



Paper submitted by

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Introduction

Since its inception, the GCIT Youth Program has enrolled 2500 “Youth at Risk” and has provided a ‘hands on’ approach to behavioural management, literacy, numeracy, vocational training, life skills and work experience. Students are provided with a flexible learning environment to which they respond readily. This program provides a second chance for many young students.

The Gold Coast’s Unique Position

“The Gold Coast has large and special needs in relation to the management of young people in the transition from school to further education and training and to work. The scale arises from the very rapid population growth, largely dependent on migration flows to the City and the prospective rapid increases in school retention rates.

The special need arises from the nature of the economic and employment base with a heavy dependence on service industries and a predominance of small business. The need is highlighted by the transient nature of the population and the absence of established family networks for many.

The Gold Coast has a glitz and glamour image, however there are parts of the Gold Coast that are among the most disadvantaged in Queensland.” *Excerpt from ‘Environmental Scan 2001—Gold Coast Youth Commitment. (GCYC)’*

To support this finding from the Gold Coast Youth Commitment Environmental Scan, the Gold Coast City Council has recently released a report – *Gold Coast – innovation City 2003* – which was undertaken by KPMG and University of Queensland.

The following findings were reporting with regard to the Social factors impacting upon the city.

Some facts about the Gold Coast:

- Australia’s fastest growing city – largest population growth rate of any single municipality in Australia over the last 25 years
- Population – 441,736 –as at the 2001 census
- Growth has been driven by economic, technological, cultural, social and value changes that are occurring in Australia
- 83% of annual population growth is attributable to inward migration
- This steady growth has had a significant impact on infrastructure and services.

Social Indicators (when compared to other regions)

- The Gold Coast younger age brackets are expected to grow in comparison to Queensland
- Lower household income per capita
- Higher unemployment rates
- Lower proportion of people with degrees or higher education
- Higher proportion of people of one parent families with dependent children
- Highest rates of child protection notifications in the State

- Highest number of domestic violence applications and orders granted in the State
- Highest number of Youth homelessness in the State
- Higher than average rates of family poverty
- Higher rates of unemployment than the state and national averages
- Youth unemployment at 19.6% (15 to 24 years) - national average is 15.7%
- Highest proportion of sole parents in the state

History

In 1997 it became apparent that existing Literacy and Numeracy classes at the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE (GCIT) needed to be adapted to assist youth who had different needs from adults attending community classes. A separate Youth Program was developed where delivery had a youth focus, to which they could relate. Youth related and career issues were also discussed and researched with the assistance of a variety of guest speakers.

Since these early beginnings, the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE (GCIT) has been involved in the delivery of our 'Youth Program' since 1997. Since its inception, GCIT has enrolled over 2500 'Youth at Risk' and provided a 'hands on' approach to behavioural management, literacy, numeracy, vocational training and work experience. The 'Youth at Risk' Programs are managed through our Access Faculty, acting as a coordination point for the program throughout the Institute.

Some Milestones in the Development of the GCIT Youth Program 1997 – 2003

The GCIT Youth Program has been in operation since 1997. The following history details how GCIT have used different strategies to formulate a successful Youth Program:

- 1997:** It becomes apparent that existing GCIT Literacy and Numeracy classes need to be adapted to assist Youth who have different needs to community adults. A separate Youth program is developed; initially using profile funding and delivery having a youth focus, to which students can relate. Youth related and career issues are also discussed and researched with the assistance of a variety of guest speakers.
- 2000:** Funded by Dept of Education, GCIT went into a successful 'alternate schooling' partnership with Keebra Park State High School, therefore extending the opportunity to 12 – 15 years olds.
- 2000:** Funded by DET *Responsive Funding (QAELLN)* and *Competitive Purchasing (Language, Literacy & Numeracy 2000)*, GCIT combines a Literacy & Numeracy Program to NRS Levels 2 & 3 with Vocational Training to encourage students to make career choices.
- 2001:** Following a visit to the GCIT Youth Program, The Honourable Matt Foley, Minister for Employment, Training and Youth, pledges **2001 Youth Access Funding**. This allowed for students to combine Literacy & Numeracy studies with 100 hours of Vocational subjects, thus achieving a full Certificate I in Vocational Access and direct entry into traineeships and further study.
- 2001:** A percentage of students were struggling with Literacy & Numeracy at NRS Levels 2 & 3 and were unable to progress. **Youth Pathways Program** developed to provide NRS Level 1 & 2 training, plus behavioural management so that students could progress onto the GCIT Youth Program and increase their ability to cope. Funded by DET **Youth Re-Connected Initiative**.
- 2001:** Griffith University recognise GCIT Youth Program innovative assessment and delivery strategies and invite partnership for national research (ARC Linkages research grant) into Youth, Numeracy and Employment. Project is developing a highly respected testing instrument which will have real application to industry, and link literacy and numeracy needs and skills to vocational programs.
- 2002:** GCIT collaborates with Gold Coast State High Schools, Referral Organisations and Youth Support Agencies to determine numbers of Youth at Risk and their needs. The program provided:
- a. In-School Vocational Training for 60 youth at risk, and

- b. 2 x Vocational subject training for 30 ex **Youth Pathways Program** students.

2002: Collaboration with the GCIT Indigenous Community Advisory Board reveals an immediate need for an Indigenous Specific Youth Program. This incorporates Cultural History and Awareness with Literacy, Numeracy and behaviour management. Responsive Funding (QAELLN) funds a one-off pilot program.

2002: The Youth Program received the Premier's Award for Excellence in Public Sector Management – Focussing on our People category

Aims and Objectives

Our aim is to direct young people, who are especially disenchanted with the whole education system, towards taking responsibility for their own educational welfare and to instil in them a love of learning, which we hope will last a lifetime.

Additionally we endeavour to assist students to obtain part/full time employment, traineeships or apprenticeships, to return to school to complete Years 11 & 12 or to undertake further educational studies.

Prior to commencing study with us, students attended either state or private high schools, but for a variety of reasons the conventional school system was not suitable and consequently, the youth have become 'at risk'. Some of the reasons include breakdown in the family unit, behavioural problems, drug and/or alcohol abuse and an inability to feel comfortable in a large, depersonalised school setting.

Ongoing Success

The success of the program has been reflected in its continued operation, excellent outcomes and ongoing funding. GCIT has used different strategies to formulate a successful Youth Program model that has been recognised as best practice. As a result we have been successful at procuring both DET Competitive Purchasing Tenders and Responsive Funding (QAELLN), in addition to Growth Funds for trailing initiatives from the State Government's Education and Training Reform Framework .

Best Practice Model

The GCIT Youth Program is regarded as a program of excellence for its quality of education and contribution to the young people of the Gold Coast Community.

The Gold Coast Institute of TAFE Youth Program is identified as a leader in the field of educating 'at risk youth' and has gained a reputation for pioneering alternative education. It aims to set the benchmark for 'second chance' education for those young people for whom school does not suit. It is based on a clear vision, staying power, entrepreneurship and the ability to provide quality education to this diverse group.

Teachers and tutors on the GCIT Youth Program have been carefully selected for their experience and ability to effectively manage and teach students classed as being 'Youth at Risk'. Recognised by The Honourable Matt Foley, Minister for Employment, Training and Youth, as being **“a group of outstanding educators”**, GCIT has been careful to only nominate training which has suitable and experienced teachers who are able to give a 'Youth Focus' to their delivery.

GCIT also acknowledges the need to form partnerships within the community to meet the diverse needs of our young people. We have established links and networks with many agencies and supporters who provide input and assistance to the Youth Program.

Number of Team Members

The team members of the Youth Program consist of a Coordinator, three to six teachers (dependent on the number of classes funded), all of which have expertise in working with high risk or disadvantaged youth. Additional team members consist of external faculty teachers, six casual tutors, numerous volunteer tutors and administration staff.

Teachers working on the Youth Program continue to keep up-to-date with current educational trends by attending Professional Development and undertaking further study. They have participated in the Green Paper Workshops, facilitated workshops on "Working with Youth at Risk", and are unpaid committee members for various Youth Services organisations on the Gold Coast. GCIT has been involved in various studies and surveys conducted by Griffith University students and has entered into practical placement arrangements for students studying education and behavioural management. This is a positive development, as our future educators will have the necessary skills to work with students at risk of failing.

Meeting the State Government's priorities and the vision for the Smart State.

GCIT is one of the many parties involved in **The Gold Coast Youth Commitment Forum** that has been formed to adhere to the commitment promises that have been made to youth nationally. The GCYC Forum aims to provide opportunities for every early school leaver on the Gold Coast.

The White Paper and ETRF

To address the priorities of the White Paper and ETRF, GCIT has undertaken the following initiatives:

- Youth at Risk – Youth unemployment in the Gold Coast region is the second highest in Queensland. In collaboration with Education Queensland, GCIT developed the Youth Program to assist those youth at highest risk.
- Expanded User Choice offerings – GCIT has increased User Choice delivery hours and has also expanded the scope of qualifications to be delivered under Traineeship or Apprenticeship programs.

Breaking the Unemployment Cycle

GCIT's Youth Program has developed strong partnerships with Job Network providers, which provide assistance and access to employment services with a clear focus on enhanced job outcomes. We now have a comprehensive register of local employers willing to participate in work placement. This opportunity gives the young people of the program a meaningful experience rather than a purely academic style of study. GCIT maintains links with employers and investigates the possibility of the student continuing with that employer on an employed, apprenticeship or traineeship basis.

Indigenous Programs

An Indigenous Youth Program was successfully run in commencing in October 2002. It consisted of a Certificate 1 in Vocational Access and/or Certificate II in Workplace Preparation and Practices, selected modules from Certificate II in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educational & Vocational Access and an 80 hour module entitled "Working Culturally". This module has been specified by the GCIT Indigenous Community Advisory Board as it is generally recognised that Indigenous Youth have an identity problem. This module provided the history, spirituality and cultural aspects of indigenous life and has been proven in a 'Risk Cultural Identity Reclamation Program' to play a dramatic part in behavioural improvement of Indigenous Youth.

Strong Partnerships and a commitment to quality, dedication to excellence and provision of improved services

Underlying the quality and success of the program, is the need to engage all relevant stakeholders in the community. The Youth Program has done this successfully. Stronger relationships between the Youth Program and other community services are vital to the success of the program for a number of reasons:

- Youth at risk require more social supports than traditional schools offer. As the central institution and single most stabilizing influence in the lives of youth, the Youth Program is the logical delivery site for added services.
- Support to the family increases a young person's capacity to learn. The Youth Program is striving to reach demanding achievement targets and has strong motivation to meet the needs of families, with positive spin-offs for educational success.
- Collaborative approaches and utilization of community services and their rich resources extending beyond regular hours through integrated services. This avoids duplication, disjointed programs and allowing the students to 'tell their story' to one person.

We now have established links and networks with the following:

- **Education Queensland.** We have built strong educational partnerships to meet the needs of schools in the Gold Coast and surrounding region.
- GCIT has a continuing partnership with **Keebra Park State High School**, funded by Department of Education to provide education to children aged 12-15 years old who have been excluded from school. The program for these young people commenced in 2000 and is now conducted at the Nerang Community Centre in a specialised environment with the assistance of GCIT Youth Program staff. This program has successfully enabled students to return to school or go onto further education and training.
- Local and State Government officials are regularly invited to visit the Youth Program and GCIT encourage and support the students to take an active role by contributing their opinions personally to these delegates. As a direct result of these visits the Gold Coast City Council waived the fees for 12 of our students to attend the **Police Citizens Youth Club** at Ashmore. Through attending the club on a weekly basis these students have obtained positive recreational skills and experienced an alternative way to use their leisure time.

- GCIT works closely with the **Department of Families** who refer their clients to us regularly.
- Partners and supporters who provide input and assistance to the Youth Program and who also refer their clients to us regularly include:
 - Streetsmart
 - YHES House
 - Family Youth and Community Services
 - Project for Homeless Youth
 - Mirakai Drug Rehabilitation Centre
 - Lifeline
 - Juvenile Aid Bureau
 - Re-Connect Family Support
 - Employment Plus
 - Gold Coast Youth Commitment Forum
 - Job Networks
 - Education Queensland and the Gold Coast Secondary Schools
 - Cetrelink
 - DET

The Future

GCIT has a clear vision for the future Youth Program. This vision is shared by the Director and all staff members in the program, who embrace it with the same energy. The growth of the GCIT Youth Program and subsequent achievement of objectives is testimony to their vision. GCIT has always encouraged its staff to exercise initiative and take ownership of projects. This produces a positive environment where teamwork can, and does, thrive.

This program has been cited as best practice with the “Queensland Government ‘Green Paper’ on Education and Training Reforms for the Future”. GCIT will deliver a 3 stage Youth at Risk / White Paper ETRF Trial for 2002 / 2003 to ensure an ongoing commitment to our youth at risk.

Some Case Studies

Ricky Burton, 14, Youth Program 2001

“I was expelled for hitting a teacher. It’s my choice to be here or not and I can talk to the [GCIT] teachers about all sorts of problems in my life. I’d like to have a go at retail but eventually want to become a nurse.”

Sam Guidici, 15, Youth Program 2001

“I was expelled from school. TAFE is more enjoyable and is an easier atmosphere. I am treated more like an adult. I want to go on to further education in I.T.”

Rochelle Hincks, 17, Youth Program 2001

“I was frustrated at school and I wasn’t learning. At TAFE I was treated with respect and made to feel I was worth something. After graduating from the Youth Program I got a job and now I’m thinking of further study, maybe Law”

Kristen Johnson, 16, Youth program 2001

“School is for some people – it just wasn’t for me, so I came here to TAFE and realised that I actually enjoy learning the things that I am taught here. To me, TAFE was a step forward in life.”

Conclusion

The Gold Coast Institute of TAFE Youth Program has many documented examples of our achievements. The major developments to the GCIT Youth Program over the past five years have been to respond to the needs of young members of the Gold Coast community most at risk in terms of disengaging and to assist them to integrate successfully.

In particular, the development of the **Youth Pathways Program** has enabled GCIT to devote more time to raising Literacy and Numeracy skills to NRS Levels 2 & 3, as well as incorporating strategies to encourage better behaviour in the classroom and establish a learning pattern.

This program has led to less of an attrition rate and proved that students progressing to vocational training are better able to cope with a classroom environment and with the literacy and numeracy skills needed to study and work.

Measurable outcomes include:

1. Students have established a learning pattern.

2. Students have achieved Literacy and Numeracy skills at NRS Levels 1 and/or 2 and/or 3.
3. Students have progressed to:
 - a. GCIT Youth Programs, or
 - b. A vocational training program, or
 - c. An academic program, or
 - d. Literacy/Numeracy training at a higher NRS Level, or
 - e. Return to school, or
 - f. Apprenticeship or Traineeship, or
 - g. Part-time or full-time employment, or
 - h. Further or Higher education.