DETERRING DRIVERS

An initiative to reduce car theft and joyriding by young people in Townsville

Evaluation report to the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs

September 2023

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Foreword

There are well documented reports across all platforms of social media about amplified community concerns relating to the high incidence of crime committed by young people. A common response has consisted of calls for the government to "get tough" on offenders through changes to legislation including greater sanctions such as increased terms in detention to address the high rates of recidivism within Queensland. Car theft including home invasions is one of the most common crimes committed by young people often in association with their peers. The incidence of car theft or joyriding by young people is not a recent phenomenon and despite various measures to address the problem there is evidence to suggest that new approaches are required which may lead youth to desist from crime and lead them onto pro-social pathways. This report entitled; *"The Deterring Drivers: An Initiative to Reduce Car Theft and Joyriding by Young People in Townsville"* is an example of a creative community-based response with the intention of providing an intervention to rehabilitate young people who have a history of car theft. The program is evidence-based, drawing on previous research on the topic in addition to key criminological theories which provides a sound platform for its overall structure consisting of educational activities and learning practical skills which have the potential to assist young people to obtain paid work. A further strength of this initiative is that it attempts to break down the silos that often exist between government departments, private enterprise, and the wider community by providing opportunities for the sharing of information to target the individual needs of young people. The program also draws on the experiences and knowledge of Australian First Nations elders to maintain cultural integrity and opens new possibilities for the development of alternative responses to youth crime based on the principles of restorative justice. The Deterring Driver's program offers fresh hope and a change of direction from current practices and opens new possibilities for trialing the program in other regional rural and remote locations. An expansion of the program to other sites would allow for a state-wide evaluation to test its overall effectiveness in reducing youth crime as well as addressing the over-representation of First Nations youth in the juvenile justice system.

Associate Professor Glenn Dawes

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Cultural Acknowledgment

We pay our respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestors of this land, their spirits, and their legacy. The foundations laid by these ancestors — the First Nations peoples — give strength, inspiration, and courage to current and future generations towards creating a better Queensland. We pay our deepest respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities, and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. We walk together on a shared journey of reconciliation where all Queenslanders will be equal and the diversity of Aboriginal cultures and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities across Queensland are fully recognised, respected, and valued by all.

Acknowledgements

Photo credit:

Maick Maciel (Front). Jamie Street (Back)

List of Acronyms

ACU	Australian Catholic University
DCYJMA	Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
RCT	Rational Choice Theory
UUMV	Unlawful Use of a Motor Vehicle
YWAM	Youth With a Mission

Executive summary

THE PROGRAM

The Deterring Drivers program is a pilot initiative that aims to better understand the motivations of young people who engage, or are at risk of engaging, in car theft and joyriding and to deter them from these activities in the future. Developed by a team of researchers with collective expertise in criminology, policing, road safety, psychology, and medicine/health, the program is designed for young people aged 13-17 years, with a specific focus on at-risk First Nations youth.

Participants in the program attend a one-day weekly session for six consecutive weeks. Each session begins with an educational talk delivered by an expert in medicine, policing, or psychology, together with talks delivered by crime victims. Considering research that shows that joyriding participants give little thought to the inherent dangers of these activities (Dawes, 2002), the aim of these sessions is to educate young people about the dangers of car theft and joyriding and to enhance levels of empathy for victims of crime and the wider community. These sessions also aim to empower participants to make better decisions and highlight the importance of being a good role model to family and peers. In addition to these educational sessions, the program incorporates several 'hands-on' recreational activities, such as panel beating workshops, a visit to a golf driving range, and the completion of a high-ropes course. The panel beating sessions are designed to channel participants' interest in cars in a positive, safe, and legal manner (Dhami, 2008), while the other hands-on activities are intended to bring participants together using safe adrenaline-based bonding activities to combat feelings of social isolation or exclusion (Dawes, 2002). Further, these activities encourage participants to reflect on concepts related to dangerous driving and car accidents, including speed, momentum, and impact.

This report details an evaluation of the pilot of the Deterring Drivers program, that took place over a six-week period in March and April 2023 in Townsville, Queensland. The city of Townsville is experiencing high rates of car theft and joyriding among young people, ranking fourth among Australian local government areas for motor vehicle theft (National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council, 2021). These issues are causing growing displeasure amongst Townsville residents (Smith, 2018), thus calling for a targeted response to address this issue. The Deterring Drivers program was specifically designed in response to the issues being experienced in Townsville, with the aim of reducing instances of car theft and joyriding in that city and inspiring youth to engage in more prosocial activities.

AIMS

The objective of this study is to examine the effectiveness of the Deterring Drivers program in reducing participants' motivations for and risk of engaging in car theft and joyriding. It also aims to better understand the motivations of young people who steal cars to joyride and the factors that may prevent or deter a young person from engaging in joyriding. Further, this evaluation assesses the effectiveness of the program in providing a safe and inclusive environment where young people can come together to combat feelings of social isolation and exclusion and examines the efficacy of the program in enhancing empathy for crime victims. Finally, the evaluation examines the effectiveness of channelling young people's interest in cars in a lawful way that builds self-esteem and social cohesion. The findings of this research will help to inform policymakers and other

criminal justice stakeholders about the effectiveness of approaches to address the issue of car theft and joyriding amongst young people.

This report presents the overall findings regarding the Deterring Drivers pilot program evaluation.

METHODS

The research uses qualitative research methods to examine the effectiveness of the Deterring Drivers program and its impact on young people's attitudes and behaviours with respect to car theft and joyriding. The research methods include pre- and post-program semi-structured interviews with participants. Interviews were also held at the completion of the program with other key stakeholders who were involved in the Deterring Drivers program in some way. These stakeholders included Youth Justice staff, Youth With a Mission (YWAM) volunteers, youth caseworkers, and other support staff. The purpose of these interviews was to gather their perspectives on the program and gain insights into their observations about the potential impact on participants' attitudes and behaviours. The research team also collected data through participant observation during the program activities.

KEY FINDINGS

With respect to the program participants' engagement and attitudes toward joyriding, the research showed:

❖ When asked if they had ever engaged in car theft and/or joyriding, most of the young people confirmed they had previously engaged in this activity, either as the driver and/or passenger. One young person indicated that they had an ongoing involvement in car theft and joyriding and most explained that they were not currently involved in these activities anymore.
❖ When asked to describe how and why they first became involved in joyriding, participants offered several explanations. These included being influenced by (often older) peers, looking to combat feelings of boredom, and deciding to take a car after finding the car keys when looking for money and property to steal.
❖ Participants typically reported that they were not under the influence of drugs or alcohol while joyriding. However, some participants explained that the adrenaline rush they experienced while stealing cars and driving produced a similar positive feeling for them.

Participants and other stakeholders outlined several reasons why they believed young people in general may engage in joyriding. These included:

❖ The influence of peers is important for young people, especially those who are disengaged from school or have an unstable home life.
❖ In regional cities, like Townsville, there can be few options to engage young people, and this can lead to delinquent and criminal behaviours out of boredom.
❖ Joyriding can increase a young person's perceived social status and provide an opportunity to "show off" to their peers.
❖ A young person's social environment, including their living conditions and home life, are likely to influence young people to participate in car theft and joyriding.

❖ A young person can lack identity and/or connection to community due to social disadvantage and/or exclusion. A lack of belonging could lead to joyriding and other behaviours.

Further, regarding potential deterrents for preventing joyriding, our findings indicated:

❖ Participants were mostly dismissive of the idea that the thought of getting in trouble with their parents or police would deter young people from joyriding.
❖ The thought of being seriously injured or dying in a car accident was a concern for some participants, as was wanting to be a good role model to younger siblings. However, participants were largely able to disregard such thoughts.
❖ The possibility for a young person to strengthen their bonds to society through lawful employment emerged as one strong possible deterrent to joyriding.
❖ Interviewees saw value in engaging young people in adrenaline-based activities to replace and replicate the positive feelings they may experience through driving and joyriding.
❖ While one young person advocated for stronger criminal justice responses to youth offenders, stakeholders disagreed with such an approach and instead advocated for diversionary services and more holistic responses.

The evaluation of the pilot Deterring Drivers program showed:

The participants valued the culturally safe space that was provided for them, which was indicated by several of the participants sharing their First Nations' cultural identity amongst themselves and with others associated with the program. The culturally safe space also allowed the participants to bond over sharing cooked meals and engaging in prosocial activities within the YWAM café area, which helped to tackle feelings of social isolation for the participants.

The participants were also taught the value of being a prosocial role model to others. Role modelling was taught within the context of making good decisions that did not negatively impact others but, instead, inspired others to also make more sensible decisions and to not act on impulse. The guest speakers taught empathy awareness to the participants to encourage positive decision-making behaviour. The speakers also allowed the participants to feel empathy for victims of crime as well as first responders to victims of car accidents.

Finally, whilst the participants demonstrated varied levels of engagement with the practical activities, the panel beating workshops proved to be the most successful engaging activity for all participants. Their enthusiasm for this activity inspired staff at the workshop to offer several of the participants paid apprenticeship opportunities.

AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION

Drawing from our findings, we make several recommendations for future iterations of the Deterring Drivers program:

❖ **Recruitment processes**: Efforts should be made to ensure that a larger number of at-risk young people engaged with DCYJMA are referred and supported to participate in the program. Further benefits would be a greater lead-in time between the referral of program participants and program delivery, and increased co-ordination between all parties.

❖ **Pre-program engagement:** It is recommended that some pre-engagement activities be arranged between program staff and participants, such as taking participants 'on country' to get acquainted with one another and program staff. This may increase young people's 'buy-in' to the program and motivation to be involved.

❖ **Activities that enhance cultural connectedness**: The program could incorporate more culturally-based activities, including taking participants to sites of cultural significance and having greater involvement of First Nations Elders and other leaders or role models from the community.

❖ **Greater focus on car-related activities:** Additional car-related activities could be provided, including mechanical workshops and go-carting.

❖ **Expanding young people's social ecosystem:** Additional efforts should be made to ensure the support and involvement of local support agencies and organisations in the program. This will help to expand the young people's social ecosystem by connecting them to additional people and services in the community and further, help to support the young people following the completion of the program.

There are only a handful of Australian studies regarding the issue of joyriding. Using interviews with 30 young people who had been detained for joyriding offences, Dawes (2002) found that for many First Nations youth, car theft and joyriding can operate as a form of resistance to experiences of social and economic marginalisation. He observed, "joyriding culture may be seen as one area where Indigenous youth can construct their identity through participation with their peers and obtain a sense of belonging through a perception of group solidarity" (Dawes, 2002, p. 207). In another Queensland study, McDonagh et al. (2002) examined factors that encouraged and discouraged joyriding amongst high school students in Brisbane using a survey questionnaire. The authors reported that the most effective legal deterrents to joyriding were punitive criminal sanctions, such as arrest and sentencing, and/or detrimental non-legal sanctions, such as injury or death. Conversely, likely facilitating factors for joyriding were using neutralising techniques such as contrasting joyriding with other serious crimes and shifting the blame to the victim. Importantly, only a small proportion of the survey participants in that study said they had been the driver (4.4%) or passenger (10%) in a car used for joyriding. Both studies highlight the gendered nature of joyriding, citing males' lower perception of risk compared to females (Dawes, 2002; McDonagh et al., 2002).

Given the paucity of recent research regarding joyriding, more research is required to further understand the motivating and mitigating factors for engaging in joyriding behaviours in an Australian context.

COMBATTING CAR THEFT AND JOYRIDING

Various suggestions have been made to combat the occurrence of joyriding and its associated dangers. One suggestion involves efforts to increase joyriders' perceptions of the potential safety consequences of their actions, both for themselves and others. Car theft and joyriding are often impulsive crimes (Anderson & Linden, 2014) where participants give little thought to the inherent dangers (Dawes, 2002). Most young people have little conception of the physical dangers of joyriding or the potential consequences that their behaviour might have on innocent members of the community (Dawes, 2002). A survey of Queensland high school students from grades 10-12 found that the strongest non-legal deterrent for engaging in joyriding was the thought that an innocent bystander or a friend might be injured or killed in the act of joyriding (McDonagh et al., 2002). Whilst only 4.4% of the sample in this study had been a driver and 10% a passenger of joyriding in the past (McDonagh et al., 2002), the results provide a tentative link between deterrence from joyriding and the danger of a friend or innocent bystander being injured or killed in the act of joyriding. Dawes (2002) furthers this notion in his research with joyriders, finding that a major factor encouraging desistance from joyriding was knowing someone who had been injured or killed while joyriding. An important aspect of an intervention program, therefore, is to highlight the likelihood of injury or death associated with dangerous driving activities like joyriding.

Kellett and Gross (2006) argue that an important harm reduction strategy for anti-joyriding intervention programs is to provide meaningful education to young people about the effects of taking drugs and alcohol whilst driving, particularly at high speeds. Driving under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol has consistently been shown to significantly reduce the driver's reaction time, concentration, and judgement of speed and distance (Queensland Government, 2022). Therefore,

Dawes (2002) notes that anti-joyriding interventions should highlight the false feelings of invincibility that young people may feel while under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.

A third strategy relates to young people's ability to rationalise their behaviours and give little thought to the victims of their actions. Research by McDonagh et al. (2002) revealed that young people use techniques of neutralisation to rationalise stealing cars for the purposes of joyriding and to diminish their responsibility in the offence. In this study, young people shifted blame onto car theft victims and contrasted joyriding with more 'serious' behaviours as the most effective neutralisation techniques. For example, commonly used rationalisations for engaging in these behaviours were: 'joyriding is nothing compared with the things police and politicians get away with everyday'; 'if the owners leave the keys in the car, they are asking for it to be taken for a joyride'; and 'if people leave their car unprotected, it is their own fault if it is taken for a joyride'.

Combined with Dawes' (2002) finding that young joyriders rarely thought about the owners of the cars they stole or felt remorse for them, it may be important for joyriding intervention programs to attempt to foster empathy for car theft victims. Amongst adolescents, low empathy has been associated with increased antisocial, aggressive, and offending behaviour (Narvey, 2021). Whilst there are no studies explicitly examining the role of empathy in inhibiting joyriding behaviours, there is an abundance of literature that demonstrates how empathy for victims of crime can significantly reduce recidivism rates amongst young offenders (see Narvey, 2021). Therefore, empathy enhancement interventions may help to reduce joyriders' ability to minimise the gravity of their behaviour and the harm their actions may cause. One method that may achieve this goal is by incorporating empathy awareness components into an intervention, whereby program participants hear from victims with lived experience of having their car stolen and the negative impact of that experience.

Research from Ireland has also shown how young people's negative perceptions of the police often motivates joyriding behaviours (Ó Cadhla, 2021). In this study, it was found that car theft and joyriding can be used by young people as a means of provoking, inciting, and defying the police, thus showing a lack of respect for police legitimacy (Ó Cadhla, 2021). More broadly, perceptions of police legitimacy have been shown to act as a crucial moderator for speeding behaviours in sensation seeking Australian youth (Bates et al., 2022). Young drivers who viewed the police as procedurally just – whereby police treat citizens with dignity and respect, allow citizens a voice, demonstrate trustworthy motives, and make neutral decisions – reported significantly lower intentions to illegally speed and greater intentions to comply with road laws. Whilst Bates et al. (2022) did not focus on joyriding specifically, the findings from their study demonstrate that perceptions and experiences of fair and just policing amongst young people potentially negates sensation seeking behaviours and influences legally compliant behaviours within a road policing context. Therefore, interventions that aim to enhance positive perceptions of the police amongst young people could also serve as a useful tactic in mitigating the dangerous behaviours associated with joyriding.

Crime prevention initiatives usually adopt a situational or social approach. Situational crime prevention measures would, in the case of car theft and joyriding, attempt to minimise an offender's opportunity to engage in these activities by, for example, making cars more difficult to steal using improved anti-theft technologies. Social crime prevention approaches may also target an offender's motivations, more so than their opportunities, for engaging in illegal activity (Rush et al.,

2006). With respect to the issue of car theft and joyriding, a social crime prevention approach would try to reduce a young person's motivation to offend, whilst also attempting to channel their interest in cars in a lawful way that helps to build their self-esteem and connection to their community (Dhami, 2008; Rush et al., 2006). Often lacking the money to pursue legitimate leisure activities, previous research has shown that young joyriders have a specific interest in car-related activities, use cars as an identity marker, and have car-related career aspirations (Light et al., 1993; Tasmania Institute of Law Enforcement Studies, 2005). As such, Rush et al. (2006) suggest that desistance from joyriding may be achieved when young people are provided with legitimate car-related opportunities. These types of initiatives are, therefore, particularly important for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, who may have fewer opportunities to engage in exciting, but lawful, activities (Anderson & Linden, 2014). As detailed in the 'Methods' section below, the Deterring Drivers program adopts a social crime prevention approach to reduce the issue of car theft and joyriding amongst young people in Townsville.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE (AND INEFFECTIVE) YOUTH OFFENDER PROGRAMS

There is no single type of intervention program that has been identified as being fully effective for all young offenders in all contexts. However, there are several common characteristics that have routinely been identified as being effective and ineffective in reducing youth offending behaviour (Pooley, 2020). Correctional boot camps, for example, have been widely adopted by governments in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia as a 'common sense' approach to addressing youth crime since the 1990s (Wilson et al., 2005). Boot camps are grounded in militaristic ideals that emphasise authority, conformity, intimidation, isolation, and intense physical training (Lincoln, 2022). Yet several decades of evaluations of boot camps have shown little impact in reducing recidivism amongst young offenders in Australia and other Western nations (Lincoln, 2022). Such 'common sense' efforts to instil discipline in 'unruly youth' contradict the fundamental components of the type of supportive relationships required to foster therapeutic programming and rehabilitation of young offenders (Cullen et al., 2005).

Criminologists have therefore emphasised the importance of relying on evidence-based approaches for guiding effective youth justice intervention programs (Pooley, 2020). For example, Hawkins and Weis (1985) identified the importance of adolescents socially bonding with prosocial family, peers, schools, and community for reducing recidivism. Positive socialisation – whereby prosocial others involve young people in conforming activities and consistently reward desired behaviours – increases attachment to positive role models, disassociation from offending peers, and thus, desistence from crime (Hawkins & Weis, 1985). Previous research supports this notion whereby peer mentoring in youth intervention programs has nurtured connectedness, academic self-esteem, and reduced youth violence (Karcher, 2009; Sheehan et al., 1999). As such, the formation of prosocial bonds amongst youth offenders has been linked with lower rates of police rearrest (Craig et al., 2017).

Similarly, cultural connectedness for young people has been positively associated with program effectiveness (Pooley, 2020). Incorporating cultural sensitivity into youth intervention programs often requires engaging stakeholders from akin cultural backgrounds who design and deliver the program using cultural language, tradition, and customs (Pooley, 2020). Given the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in the criminal justice system, cultural sensitivity in youth justice intervention programs is especially important in Australia. Youth

justice interventions embedded in Indigeneity are deemed more relatable and credible by First Nations youth (Fazal, 2014), and are therefore more effective in reducing offending when compared with more mainstream programs (McGuinness et al., 2017).

Underpinning most effective youth offender programs are elements of restorative justice, especially since it typically involves not only the victim and the offender working together, but also the family and the community (McGuinness et al., 2017). Restorative justice is a concept that typically creates a non-adversarial dialogue between an offender and victim to promote offender accountability and restore the harm done to the victim (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2013). It has been widely used in Australia in youth justice conferencing to some measured success in reducing reoffending (McGuinness et al., 2017). A direct victim does not always need to be present and can be represented by a neutral third party or a community panel of representatives (Bouffard et al., 2017). Whilst evaluations regarding the effectiveness of restorative justice for decreasing recidivism have been mixed, victims, communities, and perpetrators consistently report high participation satisfaction in comparison to formal court processes (McGuinness et al., 2017). As such, programs that incorporate elements of restorative justice are likely to enhance the procedural satisfaction of all stakeholders engaged within the program.

The 'Deterring Drivers' program

TOWNSVILLE: THE LOCAL CONTEXT

Townsville is facing an unprecedented surge in car theft and related activities, including joyriding. Between 31 May 2022 and 30 May 2023, there were 1,378 recorded UUMV offences in the Townsville region (see **Figure 1**), representing a 129% increase (or an additional 312 UUMV offences) compared to the previous year (Queensland Police Service, 2023). Further, data from the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council (2021) revealed that in 2020/2021, 815 vehicles were stolen in Townsville for short-term purposes, including by opportunistic thieves for use in other crimes, joyriding, or transport. This represents a theft rate of 4.14 per 1,000 population, ranking Townsville fourth among local government areas in Australia with the highest number of motor vehicle thefts (National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council, 2021).

These escalating issues have caused growing dissatisfaction amongst Townsville residents (Smith, 2018) and have prompted calls for the Queensland Government to adopt a harsher response toward youth offenders. However, research suggests that the threat of detention or other legal consequences generally has little deterrent effect on many young individuals who engage in car theft and joyriding (Anderson & Linden, 2014; Dawes, 2002; Rush et al., 2006). Following a two-year research project on youth joyriders in Townsville, Dawes (2002, p. 204) concluded that "the present system of providing young Indigenous offenders with custodial sentences does little to quell their desire to steal cars". Therefore, a more innovative and targeted approach is necessary to address this issue.

Figure 1: Queensland Police Service Online Crime Map for Townsville area, showing offences for Unlawful Use of a Motor Vehicle (31 May 2022 - 30 May 2023)

THE 'DETERRING DRIVERS' PROGRAM

The Deterring Drivers program is a pilot initiative designed to address the issue of car theft and joyriding among young people (see **Table 1**). The program was developed by a team of researchers with diverse expertise in criminology, policing, road safety, psychology, and health/medicine. It draws inspiration from a previous study and recommendations by Dawes (2002), whose research had focused on car theft and joyriding by First Nations youth in Townsville.

Table 1: Overview of Deterring Drivers program

	Educational Component	Recreational Activities	research activities
Week 1	Orientation session: • Introduction to the program & project team Psychologist-led session: • Being a good role model	• Art/water colour painting exercise	• Pre-program participant interviews • Participant observation
Week 2	Victim-led session on: • Impacts of burglary, theft & loss/damage of property	• Protective shoe fitting	• Participant observation
Week 3	Police-led session on: • Dangers of joyriding & legal consequences of car theft • Youth Co-Responder program	• Panel beating workshop	• Participant observation
Week 4	Medical expert-led session on: • Reflections from the Emergency Department • Mixing drugs/alcohol with joyriding	• Golf driving range	• Participant observation
Week 5	Sportsperson led session on: • Building resilience and emotional regulation • Being a team player	• Panel beating workshop	• Participant observation
Week 6	Psychologist-led session: • Being a good role model – where to from here?	• High ropes course	• Post-program participant/stakeholder interviews • Participant observation

The program spans six weeks and combines educational sessions about the dangers of joyriding and the legal consequences of car theft with recreational and 'hands on' activities. The educational sessions are led by professionals in policing, psychology, and medicine who highlight the potential consequences and dangers associated with car theft and joyriding, since these behaviours are often impulsive crimes where participants give little thought to the likely risks (Anderson & Linden, 2014; Dawes, 2002). For example, in the pilot program, Dr Anthony Dillon, a registered psychologist and member of the research team, spoke to participants about how they could serve as positive role models within their families, among their friends, and in the wider community. The educational sessions also incorporate elements of restorative justice, with a member of the local community who has experienced burglary and theft sharing their story to foster empathy among the participants. This is particularly important, as joyriders often fail to consider the impact on the owners of the stolen cars or exhibit remorse for the victims of car theft (Dawes, 2002).

During the pilot program, the educational sessions were held in Youth With a Mission's (YWAM) Youth Precinct on Walker Street in Townsville. The newly constructed Youth Precinct facility provides a versatile space that includes a high and low ropes course, a café, and a multi-purpose youth area (see **Figure 2**).

Figure 2: Youth With a Mission's Youth Precinct, Walker St Townsville

The program's second component focuses on practical and 'hands-on' experiences, alternating between participation in panel beating workshops and engaging in recreational activities, such as a high-ropes course and golf driving range. These activities aim to shed light on the dangers of joyriding by emphasising factors such as speed, force, momentum, and impact. The objective is to provide a safe and legal outlet for participants' interest in cars while fostering a sense of unity through bonding activities that counteract social isolation or exclusion (Dawes, 2002; Dhami, 2008). Research indicates that car theft offers young and disadvantaged individuals an opportunity to feel in control and showcase their skills to peers (Anderson & Linden, 2014). The Deterring Drivers program is designed, therefore, to provide opportunities for skill development and

relationship-building through lawful means, with the intention of reducing participants' desire to engage in joyriding. This aspect of the program draws inspiration from previous initiatives and programs targeting young people involved in automotive-related crimes, such as the Synergy and U-Turn Programs. An evaluation of the latter program demonstrated that recreational activities (in that case, go-karting) played a significant role in its success (Tasmania Institute of Law Enforcement Studies, 2005).

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Research suggests that youth offender programs are most effective when they are underpinned by an evidence-based theory of change (Pooley, 2020). Having a strong theoretical basis assists researchers to identify how a program works to reduce reoffending behaviours and to understand the mechanisms that underlie those behavioural changes (Pooley, 2020). The Deterring Drivers program is underpinned by several criminological theories that help to explain why individuals may engage in deviant or criminal behaviours and further, how an intervention may make offending or reoffending less likely. However, it must be noted that all criminological theories have their limitations, especially when applied to an understudied area of the youth justice literature such as joyriding. To offer the greatest chance of success, the program offers an integrated approach by drawing from several theories.

Rational Choice Theory (RCT)

RCT is a classical criminological theory that suggests that human nature is goal-oriented and can be directed by education (Zhao et al., 2021). The happiness of humans can be understood to be a culmination of maximising pleasure whilst minimising pain in making life decisions. In relation to crime, RCT suggests that crime acts are the result of rational choices where the offender weighs up the benefits against the costs in considering whether the crime is 'worth it' (Zhao et al., 2021). RCT underpins aspects of the Deterring Drivers program by educating the young participants regarding the dangers of joyriding behaviours so that they may make more prosocial, rational, and logical decisions about their actions. Implementing the expert guest speakers as well as the recreational activities into the program are designed to teach the participants methods to mitigate impulsive and reckless behaviours regarding joyriding. Yet Groombridge (1997) argues that RCT should be applied with caution in this context, stating that whilst the hedonistic thrill of joyriding fits well within the theoretical framework of maximising pleasure, the 'irrational' and careless nature of seeking the short-term thrill does not.

Deterrence Theory

Decisions to offend are also theorised to be shaped by threats of sanction. Deterrence theory suggests that individuals rationalise their actions by forming perceptions about the risks and consequences involved in committing a crime in relation to the "certainty, severity, and celerity of possible punishment" (Pogarsky et al., 2005, p. 3). Under this notion, the greater the perception of sanction probability, the less likely the individual is to commit the criminal act. Given many auto theft offenders are unperturbed by threats of greater criminal sanction (McDonagh, 2002), extra-legal sanctions can be used as a more compelling form of deterrence for young offenders (Pogarsky et al., 2005). For example, joyriders and young people more generally have been found to be deterred from car theft and joyriding through fear of a friend or innocent bystander being injured or killed (Dawes 2002; McDonagh 2002). More broadly, self-disapproval (guilt or regret)

or social disapproval (shame) from peers or family have also been identified as powerful moral threats deterring young offenders from committing crime (Pogarsky et al., 2005). Reintegrative shaming – where shaming is placed on the behaviour and not the characteristics of the offender – has been found to be especially important for First Nations youth in encouraging desistance from crime more generally (Stewart et al., 2014).

Elements of deterrence theory underpin aspects of the Deterring Drivers program, such as educating the young participants about the threat of criminal and public (vigilante) sanction as well as cultural shaming by First Nation Elders in the community. These aspects were highlighted to participants in the pilot through the expert talks given by police officers and crime victims.

Techniques of Neutralisation

Techniques of neutralisation is a criminological theory that suggests offenders minimise the psychological impacts of their crimes by avoiding feelings of guilt and responsibility (McDonagh et al., 2002). Sykes and Matza (1957) originally proposed that deviant individuals learn a range of justifications or rationalisations for absolving self-blame and shifting blame on to others to neutralise their own deviancy. Sykes and Matza (1957) explicitly refer to auto theft as being passed off by offenders as 'borrowing'. McDonagh et al. (2002) argue that joyriders often deny causing injury because they may have returned the stolen car undamaged or that they were simply 'following the crowd'. The Deterring Drivers program aims to increase young people's levels of responsibility for committing joyriding behaviours by implementing restorative justice factors, such as utilising guest speakers who are victims of crime. When confronted with the victims of crime and hearing their first-hand lived experiences of the impacts of the offending, it is anticipated that it will be difficult for participants to neutralise their responsibilities for joyriding (or risk of) in future. This notion is supported by Australian research which shows that when young people (some of whom had been arrested for car theft) were confronted with their victims or victim representatives, the young people demonstrated taking responsibility for their actions through expressions of remorse, apology, guilt, and sadness (Queensland Government, n.d.; Queensland Government, 2018).

Procedural Justice

Procedural justice has been widely used to assess people's perceptions of the treatment they receive from police during processes involving decision making (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). Procedural justice policing entails that police engage with citizens in a dignified and respectful manner, allow citizens a voice, treat citizens neutrally (without bias), and demonstrate trustworthy motives to citizens. According to the theoretical framework, if the public perceive the police to be procedurally just during decision-making processes with citizens (first-hand or vicariously), it has the potential to increase public satisfaction, compliance, and cooperation with police directives (Mazerolle et al., 2014). Perceptions of procedural justice policing have been found to be especially valuable for young persons in general, and have been linked with greater perceptions of police legitimacy and compliance with legislation and police directives (Murphy, 2015; Bolger & Walters, 2019). More specifically, greater perceptions of police procedural justice in youth have been linked to compliance with motor vehicle legislation and a reduction in automobile sensation seeking behaviours (e.g., speeding) (Bates et al., 2022). Inversely, perceptions of a lack of police procedural justice in youth has been linked with rebellious and uncooperative behaviour towards the police (Ray, 2023). Past research has demonstrated young joyriders' contempt for police and

how joyriding can be used to defy, incite, and provoke police (Ó Cadhla, 2021). As such, expressions of procedurally just policing towards young people may increase perceptions of police legitimacy in young people engaged in (or at risk of) joyriding and lead to more legally compliant behaviours in this regard.

The Deterring Drivers program implements community-oriented policing strategies in the form of expert police speakers who engage with the participants in a non-punitive manner. Given community-oriented policing is significantly correlated with perceptions of procedural justice, the aim of involving police in the program is to build trust between the young participants and the police.

CULTURAL COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM

The Deterring Drivers program was designed with a focus on First Nations youth as the intended program participants. It was important, therefore, that factors of cultural sensitivity and appropriateness be considered during the program's design and delivery. Researchers have recognised the importance of providing culturally sensitive programs that resonate with the lived social and cultural experiences of the intended participants (Dawes, 2002; Pooley, 2020). Research shows, for example, that cultural awareness and sensitivity are critical to program effectiveness, particularly in cases where participants maintain strong ties to their cultural background (Pooley, 2020). Further, programs that are designed specifically for First Nations youth are more effective in reducing rates of reoffending than programs with more of a mainstream focus (McGuinness et al., 2017).

Several culturally sensitive and appropriate elements were incorporated into the Deterring Drivers program, following consultation with DCYJMA's Associate Principal Cultural Capability Officer. The pilot program began with a traditional smoking ceremony that was performed by local Townsville traditional owners (see **Figure 3** below). Smoking ceremonies are a traditional First Nations custom used for openings and ceremonies to wish individuals or organisations success. Native plants are burned to emit smoke which is intended to ward off bad spirits and to cleanse the area (Deadly Story, n.d.-b).

Where possible, the program engaged individuals from a First Nations background to provide the expert talks in the educational sessions. For example, the program engaged a First Nations psychologist, police liaison officer, sportsperson, and crime victim to address the participants. Research shows this is an important aspect to achieve a culturally sensitive program, with Fazal (2014) finding that young First Nations people were more likely to perceive a program or speaker as credible when they shared a similar cultural background. Other individuals from a First Nations background (including Youth Justice staff) regularly attended the program sessions and encouraged the use of 'yarning' practices. Yarning is a culturally safe Indigenous style of communication and conversation used to share stories and information between two or more people socially or informally. It is considered a special way to connect and relate with First Nations culture (Bessarab & Ng'Andu, 2010).

Figure 3: Smoking ceremony in Townsville, performed by local traditional owners

AIMS OF THIS RESEARCH

The objective of this research is to examine the effectiveness of the Deterring Drivers program in reducing participants' motivations for and/or risk of engaging in car theft and joyriding. Additionally, the study aims to gain deeper insights into the motivations of young people who steal cars to joyride and identify factors that could potentially prevent their engagement in such activities. By achieving these objectives, this research will provide valuable information to policymakers and other stakeholders in the criminal justice system about the effectiveness of approaches aimed at addressing the issue of car theft and joyriding among young people.

OVERVIEW OF METHODS

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

Recruitment for the pilot program focused on young people in Townsville, aged between 13 and 17 years, who were identified as either having already engaged in car theft and joyriding or being at risk of doing so. Both male and female participants were invited to join the program, with a specific focus on First Nations youth. To recruit participants, the research team collaborated with the Townsville North and South Youth Justice Service Centres, local community support services, and educational pathways. Potential referrers were provided with comprehensive information about the program's nature, purpose, and target participant group through personal visits, emails, and phone calls. Detailed information sheets, recruitment scripts, and referral forms were made available to assist with the recruitment process. Decisions about which young people would potentially benefit from participating in the program and who was considered 'at risk' of engaging in joyriding were made by the referrers. These assessments were made based on the referrers'

knowledge of the young person, their engagement in offending behaviours that could escalate to joyriding (for example, theft, burglary, or property damage), and/or the young person's relationship with other individuals who were known to engage in joyriding (such as family members or peers).

Upon receiving referrals, the research team directly contacted the young person (with their consent) to discuss the program, their potential involvement, and the associated risks. Discussions were also held with their parents or guardians, and in some cases, their case workers or support persons, to ensure a clear understanding and consent for participation. Once it was determined that the young person (and their parent or guardian) was satisfied and willing to participate, they were invited to join the pilot program.

The initial goal was to recruit approximately 20 participants, allowing some room for participant attrition rates, and with the aim of having around 12-15 participants complete the six-week program. Difficulties were encountered, however, during the recruitment process, with a low number of (and late) referrals. In total, 13 referrals were received, including two referrals for the same individual. Of these, seven individuals agreed to participate in the program and attended one or more program sessions, as outlined below.

SAMPLE

A total of seven participants took part in the pilot program. All participants were male and were aged between 13 and 16 years (see **Table 2**). Attendance rates varied from a low of 17%, with one participant attending only one out of the six possible sessions, to a high of 83%, with two participants attending five out of six sessions. Reasons for sporadic attendance included family holidays, issues with police and other criminal justice agencies, and school suspensions.

Table 2: Participant information and attendance

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Attendance: Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Daniel	16	M	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔
David	15	M	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔
Michael	14	M	✔	✔			✔	✔
Brendon	15	M	✔	✔			✔	
Tyson	14	M	✔	✔	✔	✔		
Robbie	14	M		✔				
Jamie	13	M	✔	✔	✔	✔		

While specific data on participants' cultural backgrounds were not collected, four of the young people self-identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Their cultural affiliation and connection to their respective communities were evident through information captured from participant observation data and/or was disclosed directly to the research team. Additionally, a fifth participant was referred to the program through a local First Nations community health organisation.

DATA COLLECTION

INTERVIEWS

To gather comprehensive insights and evaluate the effectiveness of the program, we employed two primary methods of data collection. Firstly, participants engaged in in-depth semi-structured interviews during their first week in the program. These interviews aimed to explore their attitudes, behaviours, and experiences related to joyriding (refer to **Appendix A** for indicative interview questions). Semi-structured interviews provide a broad structure for data collection that allows for comparison across cases, but still allows research participants to describe, in their own words, their perceptions of the program and experiences with joyriding. Where possible, participants were also interviewed again after the program's completion to assess any changes in their attitudes and potentially their behaviours. Overall, we conducted 11 interviews with the seven participants involved in the pilot program. Seven interviews took place at the program's outset, while four interviews were conducted post-program.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six relevant stakeholders, including caseworkers, volunteers, and other support staff who interacted with the participants or had the opportunity to observe the pilot program. These stakeholder interviews were conducted after the program's delivery to gather their perspectives on the program's effectiveness.

All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent using a portable digital device. To ensure confidentiality, the research team de-identified the transcripts by removing personal names and details. Qualitative analysis of the interview data was conducted using NVivo software.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

The interview data were supplemented by participant observation. Participant observation is a qualitative social research method that is unique in its ability to study people, culture, and processes within group settings (Jorgensen, 1989). The researcher participates in the daily lives of the participants being studied by observing, listening, and questioning the participants in their natural setting over a period of time (Takyi, 2015).

With the consent of the participants, each day of the activity within the program was observed by a member of the research team. Field notes were taken to capture observational data, which included formal and informal conversations, interview notes, records of activities, and diary type entries. To minimise intrusiveness, we adopted an 'observer-as-participant' role whereby the researcher observed more and participated less (Baker, 2006). Although the researcher's identity was known to the participants, this approach is less interrogative than other forms of participant observation since the researcher maintains a professional distance when making observations. Therefore, the observer-as-participant approach minimises affecting the situation and allows the researcher to observe events in their natural state (Takyi, 2015). During the participant observation, measures of observation included:

- ❖ the participants as they listened to the guest speakers;
- ❖ the pedagogical practices used by the guest speakers and the research team;
- ❖ the participants as they engaged with the activities;
- ❖ the participants as they engaged with one another;
- ❖ formal and informal conversations held between participants and with members of the research team;
- ❖ the words and language used by the participants when referring to joyriding and cars; and
- ❖ the culture of the group within the research site.

Although participant observation measures are dynamic and creative, the overall aim of these observational measures was to assess the program's efficacy in relation to how engaged the group was with the program, their cohesiveness as a group, and whether the participants understood and learnt the lessons of the program.

This data was collected and analysed in an anonymised manner, in that names or physical characteristics of members of the participant were not collected. The purpose of these data was to gain an impression of participants' engagement with the activities. No personal identifier can be inferred from the observational data.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

To ensure the Deterring Drivers program responded to local community conditions and needs and had the support of local groups, services, and organisations, it was important that the research team consult with members of the local community throughout the design and delivery of the program. To achieve this, a representative from the research team travelled to Townsville in October 2022 for the purpose of engaging with local stakeholders about the Deterring Drivers program and its associated research. They met with and discussed the program with local First Nations individuals and groups, including individuals working with or alongside youth justice, First Nations justice groups, police officers and other staff engaged in a local youth co-responder program, and representatives from other service and program providers throughout North Queensland.

Through these consultations, the research team was able to participate in reciprocal discussions about the Deterring Drivers program, the potential difficulties that may be encountered with recruiting and retaining this specific participant group, and ways of ensuring that the program was both culturally safe and appropriate for young First Nations individuals. Local stakeholders verbally communicated their support for the program and the efforts being made to embed culturally appropriate elements throughout the design of the program. Through this process of community consultation, no objections to the program, the intended participant group, or any of the methods to be used were raised.

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

It was also necessary to obtain ethical clearance to conduct this research. Ethical clearance for the program was granted by ACU's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) on 12 January 2023 under approval 2022-2756HI. Given its focus on young First Nations individuals who may be

engaged in illegal activities, this research underwent a thorough process of review. This included consultation with ACU's Indigenous Research Ethics Advisory Panel prior to approval of the research.

Where participant quotes have been included in the findings below, all identifiers have been removed or modified to protect research participants' right to anonymity. Participants' names have been replaced with pseudonyms[4]. A numbered identification system has been adopted to refer to stakeholders who were interviewed for this research (e.g., S1).

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4. It is recognised that the pseudonyms provided are all Anglo-Celtic names. This was a deliberate choice given all the participants' real names were Anglo-Celtic in nature.

Findings: Part 1 – Engagement and attitudes toward joyriding

Our findings are presented in two main sections. In this first section, we provide an overview of the young participants involved in the pilot program, delving into their lives, aspirations, and involvement in car theft and joyriding. We also draw from the interview data to gain insights into the underlying reasons that lead young people to engage in these activities and explore potential deterrent factors for the future.

In the second part of our findings, we offer a comprehensive evaluation of the Deterring Drivers program. We highlight both the successes and the lessons learned from the pilot program, shedding light on its effectiveness in addressing the issue of car theft and joyriding among young people.

DETERRING DRIVER PARTICIPANTS – AN OVERVIEW OF THEIR LIVES AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

We begin our findings with a description of the participants, including their hobbies or interests, living situations, and aspirations for the future. Participants commonly described interests including motorbike or dirt bike riding, fishing, NRL football, and playing video games. A few described a specific interest in cars, with Daniel explaining, "I love cars. Cars are my everything. Ever since I was a kid, I always loved working on cars, so cars is [sic] just my number one". In their pre-program interview, several participants expressed aspirations to work as a mechanic (David and Robbie) or to work in a trade, including as a "roofer" (David), in "either plumbing or tiling" (Brendon), as a professional football player (Tyson and Jamie) or in the mines (Tyson) or meatworks (Robbie). Most participants were engaged in education, albeit in an alternative or 'flexible' form of school designed for young people who did not thrive in traditional education environments. One participant did not attend school at all, explaining they had not attended since Grade 8.

Most participants had or were currently experiencing precarious living situations. One young person had previously experienced homelessness (having lived in a tent), while another and their family were currently living rough. Other participants lived with a single parent (including a young person who had a parent currently incarcerated), while others lived with extended family, including aunties and uncles, grandparents, and/or siblings.

INTERACTIONS WITH POLICE AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Several participants reported having had some criminal justice system involvement, including being on house arrest, serving time in a juvenile detention facility, and serving a period of probation. Others reported contact between the criminal justice system and one or more members of their family, including Daniel whose father was incarcerated at the time of the program, and Michael, who noted "most of our family is in jail right now. And if they're not in jail, they're going through court".

All the young people who participated in the pilot program reported having had some prior interaction or encounter with police, most of which they reported as having been a negative experience. These negative experiences and perceptions of the police are not surprising given research in Australia consistently shows how young people – especially young people with overlapping marginalities such as Indigeneity and mental illness – often have negative encounters

with the police that shape their trust and confidence in police (Morgan & Higginson, 2023). Participants described various scenarios where they felt targeted or harassed by police. For example, Daniel spoke of being approached by police while out walking or riding his bike: "They can get a bit harassing. I could be riding a bike, or I could be walking, [and] they'd be pulling me over ... And it's like, officer, I'm just walking my bike or I'm just riding my bike. It gets to the point every day where it's like, you can't be doing this". Others described being pinned to the ground by police with their head pushed into the floor at a shopping centre (Michael), being stopped in public places by police and asked if they had money and being kicked in the ribs while spending time with family and friends at home (Jamie).

Several participants had strong emotional reactions when asked their views about police, with Tyson, Robbie and Jamie expressing they "hated" police. For Robbie, anger toward police stemmed from his interactions with officers after being "spiked"[5] while driving a stolen car. He said that the police had lied and provided inaccurate information that was later broadcast on the news:

> *"[Police said] that I was on drugs when I really wasn't, and they said that I was in [another Australian state]. They said that I told them that I was in [Australian state], and that I didn't know where I was, when legit I remember that thing full fucking clear as day. … I told them I didn't have a name and then they said that I was on drugs because I wouldn't tell them."* (Robbie)

Another young person described their attempts to avoid all contact with police, noting, "We see them, and we don't speak to them because we think we're probably going to get arrested or something like that" (Brendon). However, this attempt at avoidance, together with what they perceived as police treating them with suspicion, could act as a trigger to potentially escalate a situation: "If they're both thinking like that, then the cop is probably going to pull you over, and you're probably going to want to run, and then you run, and then it turns into something" (Brendon).

Poor impressions and interactions with police were not unexpected, according to stakeholders involved with the pilot program, who generally described that young people lacked respect for police. They pointed to several contributory factors that often led to this fractured relationship, including the nature of the interactions between police and young people, particularly those from First Nations communities:

> *"They don't respect the police at all. If you look at what they're doing here, they're actually encouraging the police to chase them. We've literally had the kids pull in front of a police car, smash the windows, throw rocks at them, and literally want the police to chase them because it's the thrill of that. There is no respect for police at all. There's just no respect. But also, that comes back into intergenerational trauma as well."* (S3)

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[5] 'Spiking' refers to tyre spikes, a method used by police to puncture and flatten tyres when a vehicle is driven over them. This method is often used to bring a stolen car or one that is being driven dangerously to a controlled stop.

Stakeholder 5 highlighted the lack of trust they had observed between young people and police, saying: "I think that there is definitely a barrier there. I think that if you're only interaction is being told off or being limited, and that's where your relationship is being established, I think that there's definitely a lack of trust that would be there". Interviewees also explained that police were perhaps erring in talking to "these young people like they're criminals, not just young people making bad decisions" (S2). The result was a mentality amongst young people of "them versus us" (S6).

Interviewees also recognised that while police officers were effective in many ways, their response to young people and their offending behaviours was primarily reactive, rather than proactive. As Stakeholder 5 reflected:

"…their approach is often very reactive. I think that there is so much happening that the police do such a great job at. But at the same time, I think if this is something that continues to be an issue within our community, how do we move from just reacting to the issue, to be preventative in the issue? … I think seeing more police there to be, 'we want to help you', as well as discipline, I think … that will really change people's mindsets."

UNDERSTANDING OF AND PARTICIPATION IN JOYRIDING

Participants were asked what their understanding of 'joyriding' was. All the young people participating in the program had heard of this term, but gave various descriptions of it, for example:

"Joyriding is pretty much stealing cars, go and have fun in it, do whatever you want in it, thrash it, crash it, pull it apart." (Daniel)

"Taking cars. Taking them for a spin." (Michael)

"Driving in a stolen car." (Robbie)

Only one participant lacked an understanding of this term, confusing joyriding with an enjoyable drive that one might take with family members.

When asked if they had ever engaged in car theft and/or joyriding, most of the young people confirmed they had previously engaged in this activity, either as the driver and/or passenger. Except for one young person who indicated that they had an ongoing involvement in car theft and joyriding, most explained that they were not currently involved in these activities anymore. One participant explained, "I don't jump in cars anymore. Yes, I don't go walking around the streets at night-time" (David), while another said, "I don't do it anymore, but I used to be really bad" (Brendon). A third young person explained they had engaged in joyriding "a lot", saying, "I've been the driver. I've drove lots and lots. … Yes, but I stopped now. I don't do that. It's just slack" (Robbie).

Another young person noted that they had "watched people steal cars, but I've never done it. I've

never participated in any of it" (Michael). They were not sure, however, whether they might participate in joyriding in future, noting "It's not really like, I won't do it. It's just I haven't done it *yet*. But I don't think I'd do it too".

Interestingly, the one young person who indicated their ongoing involvement in joyriding did not view that behaviour favourably, referring to themselves as "just a little car thief" and noting:

> *"I would say, it's not a good life. It's not a good life to be in and sometimes you don't got a choice, and sometimes you do got a choice, and it's just really the way you want to go about life."* (Daniel)

When asked to describe how they first became involved in joyriding, participants offered several explanations. Firstly, some participants noted they had been influenced by their peers. Daniel reflected that they had "followed the wrong person and then that person brought me into shit that I don't want to do". For him, hanging out with "the wrong crowd" ultimately culminated in his involvement in stealing cars:

> *"I was going to [public high school] and I was hanging around the wrong crowd at the time. And then I started going to their house a bit more with two of my mates, and then we started doing things, and that … led us to doing things in the night and it just led to joyriding."*

A second young person noted that boredom was the reason, in their view, that young people engaged in joyriding. They went on to describe how they had started to socialise with an older peer group and began joyriding because of the combination of peer influence, feelings of boredom, and the enjoyment they gained from driving:

Interviewer:	*Can you remember why maybe you decided to start joyriding in the first place? What was it that first time you did it that you thought why would you want to do that?*
Participant:	*I don't know. Dumb.*
Interviewer:	*Were you bored?*
Participant:	*With the kids I was with. … I hanged around with older kids when I was 12. They were like 16.*
Interviewer:	*And where did you meet them? School or something?*

Participant:	*Yes. At the school. I met some kids through school and then met other kids through them and then stopped hanging around them kids and hanged around them kids.*
Interviewer:	*And was that something where you felt pressured by older kids to do, or you wanted to be cool?*
Participant	*I just did it. I was just bored, just used to do it a lot. I just liked it, driving around*. (Robbie)

Brendon described how they had initially been looking for money and other items to steal from cars when they had come across a car key that had been left in a vehicle. At that time, they said they decided to take the vehicle to drive for "a little bit of fun". They went on to explain:

"It's just something to do. When you're out there, and you're a kid on the streets, and you have mates that are doing that stuff you just want to have fun with them. It's like the root of the evil, is your friends."

ROLE OF DRUGS AND/OR ALCOHOL

Previous research has reported conflicting findings with respect to the role that drugs and/or alcohol may play in young people's engagement in joyriding. Some research (e.g., Dawes, 2002; Kellett & Gross, 2006) indicates that drugs and/or alcohol may make young people more likely to engage in risky driving behaviours or be used to increase the intensity and experience of joyriding. Other research, though, reports that "although young auto thieves may use alcohol, drugs, or solvents, auto theft does not necessarily coincide with the use of such substances" (Dhami, 2008, p. 190). Consistent with Dhami's (2008) findings, the young people in this study typically reported that they were not under the influence of drugs or alcohol while partaking in joyriding and related behaviours. For example, when asked whether joyriding was an activity where they would drink or take drugs before doing, Robbie replied, "No, just sober". Daniel, who admitted to frequently engaging in joyriding, also denied that drugs or alcohol were linked to his behaviour:

Interviewer:	*Is it ever like that you're drinking or doing drugs? And then does that play a role in then stealing cars and joyriding or they're separate?*
Participant:	*No, I don't really drink. I don't like drinking because my stepfather when he used to drink, he used to get violent to my mum and I just don't really like drinking. So, not really.*
Interviewer:	*And what about drugs? Is it ever…? No.*
Participant:	*No.*

Brendon noted they engaged in car theft while high from smoking marijuana "a couple of times". However, they said they did not ever combine alcohol and driving. Another participant (who said they had not ever participated in joyriding) suggested that while young people may not engage in drugs or alcohol, their understanding was that "they do vaping. I don't know if they sniff petrol, and I don't know if they sniff Rexona [solvent] and that" (Tyson).

Importantly, while the young people we interviewed said they did not usually use drugs or alcohol when joyriding, some participants explained that the adrenaline rush they experienced while stealing cars and driving them produced a similar positive feeling. As one young person explained, "It's like the adrenaline is pretty much like a drug to you because when you get that adrenaline pumping, you're like pumping, pumping when you go. That's what keeps making you come back. That's what you want every time" (Daniel). Part of the thrill, they explained, was "the adrenaline rush by the cops chasing you, and you're in the car over the speed limit, doing 100 kilometres over the speed limit … and there's a cop behind you chasing you, trying to get you".

Reflecting what Kellett and Gross (2006, p. 49) refer to as the "diminished experience from the same level of joyriding", this participant confirmed, when asked, that over time it may be necessary for young people to push the limits further and engage in more dangerous and riskier behaviours to achieve the same level of enjoyment from joyriding.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOTIVATIONS FOR ENGAGING IN JOYRIDING

Interviews with participants and other stakeholders also provided the opportunity to better understand the reasons why young people might engage in behaviours like car theft and joyriding. Interviewees identified several reasons that may contribute to young people's participation in these activities, including boredom and sensation seeking, a desire to impress peers and increase their social status, and social disadvantage and a need to escape their current circumstances.

Interviewees were uncertain whether there existed a culture of joyriding amongst youth in Townsville. One young person, who described having an extensive history of car theft and joyriding, did not believe there was a youth culture in Townsville that promoted these behaviours, but rather, simply groups of bored young people who were looking for something to do:

> *"I wouldn't say a culture. I'd just say, not a gang, but just a group of young juveniles that are bored at home. They've got nothing to do. They just hang around with their mates and then their mates get bored. And then they're like, oh, let's go steal a car."* (Daniel)

Brendon agreed with Daniel that the influence of friends was important, noting "When you're there, and you're a kid on the streets, and you have mates that are doing that stuff, you just want to have fun with them. It's like the root of the evil, is your friends". Stakeholder 1 also agreed that peer influence was an important factor in shaping young's people behaviour. However, unlike Daniel, they felt that a culture of joyriding perhaps did exist, reasoning that "it does seem like a culture if there's a sense of belonging in it".

Several interviewees reflected that in regional cities, like Townsville, there were often few options to engage youth, and this could lead to delinquent and criminal behaviours. As Stakeholder 2 pointed out, "There's not a great deal for kids to do in Townsville, and what there is, often kids don't know about". Stakeholder 6 agreed, noting "Particularly in Townsville there's a lack of engagement. It could be boredom". Others agreed, noting that young people "just want to do it for fun" (Tyson), are wanting to experience the feeling of driving (Brendon), or are looking for "an adrenaline hit" (S3).

Two young people also pointed to the increased social status that joyriding behaviours can provide, noting they felt these behaviours provided an opportunity for young people to "show off" (Jamie) or "brag to their friends" (Brendon). The rise in popularity of social media contributed to this problem, according to these young males, with Brendon explaining: "what they do is they go around in these cars and then they start posting to social media and then they think they're cool".

Interviewees also recognised that a young person's social environment, including their living conditions and home life, were likely to play a part in why young people participate in car theft and joyriding. Daniel, for example, urged people to think beyond simplistic explanations about 'bored' youth and instead to think about the home life faced by young people who were engaging in delinquent or criminal behaviours:

"And it's like, because they're got nothing to do. It's like, no, maybe go look at how their parents are treating them. Have a look in their household because it's not … everything that they have to do, because they are bored or because they've got nothing to do. It's actually because of what's in their household. Who's treating them right, who's treated them wrong, if there's any food in the house. Maybe they are only doing this because they want food or only because they're doing this because they've got nothing at their house. They've got nothing. And maybe if they don't go to school, they've got nothing to do during the daytime or the night-time. They've got nothing, so that's why they do those things."

Others agreed, with Stakeholder 5 noting the importance of taking a more holistic view of young people and their circumstances. In their view:

"it's so much bigger than just the actions of what they're doing. I think that there's a need to escape something. And I feel like whether that be their home environment that isn't the greatest, or school, or even just their own mindset, and their world around them. Hearing some of their stories, I don't think any young person should be dealing with some of the things that they're dealing with. And so, I feel like in many ways, it's a need to escape or just act out, in order to remove themselves from a situation."

Several interviewees noted that it was likely a combination of these factors that put young people at-risk of engaging in car theft and joyriding. Further, and importantly, as a few interviewees pointed out, social disadvantage and/or exclusion could lead to a lack of identity and/or lost connection to community for a young person:

"I think the reason why a lot of our young people are in the predicament they're in today is because of a lack of identity. And when I say identity that's not just culture. That could be identity just with knowing, belonging to a family, to a person." (S3)

"There's a lost connection to [young people] feeling like their actions have consequences in the larger community, and their understanding and connection that they can negatively affect their web of communities here as well. So, a lack of ownership and understanding of what they're a part of." (S6)

Media representations of youth offenders often only serve to perpetuate these issues, according to Stakeholder 2. They described how youth offending has emerged as an issue attracting substantial media attention in recent years, both in traditional media forms and social media, like Facebook. The result, they said, is that "the kids that are engaged in this behaviour have just been painted in just a terrible light. At the end of the day, they are kids, they're making some bad choices, but they are not bad kids" (S2).

POSSIBLE DETERRENTS FOR STOPPING JOYRIDING

Interviews also described possible ways of stopping or deterring young people from engaging in activities like car theft and joyriding. Potential strategies ranged from engaging young people in adrenaline-based activities and improving their employment prospects to harsher criminal justice responses. Interviewees also commented on approaches they felt were unlikely to succeed in responding to this issue.

Participants were mostly dismissive of the idea that the thought of getting in trouble with their parents or police would deter young people from joyriding. As Michael explained, "Most of their parents won't care where they are. So, no, parents don't care". Tyson agreed, noting it was unlikely that a young person's parents would even be aware they were engaging in these activities. Participants were also unconvinced that young people would be deterred through fear of being apprehended by police. For Michael, this was linked to his experience of seeing these behaviours go unpunished. As he explained, "I know people that have stolen many cars and they still haven't been caught". Tyson agreed in part, noting that while he thought young people may be fearful of police, they may simultaneously perceive police as not being very effective when it came to stopping joyriding. A stronger deterrent, he felt, was the risk of a young person stealing the "wrong car", for example, from an Elder in the community. The repercussion in that case, he thought, was "[the victim's] family will come after them with their big cars". From Jamie's perspective, young people were unlikely to listen to anyone who tried to warn them off these behaviours and would continue regardless.

For Daniel, the idea that he may be seriously injured or die while joyriding was something he worried about. He described being concerned about the impact his death would have on his mother, saying "you know there's a saying, no parent wants to bury their kids and the kids [have] got to bury their parents? And I feel that same way". However, he also explained that thoughts like these were typically fleeting: "I think about it for a couple of minutes and then it would just go out of my head, because I'm either too worried or too focused in the car driving or in the backseat having a fun time, you know".

The idea of wanting to be a good role for his younger siblings appeared to be a more pressing concern for Daniel, although one that he also largely dismissed because his brothers and sisters did not live in the same house as him:

"If I had my little brothers and sisters back in my life and back in my house, it would stop me [from joyriding] because then they're looking up to me. Then that's a reason for me to go get a job, so they can look up to me, instead of looking up to me stealing cars. … They're not living with me so they don't look up to me now, so I can do whatever I want because I'm an adult. There's no one looking up to me anyway."

The possibility of strengthening his bonds to society and becoming his own role model through lawful employment appeared the strongest motivating factor for Daniel to stop joyriding. As he explained, though, the possibility of him getting a job appeared unlikely because he had been disengaged from school for a long time:

Interviewer: *You said your dream is to be a mechanic. Do you think if you got an apprenticeship and a chance to do that, that might keep you busy? Keep you away from doing these things, and you might think, I've got more to lose if my boss found out? Do you think that would make any difference for you?*

Participant: *Yes, it probably would because then I've got to actually … If I had a job, then that's something for me to look up to as well. I can be my own role model. If I keep doing this then I won't be my own role model but if I get a job or something, switch my life up, then it's something for me to look up to. Then I can try and change my life and try and do better for my little sisters, but it's just a bit hard without my schooling and everything.*

Other participants agreed that the best way to reduce issues of car theft and joyriding was to engage young people in adrenaline-based activities. Robbie, who no longer participated in joyriding, explained that he, along with his friends, had replaced the enjoyment of joyriding with dirt

biking: "I've had [a dirt bike] for ages, but one got sold when I started doing naughty shit. So, my dad bought me a new one. And then [friend] got one and [friend] got one. So, we just all ride around". Engaging in this activity as a group had kept Tyson and his friends out of trouble. As he explained, "we all stopped. If there's two us stopped and one still does it, there's no point".

Stakeholder 3 agreed that it was important to attempt to replicate the adrenaline rush that a young person receives through joyriding. In their view, this would help the young person to realise that there were lawful ways of experiencing adrenaline highs. They remained unsure, however, whether lawful recreational activities would be sufficient to provide the necessary thrill for risk-seeking youth:

"And we actually can't do anything to break that cycle given the adrenaline hit that they're getting from driving in these cars. The next best thing is to take them to a rollercoaster or something like that, but it's still not going to be the same thing. Because it's also the thrill of planning the break-in, knowing when to go and get this, knowing when to do that. Sneaking around and pulling this off is the adrenaline hit that they're getting. We need to be able to replace that with something, but that's going to be a hard thing to do, brother, when it's so hard to replace that adrenaline hit that they're getting."

Other suggestions included the use of technology, like car mobilisers, to deter would-be car thieves: "When you steal someone's car, it can just turn it off whenever. That would be like… You couldn't steal a car if that was in there. You wouldn't steal it" (Robbie). Surprisingly, one young person (Brendon) even suggested harsher criminal justice responses to youth offenders:

Interviewer*:* *In your opinion, what can be done to stop young people from stealing cars, if anything?*

Participant*:* *Definitely curfew.*

Interviewer*:* *Curfew, yes.*

Participant*:* *Definitely curfew.*

Interviewer*:* *Because that stops you, obviously, you can't leave your house.*

Participant*:* *Maybe, chuck them on youth justice programs. No more slap on the wrist. If they want to be like adults you've got to treat them like adults.*

Interviewer: *So, stronger punishment, you reckon?*

Participant*:* *Yes, definitely. They're criminals, you know.*

Stakeholder 2 disagreed with the idea of harsher criminal justice responses or to increased spending on infrastructure for youth offenders. Instead, they reasoned:

"I think the money should be going into those redirection, diversionary services, like our [service name]. ... Basically, they drive around at night like the co-responders, pick up kids, and they put them on night-time programs. … They put on activities in the night-time to tire the kids out, get them off the street, and then they drop them home."

Stakeholders 3 and 4 also called for more holistic responses that assisted the young person and their family and provided them with a sense of identity and purpose in the community:

"We need to be working in a holistic way to help mum, dad, whatever family is still suffering from their own traumas to actually have that self-determination back within their family. … But then when you also dig a little bit deeper, they don't have stability, they don't have structure, they don't have identity, they don't have any of that sort of stuff. This is why we're talking about culturally responsive, or appropriate programs to actually meet the needs of those families." (S3)

"If [joyriding] stems from them not having anything else to do, then giving them more purpose, I think [will help]. If that's even purpose in the community, or at home and in the community, where they feel at home and feel like they belong." (S4)

Findings: Part 2 – Evaluation of the Deterring Drivers program

The evaluation of the pilot Deterring Drivers program was held over a period of six weeks in Townsville during March and April 2023. To assess the effectiveness of the program, data were drawn from the interviews with pilot program participants and other stakeholders. Furthermore, each day of the program was observed by a member of the research team by taking observational field notes. The purpose of the participant observation was to provide further evaluation of the program's effectiveness in relation to participant engagement, cultural sensitivity, guest speaker content and delivery, and the recreational activities. All participants were aware that a member of the research team was observing them. Wherever possible, this section provides direct quotes from the interviews and field notes to enhance the meaning and form of the findings within the analysis.

Analysis of the interview data and field notes revealed several salient themes regarding the project's core aims and objectives, namely: cultural safety, social cohesion, role models, empathy, and engagement.

CULTURAL SAFETY

Cultural connectedness for young people has been positively associated with program effectiveness, especially given that First Nations youth deem programs grounded in Indigeneity as more relatable and credible (Fazel & Danesh, 2002; Pooley, 2020). Whilst connecting First Nations youth with their culture was not an explicit aim of the program, providing a relevant and culturally safe space was. As such, a core theme within the data was in relation to the program being culturally safe for the participants.

For example, a program attendee gave an Acknowledgment of Country at the start of every day the program was delivered, recognising that the program was held on Wulgurukaba land. The Acknowledgment of Country was generally delivered by a First Nations Australian. It was also apparent from the outset of the program that there were evident displays of Indigenous culture, such as the television screen at YWAM's Youth Precinct café displaying the 'Deterring Drivers' title presented against a backdrop of authentic Indigenous artwork. Yarning was also encouraged between participants and support staff to allow cultural expression. Some program attendees, including volunteer or support staff and some of the guest speakers also wore clothing displaying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artwork and insignia:

> *Most of the kids' guardians have outfits that honour Indigenous cultures.* (Field notes)

Many of the guest speakers also identified as First Nations Australians and expressed their cultural heritage to the participants during their talk, conceivably to enhance relatability with the participants. The police guest speaker, for instance, begins his talk by acknowledging his Indigenous heritage:

> *[The police officer] starts talking. He mentions to the kids that he joined the police because he wanted to help kids. He provides a background and tells us rapidly how he became a police officer. He mentions that his dad is an Aboriginal man.* (Field notes)

Whilst the program was not exclusively for First Nations youth, and nor did we ask any of the participants to identify their cultural heritage, the culturally safe space of the program encouraged many of the young people to engage with the program using Indigenous cultural sentiments. Some referred to the program volunteers and support staff as 'Aunty', 'Uncle', or 'Grandad'. First Nations people use these terms as a sign of respect when referring to an Elder who is held in high esteem by their community and is considered a custodian of knowledge and lore (Deadly Story, n.d.-a). At first, the participants made these cultural gestures explicitly towards the First Nations members of the research team or volunteers. However, in the latter stages of the program, some participants extended this etiquette to other non-Indigenous members of the program. For example, on the last day of the program, one participant addressed a non-Indigenous member of the research team in this way:

> *Michael has perked up and thanks me and calls me 'Uncle', which is a sign of respect in Indigenous culture.* (Field notes)

Whilst the participants may have used this term to refer to older staff members of the research team through 'force of habit', it is most likely that the research team had gained the trust and respect of the First Nations youth during the six-week delivery of the program. As Stakeholder 3 explained, "It's the recognition. So, in your own right, now you've become an uncle to that person".

Participants and key stakeholders involved with the program echoed our observations about the safe environment that was created at the program sessions. For example, in their exit interviews, Daniel commented on the vibe of the program, saying "It's very positive. It's really healthy, really relaxed and calming", while David reflected on "seeing smiles, [and] happy faces". As Stakeholder 3 described, creating a safe space helped to instil a sense of belonging in the young people:

> *"But what I did notice was that the kids, from start to finish … there was more confidence within them to actually talk. But also, just the way they were interacting with [program staff]. I also observed how they would come in and talk and shake hands with the guest speakers and all that sort of stuff as well. I think what we've got is that the kids have found confidence within themselves, [and] a sense of belonging. When I talked about identity, but they belong to the group. So, they knew that they could come in and it was a safe space for them."*

SOCIAL COHESION

The social cohesiveness of the group was another successful aim of the program that also resonates with the cultural safety findings above. One fundamental aim of the program was to battle feelings of social isolation amongst the participants, especially given many of the participants do not attend school regularly, are unemployed, and experience family or relationship issues at home. In addition to the program being culturally appropriate, the program was also more broadly designed to harness social inclusiveness, acceptance, recreation, and a space to build friendships.

A good opportunity to deliver these goals was via the sharing of a meal together at lunchtime each week of the program. The YWAM café space is equipped with a commercial kitchen where the staff and participants could prepare and eat lunches together. Participants were also invited to submit meal requests for the following week and to help prepare food in the kitchen. Sharing lunch together around a large table provided ample time and space for the participants and staff to converse amongst themselves and to bond:

> *The whole group returns inside to prepare for lunch. We see that the YWAM staff have set out plates of shepherd's pie, with garden salad and garlic bread. [Staff member] tells me that the boys had asked him the previous week for this particular lunch. We sit together as a group, together with YWAM volunteers.* (Field notes)

As Stakeholder 4 reflected, sharing a meal was valuable in making participants feel comfortable: "Having lunch together, I think helped a little to break down the walls a bit, and all that stuff". It also provided an opportunity for the young people to get to know program staff and volunteers:

> *"We saw that with Daniel. You could tell by the end [of the program], that he wanted to be around us, and wanted to spend time with us. He didn't really care much for cooking but would help us to cook things."* (S4)

These meals also provided some salvation for those participants who were living rough or had no food at home. After the first week of the program, program staff and volunteers recognised that some participants were very hungry and looking for additional food. From that week forward, participants were encouraged to take leftover food home in takeaway boxes:

> *Michael expressed to us that he was very hungry and had not eaten for two days. He also said he had not slept for two days...Michael puts excess food in Tupperware to take home.* (Field notes)

When asked what he enjoyed most about the program in his exit interview, Michael confirmed, "Mostly the lunches. The lunches were really good".

Furthermore, the staff and research team made an effort to celebrate the birthdays of the participants should they fall within or close to the dates of the program delivery. For example, our field notes record an example of a celebration held for one of the participants as they turned 16 years of age:

Five to six members from [the] school show up to celebrate David's birthday. … The cake is presented to David for his birthday. Everyone sings happy birthday, and he looks chuffed. … David hugs and thanks [researcher] for his birthday surprise. He is clearly very grateful.

Some of the guest speakers expressed how social cohesion expands beyond the program and explained to the participants how they are all 'connected' despite their differences:

His message is 'We are all connected'. He says: 'We may be different, but we can all be one.' He also points out that: 'We are not necessarily the same, but we are all connected'. This is emphasised and mentioned several times. (Field notes)

Our observations of the participants yielded several indicators of successful social cohesion and comfort with the program and its staff. Although a subjective assessment, visual displays of engagement, satisfaction, and mood were recorded across the six-week program. One record in our field notes from week two of the program stated:

[We] have noticed a change in Brendon's attitude … he is different from the kid we saw last week, with his cap down, almost covering his eyes. This is not the case now. He is opening up to us.

These observations were supported by key stakeholders who knew the participants well prior to the commencement of the program. Stakeholder 1 spoke about the cohesion of the group:

"What you guys put together in terms of what you're offering in each session, is an unreal opportunity for the young people. I think just the way you designed it, all coming together in a safe space, eating together, feeling that warmth of this atmosphere with the YWAM community. I feel like that sets them up for success because they are coming somewhere familiar. And then you had really, really good

guest speakers. A small, intimate enough group, where they're listening, they're open to it. And you've touched on uncomfortable things in a way that's safe. And then [participants were] given really good opportunities, like that panel-beating workshop. I think that was really beneficial."

On the last day of the program, David expressed his gratitude for the program and how it helped him to make friends and enhanced his mood over the course of the six weeks. He said, "Coming here with friendly people makes me feel good. It makes me feel motivated". On the last day of the program, as we farewell the participants, we also record in our field notes:

I finish the interviews as the participants return their gear and talk excitedly amongst themselves. At this stage, we are a really cohesive group, and everyone is sad to be saying goodbye to each other.

ROLE MODELS

To try and disrupt the cycle of joyriding behaviours amongst youth, a focus of the program was to instil the importance of becoming a positive role model amongst the participants. Previous research suggests that young people who participate in auto-related crime often do not have close relationships with pro-social friends or family members (Thielking & Pfeifer, 2016). However, young offenders may find motivation for desistance by envisioning themselves as a role model for others (Abrams & Aguilar, 2005), with perceptions of being a role model shown to operate as a strong form of social control that can prevent reoffending (Carlson, 2013).

A key theme within the data was the guest speakers emphasising the importance of being a positive role model for friends, family, and the wider community. Several guest speakers defined role modelling as inspiring and influencing others to make positive decisions through leadership and helping others who are in need. For example, we recorded this interaction in our field notes between the psychologist guest speaker and program participants:

Guest speaker: "What are some things that we can do for others?"

Daniel answered readily: "Offering help". Daniel then added, spontaneously: "Being here cleaning" (he meant cleaning after lunch, because he had helped with this).

[The guest speaker] emphasised the fact that, when someone does something good, then it motivates others to follow the example, and that this is known as a 'ripple effect'.

Guest speaker: "Being here makes you a role model".

These presentations and group conversations were often related to the notion of making better choices through emotion management. All the guest speakers articulated that 'emotional literacy' and being mindful of emotions is integral to becoming a positive role model. For example, the ex-professional rugby player (who serves as a role model to most of the young participants given his high-profile status in the community and his Indigenous identity), drew in his talk upon notions of identifying and labelling emotions and finding ways to help with emotion regulation:

> *The guest speaker says, "when emotion leads to an action, that's when we do bad things … Go for a walk and calm yourself down." David agrees.*
>
> *[The guest speaker] talks about mindfulness: "The ability to be calm, relaxed, and present. Mindfulness practice is about managing destructive thoughts; they can lead to destructive behaviour".* (Field notes)

This particular talk was related to the personal experiences of the guest speaker, who contextualised destructive thought processes with their own professional sporting experiences. Our field notes reflected how the guest speaker discussed how it made him feel not being picked for the first team (i.e., players who took the field) on multiple occasions for important games:

> *"'I'm not good enough, I felt like a failure' … You're allowed to feel emotions. That's why we teach a thing called gratitude. We are happy for the things we have and not for the things we don't have".*

Whilst the guest talks were not always explicitly about joyriding, the underlying message was often related back to the notion of making better choices and not acting on impulse. The guest speakers often asked participants to reflect on the consequences of making poor choices and not being a good role model. For example, we recorded in our field notes quotes from two guest speakers:

> *"Short-term gains result in long-term pains."*
>
> *"That one choice you make can result in you sitting in a police cell…One little decision can lead to long-term problems…I'm just asking you to think ahead."*

The dangers of misusing drugs and alcohol whilst driving was a core theme in the data in relation to making poor choices and being a negative role model. The medical professional guest speaker emphasised this issue by drawing on his first-hand experiences of treating car crash victims in the Emergency Department who were intoxicated:

> *[The guest speaker] says that he often sees people in the Emergency Department who end up with injuries or trauma – whether by misadventure or drugs and alcohol. …[He] explains that people don't always make good decisions when they are drinking.*

These conversations were followed up with a role-playing exercise which allowed the participants to contextualise the detriments of excessive alcohol consumption and drink driving in practice. Participants were handed Fatal Vision goggles (goggles with lenses that mimic varying degrees of visual intoxication) and were instructed to attempt to throw and catch a ball with a partner. The loss of coordination whilst wearing the goggles and attempting to perform basic motor skills exemplified to the participants how driving a car under the influence of alcohol is dangerous.

The exit interviews with the participants provided evidence to suggest how some of the participants really valued the notion of being a positive role model and influencing others to make better choices. David, for example, said:

> *"It's what built me up. You know, mister? I love people talking to me. Like I just want to learn off and, yes. Learn knowledge. You know what I mean? … Be a role model. Be a superstar. You know, mister? Yes, being gold."*

EMPATHY

A key aim of the program was to enhance levels of empathy among participants for victims of crime and the wider community. In achieving this aim, the content of the guest speaker talks as well as the practical activities, were designed to help the participants understand the emotion and perspectives of others, particularly in relation to being a victim of car theft. In accordance with the principles of restorative justice and youth justice conferencing, these talks were delivered in a round table fashion where everyone sat on the same level and was encouraged to participate.

Since joyriders often break into houses to steal car keys to engage in joyriding behaviours, a First Nations Elder who had recently had their home broken into was invited to share their experiences of being a victim of crime. In the field notes, we recorded the guest speaker asking the participants:

> *"How would you feel if you had your home broken in?"*
>
> *Brendon says: 'I would be mad'. … Michael says that he too would be mad.*
>
> *[The guest speaker] reveals to us that they had their house broken into a few weeks ago. They explain that this was very hard because their partner had recently passed away. They say they experience a lot of fear. They found the experience traumatic,*

and they are worried now every day. As a person who is well known in the community, it hurt them even more because they have done their best to help kids.

Whilst the participants were engaged with this talk and reciprocated their understanding of the fear associated with being a victim of a burglary, they were also warned of the dangers of such behaviours to themselves. For example, the guest speaker cautioned the participants about the dangers of vigilantism:

[The guest speaker] adds that the kids should consider that if they enter illegally into someone's home, they 'may not walk out'. (Field notes)

Other guest speakers also highlighted the dangers of joyriding and associated activities by engaging with empathy in their talks. The police guest speakers, for example, described the 'devastating' impact of being first responders to car accidents involving young people:

[The police officer] states that recently, 'three stolen cars have crashed recently, [it was] pretty scary'. Then, he reveals, 'one of my worst fears is seeing kids crash. One I knew very well. I had to help to identify a lad after he died, it was very sad'. 'Some police quit their job after that crash' [he was referring to a crash in which four young people lost their lives]. (Field notes)

Key stakeholders who knew the participants prior to the program observed how the participants engaged with these talks and seemed to display empathy for victims of car theft. They praised the way the talks were not delivered in a lecture format but were instead delivered as a conversation in a circle setting. For example, Stakeholders 5 and 6 stated in their interviews:

"…to see how the education times were in some ways very interactive, less of a lecture style, but more so in round groups. Everyone was in kind of like that common space and common ground." (S5)

"…seeing some of the young guys start thinking through some of these things, and also having casual conversations about it as well, they seemed to pick up some of the things that were discussed during that educational time." (S6)

The exit interviews with the participants also demonstrated how the conversations with the guest speakers had influenced their way of thinking in relation to empathy and understanding differing perspectives. For example, when asked what he had learned from the program, Michael referred to the message given by one of the guest speakers: "When [the guest speaker] talked about when you see things from a different point of view, like you step back out of the box, and that really

helped". Indeed, when asked what advice he would offer for other young people who may consider participating in this program in the future, he said, "Mainly just try to see things in a different perspective than you already do. Try to think about people around you".

The panel beating workshop provided further scope for the participants to emphasise the detrimental impacts of car theft and joyriding. On both occasions that the participants were taken to the panel beating workshop, the manager of the workshop provided a tour of the site and pointed out the damage that had been caused to stolen cars that had subsequently been towed into the workshop for body repairs. This allowed the participants to see first-hand the physical and financial cost of joyriding behaviours:

[The manager] takes us for a tour of the stolen cars section. He tells us that 80 of the 300 cars that are currently at the workshop were stolen by young people who went on a joyride. There is an SUV, it has some obvious damage. The Manager explains that it will cost about $37,000 to repair the vehicle, which is about half of the car's original cost. (Field notes)

Figure 4: Car damaged through joyriding awaiting repair

Whilst this tour helped the participants to understand the financial and possible health impacts of joyriding behaviours, the manager also highlighted some other costs to victims of car theft. For example, the manager informed participants of the inconvenience caused to people whose car had been stolen:

> *We move to the next car, a BMW, and [the manager] says that the car has been at the workshop for a while but that 'it may not be ready for another six months'. [The manager] mentions that, unfortunately, due to incidents with stolen cars, some people are finding themselves in very difficult situations. For example, many cannot work without a car. Some can afford buses, Ubers, or taxis, but many cannot. The participants seem surprised. [The manager] adds that when cars are stolen, not only the owner of the car suffers, but also their families. David shows empathy.* (Field notes)

These conversations with the participants were not presented in an accusatorial or blameworthy tone, but rather, were given compassionately to help the participants understand the consequences of their actions beyond harm to themselves and the vehicle. Members of staff at the panel beating workshop also provided a relational aspect to their interactions with the participants. For example, they engaged with the participants by explaining that they too came from disadvantaged backgrounds and sometimes made poor decisions when they were young:

> *[The manager] tells them that there are jobs at the workshop, and the participants can always walk in and ask for one. He also mentions that he hires people of all backgrounds … he says that the past doesn't matter, but a person can change. He emphasises: 'You can have a bad background, a good background, or no background. We look for people who show respect and commitment'. He says that he himself comes from a working-class background. His message is to move forward.* (Field notes)

Several of the participants were offered apprenticeship opportunities, as demonstrated in Daniel's case study. This highlights the sincerity (and success) of this practical activity.

ENGAGEMENT

The final salient theme within the data relates to how engaging the program was for the young participants. A fundamental aim of the program was to provide therapeutic programming and rehabilitation for the participants via enjoyable, prosocial bonding activities. Overall, there were five 'hands-on' activities designed to keep the participants stimulated and engaged in the program whilst also teaching them the detriments of joyriding behaviours. These activities were: an art session, two panel beating sessions, a session with a professional golfer at a driving range, and a high ropes course.

Levels of engagement for each of the activities varied amongst the participants depending on personal interests and energy levels at the time. For example, the art activity and the high ropes course yielded mixed interest, with some participants being engaged and enjoying the activities, whereas others appeared less interested or willing to participate. Several participants voiced their excitement of scaling the high-ropes course at YWAM's Youth Precinct (see **Figure 5**). However, when the time came to complete the course in week six of the program, several participants pulled out before or during the course, citing a fear of heights or illness.

Figure 5: High ropes course at YWAM's Youth Precinct

The activity at the golf driving range was enjoyed by most the participants and provided an opportunity for them to demonstrate their natural talents and receive positive reinforcement. However, the panel beating workshop activities arguably yielded the most excitement and engagement amongst the participants, especially given their deep interest in automobiles. Several of our observations recorded in the field notes demonstrate the participants' sustained enjoyment and engagement with this activity. For example:

The boys are split up into three groups. David is painting and Daniel is doing mechanics. This is the most engaged the boys have been. Daniel is under a car… David puts a welding mask on, and I help tighten the back. Michael and Brendon paint a car door together and use power tools to buff it up. I notice that Jamie …

seems to be really enjoying the activity. I don't believe I have seen him this engaged before and confident.

The staff at the workshop provided positive feedback on the engagement of the participants in this activity by routinely complimenting and encouraging the repair work they were conducting. The manager of the panel beating workshop also expressed his praise and admiration for the work ethic of the participants, which was demonstrated by him offering several of the older (the legal age for an apprenticeship in Queensland is 16 years or older) participants the opportunity for an apprenticeship. For example, we recorded in the field notes:

Boss asks David: "How old are you?"

"16 Mister" – David

"About old enough for an apprenticeship" - Boss

As discussed in further detail in the case studies, Daniel informed the research team following the second panel beating activity that he had been offered a job by the manager of the workshop:

Daniel goes on to explain that [the manager] from the panel beating asked if he would be interested in applying for a job. They had asked him to put together a résumé and submit this to them. Daniel explains how they had said they could set him up with a pushbike or that a co-worker may possibly be able to assist with driving Daniel to and from work. (Field notes)

Assisting the participants with finding employment was an unintended outcome of the program. Yet given the manager of the panel beating workshop openly offered participants paid employed as an apprentice (or to organise a school-based apprenticeship), indicates how serious and committed the participants were in partaking in this practical activity and working with cars in a positive manner. Stakeholder 1 also reflected on the importance of connecting with the staff at the panel beating workshop and how that established relationship may open doors for other young people in the future:

"I had a chat to the [manager] and he was telling me about his approach in school-based apprenticeships and just how tightly supported they are. And now I can share that with people who work with these young people, but also other young people I work with. And we know that's an option and so, what [the program has] done is open up a connection for the young people, but also connections for us as a [service] that's interested in different pathways. So, that's a huge deal."

CASE STUDY – DANIEL

The program delivered several stories of change that are supported in the data. The most significant change exhibited in one of the participants was the acquiring of a vocational opportunity as a panel beater. This particular case study relates to Daniel (not his real name), a nearly 17-year-old boy who does not attend school, nor has ever had a job. During the program, Daniel's father was released from prison. His mother is on a disability support pension. Daniel typically spends most of his days with his girlfriend, at home playing computer games, or hanging around with his friends on the streets.

Daniel attended five of the program's six sessions and was supported in doing so by a case worker. He admits that he missed one session due to being in trouble with the police regarding a domestic dispute with his girlfriend. During the opening interviews with the participants at the outset of the program, Daniel openly admitted to often engaging in joyriding behaviours as a driver or as a passenger with his friends. Despite not having a driver's licence, Daniel explains to us that he is extremely passionate about cars and loves to drive them. He explains that he steals and joyrides cars because he has few opportunities to engage in legal car-related activities and because it offers a temporary escape from the realities of his life.

Daniel is a helpful and kind natured young man who often helps to prepare food in the kitchen and clears tables at the YWAM venue where the program is based. He interacts well with the YWAM volunteers, program staff, and the other boys and is often engaging in banter. As well as listening to the expert speakers and engaging in the program's other activities, he clearly enjoyed attending the panel beating sessions the most. It is here where he could channel his passion for cars into practical 'hands-on' experience by fixing them. He was shown how to spray paint, weld, and use power tools to repair damaged cars – many of which had been damaged due to being joyridden. His enthusiasm and natural abilities for panel beating was noticed by management at the workshop and they encouraged him to hand his resumé in so that he can start an apprenticeship with them.

On the last day of the program, Daniel's case worker informs us that he drove Daniel back to the workshop so that he could submit his resumé. Daniel was immediately offered an apprenticeship and was due to start two weeks from then. Daniel's demeanour on the last day of the program was excitable and upbeat as he tells us in his exit interview that he feels he got the most out of the program of all the participants since he acquired a job. He informs us that he has not joyridden since the start of the program and does not intend to joyride anymore since it is no longer 'worth it'. He does not want to jeopardise his new job and wants to save enough money so that he may buy his own car in the future. When asked how he intends to abstain from stealing cars and joyriding, he tells us that he has already begun to disassociate himself from his peers who routinely engage in joyriding behaviours.

CASE STUDY - DAVID

Another positive story of change relates to a 16-year-old boy called David (not his real name). David identifies as a First Nations Australian. David's standard of reading and writing is very poor and there are indications that he may suffer from an undiagnosed cognitive disability. David stated that he did not steal cars or joyride 'anymore'. He is a talkative and engaging young man.

A fundamental purpose of the program was to bring participants together using safe, adrenaline-based bonding activities to combat feelings of social isolation or exclusion. David openly states that he values the welcoming community that the program creates and often refers to it as 'like family' and 'his second family'. He says that he enjoys coming to the program and seeing all the 'smiley faces because it makes him feel good'. He also enjoyed the hands-on activities such as the panel beating and was also encouraged to hand a resume in by the senior staff in the workshop. Despite his possible cognitive disability, David excelled in the hands-on activities at the panel beating and maintained his focus for more than 90 minutes. On the last day of the program, David overcame his self-confessed fear of heights and participated in the high ropes course with his peers.

To harness social inclusion and bonding, David celebrated his sixteenth birthday at the program centre where he was surprised with a birthday cake. Teachers, volunteers from YWAM, and the research team were all present to celebrate David's birthday. During his exit interview on the last day of the program, David repeatedly referred to this event as being a novel and incredibly special experience that he was thankful for.

Areas for consideration

As the previous section detailed, the Deterring Drivers program was successful in achieving several positive outcomes, including enhancing cultural safety and social cohesion, providing young people with pro-social role models, and offering employment and training opportunities. However, since this was a pilot program, there were several areas that were identified as potentially being improved for future iterations of the program. We summarise these below.

Recruitment processes

❖ Fewer than expected referrals for the program were received, including from DCYJMA. Since DCYJMA supervise and support young people who are engaged in offending behaviours, including UUMV offences, efforts should be made in future to ensure that a larger number of these young people are referred and supported to participate in the program.

❖ Referrals to the program were also received relatively late, including in some cases, the day before the program was scheduled to begin. This impacted the ability of the program staff and referrers to make necessary arrangements for the young people, including having consent forms signed, arranging travel to and from the program, and purchasing the required safety footwear for panel beating sessions. A greater lead-in time between referral and program delivery and better co-ordination between all parties would assist these processes.

Pre-program engagement

❖ For future iterations of the program, it is recommended that some pre-engagement activities be arranged between program staff and participants. This could include, for example, a barbecue or taking participants 'on country' to get acquainted with one another and program staff. Activities may increase the young people's 'buy-in' to the program and motivation to be involved.

Activities that enhance cultural connectedness

❖ While efforts were made to ensure the cultural safety and appropriateness of the program for the participants, the program could be extended in future to incorporate more culturally-based activities. This could include, for example, taking participants to sites of cultural significance and having greater involvement in the program of First Nations Elders and other leaders or role models from the community.

Greater focus on car-related activities

❖ The panel beating workshops were the most successful recreational activity, and although not an intended outcome of the program, provided employment and training pathways for

the participants. For future iterations of the program, we recommend that additional car-related activities be provided, including mechanical workshops and go-carting.

Expanding young people's social ecosystem

❖ Additional efforts should be made to ensure the support and involvement of local support agencies and organisations in the program. These efforts could include services that provide health and wellbeing support or organisations that offer other programs in the community for at-risk young people. This will help to expand the young people's social ecosystem by connecting them to additional people and services in the community that can provide assistance. These connections will also help to support the young people following the completion of the program.

Limitations

Whilst the findings from this evaluation elicit encouraging results in relation to meeting the target aims of the study, we recognise that the evaluation has several limitations that may affect the validity and generalisability of the findings. Firstly, given limitations with funding and time, the design of the evaluation was cross-sectional and limited in its capacity to measure behavioural change long-term. Future iterations of the pilot program and associated evaluations should incorporate a longitudinal design, whereby follow-up studies with research participants are used to measure the longitudinal efficacy of youth justice interventions in relation to stemming joyriding behaviours. Secondly, we recognise that the sample size of the study was low, thus hindering the generalisability of the findings. Every effort was made to engage with community organisations to recruit young participants who were identified at risk of, or engaging in, joyriding behaviours. Yet, the target sample is a 'hard to reach' population given the transient nature of young disadvantaged First Nations Australians who are often disengaged from mainstream educational/employment opportunities and/or experiencing precarious living arrangements. For example, some young people who were referred to the program either failed to participate or participated but had sporadic attendance due to social issues within the home or complications with law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

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Appendix A: Indicative interview questions

1. Pre-program participant interview

1. To begin, can you tell me a little bit about yourself? What are your hobbies or things you like to do?
2. Do you go to school?
    a. *If yes, what are your favourite subjects at school? Do you participate in any sports or other activities?*
    b. *Do you have a job? If so, tell me a little bit about it*
3. Do you live at home with your parents or guardians? If not, where do you live?
4. What sort of things are you interested in doing in the future? Is there a particular type of job you have an interest in or a specific subject you would like to study?
5. This program is all about joyriding such as driving or being a passenger in a stolen vehicle for fun. Have you ever heard of joyriding? If so, what does 'joyriding' mean to you?
6. If you or your friends have been joyriding before,
    a. *Can you tell me a little bit about this? What was your involvement? How often did this happen? Can you remember the reasons why you (or your friends) decided to joyride? Have you ever drunk alcohol or taken drugs before? If so, do you ever drink alcohol or do drugs while joyriding?*
    b. *If no, why do you think some young people steal cars and how do you feel about it?*
7. Have you ever met or do you know someone who used to steal cars and then stopped doing it?
    a. *If yes – do you know why they stopped stealing cars?*
8. In your opinion, what could be done to stop young people from stealing cars?
9. Do you have any thoughts or opinions about police? *[Prompt: do they do a good/bad job? Are they fair/unfair, especially when it comes to young people? Do they know how to deal with young people who steal cars and drive them for fun?]*
10. Can you tell me some of the reasons why you have joined this program? Is there something you are particularly interested in learning about or experiencing?
11. Is there anything about the program that you are unsure or nervous about?
12. Is there anything else you think we should know about young people who steal cars to drive them for fun?
13. Is there anything that you would like to share with us, or are there any questions you would to ask us?

2. Post-program participant interview

1. To begin, can you tell us whether you enjoyed the program? What part/s did you enjoy the most? *[Prompt: Were there any staff or activities that you particularly liked?]*
2. Did you learn anything new from the program? If so, what did you learn?
3. Was there anything about the program that you didn't like or that you think we could do better?
4. Do you think your opinion on stealing cars to drive them for fun has changed at all?
    a. *If yes, in what ways? What do you think about these activities now? Why do you think your views have changed?*
    b. *If no, how do you feel about stealing cars and joyriding now?*

5. In relation to joyriding and stealing cars, do you think this program has given you ways to make better decisions now than before the program?
6. Has your relationship with any of your friends changed since we started the program? If yes, how?
7. Have your views on police changed at all since doing this program?
8. Have your views on young people who commit crimes changed at all since doing this program?
9. Do you have any plans for the future? If so, can you share them with me, please?
10. Is there anything else you want to share with us?

3. Post-program: Other stakeholder interview

1. From your observations or knowledge of the program, do you have any comments or feedback on how the program was designed? *[Prompt: intended participant group; length of intervention; style of intervention]*
2. Do you have any comments on how the program was delivered? *[Prompt: Staff involved, delivery of expert talks, delivery of hands-on activities]*
3. Was there anything about the program you think we could improve for the future?
4. Do you think this type of intervention can reduce the risk of young people engaging in car theft and joyriding? Why?
5. To your knowledge, has the program changed the attitudes or behaviours of participants concerning car theft and joyriding? Why?
6. To your knowledge, has the program changed the behaviours of participants? Why?
7. Do you have any other comments or feedback to share with us?

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