

Report of Study visit on the management and operation of mentoring programs For deprived children and youth (November 3-6, 2009; Sydney, Australia)



nsw commission for
children & young people



Prepared by:

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Ms May Wong, Hans Andersen Club Ltd

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(February 5, 2010)

(A) Introduction

➤ Theme & Objectives

To study the management and operation of mentoring programs for deprived children and youth in New South Wales, Australia.

➤ Itinerary

Date and time to be confirmed	Agency and name of program	Characteristics
November 3, 2009 (Tuesday)	Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Cross-cultural mentoring- one-on-one mentoring relationship- high school studies from Year 7 through to Year 12
November 5, 2009 (Thursday) 9:30am – 12:30pm	Plan-it Youth -South Western Sydney Region Plan-it Youth mentoring program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- thinking of leaving school & need extra support to continue at school or prepare for a successful transition from school to work- One to One- Mentor Age: 18 - 80+ years- Mentee Age: 13 - 18 years
November 5, 2009 (Thursday) 2:30am – 4:30pm	RUSH Mentoring Program In 2 Life Incorporated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 'at risk' of suicide, homelessness, depression, self harm, addictive issues and early school leavers- One to One- Mentor Age: 18 /above years- Mentee Age: 12 - 16 years
November 5, 2009 (Thursday) 4:30am – 5:30pm	The Hunter Youth Mentor Collaborative (HYMC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- an umbrella organization- develop, support and promote the growth of mentoring programs through: monthly networking meetings and special forums- funding for special projects; and advocate on behalf of mentoring groups.
November 6, 2009 (Thursday) 2:30am – 5:30pm	NSW Commission for Child and Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- an independent organisation working with others to make NSW a better place for children and young people.

➤ Delegates List

With the support from Mr Ken Chan and Ms Karlie Tang of H.K. Council of Social Service, a group of six delegates was formed. The details are (in alphabetic order):

Ms Chow Oi Ting
Ms Chu Lai Ying
Mrs Eltha WONG
Ms May Wong
Mr Wong Chi Yuen
Ms Yu Fan

Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service
Hong Kong Christian Service
Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service
Hans Andersen Club Ltd
Society for Community Organization (SOCO)
The Hong Kong .Federation of Youth Groups

The present report briefly records the observations during the visit. Feedbacks from the group members and possible implications to Hong Kong were also mentioned in the following sections.

(B) Evaluation of the Event Programme

1. AIME (Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience)

Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience is an Indigenous Corporation and a not-for-profit charity with Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status that uses a unique style of structured education mentoring to link university students in a one-on-one relationship with high school Indigenous students. AIME's objectives are to increase Year 10, Year 12 and university admission rates for all Indigenous Australian students who participate in the program. AIME partners with university student volunteers in a one-on-one mentoring relationship with a high school Indigenous student, for an hour a week over the course of a 17-week program. Apart from the impact AIME is having on Indigenous high school students, it offers a significant opportunity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous university students to gain invaluable experience working with Indigenous high school students, and offers a great base for university-marketing and recruitment with AIME facilitating the development of long-term partnerships between local high schools and the university. The project originated with 2 enthusiastic students from University of Sydney. For 2009, there are in total 22 staff serving in the project.

During the session, the representative, Paul briefly presented the history of Australia and the present difficulties of Aboriginal children facing with. The project was originated when the founder Jack Manning Bancroft appealed to his classmates for their weekly participation to support the Aboriginal students a one-to-one basis in learning different skills such as time management, study techniques, essay writing, financial management, drugs & alcohol problems. Such important details of operation and management of the mentoring programs as staffing, funding and funding raising initiatives, operation handbooks, matching criterion, and evaluation methods were all discussed.

2. The Hunter Central Coast Plan-it Youth Community Mentoring Program

The Hunter Central Coast Plan-it Youth Community Mentoring Program is a school-based mentoring program for students aged 15-19 years who may leave school without a work or career plan. The aim of the program was to support students to explore their options prior to leaving school so that they could make informed choice.

The nature of the mentorship belonged to one-on-one mentoring relationship. Those volunteers were trained through Hunter Institute of TAFE (Outreach) and with successful application to Plan-it-Youth.

Further, Plan-it Youth Hunter Central Coast faced a new challenge to reorganizing to continue with one fulltime coordinator.

It was a very special meeting as those representatives from Hong Kong could join the program session directly with those mentors and mentees. Before running the session, the mentor team leader, Margaret, briefly introduced the purpose and theme of the session to those mentors and mentees together. Then mentors and mentees divided into small groups and started to discuss and share the topic of 'Generosity'.

Furthermore, during the group session, both mentors and mentees also shared their valuable experience, such as why they joined the scheme, as well as how they evaluated the outcome of the program etc.

3. RUSH Mentoring Program In 2 Life Incorporated

The RUSH, which is an abbreviation of “Reducing yoUth Self Harm”, is a mentoring program mobilizes caring volunteer adults and qualified youth workers to make a valuable contribution back into the community by mentoring struggling young people. The program aims at supporting young people through every day life in simple and meaningful ways. This is achieved by providing mentors for young people at an early enough age before entrenched problematic behaviors occur and provides an accessible adult for the youth to seek help and advice from.

RUSH offers to the community a project that targets youth who are 'at risk' of suicide, homelessness, depression, self harm, addictive issues and early school leavers. RUSH is a mentoring program that will be implemented in the local community for the benefit of the whole community. It is a holistic approach to providing support services to young people who have found life difficult, and their choice factor relatively unsuccessful. Harm mineralization is an initiative in the early prevention risk management of suicide and other related behaviors.

During the meeting, the Regional Director and Mentoring Coordinator delivered a talk to introduce the mission as well as the content of the Mentoring Programme as followings:

According to official statistics, although the suicide rates of the young people in Australia have halved since 1998 from 17.1 in 100,000 young people to 8.3 in 100,000 young people in 2008, suicide is still the leading cause of death for Youth in Australia. Moreover, 1 in 4 young people aged 16 to 24 (26%) have a mental disorder in any given year. Also, 23% of Australians aged 14 to 19 had used illicit drugs, while 75% of adult mental and substance abuse use disorders begin in childhood or adolescences. Besides, the families in Australia also have a significant change that in 2006 there were 51,375 divorces, 51% of these involved children and youth that they were leaving fewer positive role models in homes.

In order to facilitate a care in the community and strengthen the support to the Youth, a unique model was developed by RUSH mentoring which centered on the community, school and family working together for the youth and the wider community.

By holding the mission of assisting the youth from destructive to constructive life path and the motto of prevention is better than cure, the Mentoring was developed which targeted on “at risk” youth aged from 12 to 16. The “at-risk” youth was defined as those early adolescent students aged 12 to 16 who attend local high schools and have at risk of suicide, self-harm, early school leaving, drug & alcohol abuse. In addition, student who may not be involved in such activities but are showing early signs that they will participate in the future, e.g. truancy, behavioural troubles, social troubles at school, etc, can also be the mentee of the program.

The mentor and mentee has to meet once a week for 12 months and each meeting last for 1 to 2 hours. Group activities will also be arranged by RUSH in order to facilitate communication and understanding. The activities are generally free of charge or with special discount received from corporate and it is hoping that “3F” (Fun, Food and Friendship) can be built up throughout the activities.

As the mentee is generally identified from the school, the triangular relationship of school—RUSH—Student/Family is critical to the success of the program. Generally speaking, the student (potential mentee) will be identified by school teachers and then referred to Welfare teachers. After that, the welfare teacher will approach the student and their parents to invite them joining the program. Student is required to complete the form and the form will be sent to mentor co-ordinator. Then mentor co-ordinator will pair up student (mentee) with community volunteer (mentor) to form a mentor-mentee relationship.

According to the sharing from the RUSH staff, all volunteers are from the local community, who are generally recruited from local churches and general public recruited after media and marketing campaign in wider community. In order to ensure the mentor's quality and protection the best interest of the child, a clear screening process will be arranged. Potential mentor has to register the interest together with the detailed application form.

After that, the program co-ordinator will interview the applicants and a probity check, i.e. Working with Children Check, which prohibits a person convicted of a serious sex offence or other registered offence engaging in either paid or unpaid child-related employment from working in child-related employment. It aims to create workplaces where children are safe and protected, and where the people who work with children are appropriately screened. Besides, the applicant has to provide at least 3 character references for assessment. Once s/he was selected, the mentor will pair up with the mentee of the same sex.

As for the training to mentor, the training program for mentors and / or mentees that includes:

- Skilled and experienced trainer
- Communication skills
- Cultural and social sensitivity, and acceptance of individual differences
- Awareness of child abuse and child safe environment practices
- Guidelines on how to get the most out of the mentoring relationship
- Crisis management and problem solving
- Referral points for other support services

During the training, roles and responsibilities of being a mentor, do's and don'ts of relationship management, boundaries and limitations for the mentor's contact with the mentee will also be highlighted.

Besides, in order to retain mentors and keep up morale, a term meeting like tea/coffee gathering will be held in each quarter among mentors, term mentoring excellence award will be prized to those mentors who put much effort and perform well in the mentoring relationship. Moreover, a Christmas card, birthday card and special cards will be sent during festival and a special event was held, and a regular SMS contact and telephone call will be made once a month from program co-ordinator to mentors regularly.

Making use of group dynamics is also essential for establishing a good mentor-mentee relationship. As mentioned above, RUSH program will design different group activities like BBQ, tennis-playing, hiking in order to facilitate communication and exchange between mentors and more understanding between mentor and mentee.

4. The New South Wales Commission for Children and Young people

The NSW Commission for children and Young People is an independent organisation that works with others to make NSW a better place for children and young people. The Commission reports directly to the NSW Parliament, and the Committee on Children and Young People oversees their work.

The Commission is guided by its legislation, the Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998, to influence and initiate broad, positive change for children and young people. The legislation requires mutual cooperation between the Commission, government and non-government agencies on laws, policies, practices and services that affect children and youth people.

The following principles guide everything they do:

- The safety, welfare and wellbeing of children is paramount.
- The views of children and young people are taken seriously.
- The relationships between children, their families and their communities are important for their safety, welfare and well-being.
- Vulnerable children and young people will be given priority.
- The Commission does not have the powers to examine individual complaints about unfair, illegal or improper conduct relating to children. Individual grievances by children and young people can be referred to the Ombudsman, Health Care Complaints Commission or Independent Commission Against Corruption for investigation.

During the meeting, the staffs delivered an introduction on their role, mission as well as the content of the Commission as followings:

➤ Advisors:

The young peoples's reference group is made up of 12 young people from across NSW. They are a sound board for the Commissioner and they provide feedback and advice on issues that affect children and young people.

The Expert Advisory Committee is grouped of eight independent professionals who work in the interests of children and young people meet regularly with the Commissioner to provide assistance and advice. Members of the group have child-related expertise in areas such as health, education, child protection, child development, the law, employment and sport.

➤ Responsibilities and Functions:

They work to improve the safety, welfare and well being of all children and young people in NSW. They speak up for kids to get their points of view heard by adult decision makers.

They influence and initiate positive change by:

- implementing and monitoring laws to help employers with recruiting suitable people to work with children and young people
- managing a voluntary accreditation system for counsellors and therapists who work with people who have committed sexual offences against children
- holding inquiries into important issues relating to children and young people

- making recommendations to Parliament, and government and non-government agencies on legislation, policies, practices and services that affect children and young people
- promoting children and young people's participation in activities and decision-making about issues that affect their lives
- providing information to help children and young people and people who work with them.

They are also responsible for implementing and monitoring laws that affect all people in child-related employment in NSW to help make workplaces safe for kids. They also run a voluntary accreditation scheme for counsellors who work with people who have committed sexual offences against children.

The legislation, the Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998, sets out their responsibilities and main functions. In summary, it says that:

- children's safety, welfare and well-being is our top priority
- children and young people's views are to be taken seriously
- healthy relationships between children, families and communities are important for the well-being of children
- it is important that organisations work together for the safety, welfare and well-being of children.
- They do this through projects, inquiries, training and seminars, community education, research, providing information and advice, the Working With Children Check and the Child Sex Offender Counsellor Accreditation Scheme.

➤ **Main areas of work:**

Main areas of work are encouraging the participation of children and young people in decision-making that affects their lives; strengthening the important relationships in the lives of children and young people, and improving their well-being and helping to create child-safe child-friendly organizations.

In conclusion, how they do this:

- Promoting ways for children and young people to participate. Having input into laws and policies that affect children and young people.
- Undertaking research, including research for the NSW Child Death Review Team
- Promoting awareness and understanding about kids' issues
- Building child-safe and child-friendly organizations
- Implementing and monitoring the Working With Children Check
- Administering the Child Sex Offender Counsellor Accreditation Scheme
- Producing publications and resources about kids' issues

(C) Observation/Implications to Hong Kong/Recommendations

➤ Observation

1. New Concepts/services learnt

First of all, audio-visual elements are included in the group session so as to encourage participation of the mentors and mentees, for example, the play back of text during the debriefing session will attract participants' attention. Secondly, different perspectives can be found in AIME as their staffs are from different disciplines, e.g. education, indigenous affairs, media.

➤ Implications to Hong Kong

1. Comprehensive training materials

After working for over 5 years, RUSH mentoring program has developed a comprehensive training material for the potential mentors. Topics like child abuses, communication skills, cultural and social sensitivity and even discussion on crisis management were also covered thorough the training, which can equip participants with wider scope of knowledge and better prepared for initiating a mentor-mentee relationship. More time and effort were put on the training sessions, but it would become inevitably be more difficult in settings in Hong Kong in view of the huge caseload required per year and the lack of manpower resources.

2. Strong culture of volunteerism

There is a strong sense of volunteerism in Australia for people from all walks of life, especially the retired people. They are willing to contribute to their society. As shared by Australian program coordinator, mentors are obligated to mentoring services and happy to share their experiences with mentees regardless of employment status. It is because they have strong mind for the betterment of children as well as the society. However, in Hong Kong, volunteers recruited are less mature. They have little commitment regarding to mentoring services as they are more interest-minded and care on the reciprocation. Quality of service is thus lowered and hindered by such thinking.

3. Mentoring service to people in need

In RUSH, mentoring is a means of assisting youth-at-risk. Mentors will act as a role model to them and encourage their participation in the community. Thus, community integration and community networking are stressed in mentoring service rather than poverty tackling. For the Child Development Fund in Hong Kong, mentoring programs are treated as an anti-poverty measure, only poor family children are eligible to use such service. Yet, it should be noted that not only children facing poverty have social problem, it applies to all youth and children in Hong Kong. The RUSH's experience inspires the Hong Kong Government as well as NGOs in Hong Kong that mentoring service should be widely employed to different youth in needs.

4. Facilitation of mentoring network among different regions

Not only providing service to all people in need, Australian workers also emphasize on the exchange of latest information among organizations of different regions. According to RUSH coordinator, the Hunter Youth Mentoring Collaborative (HYMC) is established in order to facilitate such. Its members are from different organizations and meetings are held regularly. Apart from exchange of latest mentoring information, assistance on funding issues, idea sharing among mentors, coordinators and mentees can also be found in the meetings. It can on one hand, promotes mentoring program among the country and on the other hand, improves mentoring skills, knowledge and management of different organizations. Hong Kong, can then take this as reference by forming similar network to create a platform for the mentioned goals. Skills and knowledge can be accumulated to enhance further development of mentoring service.

5. Mentoring service to the minorities

The minorities in Australia can also receive support from AIME. The aim of this project is to enhance the understanding of non-indigenous students through programs. The project has remarkable result. It matches up Aboriginal student with Australian mentors of European origin. Surprisingly, cultural sensitivity is not a problem at all. AIME would like to take the racial variety as a normal social facet in Australian community. This can be applied in Hong Kong too as our society is a multi-ethnic as well. Government support is important to implement the similar project.

6. Reasonable staff-to-case ratio to maintain good mentoring development

A reasonable staff-to-case ratio can ensure the service quality and maintain good mentor-mentee relationship. According to the sharing of RUSH staff, we have learnt that a reasonable ratio is 3 staffs to 60 cases at the same time. Low caseload enables coordinator to share more time to maintain good relationship between mentors and mentees. Unfortunately, high caseload in Hong Kong creates tremendous pressure on workers. Thus, service quality will then be adversely affected.

7. Clear screening mechanism of applicants

Apart from filing application forms, attending trainings and conducting interviews, a mandatory screening process is established in the course of selecting mentors. The check, namely Working with Children Check, is implemented by the New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People. Its aim is to determine whether people are suitable to work in child related employment. It prohibits persons who convicted serious sex offenses or other registered offenses to engage in child-related work. This is highly referential to Hong Kong as it can increase the safeguard and minimize the threat for the best interest of the child. In order to avoid creating discrimination or deterring ex-offenders from integrating into the society, legislation should confine the area of prohibition on specific work, either paid or voluntary, like child-care workers, volunteers of child service etc.

➤ Recommendations

First of all, privacy problem is needed to be concerned. During our visit to AME, we found that no social worker is involved. Although the program strongly required the mentors to undergo a probity check and examination on their psychological profile, some important principles like confidentiality, self-determination, non-judgmental attitude may easily be neglected. Supervision is very important to mentors so as to maintain service quality. However, the proportion of staff in AME seems not sufficient enough to provide adequate support to mentors in the project.

Secondly, more dialogues with applicants and related people are recommended. The whole picture can be explored if we can meet with mentors, mentees and high school teachers rather than only organizers.

Lastly, this visit is well-constructed and running. It is a treasure experience for visitor to join the program session directly and have first-hand information about process and interaction between mentors and mentees. Moreover, Hong Kong participants can share the views from different parties during this visit, e.g. agency representatives, mentors and mentees.

(D) Evaluation of the Event Organization

➤ Organization / arrangement of the organizer

Overall speaking, the arrangement of AIME (Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience), The Hunter Central Coast Plan-it Youth Community Mentoring and RUSH Mentoring Program In 2 Life Incorporated were very good.

Those staffs were friendly and supportive during the visit. Moreover, they were well prepared to introduce their services. However, the arrangement of NSW Commission for Children and Young People was far below expectation. Not only the time of visit was very short, but also the content of introduction was very brief and general.

➤ Area for improvement

It would be better if the organizations could arrange delegates to have a direct site observation of actual practice and have a chance to dialogue with mentors and mentees. Hence, an all around picture of the mentoring service could be explored.

Study visit would be better to held after 6 Nov so as to avoid Australia Big Festival ~ Melbourne Cup. Since much NGOs and schools were in holiday during that festival.

(E) Conclusion

- Organizations and agencies with rich and strong experience on the development of mentoring schemes and coordinating institutes different models or approach for children and youth. It can be explored various issues in developing, organizing, managing and monitoring schemes from rich experience as well as from relevant evaluative research of other country. Moreover, It will be a treasure experience for those delegations to join the sharing session and to have first hand information about the field visits and interaction between the mentor and mentee in this study visit in Australia.
- Regarding the different organizations of the captioned event, the staff of RUSH mentoring is a good example for the children and mentor. It can be seen from the attitude of the staff in arrangement the visitation and the course of introducing the programme. Passion, love and enthusiastic were found in the mind of the staff and the programme.
- There is a strong culture of volunteerism in Australia. They did have a strong mission for the betterment of the children and youth; especially the retired persons contribute their time to the society. Compare with Hong Kong, the mentorship program are less mature. Thus, the commitment and the mentor-mentee relationship must be strengthened in the future development of mentoring program service.

(F) Appendices (Refer to the field visit record form)

- Publication brought from the event:
 - a) Interactive Textbook, Year 9, Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience, 2009
 - b) Leadership Textbook, Year 10, Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience, 2009
 - c) Leaflets of community mentoring program in Path-It Youth
 - d) Volunteer mentor information folder, RUSH, 2009
 - e) Notes of youth mentoring in Rush
 - f) Annual report, NSW Commission for Children and Youth People, 2008-2009

(G) Contacts brought from the Study Visit

Agency and name of program	Address	Contact person
Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME) AIME Indigenous Corporation http://www.aimementoring.com	Level 1, Wentworth Building, Cnr City Rd and Butlin Ave, University of Sydney, NSW-2006	Deborah Kirby-Parsons Admin Director Tel: (02) 9563 6813 Fax: (02) 9563 6815 dkp@aimementoring.com
RUSH Mentoring Program In 2 Life Incorporated www.in2life.org.au	28 Fraser Pde, Charlestown, NSW-2290	Matt Schultz Mentor Coordinator matt@rush.org.au Phone: 0249206147 Fax: 0249421096
Plan-it Youth -South Western Sydney Region Plan-it Youth mentoring program www.in2life.org.au	Cnr Lithgow & Lindesay Streets, Campbelltown, NSW-2560	Janette Chisholm Regional Coordinator for South Western Sydney janette.chisholm@det.nsw.edu.au Phone: (02) 46259321 0429657769 Fax: (02) 46281689
Hunter Valley Mentoring Collaborative www.hymc.com.au	(N.A)	Melinda Smith HYMC Vice Chair Phone 1300 798 896 E-mail info@hymc.com.au
NSW Commission for Child and Young People	Level 13, 55 Hunter Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000 GPO Box 5341 Sydney NSW 2001	Ian Webb <i>Policy Advisor</i> Tel: (02) 9226 2568 Mob: 0438?291?001 Fax: (02) 9228 4598 Ian.Webb@west.minister.nsw.gov.au

THE HONG KONG COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE

Service Development

STUDY VISIT ON THE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF MENTORING PROGRAMS

For deprived children and youth

(NOV 3-6, 2009; SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA)

AGENCY VISIT / MEETING RECORD FORM

1. **Date of Visit/Meeting:** 3 November 2009
2. **Name of Agency:** AIME (Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience)
3. **Address/Meeting Venue:** Level 1, Wentworth Building, Cnr City Rd & Butlin Av,
University of Sydney
4. **Contact Person:**
Name & Position: Deborah Kirby-Parsons, Admin Director

Telephone no: (02) 9563 6813 Fax: (02) 9563 6815
5. **Description of Agency**, including type of services provided, target served, programmes, staffing, funding sources, and special facilities:

Background of AIME :

Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience is an Indigenous Corporation and a not-for-profit charity with Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status that uses a unique style of structured education mentoring to link university students in a one-on-one relationship with high school Indigenous students.

Targets and Objectives:

AIME's objectives are to increase Year 10, Year 12 and university admission rates for all Indigenous Australian students who participate in the program.

Programmes:

AIME partners university student volunteers in a one-on-one mentoring relationship with a high school Indigenous student, for an hour a week over the course of a 17-week program. Apart from the impact AIME is having on Indigenous high school students, it offers a significant opportunity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous university students to gain invaluable experience working with Indigenous high school students, and offers a great base for university marketing and recruitment with AIME facilitating the development of long-term partnerships between local high schools and the university.

Staffing:

The project originated with 2 enthusiastic students from University of Sydney. For 2009, there are in total 22 staff serving in the project.

Funding Sources:

The project requires A\$260,000 for 1 site serving 100 pairs of mentors and mentees, in which A\$200,000 is granted by the university, A\$8,000 from the schools and others from donations and local charity trusts. AIME also received in-kind support from corporates (e.g. legal advices from Baker & Mackenzie).

Others:

AIME has developed a set of teaching handbooks to deliver the mentoring activities for participants at different grades. The handbooks are well written and become handy references for the volunteers involved. Its staff is innovative to make use of ICT (e.g. Youtube) in delivering training content, publicity and fund-raising appeals.

6. Content of Meeting:

During the session, the representative, Paul briefly presented the history of Australia and the present difficulties of Aboriginal children facing with. The project was originated when the founder **Jack Manning Bancroft** appealed to his classmates for their weekly participation to support the Aboriginal students on a one-to-one basis in learning different skills such as time management, study techniques, essay writing, financial management, drugs & alcohol problems. Such important details of operation and management of the mentoring programs as staffing, funding and fund-raising initiatives, operation handbooks, matching criterion, and evaluation methods were all discussed.

7. Observation: (e.g. stimulation / implications for Hong Kong)

- Add in audio visual elements in the program that can enhance the participation of the members during the group session. Besides, the play back of the video show may be a good channel for debriefing session / the evaluation of the program.
- The AIME's staff come from different kinds of disciplines, such as education, Indigenous affairs, media, ...etc. They can provide different view of perspectives in designing the content of the program.
- During our visit to AIME, we found that no social worker is involved. Although the program strongly required the mentors to undergo a probity check and also examine their Psychological Profile during the screening process so as to protect the mentees, I wonder some important principles like confidentiality, self determination, non judgmental attitude... may easily be neglected.
- Being a minority group in Australia, the indigenous high school students received the support from AIME. The aim of the project is to enhance the understanding of the Non indigenous students through the mentoring programs. The project has a remarkable result for the indigenous in Australia. Thus, the project is a good model for those minority group in Hong Kong.
- Supervision is very important to mentors so as to maintain the service quality. However, the proportion of the staffs in AIME seems not sufficient enough to provide adequate support to those mentors within the project.

- Though the project matching up the Aboriginal students and Australian mentors who were mainly with European origins, surprisingly, the cultural sensitivity was not an issue that deserved mentors' special attention. It was because AIME would like to take the racial variety as a normal social facet of Australian community.

8. **Recommendations:** (e.g. whether it is worthwhile to visit the agency again?)

The AIME is innovative and effective in mobilizing the potential human capital of university students and from the society. For the mentors, it is definitely a precious lesson to experience "social responsibility" before they start their career paths. For the mentees and the community, the outcomes demonstrated its successes. It is a good reference for Hong Kong.

The AIME staff was friendly and supportive during the visit. It would be even better if the delegates can have a site observation of actual activities and direct dialogues with the mentors and mentees.

Completed by: Ms. Yu Fan (HKFYG) and May Wong (HAC)

Date: 3 December 2009



Drawings from the students call for racial harmony.



Samples of operation handbooks



AIME representative Paul (left front) presenting the project.



Photo with the delegate group

THE HONG KONG COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE

Service Development

STUDY VISIT ON THE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF MENTORING PROGRAMS

For deprived children and youth

(NOV 3-6, 2009; SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA)

AGENCY VISIT / MEETING RECORD FORM

1. **Date of Visit/Meeting:** 5 Nov 2009
2. **Name of Agency:** The Hunter Central Coast Plan-it Youth Community Mentoring Program
3. **Address/Meeting Venue:** Kotara High School
4. **Contact Person:**

Name & Position: Janette Chisholm Regional Coordinator for South Western Sydney

Phone: (02) 46259321 0429657769 **Fax :** (02) 46281689

Mail : janette.chisholm@det.nsw.edu.au

5. **Description of Agency**, including type of services provided, target served, programmes, staffing, funding sources, and special facilities:
(This part can be substituted by attaching printed materials of the Agency.)

The Hunter Central Coast Plan-it Youth Community Mentoring Program is a school-based mentoring program for students aged 15-19 years who may leave school without a work or career plan. The aim of the program was to support students to explore their options prior to leaving school so that they could make informed choice.

The nature of the mentorship belonged to one-on-one mentoring relationship. Those volunteers were trained through Hunter Institute of TAFE (Outreach) and with successful application to Plan-it-Youth.

Further, Plan-it Youth Hunter Central Coast faced a new challenge to reorganizing to continue with one fulltime coordinator.

6. **Content of Meeting:**
It was a very special meeting as those representatives from Hong Kong could join the program session directly with those mentors and mentees. Before running the session, the mentor team leader, Margret, briefly introduced the purpose and theme of the session to those mentors and mentees together. Then mentors and mentees divided into small groups and started to discuss and share the topic of 'Generosity'.

Further, during the group session, both mentors and mentees also shared their valuable experience, such as why they joined the scheme, as well as how they evaluated the outcome of the program etc.

7. **Observation:** (e.g. stimulation / implications for Hong Kong)

- Volunteers are required to enroll and complete a 12 week TAFE Outreach Course “Mentoring in the Community”. The Role of Government support is very important in implementing the mentoring program.
- Retirement person can be an important resource for mentoring program as they have time, fruitful working experience and life wisdom.
- School-based mentoring program is a very good approach as students can be benefited very much from the one-on-one mentoring relationship in the career planning during school time.
- The program is very well organized and structured as each mentor has the program handbook before running the session. Hence, the mentors will be more confidence to start the session, as well as develop the mentoring relationship.

8. **Recommendations:** (e.g. whether it is worthwhile to visit the agency again?)

The program is worthy visit again as it is well structured and well running. Moreover, it will be a treasure experience for those visitors to join the program session directly and to have first hand information about the session process and interaction between the mentor and mentee. Furthermore, during this visit, Hong Kong participants can get different parties’ point of view i.e. the agency representatives, mentors and mentees on the effectiveness of the program.

Completed by: Chu Lai Ying, Phoebe (HKCS)
Date : 5 December 2009



Venue of meeting : Kotara High School



Mentor Group Leader, Margret introduced the Session to those Mentors & Mentees.



HK participants joined the Mentor & Mentee Program session together.



Mentee shared her point of view after the program session.



HK participants together with the Plan-it-Youth Mentoring Program Representatives.

THE HONG KONG COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE

Service Development

STUDY VISIT ON THE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF MENTORING PROGRAMS

For deprived children and youth

(NOV 3-6, 2009; SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA)

AGENCY VISIT / MEETING RECORD FORM

1. **Date of Visit/Meeting:** 5 November 2009 (Thursday)
2. **Name of Agency:** RUSH Mentoring Program In 2 Life Incorporated
3. **Address/Meeting Venue:** 28 Fraser Pde, Charlestown, NSW-2290, Newcastle
& Hunter Region, RUSH Mentoring Services, Australia
[<http://www.in2life.org.au/>]
4. **Contact Person:**
Name & Position: Matt Schultz, Mentor Coordinator

Telephone no: 0249206147 Fax: 0249421096
5. **Description of Agency**, including type of services provided, target served, programmes, staffing, funding sources, and special facilities:
(This part can be substituted by attaching printed materials of the Agency.)

Introduction to In 2 Life and RUSH

In 2 Life is an independent non-profit organization operating an early intervention Mentoring and life skills program for troubled and vulnerable young people aged 12-16, who are experiencing significant difficulties at home, school and in their local community.

In 2 Life was founded in 2001 in South Australia, establishing the RUSH Mentoring Program which has now grown to include schools in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia. By providing a vital school-based mentoring program, it assists young people overcome personal crisis and negative life experiences.

The RUSH, which is an abbreviation of "Reducing yoUth Self Harm", is a mentoring program mobilizes caring volunteer adults and qualified youth workers to make a valuable contribution back into the community by mentoring struggling young people. The program aims at supporting young people through every day life in simple and meaningful ways. This is achieved by providing mentors for young people at an early enough age before entrenched problematic behaviors occur and provides an accessible adult for the youth to seek help and advice from.

RUSH offers to the community a project that targets youth who are 'at risk' of suicide, homelessness, depression, self harm, addictive issues and early school leavers. RUSH is a mentoring program that will be implemented in the local community for the benefit of the whole community. It is a holistic approach to providing support services to young people who have found life difficult, and their choice factor relatively unsuccessful. Harm mineralization is an initiative in the early prevention risk management of suicide and other related behaviors.

Target served

The target group for this project is young 'at risk' people aged between 12-16 years. This target group needs positive lifestyle modeling and the development in relationships, which have normally broken down within their own families. Their needs are inclusive of providing support services due to their risk of suicide, homelessness, early school leaving, alcohol and drug abuse. RUSH has been designed to recruit and train mentors to be available night times and weekends for youth when they are most at risk of self-harm and core services are not available. Some of the outcomes are expected to be:

- An increase in the resilience in young people who are at risk of harmful drug-use, leaving school early, homelessness and self-harm
- Reduced truancy rates
- Increased self-esteem
- Positive change in class-room behavior
- Development in stronger family and community relationships
- Youth are provided with the opportunity to develop and improved skills in leadership and communication

Although the RUSH mentors are not counselors, by relating intimately with the young people and their families, intervention can occur as mentors observe crisis' developing and make the appropriate referrals and /or find other necessary support.

The community will benefit as truancy will decrease, criminal activity will decrease, violent behavior and crimes will decrease, drug-use and addictive behaviors will decrease.

Programmes

The services at RUSH are mainly divided into three parts: RUSH Mentoring, RUSH Education and RUSH Youth Centre:

RUSH Mentoring

The mentors are members of the local community who volunteer some time each week, to build the relationship into a local High School Student's life. RUSH Mentoring allows the youth to have someone else to talk to in times of need or when critical choices are made in their lives. While not all youth are comfortable with talking to their parents about issues, the mentor allows the youth to confide in another source and ask for advice in a safe environment.

The main objective of RUSH is to provide young people, already identified as being at risk with a mentor who will be able to help and encourage the young people to make better decisions and help them achieve their full potential. A secondary objective is to connect youth, community, schools and families.

The mentoring relationship is on one-on-one basis. As far as the recruitment of the mentee was concerned, the mentee was identified by the welfare department and the students together with the families will have an agreement to enter a twelve month mentoring period. The mentor/mentee connection is based upon common interest and same gender. The mentoring is primarily done outside of school hours.

Mentors are recruited from the community. After a thorough screening process they are then trained in mentoring good practices. Mentors volunteer an hour a week for twelve months. Comprehensive training together with the mission of the mentoring program will be provided to the mentors and the mentors recruited should equip with positive role models and demonstrate a recording of doing life well.

RUSH Education

RUSH Educational Seminars involved youth communicators, and whole school assemblies in High Schools. At the seminars they speak about their life experiences, problems they have had, and how they have dealt with them in the past and present. Help seeking behavior is encouraged through these talks, as solutions and alternatives are presented. Past seminars have been very successful, and those speaking are willing to take time afterwards to chat to students.

RUSH Youth Centre

The RUSH Mentoring program is unique in one very important way. The Youth centre which is not used by any other mentoring program is a place of fun and friendship. Designed around is the idea of giving Mentors and Mentees a place to build their relationship through activities.

Youth Centres are only accessible by the Mentee if they are with their Mentor. The centres are open to the Mentor and Mentee free of charge and are there to give them a base of activity while they grow in their relationship. A range of activities are at each centre from board game to computer networks, X-Box and Table Tennis. While each centre may offer different options, each one is designed with the youth in mind.

Other related services

In 2 Life through its RUSH program also conducts educational seminars through high schools throughout South Australia. These seminars address issues of harmful drug use, self-harming behavior, dealing with crises and homelessness. Mental health rational behind these seminars is to encourage help seeking behavior amongst adolescence. To this end In 2 Life is now developing a formal campaign to further promote help seeking behavior.

RUSH Mentoring brings the local community together for the cause of local youth. Community members freely offer their time to support a student of the local High School. This support may take various forms, such as help with homework, going to events, hanging out at the Youth Centre, or just being there to talk too.

The RUSH program started in September 2004 at Hunter region and it serves school by mentoring young people through:

➤ Self-esteem based seminar mentoring

RUSH mentoring services' self-esteem seminars enable RUSH to address whole school years on building resilience and self-esteem in their lives. The seminars fit with the welfare department's curriculum and all receive outstanding feedback from both students and teachers. Until the date of the visit, over 15,000 students in schools have attended the seminars rendered by RUSH.

➤ **Leadership mentoring**

At the end of 2007, RUSH also attempted to co-operate with a high school by starting a leadership mentoring program which equip, empower and stir up in young people to desire to lead in their sphere of life.

➤ **Camps**

Besides, camps are organized in order to accelerate the mentoring experience for both mentors and mentees by creating common experience and establishing common goals. The participants can learn life skills and team principles which were proven to have a life changing effect for mentors, mentees and whole families.

➤ **Mentor and mentee events**

Quarterly events purposed to accelerate the mentoring relationship. Activities like boating, BBQ, tennis days, visiting park, etc., Mentors, mentees and their whole family are invited to attend those activities.

Staffing

To create stability in a volunteer mentoring program, RUSH employ a Mentoring Coordinator to oversee the operation. The staff ratio is one day employed to every 10 active mentors. As for the RUSH Hunter Region Team, there are three employed staff, including Regional Director, RUSH administrator, and Mentor Co-ordinator.

Funding sources

RUSH Hunter Region has operated on donations, sponsors, fundraising and grants:

Donations: A number of people were identified who contribute to the project regularly.

Sponsors: Certain business and churches were regularly sponsored the services.

Fundraising: RUSH also holds two fund-raising events a years, including annual dinner auction and annual business breakfast.

Grants: Besides, grants were received constantly from organizations, like Commonwealth Bank, Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation, Ansvar Insurance and ANZ Bank.

6. Content of Meeting:

During the meeting, the Regional Director and Mentoring Coordinator delivered a talk to introduce the mission as well as the content of the Mentoring Programme as followings:

6.1 Why program was started?

According to official statistics, although the suicide rates of the young people in Australia have halved since 1998 from 17.1 in 100,000 young people to 8.3 in 100,000 young people in 2008, suicide is still the leading cause of death for Youth in Australia. Moreover, 1 in 4 young people aged 16 to 24 (26%) have a mental disorder in any given year. Also, 23% of Australians aged 14 to 19 had used illicit drugs, while 75% of adult mental and substance abuse use disorders begin in childhood or adolescences. Besides, the families in Australia also have a significant change that in 2006 there were 51,375 divorces, 51% of these involved children and youth that they were leaving fewer positive role models in homes.

In order to facilitate a care in the community and strengthen the support to the Youth, a unique model was developed by RUSH mentoring which centered on the community, school and family working together for the youth and the wider community.

6.2. About RUSH Mentoring

By holding the mission of assisting the youth from destructive to constructive life path and the motto of prevention is better than cure, the Mentoring was developed which targeted on “at risk” youth aged from 12 to 16. The “at-risk” youth was defined as those early adolescent students aged 12 to 16 who attend local high schools and have at risk of suicide, self-harm, early school leaving, drug & alcohol abuse. In addition, student who may not be involved in such activities but are showing early signs that they will participate in the future, e.g. truancy, behavioural troubles, social troubles at school, etc, can also be the mentee of the program.

The mentor and mentee has to meet once a week for 12 months and each meeting last for 1 to 2 hours. Group activities will also be arranged by RUSH in order to facilitate communication and understanding. The activities are generally free of charge or with special discount received from corporate and it is hoping that “3F” (Fun, Food and Friendship) can be built up throughout the activities.

6.3 Referral process

As the mentee is generally identified from the school, the triangular relationship of school—RUSH—Student/Family is critical to the success of the program. Generally speaking, the student (potential mentee) will be identified by school teachers and then referred to Welfare teachers. After that, the welfare teacher will approach the student and their parents to invite them joining the program. Student is required to complete the form and the form will be sent to mentor co-ordinator. Then mentor co-ordinator will pair up student (mentee) with community volunteer (mentor) to form a mentor-mentee relationship.

6.4 Recruitment, screening and training for mentors

According to the sharing from the RUSH staff, all volunteers are from the local community, who are generally recruited from local churches and general public recruited after media and marketing campaign in wider community. In order to ensure the mentor’s quality and protection the best interest of the child, a clear screening process will be arranged. Potential mentor has to register the interest together with the detailed application form.

After that, the program co-ordinator will interview the applicants and a probity check, i.e. Working with Children Check, which prohibits a person convicted of a serious sex offence or other registered offence engaging in either paid or unpaid child-related employment from working in child-related employment. It aims to create workplaces where children are safe and protected, and where the people who work with children are appropriately screened. Besides, the applicant has to provide at least 3 character references for assessment. Once s/he was selected, the mentor will pair up with the mentee of the same sex.

As for the training to mentor, the training program for mentors and / or mentees that includes:

- Skilled and experienced trainers
- Communication skills
- Cultural and social sensitivity, and acceptance of individual differences
- Awareness of child abuse and child safe environment practices
- Guidelines on how to get the most out of the mentoring relationship
- Crisis management and problem solving
- Referral points for other support services

During the training, roles and responsibilities of being a mentor, do's and don'ts of relationship management, boundaries and limitations for the mentor's contact with the mentee will also be highlighted.

6.5 Keeping morale and retaining mentors

Besides, in order to retain mentors and keep up morale, a term meeting like tea/coffee gathering will be held in each quarter among mentors, term mentoring excellence award will be prized to those mentors who put much effort and perform well in the mentoring relationship. Moreover, a Christmas card, birthday card and special cards will be sent during festival and a special event was held, and a regular SMS contact and telephone call will be made once a month from program co-ordinator to mentors regularly.

Making use of group dynamics is also essential for establishing a good mentor-mentee relationship. As mentioned above, RUSH program will design different group activities like BBQ, tennis-playing, hiking in order to facilitate communication and exchange between mentors and more understanding between mentor and mentee.

7. Observation: (e.g. stimulation / implications for Hong Kong)

7.1 Strong culture of volunteerism in Australia

There is a strong culture of volunteerism in Australia that people from all walks of life, especially the retired persons are really to contribute their time to the society after retirement. According to the sharing from the program co-ordinator, regardless of the employment status of the mentors, they are more committed to the mentoring service and share a lot with the mentee. They did have a strong mission for the betterment of the children. In view of the Hong Kong situation, the volunteers recruited in Hong Kong to participate the mentorship program are less mature. Some of them, especially some university students, are not mature enough and may have little commitment on the mentoring service. They are more calculative and concerned about their self interest instead of the well-being of the mentee that the service quality and the mentor-mentee relationship will be hindered.

7.2 Clear and screening mechanism of applicants

Apart from filling application form, attending training and interview, a mandatory screening procedure was established in the course of selecting the mentors. The check, namely Working with Children Check, is conducted by The New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People which aims to determine whether people are suitable to work in child related

employment. It prohibits a person convicted of a serious sex offence or other registered offence engaging in either paid or unpaid child-related employment. This is highly referential for Hong Kong as it can increase the safeguard and minimize the threat for the best interest of the child. However, in order to prevent from creating any discrimination or deterring ex-offenders from integrating into the society, the legislation should confine the area of prohibition on a specific paid or unpaid work, like child-care worker, volunteer of child services, etc..

7.3 Comprehensive training materials

After working for over 5 years, RUSH mentoring program has developed a comprehensive training material for the potential mentors. Topics like child abuses, communication skills, cultural and social sensitivity and even discussion on crisis management were also covered thorough the training, which can equip participants with wider scope of knowledge and better prepared for initiating a mentor-mentee relationship. More time and effort were put on the training sessions, but it would become inevitably be more difficult in settings in Hong Kong in view of the huge caseload required per year and the lack of manpower resources.

7.4 Reasonable staff-to-case ratio to good mentorship development

A reasonable staff-to-case ratio can ensure the quality of service and the mentor-mentee relationship. According to the sharing from RUSH staff, it was learnt that three staff has to look after less than 60 cases at the same time. The low caseload enhances the co-ordinator have more time to maintain the relationship with mentors and mentee. Unfortunately, the high caseload in Hong Kong creates tremendous pressure on the worker that the service quality will also be adversely affected.

7.5 Mentoring as a means for children regardless of economic status

In RUSH mentoring, mentoring is a means of assisting the youth at-risk by providing a positive role model to the mentee and enhance their participation in the community. It is a means of community integration and community networking instead of a poverty work. As for the Child Development Fund in Hong Kong, the mentoring program was treated as an anti-poverty strategy that only children from poor families are eligible for joining the program. As the youth in Hong Kong also faces similar social problems, the RUSH's experience inspires the Hong Kong Government as well as NGOs in Hong Kong to reflect if mentoring service should be widely employed to different youth in needs.

7.6 Facilitation of mentoring network among different regions

According to the RUSH's co-ordinator, in order to facilitate exchange among NOGs, the Hunter Youth Mentoring Collaborative (HYMC) was established which members groups from different organizations can meet regularly. It enhances exchange of latest information on mentoring, obtain assistance on funding issues, share ideas with people (including mentors, programme co-ordinators and mentees) who are working on the same issues, promote mentor program as well as improve skills and knowledge on mentoring and programme management. Hong Kong can take this as a reference by forming similar network in order to create a platform to achieve the above goals, knowledge and experience from mentoring can also be accumulated to enhance further development.

8. **Recommendations:** (e.g. whether it is worthwhile to visit the agency again?)

In view of the visit, it is not recommended to visit the agency again. It would be more fruitful if the time of visit can be longer and have dialogues with the mentee and the welfare teacher at high school so that an all around picture of the service could be explored.

Completed by: WONG CHI YUEN

Date: 25 November 2009



Mr. Rick Prosser, the regional director of RUSH Mentoring services, introduced the mission and the underlying values of the services during the visit.



Mr. Matt Schultz, the mentor co-ordinator, introduced the content and the operation of RUSH mentoring program during the visit.



The mentor of RUSH Mentoring shared her mentoring experience with delegation members.



Training materials and information for volunteer mentor of RUSH Mentoring program



The delegation members exchange their views with the staff of RUSH and the executive of the Hunter Youth Mentor Collaborative (HYMC)



The delegation members presented the souvenirs to the representative of RUSH mentoring services and the representative of Hunter Youth Mentor Collaborative (HYMC)

THE HONG KONG COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE

Service Development

STUDY VISIT ON THE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF MENTORING PROGRAMS

For deprived children and youth

(NOV 3-6, 2009; SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA)

AGENCY VISIT / MEETING RECORD FORM

1. **Date of Visit/Meeting:** 6 Nov 2009 (Friday)
2. **Name of Agency:** NSW Commission for Children and Young people
3. **Address/Meeting Venue:** Level 2, 407 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010
4. **Contact Person:**
Name & Position: Stephen Robertson , director, influencing
Telephone no: 0413 452 103 Fax: 9286 7270
Mail : CCYP@kids.nsw.gov.au
5. **Description of Agency**, including type of services provided, target served, programmes, staffing, funding sources, and special facilities:
(This part can be substituted by attaching printed materials of the Agency.)

➤ **The NSW Commission for children and Young People:**

The NSW Commission for children and Young People is an independent organisation that works with others to make NSW a better place for children and young people. The Commission reports directly to the NSW Parliament, and the Committee on Children and Young People oversees their work.

➤ **Role:**

The Commission is guided by its legislation, the Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998, to influence and initiate broad, positive change for children and young people. The legislation requires mutual cooperation between the Commission, government and non-government agencies on laws, policies, practices and services that affect children and youth people.

The following principles guide everything they do:

- The safety, welfare and wellbeing of children is paramount.
- The views of children and young people are taken seriously.
- The relationships between children, their families and their communities are important for their safety, welfare and well-being.
- Vulnerable children and young people will be given priority.

The Commission does not have the powers to examine individual complaints about unfair, illegal or improper conduct relating to children. Individual grievances by children and young people can be referred to the Ombudsman, Health Care Complaints Commission or Independent Commission Against Corruption for investigation.

6. Content of Meeting:

During the meeting, the staffs delivered a introduction on their role, mission as well as the content of the Commission as followings:

➤ Advisors:

The young peoples's reference group is made up of 12 young people from across NSW. They are a sound board for the Commissioner and they provide feedback and advice on issues that affect children and young people.

The Expert Advisory Committee is grouped of eight independent professionals who work in the interests of children and young people meet regularly with the Commissioner to provide assistance and advice. Members of the group have child-related expertise in areas such as health, education, child protection, child development, the law, employment and sport.

➤ Responsibilities and Functions:

They work to improve the safety, welfare and well being of all children and young people in NSW. They speak up for kids to get their points of view heard by adult decision makers.

They influence and initiate positive change by:

- implementing and monitoring laws to help employers with recruiting suitable people to work with children and young people
- managing a voluntary accreditation system for counsellors and therapists who work with people who have committed sexual offences against children
- holding inquiries into important issues relating to children and young people
- making recommendations to Parliament, and government and non-government agencies on legislation, policies, practices and services that affect children and young people
- promoting children and young people's participation in activities and decision-making about issues that affect their lives
- providing information to help children and young people and people who work with them.

They are also responsible for implementing and monitoring laws that affect all people in child-related employment in NSW to help make workplaces safe for kids. They also run a voluntary accreditation scheme for counsellors who work with people who have committed sexual offences against children.

The legislation, the Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998, sets out their responsibilities and main functions. In summary, it says that:

- children's safety, welfare and well-being is our top priority
- children and young people's views are to be taken seriously
- healthy relationships between children, families and communities are important for the well-being of children
- it is important that organisations work together for the safety, welfare and well-being of children.

They do this through projects, inquiries, training and seminars, community education, research, providing information and advice, the Working With Children Check and the Child Sex Offender Counsellor Accreditation Scheme.

➤ **Main areas of work:**

Main areas of work are encouraging the participation of children and young people in decision-making that affects their lives; strengthening the important relationships in the lives of children and young people, and improving their well-being. Besides, helping create child-safe child-friendly organizations.

In conclusion, how they do this:

- Promoting ways for children and young people to participate
- Having input into laws and policies that affect children and young people
- Undertaking research, including research for the NSW Child Death Review Team
- Promoting awareness and understanding about kids' issues
- Building child-safe and child-friendly organizations
- Implementing and monitoring the Working With Children Check
- Administering the Child Sex Offender Counsellor Accreditation Scheme
- Producing publications and resources about kids' issues

7. **Observation:** (e.g. stimulation / implications for Hong Kong)

All employers in NSW, including self employed people, have responsibilities under the Working With Children program. There are three key strategies of the Working With Children program:

➤ **Exclusion of prohibited persons**

This strategy focuses on specified, identified offenders and targets the high risk population of known offenders, called prohibited persons. Under the Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998 prohibited persons are prevented from working in child-related employment. People who have committed serious sex offences against children or adults, or serious physical assault, kidnap or murder offences against children are prohibited persons.

➤ **Working With Children background checks**

The Working With Children background check involves checking the relevant records of people who are being recruited to child-related employment to consider whether they indicate any risk to children. Relevant records are examined to develop an estimate of the risk to children. The result of the estimate of the risk is used by the employer and informs their final recruitment decision.

Only mandatory background checks are carried out through the Working With Children Check. Background checks are conducted by the NSW Commission for Children and Young People and other Approved Screening Agencies. Three specific checks are made for:

- relevant criminal records;
- relevant Apprehended Violence Orders; and
- relevant employment proceedings.

If they find any relevant records during the background check, they will assess the risk of employing the person in that particular position. They then provide an assessment report to the employer.

➤ **Developing child-safe and child-friendly organizations**

This strategy builds the organization so it is a safe and friendly environment for children and minimizes the risk of harm occurring. Experience shows that the commitment to risk management helps makes the organization safer for children, young people and the adults who work there. By making the organization safer and more welcoming places for children, they provide the foundation for the other strategies above, and make them more effective.

The Commission for Children and Young People has developed resources to help them put in place policies, procedures and mechanisms for identifying and managing the risks in the organization, their activities and their staff positions, and for assuring quality. These resources include recruitment, supervision, training, complaints and disciplinary procedures which address the identified organizational and situational risks. They also include the establishment of participatory mechanisms that guard against risk by creating a culture and environment that promotes openness, makes children feel welcome and encourages children to tell them if something is worrying them.

8. **Recommendations:** (e.g. whether it is worthwhile to visit the agency again?)

In view of the this visit, it is not recommended to visit the agency again. It would be more fruitful if it has dialogues with the children and have workshop, training, seminar or community education observations so that a concrete picture of the service could be explored.

Completed by: Ms. CHOW Oi-ting, Chloe (BOKSS)

Date: 5 December 2009



Venue of meeting : NSW Commission for Children and Young people



The delegation members exchange their views



Photo with the delegate group



Training materials and information from NSW Commission for Children and Young people