

B.E.S.T Centre Annual Report 2008



Berry Street believes all children should have a good childhood

Berry Street also believes education is essential for the restoration of hope and trust to the lives of children and young people who have suffered abuse & neglect

The beginning of the B.E.S.T Centre

In 2001, the Department of Human Services conducted an audit of children & young people in residential care. The results indicated a significant gap in educational services & confirmed the anecdotal experience of the residential care field. Some of these findings included:

- 53% of young people 13 years & over living in residential care were not enrolled in school. They had no links to any school.
- Only 18% of young people aged between 16 - 18 years were enrolled in either Year 11 or 12;
- 26% of children & young people in residential care had been permanently excluded from school. These young people had been excluded from several schools across the system. Even if they were offered a place in school, the young people themselves didn't feel able to return.

Of those children & young people in residential care who were enrolled in school, there were often concerns in relation to attendance & suspension. These young people were either excluded by the school or, as a result of their past abuse or neglect, found it difficult to manage attendance & compliance with school expectations.

The results of the DHS audit prompted Berry Street to conduct a similar audit in the Southern Region. The results were stark.

- 96% of young people in Berry Street's Southern Residential Care program were either not enrolled or permanently suspended from school.
- Young people in other programs within Berry Street also presented similar issues for the mainstream education system. In fact, some of the young people in our non-residential programs presented the greatest challenge in relation to educational/vocational opportunities.

Berry Street advocated widely for the establishment of an appropriate school for high-risk young people, but was unsuccessful. The generous support of the Felton Bequest enabled Berry Street to establish an independent Registered Special School, the B.E.S.T Centre, in June 2003.

The educational response at the B.E.S.T Centre had to work in a multifaceted way including:

- Knowledge of the high risk adolescent population
- Understanding the case management, accommodation & protective context
- Having the capacity to connect & work collaboratively with other programs within Berry Street

The Centre had to engage these young people in the educational process where other schools had failed.

In 2007, a campus of the B.E.S.T Centre was opened in Morwell, informed by the foundation work completed in Noble Park.

The B.E.S.T Centre offers a school program as one of a number of services that Berry Street delivers to vulnerable & disadvantaged young people in the community. The B.E.S.T Centre fits as part of a suite of service provision that targets young people who are disengaged from education, have significant issues within their family & are often marginalised within in our community. The B.E.S.T Centre offers educational pathways & transition as part of a holistic response to vulnerable & disadvantaged young people.

**Noble Park
& Morwell
Campuses**

Who do we work with?

The young people enrolled at the B.E.S.T Centre are aged 12-18, come from all walks of life & have an interest in learning. Most of the young people at the B.E.S.T. Centre may:

- require assistance to overcome learning difficulties necessitating extra support
- have some impairment to their intellectual functioning
- have a history of trauma & experience great difficulty in managing their emotions
- have difficulties with substance misuse & can engage in risk taking behaviours
- live away from their families, or have disrupted living circumstances & require case management intervention as part of the protective DHS response
- have left school early or are unable to attend mainstream school & require support to get back on track
- be assisted to complete their Juvenile Justice requirements, or have spent time in a custodial facility & require assistance through Pathway Planning & educational programs to transition into the community
- be single mums or dads who would benefit from vocational training & parenting assistance
- be in receipt of a Centrelink payment, or need support to stabilise income or require support due to being homeless

Outcomes for students

Essentially the developmental work of the B.E.S.T Centre has been targeted at sharpening our response to building literacy & numeracy in a student population that functions well below the age appropriate benchmarks.

The B.E.S.T Centre as a new school places strong emphasis on building a positive learning environment for all of our students. The foundation work of the school focused on devising a culture that was able to respond to the complex learning needs of our vulnerable & disadvantaged school population. This response included creating personal learning goals for each student that incorporated both their social emotional goals, building both resilience & pro-social behavior that would help our students function more successfully in the community. These goals were then incorporated into academic goals for literacy, numeracy & the wider curriculum based on the interests & strengths of our student population to create a more comprehensive educational program.

In 2008 we applied our knowledge & expertise in understanding the impact of trauma on child development to build greater outcomes in literacy & numeracy. If students are able to feel safe & more in control of their emotions, they are less deregulated & more receptive to learning.

Learning and teaching

B.E.S.T Centre Noble Park

In 2008 we provided a school program to 32 students over the year. Their outcomes were:

- 4 students completed the year ten program & are now enrolled in a VCAL program with Link Employment
- 3 transferred mid year to programs in Frankston due to placement breakdown & were unable to sustain the travel to Noble Park
- 4 students were able to move from residential care to a home based care placement & stabilised their high risk behaviour with the support of the School
- 3 students were able to move to a DEECD school in 2009 & have used their time at the B.E.S.T Centre to build the skills for this to be successful
- 4 have enrolled in TAFE pre-apprenticeship courses
- 1 returned home & has an apprenticeship as a baker
- 1 has successfully completed a hospitality course after attending B.E.S.T Centre
- 3 are currently incarcerated & will return to the school with a lot of support from the CIRC program once they are released from the Juvenile Justice Centre
- 3 have withdrawn from the school program & did not finish
- 1 was placed in highly protective care repeatedly due to extreme risk & will require additional support to sustain her program
- 6 students have returned to the B.E.S.T Centre for 2009



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B.E.S.T Centre Financial Performance 2008

Financial Performance for the year ended 31 December 2008

INCOME	\$
School Fees	16,035.00
Other Private Income	155,267.29
State Government Recurrent Grants	237,990.19
General Recurrent Grants Program	373,279.01
LNSLNP—per capita	18,766.00
LNSLNP—Recurrent	223,420.00
TOTAL OPERATING INCOME	1,024,757.49
EXPENDITURE	\$
Salaries—teaching staff	514,945.63
Workcover	6,684.73
Superannuation	41,573.34
LSL	7,272.06
TOTAL SALARIES	570,475.75
Teaching, administration & clerical expenses	249,746.47
Building & Grounds operation	46,951.09
Rent & Operating lease expenses	41,018.39
Depreciation	45,296.48
TOTAL NON-SALARY EXPENSES	383,012.43
TOTAL EXPENSES	953,488.18
OPERATING PROFIT	71,269.31
Capital income	172,379.31
Capital Expenditure	172,379.11
NON-OPERATING PROFIT	0.00

Education & training programs at Berry Street

Berry Street's education and training programs have developed in response to local community needs. Our capacity to advocate for and respond to the needs of children and young people in the local communities in which we operate is one of Berry Street's greatest strengths and is a key principle underpinning all of our work. This approach has led to a considerable diversity in education and training activity:

- Partnership arrangements with other education and training providers
- Advocacy for the educational needs of vulnerable children and young people
- Enhancement of education provided to children and young people in out of home care through collaboration, advocacy and case management



Berry Street Education & Training

Berry Street believes that all children have the right to highest quality education and training. Education is essential for the restoration of hope and trust to the lives of vulnerable children and young people.

To achieve this:

- All children should have the opportunity to experience the benefits and the positive social impact of school attendance in the mainstream school system
- All children must have quality early childhood education in order to achieve the best developmental and educational outcomes
- All children must have the most appropriate education to meet their needs whatever they may be at a particular time in their lives

Berry Street is committed to:

- Providing for the highest possible expectation of children and young people's educational achievements
- Providing education and training across the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains
- Providing pathways for young people into further education, training and employment
- Working in partnership with community, business, government and other education providers
- Advocating for quality educational outcomes and appropriate educational programs for children and young people in our care as well as for other marginalised children and young people

Learning and teaching

B.E.S.T Centre Morwell

In 2008 at Morwell Campus, we accessed targeted funding to support the special needs of students under the "severe behaviour disorder" for 22 students. On entry in 2008, there were 27 students.

Many of these students were not able to access additional resources to support their needs previously. All of our students have had strong diagnostic work done to better understand their functioning and identify areas for support. Typically many of our students have an intellectual disability or borderline functioning that has not been identified previously.



Our most functional students have engaged in the learning process and have been able to identify goals and work to them with the assistance of our staff.

In 2008 we provided a school program to 41 students, 34 boys & 7 girls. 14 of our students were Indigenous. Their outcomes were:

- 10 moved away from the area
- 3 gained employment
- 8 undertook a transition to Year 11 or a Vocational Education & Training course at a local Secondary School
- 8 transferred to the JPET pre-employment program
- 12 have returned to the B.E.S.T Centre for 2009

Student attendance

Students enrolled at both campuses of the B.E.S.T Centre attended, on average, 60% of the time. Review of this attendance data indicates that for many students this attendance rate is most frequently impacted by personal issues for students and their families (including periods of time incarcerated), living arrangements (placement moves within the Out of Home Care system) and by other expectations placed on these students from external forces (such as attending court, Child Protection requirements, etc). Both campuses continue to actively monitor attendance and creatively engage students in the life of the School.

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