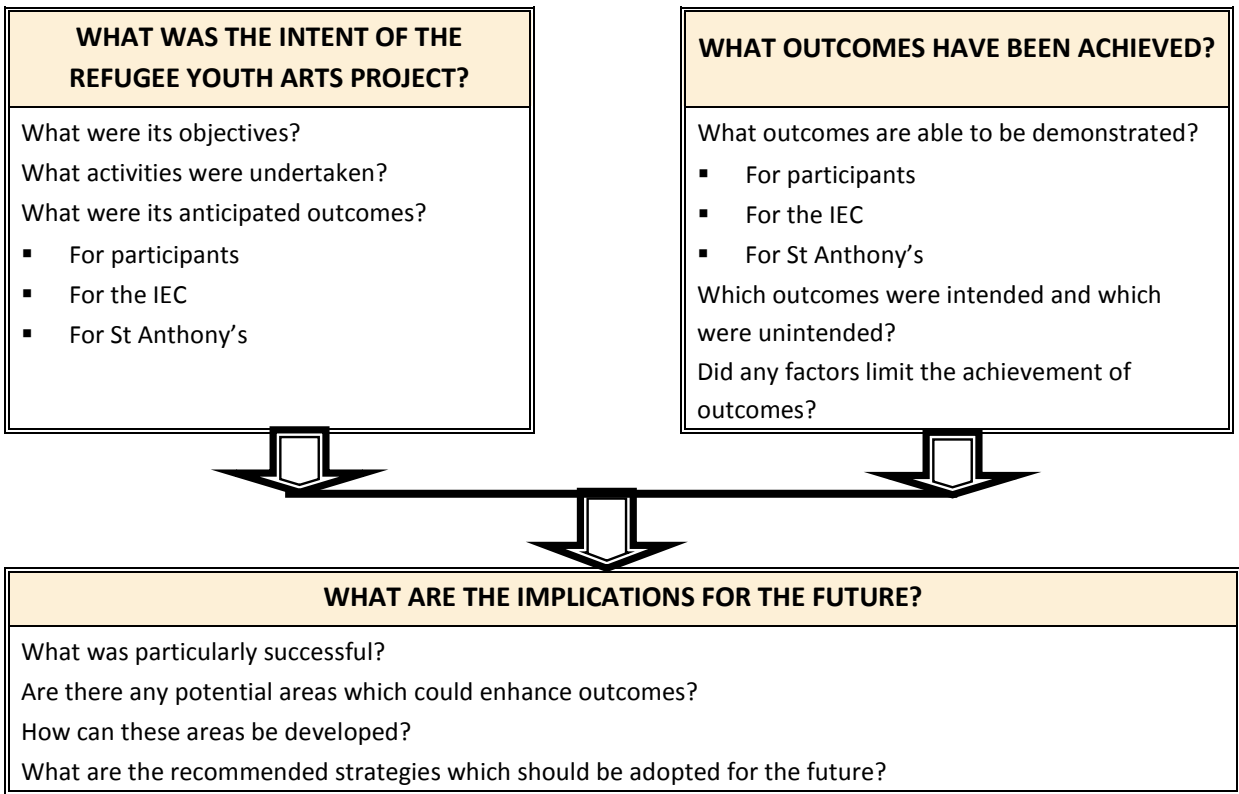
The evaluation activities were designed to give both pre and post project information. The data collection involved:

1. Focus groups conducted with participants in week 1 and week 8 of the program;
2. An interview with the Youth Arts Worker in week 1 and week 8 of the program;
3. An interview with the IEC Head Teacher in week 1 and week 8 of the program; and
4. An interview² with the Manager, Service Support and Development, St Anthony's Family Care at both the commencement and conclusion of the project.

Participants were divided into two separate groups on each occasion to facilitate communication. At the pre-project focus group, specific arrangements were made to employ interpreters. The first group had a Karen interpreter and the second group accessed interpreters provided by the IEC. Both follow-up focus groups relied on informal support from the IEC interpreters. On each occasion, the Youth Arts Worker was also able to provide communication assistance.

Figure 1 below lists the major investigative questions.

Figure 1: Major Investigative Questions



² The initial interview was face-to-face and the follow-up was a telephone interview.



Findings

The Refugee Youth Arts project was developed as a project between St Anthony's Family Care, the contracted Youth Arts Worker and the Chester Hill Intensive English Centre. At its core was recognition of the important role which can be played by music as the "universal language" through which young people can express themselves.

The Chester Hill Intensive English Centre (IEC) is one of 14 Intensive English Centres operated by the NSW Department of Education and Communities in the Sydney metropolitan area and they were keen to have their students benefit from the program. The IEC called the project "The Music Video Project" and as this is how it became known; the evaluation has adopted this terminology.

While St Anthony's envisaged the target group for the project as young people newly arrived in Australia, the school elected to offer the program to students who had a refugee background.

1.1. Project participant selection process

The Head Teacher at the IEC offered the opportunity to participate in the project to all students who were continuing at the school into term 2 and who were on 200, 202 and 204 visas. This resulted in a total group of 14 students. This included two older boys who it was thought initially may not participate as they had access to another mentoring program. However, they did not participate in the baseline focus groups. A key indicator of the enthusiasm of participants for the project was that all 14 students completed the whole program.

1.2. Characteristics of project participants

Information was collected on participant age, gender, and length of time in Australia at project commencement, country of birth, language spoken at home and details of any other languages spoken.

Participants ranged in age from 12-18 years. The distribution of ages is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Age of participants

Age	# of Participants
12-13 years	4
14-15 years	6
16-17 years	3
18 years	1
TOTAL	14

All students were recent arrivals to Australia, with more than half in the country for less than 3 months. Length of residence ranged from one month to nine months. The distribution of length of time in Australia is shown in below.

Table 2: Length of time in Australia

Time	# of Participants
1 month	2
2-3 months	6
4-5 months	2
6-7 months	2
8-9 months	2
TOTAL	14

Across the 14 participants, there were 7 different languages spoken at home and 7 different countries of origin. In terms of second languages spoken, one student was also fluent in French and two Farsi speakers also had some Arabic language skills.

Table 3: Country of origin and language groupings

Country	# of Participants	Language	# of Participants
Burma	4	Karen	4
Ethiopia	3	Amharic	3
Iraq	2	Farsi	2
Iraq	1	Arabic	1
Afghanistan	1	Farsi	1
China	1	Mandarin	1
Thailand	1	Thai	1
Guinea	1	Fula	1
TOTAL	14		14

There were a couple of students from village backgrounds who had no previous experience of any formal education system with the IEC being their first exposure to school.

1.3. Initial project expectations

PARTICIPANTS

There were 12 students who participated in the baseline project focus groups. At the time of the baseline, only the first session of the project had been conducted.

Participants were asked why they had decided to join the Music Video project.

On the whole, reasons given for joining the project were positive and included:

"... to see if I am good at singing."

"I was invited to join."

"I'm interested in music and dance."

"My whole class is participating."

There was a notable exception with one 14 year old male student clearly indicating that he would much prefer to be playing football than to be participating in the project.

Participants were asked what they hoped to learn through the project.

On the whole, answers centred on music skills and included:

"... to learn music skills."

"Composing."

"Learning about English music."

"To learn rap."

However, one student identified *"To practise English"* as a goal.

Participants were asked to rate their confidence in spoken and written English.

There were only 2 students who indicated that they had some confidence in spoken English with the remainder indicating that they were not confident. There was slightly more confidence in written English with 4 students indicating that they had some confidence with written English.

Participants were also asked to rate their confidence in singing and performing.

Of those who expressed a view (n=8), there was an even split between those who said they were confident and those who said they were not.

What participants are most looking forward to in the project.

The most common responses were singing, performing and dancing. Two people mentioned the video-making component of the project.

Satisfaction with the project to date

The baseline questions included measures of participant satisfaction about:

- The amount of time each week for the project (two sessions);
- The length of the project (8 weeks);
- The project activities which have been undertaken; and
- Working with other youth on the project.

Participants found it difficult to express their level of satisfaction. In the main, this appeared to be a result of their limited exposure to the project at the time of the baseline. Nevertheless, there was majority agreement that they would recommend the project to other students at the IEC.

YOUTH ARTS WORKER

The contract Youth Arts Worker employed for the project is very experienced in work of this nature and had previously conducted programs within an Intensive English Centre setting. This experience had informed the development of the aims for the current project. As noted above, at the time of the baseline interview, only one session had been conducted. It had become clear at this point that the minimal English literacy levels of the group meant that literacy and education would play a larger focus in the program. The Youth Arts Worker agreed that the key aims for the project would be:

- Develop skills in literacy and oral presentation;
- Build confidence and self-esteem; and
- Provide opportunities for the young people to participate in activities they would not ordinarily have the opportunity to participate in.

The Youth Arts Worker noted that the medium of arts would allow the harnessing of the potential of the project to build on literacy - he had already identified in the first session that the concept of rhyme was new to the participants and that he would build on this in future sessions. Similarly, the literacy starting levels of the group would mean that song writing would need to concentrate on basic lyrics - rather than telling any complicated stories about people's lives.

He was thinking that a second song could have a chorus sung in English, but with verses in student's home languages, but was worried that two songs might be a little ambitious. Likewise, the level of instruction and computer skills required to work the video-editing equipment at the Power House Museum may require a modified approach.

The first session had also introduced different styles of music to the students, with RAP music being well-received. Use of RAP had also allowed the group to understand the concept of speaking in time with the music. Feedback from the school interpreter aides was that the students had been very enthusiastic about their attendance at the first session.

With regard to the scheduling of the program, the Youth Arts Worker considered it would have been better if the program was not going to be split across two school terms with the intervention of the school holidays potentially impacting negatively on the momentum of the project. However financial year constraints had dictated this scheduling. Similarly, there would be a time gap between the completion of the 8 weeks and the launch of the video and song performance at the end of term IEC graduation on 1 July 2011. He was hopeful that the students confidence would grow to both allow them to undertake the stage performance as well as to receive the extra boost in confidence which its successful accomplishment would deliver.

HEAD TEACHER - CHESTER HILL IEC

The Head Teacher said she was very excited about the program. She explained that she was hoping that it would assist with the settling in process of the students who were new arrivals at the centre, having been in Australia for less than six months. They did not have any recreation opportunities after school and she was anticipating that the common language of music and the joy that music could bring would be able to ameliorate some of the student's feelings of hurt. Thus for her the program had 3 potential benefits for her students:

- A welfare benefit, assisting with settling in;
- An educational benefit - assisting with the student's literacy in English; and

- A boost in confidence, especially through the production of a video where the students could see themselves perform.

From the perspective of the outcomes for the IEC, she reported that:

- Publicity for the Centre would be beneficial. Currently 40% of the students are from a refugee background. The school has been welcoming new arrivals for 33 years; and
- The project is closely aligned with the purposes of the centre.

She was pleased that the project was targeting younger students and those with lower literacy levels. She had heard about the RAP music from the first session and saw it as an excellent medium for linking cultures.

MANAGER, SERVICE SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT, ST ANTHONY'S FAMILY CARE

The manager at St Anthony's was looking forward to the project and the role which it could play in meeting the needs of migrant youth. She reported that a critical focus for St Anthony's was the outcomes for the participants and whether the project could deliver a sense of achievement, fun and learning. She was interested to find out what elements would contribute to the project's success.

The project was targeted at youth who would not be accessing mainstream youth centres or out of school hours (OOSH) programs. She acknowledged the importance of the Youth Arts Worker's facilitator role and the need for confidence in the skills of the person undertaking the project and their capacity to be flexible in matching the project's activities to the level of the participants.

1.4. Brief description of each week of the project

After the initial week of the project, the Youth Arts Worker understood that the low literacy level of the group meant that personal stories would not be able to be used as the basis of the lyrics for the songs that were to be written by the group. Instead, he chose to use photos as the starting point combined with a group voting process to select their preferred backing tracks. These were chosen (one fast tune and one slower) from a choice of 9 tracks.

WEEK 2: Using photos as prompts, the students made a selection and in time with the chosen music, practised saying; "My name is XX ... I like YYY". Each run through they needed to get louder and louder; eventually the facilitator had individuals taking turns standing on a coffee table in the room (as a stage substitute). He described this as having worked really well:

"They started to open up and about 60% were able to say the words in time with the music."

WEEK 3: Work began in earnest on rhymes. The facilitator explained the concept of rhyming - then the group worked on what would be good words to rhyme from the "I like" themes. They worked on possible rhymes as a group - with people making suggestions for each person's chosen "I like" item or activity.

WEEK 4: The Youth Arts Worker had prepared the chosen rhymes printed out in very large font size; some students found it easier to read the words, rather than speak them from memory. The group also worked on the chorus for the song, and the first line of the chorus became its title: "We are all from the IEC ..."

WEEK 5: Work began on a second song - this used additional material from the first song, where one of the students had developed the line "Everyone is beautiful". This was then used as the starting point for the second song and an appropriate melody selected; then for the verses, each person had to work out the same message in their own language. Some assistance was received from the bilingual teacher's aides in choosing the words to fit.

Words of Song:

"Everyone is beautiful"

"Everyone is good"

"We are always happy"

"Everybody should"

WEEK 6: For this week's sessions, video equipment was brought to the school and filming was done of both the performances of the two songs as well as suitable video footage of each person related to their own themes for the first song about what they liked. Examples were things like eating ice-cream, kicking a ball, and making cakes.

Over the school holidays, the Youth Arts Worker took responsibility for editing all the video clips and the songs. He reported that the students had really loved watching themselves on video.

WEEK 7: This was the week of the excursion to Powerhouse Museum. The main focus of the excursion was for the students to use the editing facilities of the Museum to make their own personal videos from the video footage and still photos which had been taken of themselves. Everyone was able to create their own product with the Youth Arts Worker providing a simplified approach to learning the basic technical skills. The project was able to secure free entry to the Museum. In the lunch break, students were taken on a brief tour of some of the exhibits and showed a strong interest in the Museum displays.

The practicalities of the organisation of the excursion were undertaken by the IEC and support staff were supplied by the school. Normal school excursion permission processes were used and the Youth Arts Worker met the students at the Power House.

WEEK 8: Practice for a performance of the first song ("We are all from the IEC") at the weekly assembly of the IEC and for the Principal of Chester Hill High School.

The principal evaluator attended the final session of the music video program which was a rehearsal for the IEC school assembly performance to take place the following morning.

“Students at first performed the chorus of the song and their individual track using an unplugged microphone. They practised singing along with a full recording of themselves and practised passing the microphone to the next person. There were a number of students who did not remember all their words.

The next time through, the Youth Arts Worker required the students to sing with no voice backing assistance, only the music section of the soundtrack. To the evaluator who was observing, this seemed to be a major stretch goal and I was worried that the students would not be able to accomplish what was asked of them. But two things happened:

Many of the students rose to the occasion and performed their individual verse well, including some who had not remembered all the words the first time through; and

Those students who were having difficulty remembering their words were spontaneously prompted by all the other students.

Finally, students practised with the microphones plugged in. They were ready for their performance.”

1.5. Views at the conclusion of the project

PARTICIPANTS

Thirteen of the 14 participants in the project were able to attend one of the two focus groups on the final day of the project. The focus group took place later on the morning of the day of the performance for the weekly IEC school assembly.

Views about the school performance

Students were asked for their feedback about how they had felt about the morning's performance for the assembly. Common comments were “happy”, “good”, “nice” and a general feeling that they had all done well. One person specifically said that they had been nervous beforehand, but that it had gone well, but only one person reported that they were still feeling nervous after the event. There appeared to be a general sense of accomplishment across the group, together with a dawning realisation that the regular sessions of the project were over. The students appeared to be a little upset by this realisation.

Best part of the project

There was a wide cross-section of responses to this question, with each element of the project being nominated across the student group. Students nominated the singing, the video filming, the excursion to the Power House Museum and the opportunity to perform.

Opportunities for new experiences

It became apparent from discussion in the focus groups that many of the participants had not previously experienced a video film of themselves and so we asked specifically about this. Across the two groups there were 10 people who reported that this was indeed a new experience for them.

Similarly, for a couple of the students, the trip to the city had been a first-time event.

Length of the project

No one felt that the project duration had been too short, with about one-third agreeing that the 8 weeks was about right. The majority felt that the project should span a whole school term and 3 students thought that 2 terms would be preferable.

Impact on learning English

Students were asked if the project had helped their English. Most said that it had helped a lot, especially with speaking skills. One student nominated "egg" as one of the new words which he had learnt. Similarly, students were all in agreement that the project had assisted with their confidence in speaking English. Two also indicated that it had helped their writing of English.

It was obvious to the evaluators that there had been an improvement in the language skills of the group between the pre and post project focus groups, with general enthusiasm and engagement with the questions being asked as well as general conversation.

All students agreed that they would recommend the program to others with comments such as "Yes, for sure" and "I like this program".

Suggestions for improvement

Most participants felt the program was great as it was and shouldn't be changed. The key suggestion made was for a longer period of time in the city - perhaps having the excursion to the Power House Museum over two days to allow for a greater opportunity to visit the exhibits of the museum and to reduce the pressure of time on the video production. Another student suggested that a greater impact on learning English could be achieved by including work on more difficult lyrics as part of the project.

The evaluators were able to specifically ask the student who had preferred football over the project at the baseline which activity he would now choose, if he were given the choice between football and the music video project. He was very emphatic in his response in choosing the music video project.

Two of the IEC interpreters who attended the final focus groups spoke about how amazed they had been with the results of the project and its impact on the students.

"I am amazed." Arabic Teacher's Aide

"They are so confident now and they were so shy. I still can't believe it." Farsi Teacher's Aide

YOUTH ARTS WORKER

The Youth Arts Worker had been delighted with the achievements of the project. He commented:

"This has been the best 8 weeks of my life."

Key success factors which he nominated were:

- The project went to the students;
- The project was integrated into the day-to-day programming of the school;
- The use of music as the “universal language” really had created a common ground and laid the foundation for a connection between the language development of the students, the activities they were undertaking and the fostering of group cohesion; and
- The positive support of St Anthony’s staff who were genuinely interested in what would make a difference for refugee youth.

He reported that the project had played a role in the transition of students to their new environment. There had been one particularly shy boy who when given the opportunity to sing in his native language showed that he was not shy in his native language and indeed had a real gift for singing which had been hitherto unrecognised.

Another student who was the only person from his country in the current IEC cohort had been socially isolated, but the project had given him a group with which he had bonded well. This had translated into support in the school playground where he now had a group of friends.

The Youth Worker had received a large amount of feedback from teachers which had had been very positive, with teachers noticing positive gains in the classroom setting. One teacher had been so pleased with the impact of the project that she came and sat in to observe one of the project sessions.

Indeed, the school had been very welcoming of the project, and despite the pressures on space within the school, the teachers made the staffroom available as the main venue for the project. Teachers also adjusted timetables to accommodate the video filming elements of the project which took longer than the session times allocated.

Despite the challenges which had been presented at the outset when the low literacy levels of the group had become apparent, the Youth Arts Worker felt that the project had been a good match to his skillset. His ability to respond to the needs of the group and where they were at, underscores the importance of recruiting for the right the skill base of a person running such a program and will be a factor that St Anthony’s will need to take into account in any future project of this nature.

Suggestions for improvement to the program which the Youth Arts Worker made were:

- Run the program on a “whole of term” basis. This would have benefits of:
 - Matching with how everything else in the IEC is programmed; and
 - More opportunity to explore lyrics and pronunciation;
- Produce a practice cd to allow students to work on their pronunciation in between sessions;
- Don’t split the program across school holidays; and
- Allocate more time for the filming component.

HEAD TEACHER - CHESTER HILL IEC

The Head Teacher reported that the project had been very successful and had exceeded her expectations. It was generating strong interest across the other IEC’s. A key benefit of the project was that this was the first time there had been a program which had targeted the low literacy group

in the school and that it had been able to deliver such a “major victory” at the end. The final assembly performance demonstrated clearly the confidence and skills which the students had attained.

The Head Teacher noted that the benefits were particularly great for some of the students who were illiterate in their first language. Its major strength was that it was built on the universal language of music. The opportunities it gave students to write a few words helped with literacy and confidence.

She saw the project as offering students “the brighter side of life”, through fun activities, and opportunities to learn new skills, highlighting in particular the video production workshop at the Power House Museum.

Although providing facilities for the program had been difficult, with the project utilising the staff room, she noted that staff were supportive as they really appreciated the benefits of the project for their students. She highlighted in particular one student who seemed to have a real gift for music and whose word pronunciation was a lot clearer as a result of the project.

She summarised the key benefits of the program as:

- Access to the music skills of the Youth Arts Worker;
- Access to the associated specialised music and video recording equipment;
- Stimulating and engaging for the students;
- Strongly grounded in the use of visual materials e.g. photos and video;
- Creating opportunities for more individualised attention to students;
- Giving students a voice and joy in their lives when many come from families facing major issues; and
- Clear educational focus in comparison to other mentoring projects which are grounded in welfare.

Suggestions for improvements included:

- Increased integration with the educational program of the school, so that it is added into the curriculum on a class-by-class basis, rather than the withdrawal from the class model which operated;
- Invite the Youth Arts worker to participate in some of the English class lessons to facilitate weaving the words/ lessons from the curriculum into the program; and
- Run the project across a whole school term.

There had been some local community newspaper publicity for the project. (A copy of the article which was published is at Appendix 1.)

The participants have been invited to perform at the annual multi-cultural Flag day on 24 June 2011.

MANAGER, SERVICE SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT, ST ANTHONY'S FAMILY CARE

The Manager, Service Support & Development, St Anthony's Family Care reported that she had been pleased with the project. She was able to visit the students on the Power House Museum excursion and reported that the level of group cohesion and the animation of the group made a big impression. In reflecting on the success of the project she highlighted the following key features:

- The facilitation skills of the Youth Arts Worker;

- The strength of the partnership with the IEC. This was reflected in aspects such as the alignment of the project with the goals of the IEC and the flexibility of the school in accommodating the project. This included access to the school staff room and flexibility in working around the video recording demands; and
- The level of engagement of the participants. All participants remained engaged with the project for its duration with no-one dropping out.

Conclusions

The findings of the evaluation of the Refugee Youth Arts project, (which became known as the Music Video project) demonstrates that the project has been a success. This view is shared universally across all of the stakeholders involved: the participants, the Chester Hill Intensive English Centre, the Youth Arts Worker and St Anthony's staff.

Even though the particular niche which the project would occupy was not so clearly articulated at the outset, the process of the actual delivery of the project has shown that the Music Video program met a very clearly identified need. That need was for the delivery of an educational and enjoyable program which would strengthen the English literacy skills, confidence and self-esteem of a group of recently arrived refugee youth who have low levels of literacy in English. There are no such programs for these youth at present.

In this way, the project was able to deliver on its key aims of:

- Developing skills in literacy and oral presentation;
- Building confidence and self-esteem; and
- Providing opportunities for the young people to participate in activities they would not ordinarily have the opportunity to participate in.

Using the medium of "music as the universal language" the project was able to deliver a range of beneficial outcomes for the target group. These included:

- Increased competency in English;
- Increased confidence in speaking and writing English;
- Increased group cohesion and support;
- Acquisition of new skills in video production and performance; and
- Experience of a sense of achievement, joy and fun in life in an Australian context.

There were some particular aspects of the achievements of the project for some of the participants which WestWood Spice, as the evaluators believe warrant highlighting. These are:

- Some students seeing themselves on video for the first time;
- Some students visiting the Sydney CBD by train for the first time;
- One student discovering that he had a real gift for singing;
- Some students who are illiterate in their own language gaining English literacy skills;
- Group cohesion and social supports and the development of playground friendships; and
- The self-esteem benefits of public performance.

What are the implications of the project for St Anthony's in working with youth in the future?

In embarking upon the provision of services to youth, the Music Video project has provided clear guidance about an area of unmet need i.e. recently arrived refugee youth who have low levels of English literacy. Chester Hill English Centre has indicated that they would be pleased to be involved in further projects of this nature. There are 13 other IEC's in the Sydney metropolitan area that could benefit similarly.

Implications for St Anthony's in embarking upon such an undertaking would include:

1. Identification of a robust source of funding;
2. Careful attention to the skills and experience required of any staff to be appointed to the role of Youth Arts Worker;
3. Clear partnership arrangements with host IEC's to cover aspects such as:
 - a. Physical accommodation of the project on site; and
 - b. Linkages of the project to the IEC curriculum and structures including minimum duration of one school term per project and opportunities to link with school English classes; and
4. Identification of any specialist music and recording equipment needed and whether arrangements should be made for hire or purchase of these.

Appendix 1: Newspaper Publicity

Published in the local community newspaper: "The Torch"



Young refugees are making music together in a Chester Hill Intensive English Centre project.

Music building bridges

By MICK ROBERTS

THEY have come to Australia's shores as some of the world's most persecuted and oppressed people, yet that hasn't prevented Bankstown's young refugees expressing their opinion through song, music and pictures.

The Refugee Music Video Project is a group of 12 young people from Chester Hill's Intensive English Centre (IEC),

who, over a series of weeks, are participating in workshops covering topics such as lyrics, song writing, recording and performance.

Project facilitator Craig Taunton said young people were asked to write a group song that collectively told their story: "The song will be composed by the young people participating in the program and professionally recorded," he said.

The end result will see the group taking part in a video editing workshop at the Pow-erhouse Museum to create a music-video clip for the song.

Funded by migrant service provider, St Anthony's Family Care, the group of students, aged from 12 to 17, come from troubled countries such as Ethiopia, Burma, Thailand, Afghanistan and Guinea.

Mr Taunton said the project aimed to provide opportu-

nities for young people to express themselves through the medium of arts and build confidence and self esteem. He said the project would develop skills in literacy and oral presentation.

"By using the medium of music and video, these kids are able to adapt much quicker to their new country by using music - a common language from all over the world," he said.

