



Transitional Programs Opening Doors for Young Offenders - Whitelion

Mark Watt, Co-Founder & CEO
Whitelion Inc

June 2008

Reintegration Puzzle

Adelaide



Outline

- Whitelion Overview
 - Whitelion's target group
 - Whitelion Programs
 - Mentoring
 - Employment
 - Young Women's Support
 - Bundji Bundji Indigenous Program
 - Whitelion's Impact
 - Case studies & Outcomes
 - Keys to success: Common themes
 - Engaging businesses
 - Transitional engagement
 - Programs are Voluntary and "Real"
 - Value-adding
-



Whitelion Overview

Whitelion supports young people to build better lives for themselves and helps make our community a more inclusive and safer place.

Our Vision - To reconnect disadvantaged young people with the community so they are living positive and meaningful lives.



Whitelion Overview

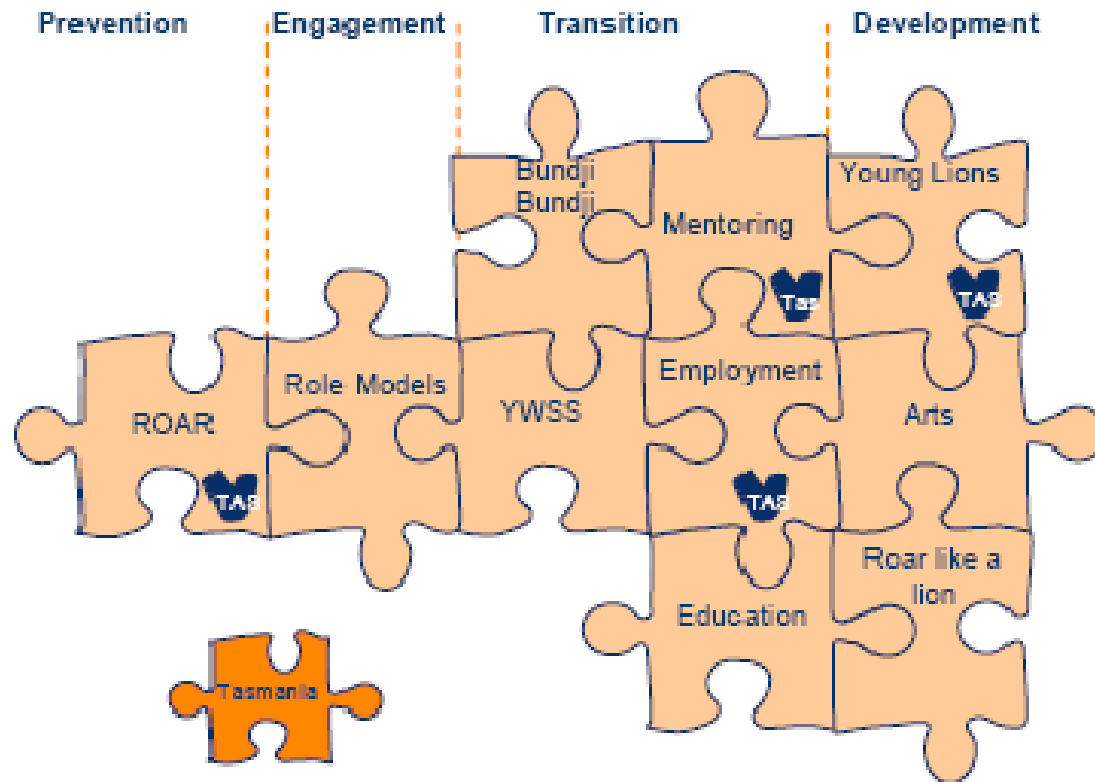
- ❑ Founded in 1999 by Glenn Manton (Ex AFL Footballer) & Mark Watt
 - ❑ Head office is in Parkville (neighbouring Melbourne Youth Justice Centre)
 - ❑ Regional offices in Barwon, Gippsland, Bendigo and NW Tasmania
 - ❑ Whitelion will commence in Adelaide next month
 - ❑ The programs are funded by a mixed pool of corporate sponsorship, government funding, grants and fundraising efforts.
-



Whitelion's Target Group

- ❑ Young people (13 to 25yrs) who are involved with, or at risk of involvement with the Youth Justice System or the Out of Home Care system.
 - ❑ Over 2/3 of our young people have a criminal history, with 1 in 2 referrals coming from the 3 Youth Detention Centres or Community Youth Justice.
-

Whitelion's Programs





A community based prevention program targeting school-aged children in geographical areas over-represented in the justice system.

In a semi-structured program, role models visit schools and inspire the young people to think about decisions they need to make & offer practical strategies for implementing positive choices in their lives.

"I have learnt that people from small communities can do big things, think about your actions & choices before you do it." Hayley, Tas, Year 8

Mentoring Programs



- ❑ Mentors are screened volunteers
- ❑ They are introduced in communal environments and the match requires mutual agreement
- ❑ The program provides connections to positive adult role models through individual and group activities
- ❑ The mentoring relationship is supervised by Whitelion workers until they graduate – often into friendships in their own right
- ❑ Mentoring programs have different target groups –
 - Custodial, Community Justice, Residential Care (RAMP), Muslim Youth (Ansaar), Out of Home Care (Leaving Care)

The difference mentoring has made to me is that I'm....."more conscientious & make better decisions. I talk to B (mentor) to help make decisions."



Bundji Bundji



A program targeting Indigenous young people involved with (or at risk of) the justice system.

Includes a partnership with two Indigenous organisations.

Mission: To empower Indigenous young people by providing culturally appropriate support and advocacy and facilitating a sense of identity through spiritual, cultural and community connection.

“Uncle Lester is always there for me. He doesn’t give up on me even when I stuffed up and ended up inside again.” Daniel, 18 years

Young Women's Support Service



YWSS supports young women through their transition from custody to the community, providing:

- Individual outreach support and referrals
 - Personal development & life skills programs
 - Building community connections & partnerships
 - Workers generally engage with the young women whilst they are still in custody
 - Outreach is flexible and responsive to each individual young woman's needs, supporting positive choices to ~~avoid recidivism~~
-

Employment program



□ An individualised approach matching the young person to the right work environment.

□ Methodology:

Interviews → Vocational Assessment → Training → Workplace Orientation → Short-term Placement → Long-term Placement → Ongoing Support

□ Whitelion partners with employers who:

- know about the 'criminal history' of the young person;
- identify a workplace 'buddy' to provide on-site support;
- provide a 'real' job with 'real' wages and realistic expectations.

"Ray & Martin (at employment) have taught me a lot. Not just about tools and driving either, they have taught me how to be patient and tolerant. They were always there for me when I was in trouble." Steve, (Qenos)

Key Principles of the Employment program



- Commitment to supporting young people towards independence & positive community engagement through employment.
 - Recognition that even short-term work placements provide learning experiences for both young people and employers; building on these is part of longer term success.
 - Recognition that a young person's unique background & experience will influence their capacity to engage with training and the workforce; & that the journey may include both positive progress & setbacks.
 - Commitment to re-engaging /supporting young people at various stages of their journey towards ongoing participation in the workforce and independence.
 - Commitment to engaging & supporting community partners, including employers to provide opportunities for young people which are mutually beneficial.
-



Business Partner Profile: TOLL



- ❑ TOLL has employed 13 young people
- ❑ Across 4 different sites in roles ranging from logistics, warehousing to admin
- ❑ TOLL provides access to legal, health and personal support services.
- ❑ Key: An internal *champion*

Employment program: Key achievements



- ❑ Since 2000, the Employment Program has trained & employed ~ 350 'at risk' young people
 - ❑ Works with 150 young people annually, & employs over 70 disadvantaged young people per year (Vic/Tas)
 - ❑ Approx ½ are from custodial backgrounds.
 - ❑ Over 40 partner companies on board, including:
 - Transport + Logistics (TOLL, Quiksilver)
 - Admin & Finance (ANZ, Medibank Private)
 - Hospitality (Spotless, KFC)
 - Construction/Trades (GROCON, QENOS)
-

Young Lions



A program for young people who have been involved in other Whitelion programs and have been identified as having leadership potential.

It empowers these young people to set and achieve personal goals, contribute to their communities & be rewarded for their involvement.



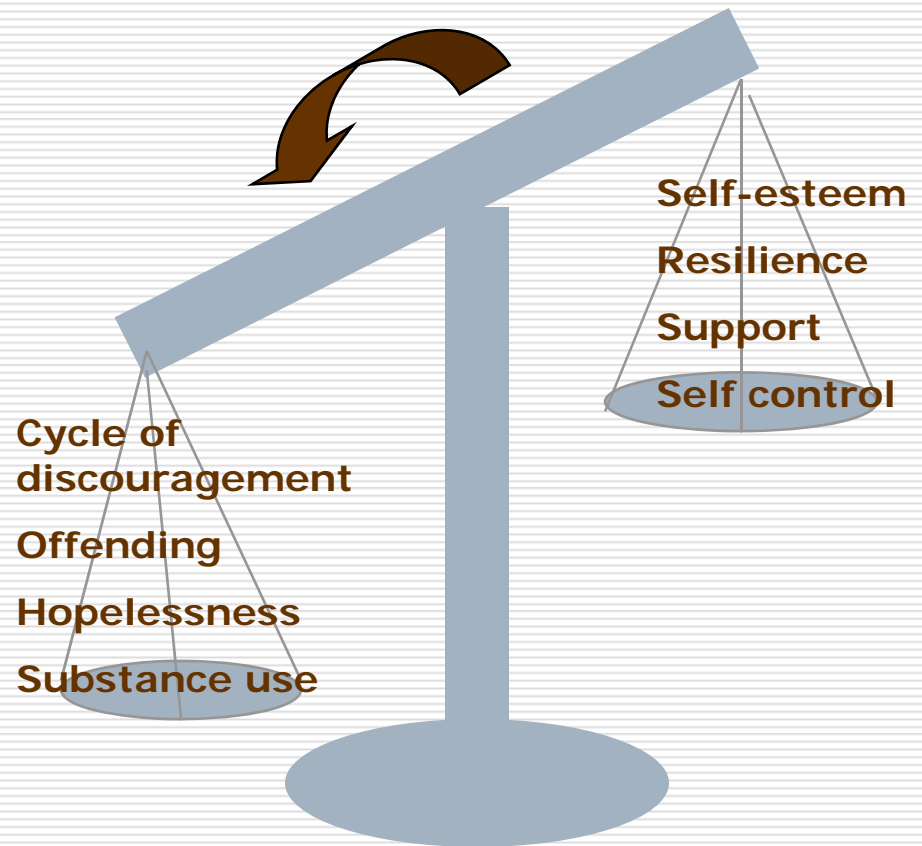
“This (3 Peaks Challenge) was an incredible experience for everyone who did it, we all learned what you can do when you really put your mind to it, and we were all doing it as equals.” James, 16 years



Whitelion's impact

Through young people's engagement with Whitelion we observe a decrease in their antisocial and criminal behaviour.

This doesn't happen in isolation.....





Whitelion's Impact

- Less tangible outcomes—
 - Build self-esteem, responsibility, teach life skills, create social connections.
 - Build resilience.
 - More tangible outcomes—
 - Reduce drug dependence
 - Reduce dependence on the criminal lifestyle.
-

Whitelion's Impact continued...



- Of the 56 young people who were employed through Whitelion's employment program between July 06-Jan 08, only 3 have since returned to custody.
 - Our pilot evaluation demonstrated:
 - of the 21 young people who fully engaged with Whitelion (mentoring & employment), none have since been incarcerated;
 - 81% of participants involved with mentoring reported that they "were committed to not re-offend".
-



Case study: *Reducing recidivism*

Nat was referred to us through the Youth Justice Centre at Parkville. At 17 yrs, she had a history of violent and property offences, a drug addiction & ran a fight club.

Whilst in detention, Nat participated in programs at the Centre such as *Liminal Lines*, was matched with a mentor, and was provided ongoing support and outreach throughout the transition from custody back to the community.

At 19yrs, Nat now lives independently, does not use drugs, is seeking ongoing employment and plays netball and football. She cares for her dog called Snoop, and is a leader to other young people as a *Young Lion*.



Case study: *At risk*

When Simon was referred to Whitelion he was 16yrs, not enrolled in school, had never worked and was pinching cars. He had little family support with no stable home and family violence. He was disengaged and *at risk*.

Simon was matched with a mentor, and referred to the Employment program through which he was supported in securing his first job as a labourer. He was supported through further positions as appropriate, and progressed to working 3 days/week at Qenos. The workplace buddies and support he received there, saw Simon learn transferable and invaluable life skills including how to problem-solve, plan, communicate and adapt.

Simon is now almost 19 yrs, living independently, completing a trade apprenticeship and supporting his ~~fiancé and baby girl.~~

Whitelion's Impact continued...



- Whitelion could provide countless case studies such as this; the impact Whitelion has on the young people we work with is indisputable.

We know our programs work!

- We have invested in evaluating our programs to demonstrate these outcomes.

We are committed to show that our programs work!

- It is accepted that the **majority** of offences are committed by a **minority** of offenders, and these young people are with whom we work.

The behaviours are entrenched & the investment to intervene is intensive.

Whitelion's Keys to Success



- Common themes
 - Engaging business
 - Transitional engagement
 - Programs that are voluntary & *real*
 - Value-adding
-



Engaging business

- ❑ An internal *champion* within the business partner, that drives engagement
 - ❑ High personal contact with businesses, through events and 1:1 relationships
 - ❑ Fostering contact with Whitelion programs & with staff across the business partner
E.g. Three Peaks, Games Days
 - ❑ Opportunity to experience growth of the young person.
-



Transitional engagement

Transition from incarceration is often the most challenging time for offenders, one where they are most at risk of re-offending.

Whitelion provides post-release support, often building on the familiarity, trust & foundations established during their voluntary involvement whilst in custody.

Whitelion provides pre- **AND** post-release support to intervene in the cycle.

“[Whitelion] assisted me with driving when I got released, they put me on the Methadone Program and put me in activities when I got released to keep me busy post-release so I wouldn't relapse. I did the Mentor Program and we used to go out a lot. Now five years on she is still my best friend.” Female, 24



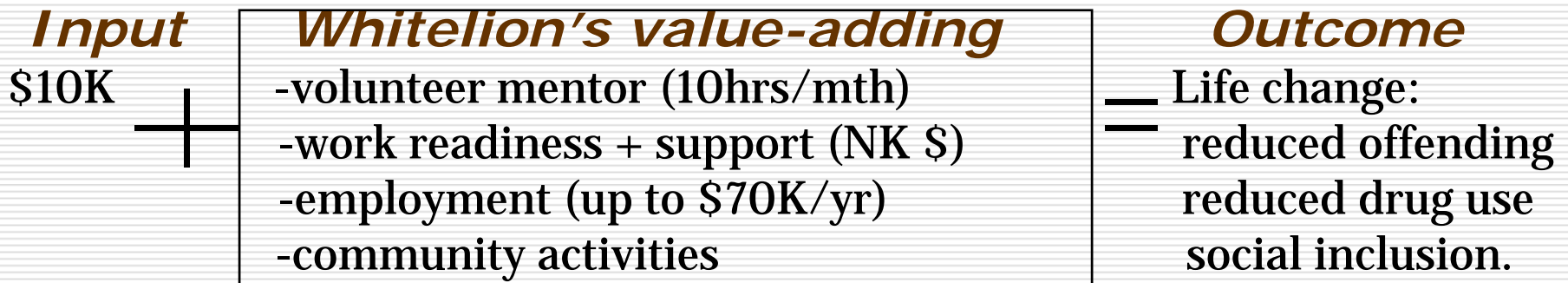
Engagement is voluntary and *real*

- ❑ Involvement with Whitelion programs is *voluntary*. This is a unique situation for many of our institutionalised young people.
 - ❑ Mentors are volunteers – *real* people spending time with the young people because they want to. This can be very hard to convince the young people of!
 - ❑ Young people are placed into *real* jobs, where they get paid *real* wages (without subsidy).
-



Value-adding

- \$10K funds Whitelion to fully engage one young person through providing them a mentor, and supporting them through work readiness & employment.
- Whitelion achieves this through operationalising existing community resources, and engaging community support to deliver its outcomes.



vs. \$200K/yr to keep a young person in custody

Contact details:



mark@whitelion.asn.au

(03) 9389 4420

www.whitelion.org.au
