



## Attitudes Towards School Attendance and Retention Rates by Young People in the Northern Territory Project

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<b>Project Title</b>	Attitudes towards school attendance and retention rates by young people in the Northern Territory Project
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<b>Date</b>	December 2008

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Please note: The Youth Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians is an independent advisory council. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Office of Youth Affairs or the Northern Territory Government.

# **Table of Contents**

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<b><u>List of Illustrations</u></b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b><u>Acknowledgements</u></b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b><u>Abbreviations</u></b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b><u>Executive Summary</u></b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b><u>Introduction</u></b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b><u>Discussion and Major Findings</u></b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b><u>Youth Surveys</u></b> .....	<b>16</b>
1. <i>In School Survey</i> .....	17
2. <i>Out of School Survey</i> .....	37
<b><u>Literature Review</u></b> .....	<b>56</b>
<b><u>Conclusion</u></b> .....	<b>58</b>
<b><u>Recommendations</u></b> .....	<b>59</b>
<b><u>References</u></b> .....	<b>60</b>
<b><u>Appendices</u></b> .....	<b>62</b>
Appendix A – In School Survey .....	63
Appendix B – Out of School Survey.....	66
<b><u>Evaluation</u></b> .....	<b>70</b>

## List of Illustrations

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Graphs 1.1.1 to 1.4.3 relate to the data collected from the In School Survey and Graphs 2.1.1 to 2.4.3 relate to the data collected from the Out of School Survey.

<b>Name of Illustration</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table 1 - Programs/initiatives currently available to young people.....	08
<b>In School Survey</b>	
Graph 1.1.1 – Gender of respondents.....	17
Table 1.1.1 – Gender of respondents.....	17
Graph 1.1.2 – Age of respondents.....	18
Table 1.1.2 – Age of respondents.....	18
Graph 1.1.3 – Cultural identity of respondents.....	19
Table 1.1.3 – Cultural identity of respondents.....	19
Graph 1.1.4 – Main language spoken by respondents.....	20
Table 1.1.4 – Main language spoken by respondents.....	20
Graph 1.1.5 – Geographical distribution of respondents.....	21
Table 1.1.5 – Geographical distribution of respondents.....	21
Graph 1.1.6 – School/Workplace of respondents.....	22
Table 1.1.6 – School/Workplace of respondents.....	22
Graph 1.1.7 – Current year at school.....	23
Table 1.1.7 – Current year at school.....	23
Graph 1.2.1 – Truancy rates of respondents.....	24
Table 1.2.1 – Truancy rates of respondents.....	24
Graph 1.2.2 – Respondents high school certificate completion aspirations.....	26
Table 1.2.2 – Respondents high school certificate completion aspirations.....	26
Graph 1.3.1 – Number of respondents who identified with having a mentor.....	28
Table 1.3.1 – Number of respondents who identified with having a mentor.....	29
Graph 1.3.2 – Influences/Support for individuals’ educational goals.....	30
Table 1.3.2 – Influences/Support for individuals’ educational goals.....	30
Graph 1.4.1 – Support program awareness.....	32
Table 1.4.1 – Support program awareness.....	32
Graph 1.4.2 – Participation in support programs.....	34
Table 1.4.2 – Participation in support programs.....	34
Graph 1.4.3 – Awareness of school to work transition programs.....	36
Table 1.4.3 – Awareness of school to work transition programs.....	36
<b>Out of School Survey</b>	
Graph 2.1.1 – Gender of respondents.....	37
Table 2.1.1 – Gender of respondents.....	37
Graph 2.1.2 – Age of respondents.....	38
Table 2.1.2 – Age of respondents.....	38
Graph 2.1.3 – Cultural identity of respondents.....	39
Table 2.1.3 – Cultural identity of respondents.....	39

Graph 2.1.4 – Main language spoken by respondents.....	40
Table 2.1.4 – Main language spoken by respondents.....	40
Graph 2.1.5 – Highest level of schooling obtained.....	41
Table 2.1.5 – Highest level of schooling obtained.....	41
Graph 2.2.1 – Family/Friends who left school early.....	43
Table 2.2.1 – Family/Friends who left school early.....	43
Graph 2.2.2 – Influence on respondent.....	44
Table 2.2.2 – Influence on respondents.....	44
Graph 2.2.3 – Truancy of respondents.....	45
Table 2.2.3 – Truancy of respondents.....	45
Graph 2.2.4 – Views on Alternative Education.....	47
Table 2.2.4 – Views on Alternative Education.....	47
Graph 2.3.1 – Number of respondents who identified as having a mentor.....	48
Table 2.3.1 – Number of respondents who identified as having a mentor.....	48
Graph 2.3.2 – Influence/Support for individuals educational goals.....	49
Table 2.3.2 – Influence/Support for individuals educational goals.....	49
Graph 2.3.3 – High school certificate completion aspirations.....	51
Table 2.3.3 – High school certificate completion aspirations.....	51
Graph 2.4.1 – Awareness of support programs.....	53
Table 2.4.1 – Awareness of support programs.....	53
Graph 2.4.2 – Participation in support programs.....	54
Table 2.4.2 – Participation in support programs.....	54
Graph 2.4.3 – Awareness of school to work transition programs/initiatives.....	55
Table 2.4.3 – Awareness of school to work transition programs/initiatives.....	55

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## **Abbreviations**

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AIEW – Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers

AITAP – Aboriginal Islander Tertiary Aspirations Program

DET – Department of Education and Training

GTNT – Group Training Northern Territory

MST – Movers and Shakers Team

NT – Northern Territory

NTCE – Northern Territory Certificate of Education

NTG – Northern Territory Government

OYA – Office of Youth Affairs

PHS – Palmerston High School

Round Table – Northern Territory Youth Minister’s Round Table of Young Territorians

SBAT – School Based Apprenticeship/Traineeship

TCHS – Tennant Creek High School

TER – Tertiary Entrance Rank

THS – Taminmin High School

VET – Vocational Education and Training

VETiS – Vocational Education in Schools Program

YMCA – Young Men’s Christian Association

## **Executive Summary**

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The Movers and Shakers Team (MST) consists of three young Territorians who have experienced the Northern Territory Education system first hand. Due to individual experiences, as a team we decided to focus our efforts on addressing 'Attitudes towards attendance and retention rates by young people in the Northern Territory'. During our high school years each member noticed a steady decline in the numbers of their peer group. This impacted on each of the members because there was a realisation that those who 'dropped' out would have to pursue other avenues in education, training and employment. Unfortunately in some cases there were more dead ends than open doors for those who left school early.

At the beginning of the year the Department of Education and Training (DET) provided a list of possible project topics to the Northern Territory Youth Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians (Round Table). The topics identified recognised the necessity to consult with young people to create future improvements. One of the topics of interest that caught the attention of our team was poor attendance rates in Territory high schools. Due to our own personal experiences, of observing the decline of student numbers during our high school years, there was a general consensus that poor attendance was a factor that contributed to young people exiting secondary mainstream education.

Within our team two of the members identify as Indigenous. Both members agreed there was a number of influences and support systems which assisted them to obtain their goal of completing their Northern Territory Certificate of Education (NTCE). A number of programs focused on leadership, mentoring and tutorial assistance however both agreed that one program stood out. The Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Aspirations Program (AITAP) which, among other things, provided support, encouragement, networking opportunities, academic challenges, mentoring and gave young Indigenous people incentives to achieve to the best of their abilities. Another positive aspect of the program was that it was inclusive of all students regardless of their level of academic achievement and generated a sense of pride and respect within the group. Unfortunately, AITAP is no longer in existence and has been replaced with a number of targeted programs such as the Indigenous Leadership and Mentoring Program.

The other member identifies as non-Indigenous and from a background where English is her second language. In her peer group of approximately twelve students, only two graduated from high school, of which she was one. Although a good student, the pressures of year 12 took its toll and she came close to leaving school. It was only with the persistence of her parents and support of her teachers that she completed her NTCE. "If I had known about Vocational Education and Training (VET) and the options available right from the start in year 10 I think I would have graduated with a better Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) score and not felt so pressured to undertake the higher level classes in order to be able to get into my chosen university degree."

With our combined perspectives we were able to identify many parallels and similarities which can be applied to the experiences of young people currently in the process of obtaining their NTCE or making the decision to pursue alternative avenues. The team initially used personal experiences as a means of developing ideas to approach reporting on this topic. To ensure we captured a range of responses we developed two surveys. One of the surveys was distributed to young people attending particular high schools targeted within urban, regional and remote areas. The second survey was developed to capture the perspectives of young people who have chosen not to complete high school. Both surveys attempted to gain an understanding of young people's opinions around education and which programs were available and accessed in order to achieve personal outcomes.

After confirmation and consultation with Office of Youth Affairs (OYA), DET and selected community organisations, surveys were distributed throughout the Territory, utilising various

youth networks and other 2008 Round Table members. The In School Surveys sent to schools were accompanied by a letter to each Principal outlining the project. The MST received 144 completed In School Surveys.

Selected community organisations were contacted to determine the most suitable method for distribution of the Out of School Survey to young people within their programs. The team was disappointed to find that there was a general disinterest in assisting with the collection of this information. It was conveyed by the selected organisations that previous reporting around similar issues and the input that was supplied was not considered or implemented to create future improvements within this area. A minimal response was received (17 surveys) however it did capture a reasonable cross section of individuals from whom the team sought feedback.

The message is loud and clear; young people understand that an education is important as long as it is relevant and delivered in a way that is meaningful to them. This sentiment was supported by 94% of respondents, most indicating that an education is important to be able “to improve in skills and knowledge, so when you get a job you’re ready”. It should be noted that all young people who responded to both the In and Out of School Surveys indicated that an education was an essential element of establishing their future career pathways.

During the research phase it was noted that although there are a significant number of programs and initiatives available for young people in and out of school, the young people surveyed indicated a minimal awareness of the programs listed. These programs are implemented in the Northern Territory and across Australia and can vary from in school and out of school programs. These programs are further explained in the Introduction of this report.

**Table 1: Programs/initiatives currently available to young people**

<b>Program</b>	<b>In School</b>	<b>Out of School</b>
Clontarff	✓	
Indigenous Leadership and Mentoring Program	✓	
YMCA – big brother and sister program	✓	✓
Danila Dilba – youth services	✓	✓
Mission Australia – Youth Beat	✓	✓
Red Cross – The SHAK	✓	✓
Australian Apprenticeships	✓	✓
Workready Program	✓	
Alternative Education Provision Program		✓
Careers Expo	✓	✓
Vocational Education in Schools Program	✓	
Try-a-Trade Program	✓	
Training for Remote Youth Program	✓	✓
Structured Work Placements	✓	
The Smith Family Mentoring Program	✓	
Adopt-A-School Program	✓	

As a means of gaining an understanding of what young people had to say about their education and their future pathways two surveys were developed. Initially the focus was only on young people within the education systems but after consulting with a number of groups it was extended to young people who had exited the education system prior to completing year 12. The results of the surveys are shown in more detail on pages 12 - 57 in the Discussion and Major Finding section of this report.

There is a concern that young people are not getting the degree of support that they need to improve their attendance. The young people surveyed in both the In School Survey and Out of School Survey identified issues such as ‘lack of support’, ‘boring classes’, ‘disengaged teachers’

and 'family problems' as leading to lack of attendance. There were also comments which identified that school was not the primary place where respondents wanted to spend their time, however they still accepted the importance of an education to 'have a good life'.

Many of the students responded positively to the survey and were of the view that an education was an important building block in their futures. Although there was a strong focus towards completing their NTCE it was noted that some respondents were accessing VET and coupling that training with their high school studies to improve their opportunities.

It was also apparent that based on the observation of poor spelling and grammar that there were lower rates of literacy within the Out of School participants. Respondents also indicated that attendance at school could improve if more support in the classroom was provided and large class numbers were reviewed.

Overall based on the data collected from the In School and Out of School Survey the above mentioned key findings provided the MST with the basis for our recommendations.

The following recommendations have been made by the MST regarding issue of 'Attitudes towards attendance and retention rates by young people in the Northern Territory':

**Recommendation 1:** There is a need for more relevant and engaging curriculum to improve the interest of students in schools and promote positive learning in the home environment. The MST feels that student motivation and poor attendance at school would be improved by more engaging teaching methods and a wider variety of subject choices that are made relevant to real world learning and relate to future career pathways. Many young people often question how their learning will be used in the future. A strategy to improve career pathways based on the subjects learned within school would be regarded as beneficial. Instead of a student committing themselves to subjects that they may not see the benefit from, relevance could be added to the subject or course material to relate these to real world situations and using a practical approach to teaching rather than an academic approach.

**Recommendation 2:** Allow flexibility of school hours by creating the opportunity to attend school within negotiated timeframes. Young people have suggested that changing times to their schooling day would be a better way to approach their education as well as having benefits of addressing anti-social behaviour incidents that occur at night time when young people roam the streets. Young people commented that "less school hours" and "school starting later" would be a good way to keep young people at school. Another interesting comment that was noted mentioned that "year 11 and 12 should be taught at university" and that you should be able to "do year 12 from home i.e. web classes where the teacher goes on webcam and teaches classes individually."

**Recommendation 3:** The Northern Territory Government to evaluate the most appropriate approach to addressing service provision to young people who are disengaged from the education system in partnership with target organisations such as the YMCA, Alternative Education Provision Program and other organisations delivering programs to young people in the community.

**Recommendation 4:** All Northern Territory high schools to implement peer mentoring programs to encourage a culture of support and leadership based on programs such as AITAP for all mainstream and Indigenous students. Promote programs in a way that removes the stigma that 'they are for squares' or for 'stupid kids', so to develop a more efficient manner of communicating the benefit of programs and initiatives to all students. One student commented that "there needs to be some sort of incentive, people need to have a class that talks about their future goals and how they can achieve them. They need role models to come in and tell us why they should complete school."

**Recommendation 5:** The Northern Territory Government to make a significant investment in more resources for Alternative Education Programs to support those young people who choose to exit the mainstream education system and discourage involvement in 'at risk' activities.

**Recommendation 6:** Address the size of classes and skills of teachers. A number of comments were directed at the teachers of the schools that we targeted. Students felt that the class sizes were too big and that they were not obtaining the support that they needed from teachers to do well.

## Introduction

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This project aimed to identify a youth perspective on possible improvements to increase attendance and retention rates in Northern Territory High Schools.

Through an initial request by the Office of Youth Affairs (OYA), various Northern Territory Government Departments provided current issues pertaining to youth within their sectors. DET identified school attendance rates as an issue they are striving to improve and have recently focused on strongly, especially concerning Indigenous youth in remote locations. It has been noted by the MST that a large and significant body of research has been undertaken which collaborates concerns that 'attendance' is an issue. The Northern Territory Government and youth organisations have been working to develop methods of addressing the problem.

From an urban perspective there are more opportunities and programs available for students than in remote locations, but there are still challenges that can impact on urban school attendance. The MST has consulted closely with young people who are still at school and those who have left early to identify their perspectives on the causes of poor attendance and retention. We also wanted to discover how students who were thinking about leaving school early could be encouraged and supported to finish school through programs or initiatives that are currently available or that could be developed in the future.

The research team focused on one remote school, one rural school and three urban Darwin schools. The schools we chose to survey were Tennant Creek High School, Palmerston High School, Casuarina Senior College, Taminmin High School and Kormilda College. We surveyed students from years 10 and 11 in our research. Based on our own experiences these were the years that the majority of our peers left school. The MST focused on particular schools to evaluate what factors may be affecting attendance by engaging with their students to capture their views on how to increase school attendance as well as establishing the current awareness and engagement of students in programs that are already available.

This project also aimed to survey youth who have left school prior to year 12 and to determine the reasons why these individuals made the decision to leave early. The MST realise that personal issues including family and personal problems have an impact on early school leavers; however the surveys did not include any questions regarding this, as they were not relevant to this project and might make the respondent uncomfortable. We worked with organisations such as the SHAK, Mission Australia, Danila Dilba and YMCA to identify these individuals.

Another area that we investigated was the role of VET in schools. The Northern Territory Government has placed a strong focus on creating options for young people to develop skills in areas that include trades and non-academic aspirations. Incentives such as the "Work wear/Work gear bonus, of \$300 to registered apprentices and trainees that meet eligibility requirements and \$1000 to apprentices undertaking training in an identified Northern Territory skills shortage area provide financial assistance during the first year of an apprenticeship or traineeship."<sup>1</sup> With the "strongest economy in the country there is a huge demand for skilled workers and great job opportunities for all young Territorians. Apprentices and trainees are essential to maintaining our strong economy as they build a skilled workforce which is necessary for the Territory's continuing growth."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [www.det.nt.gov.au/training/students/special\\_support](http://www.det.nt.gov.au/training/students/special_support)

<sup>2</sup> <http://newsroom.nt.gov.au> – *Try A Trade*, Marion Scrymgour, 24 September 2008

## **Discussion and Major Findings**

In order to establish what decisions young people were making about their education the MST first needed to gain a more rounded understanding of the current attendance rates in Northern Territory high schools.

The MST had four informal discussions with Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers (AIEW) regarding current issues facing Indigenous students. The AIEWs we consulted with provided us with a holistic perspective on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous attendance. The MST felt that it was necessary that we consult with a broad range of stakeholders especially those who were working with young people daily to ensure that we understood where young people and those working with young people were coming from. There were a number of elements involved within the process but mostly it was about gaining as much feedback as possible from a number of sources such as reports, research conducted by state and federal Government departments, community organisations as well as our survey data to develop our report.

In terms of the services and support mechanisms available to young people there is an extensive range available that can be utilised. One of the issues identified was that a number of programs were perceived as 'elitist' or did not provide consistent support. Students that had been identified as academic achievers and 'future leaders' were singled out and recommended to various programs but there was a large proportion of students who did not fit into this category thus many continue to remain unsure of what is available due to a lack of communication on behalf of program and service providers.

Our next step was to take a formal approach and make contact with the Department of Education and Training in order to gain a departmental view on the issue. We met with Ms Zoe Dobson, Senior Policy Officer in Attendance and Mr Alan Perrin, the Manager School Transitions in Remote Schools Policy and Services to introduce our project and to ascertain whether any prior research had been conducted around this topic with a Territory focus. From this meeting we acquired information and statistics surrounding the issue of attendance. The MST gained an understanding from this meeting that no prior research had been conducted by the Department around the issue of young people's attitudes towards attendance and retention rates in the Northern Territory.

Leading on from this initial meeting, we contacted Ms Katie Bazyanski, Assistant Manager, Information Services, DET to acquire enrolment and attendance figures listing all of the schools within the NT. The schools were categorised into Access/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) geo-locations and defined into government and non-government sectors. This data did not distinguish between primary and secondary school attendance figures, which made inclusion of this data irrelevant for the scope of our project.

In order to review the current attendance issue, information had to be gathered first hand from current high school students to determine the motivations behind young people choosing not to attend classes, future aspirations and the improvements young people felt could be made to the current high school system. Furthermore, we gathered information from young people who had already decided to leave school early, to establish the causes, support systems, future aspirations and general comments on what could have helped keep these individuals in school.

As a result of this two-stage research, the MST decided to develop two surveys, one which would be conducted in schools and one which would be conducted with young people out of school, to gain primary information and statistical data for the project.

The In School Survey was directed at young people currently attending high school in years 10 and 11. The survey was designed to permit the team to gather attitudes towards the importance of education, determining awareness and participation in support programs to help with

schooling and what young people believe could be improved to motivate them to complete their NTCE.

Considering the timeframe in which the survey was distributed and due to be returned, the MST felt that the surveys returned provided a good cross-section of young Territorians. There was unfortunately a minimal response from one of the target schools, as they claimed that the timeframe was too short to receive and return the surveys.

To gain a rounded perspective on our project we felt that it was necessary to speak with young people who were no longer in the education system or defined as 'at risk' of leaving early. A survey was composed to reflect the questions that we were hoping to be answered by young people who fit into this category. The Out of School Survey was directed at young people between the ages of 15 – 25 who decided not to complete their NTCE for various reasons. The responses helped us develop an understanding of the attitudes towards education, awareness and participation in existing support programs/initiatives where students are focusing their attention to create future pathways.

The research team then approached the identified community organisations including the YMCA, the Red Cross, Danila Dilba, Mission Australia and the Alternative Education Provision Program that offered services that would attract young people that were no longer attending school. We contacted the above mentioned agencies but received a mixed response.

One agency in particular informed us that the time that we had given them to organise the young people that utilised their service was not long enough and that it was going to be difficult to coordinate the filling out of surveys. It was then suggested that a focus group would be a more suitable avenue however a number of obstacles presented themselves during this process. Unfortunately time expired and we had to let that opportunity pass.

A number of agencies were contacted and sent a copy of our survey but never distributed them to the young people that utilise their services.

We did however have a fantastic response from one particular agency that provided us with 17 responses from young people that are not attending school for a number of reasons but also combined with a group of students that did attend school periodically.

The MST thought that it was particularly frustrating that we were unable to acquire access to the young people within this group of irregular or non-school attendees which came down to a number of factors. Factors that created obstacles to obtain this information included, over-worked and under-resourced staff, misgivings generated from previous reports that made recommendations and were never implemented, lack of cooperation from agency staff and not enough time for agency staff to approach young people. Based on our experience it was disappointing to receive this lack of assistance.

During the process of collecting responses from both the In School Survey and the Out of School Survey the MST investigated a number of programs that were identified as available to young people in school and out of school. Although there are many more that we could have listed these were the few that were selected as the most recognised by young Territorians:

**Clontarf** – "Is a not for profit organisation originating in Western Australia. Its aim is to help improve the health, employment, education and life skills of Australia's teenage male Indigenous population. The Foundation's programs are delivered through a network of Academies, each of which operates in partnership (but independent of) a school or college."<sup>3</sup> This program is currently running in the Northern Territory at Anzac Hill High School, Alice Springs High School, Halls Creek, Katherine, Palmerston, Sanderson, Tiwi Islands and Yirara.

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<sup>3</sup> Clontarf foundation, annual report 2006, pg 2

**Structured Workplace Learning program** - The structured workplace learning program provides students with structured learning and development opportunities in a real or simulated work environment. In many circumstances, students are also given the opportunity to gain real qualifications while they train and learn.”<sup>4</sup>

**Workready Program** - “Workready is a school to work transition program that aims to assist and encourage year 11 and 12 students to take part in structured Vocational Education and Training (VET) that leads to School Based Apprenticeship/Traineeship (SBAT) and hopefully, an ongoing apprenticeship.”<sup>5</sup>

**Adopt-a-School** – This program “encourages businesses to work with schools in their area, and engage young people in hands on learning experience. Students are given the opportunity to gain real experience, learn about the career opportunities open to them, and find out about the kinds of skills employers are looking for.”<sup>6</sup>

Structured Workplace Learning programme, Workready Programme and Adopt-a-School programme are delivered by YouthWorX NT on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

**The SHAK** – “The SHAK youth recreational and development centre is one of the largest youth recreation centres in the Northern Australia and was established to allow young people to have a place where they can have fun, be comfortable and safe. Managed by the Australian Red Cross, it runs a variety of programs both in and outside the centre and works closely with the community to ensure that its services are relevant and appropriate.”<sup>7</sup>

**The Smith Family Mentoring Program** - The Smith Family is a national, independent non-profit organisation that helps disadvantaged Australian children realise their potential through education.

**Try’ a Trade** – At the annual Try’ a Trade “Qualified trades people guide Year 9 students through a variety of small projects which demonstrate the skills needed for each trade. Students are able to have a go at 11 different industry areas from welding to plumbing, hairdressing and hospitality. Try’ a Trade is the first step to towards students beginning vocational education and training in schools.”<sup>8</sup>

**Careers Expo** – The annual Careers Expo “provides students, teachers, parents, employers and other stakeholders in the jobs market with a convenient opportunity to exchange information, identify careers options and to build networks. Expos are held at prominent venues in the Northern Territory’s five major population centres including Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Darwin.”<sup>9</sup>

**Vocational Education in Schools Program** – The VET in schools (VETiS) program “gives students the opportunity to try a particular profession while still at school. The student takes part in VET studies on offer at the school that can contribute towards a achieving their NTCE.”<sup>10</sup>

**Indigenous Student Leadership and Mentoring Program** – the initiative “aims to improve leadership opportunities for Indigenous secondary students enrolled in government schools by

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.youthworxnt.com.au> – Structured Workplace Learning Programme

<sup>5</sup> Workready Program Handbook 2008, YouthWorX NT

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.youthworxnt.com.au> – Adopt-a-School

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.actnow.com.au> – The SHAK, The Australian Red Cross

<sup>8</sup> <http://newsroom.nt.gov.au> – Try A Trade, Marion Scrymgour, 24 September 2008

<sup>9</sup> <http://newsroom.nt.gov.au> – Careers Expos to tour the Territory, Department Education and Training, 5 August 2008

<sup>10</sup> [www.det.nt.gov.au/training/students/vetis](http://www.det.nt.gov.au/training/students/vetis) - VET in schools program

engaging local organisations and the broader community in supporting leadership opportunities focused on improved educational outcomes and pathways.”<sup>11</sup>

**YMCA – Big Brother and Sister Program** – “The YMCA of the Top End is a community based charity that delivers programs and services to help build strong people, strong families and strong communities across the Northern Territory.”<sup>12</sup> The Sisters Project is an exciting new project using creativity, expression and information to provide support, build self esteem, skills, safety and social links for young women aged between 12 and 21 years.”<sup>13</sup> A similar program runs for young men between the ages of 12 and 21 years with similar objectives.

**Training for Remote Youth Program** – “The Training for Remote Youth (TRY) program is an initiative of the Northern Territory Government. There is a commitment by the government to increase the employability of youth who are at serious risk and have disengaged from school-based education. TRY is aimed at bringing youth and the local community together to provide structured training and learning experiences that will enable young people to prepare for employment in the community or re-engage in further learning.”<sup>14</sup>

**Alternative Education Provision Program** – “Alternative Education Provision (AEP) teams were established in Darwin's northern suburbs and Palmerston from the beginning of 2004, and in Katherine from late 2005. The AEP focus is on young people aged 10-15 who have disengaged from mainstream schooling or are at strong imminent risk of disengagement. Individuals are case managed with a view to re-engaging them in education, training or employment.”<sup>15</sup>

**Australian Apprenticeships/Traineeships** – “Australian Apprenticeships or Traineeships combine practical, paid employment with structured training in order to achieve a nationally recognised qualification.”<sup>16</sup>

**Mission Australia (Youth Beat)** – “Youth Beat provides a Youth Outreach Service to young people in the northern suburbs of Darwin, Katherine and the surrounding areas, who are on the streets at night. The service engages and connects with young people with the purpose of building relationships, providing information and referrals, and responding to crises.”<sup>17</sup>

**Danila Dilba Youth Services** – “The Danila Dilba Youth Service offers a range of activities, programs and support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth aged 10 – 20 years and living in the Palmerston area. Services included individual and family counselling, health, promotion, cultural education and community development activities.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> [http://www.betterschools.nt.gov.au/indigenous\\_education/leadership\\_mentorship\\_program.shtml](http://www.betterschools.nt.gov.au/indigenous_education/leadership_mentorship_program.shtml) - Indigenous Student Leadership and Mentoring Program

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.topend.ymca.org.au/index.asp?menuid=060>

<sup>13</sup> [http://ywcaofdarwin.org.au/cms/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=4&Itemid=59](http://ywcaofdarwin.org.au/cms/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=4&Itemid=59)

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.det.nt.gov.au/training/indigenous/docs/try\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.det.nt.gov.au/training/indigenous/docs/try_guidelines.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.det.nt.gov.au/education/special\\_education\\_wellbeing/wellbeing\\_pathways/alternative\\_education.shtml](http://www.det.nt.gov.au/education/special_education_wellbeing/wellbeing_pathways/alternative_education.shtml)

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.aacnt.com.au/apprentice.html>

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.missionaustralia.com.au/document-downloads/doc\\_details/72-youth-beat](http://www.missionaustralia.com.au/document-downloads/doc_details/72-youth-beat)

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.createyourfuture.org.au/health/dealingWithLoneliness.do>

## **Youth Surveys**

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The MST's purpose in the distribution of two separate surveys was to gather feedback from young people still attending high school within Years 10 and 11 and young people who had already left school to identify the support mechanisms the individuals surveyed accessed to support their educational and personal aspirations for their future.

The data gathered from the surveys is set out in two sections: In School Survey data and Out of School Survey Data.

1. The In School Survey data has five basic components:

1. Composition of survey respondents
2. Personal values around education
3. Individual support of respondents
4. Support programs and initiatives identified which support individuals

2. The Out of School Survey data has five basic components:

1. Composition of survey respondents
2. Personal values around education
3. Individual support of respondents
4. Support programs and initiatives identified which support individuals

Section 5 of the Youth Survey evaluation provides combined suggestions from both the In and Out of School Survey for improvements to education from a youth perspective.

Both surveys proved valuable in the form of responses and statistics, which are detailed in this section of the report. Each question from the survey will be listed and then the statistical and written responses from respondents will be analysed.

A total of 144 surveys from around the Northern Territory for the In School Survey were received as well as 17 Out of School Surveys from young people who had left school early.

## 1. In School Survey

### 1. Composition of Survey Respondents

Graph 1.1.1 Gender of respondents

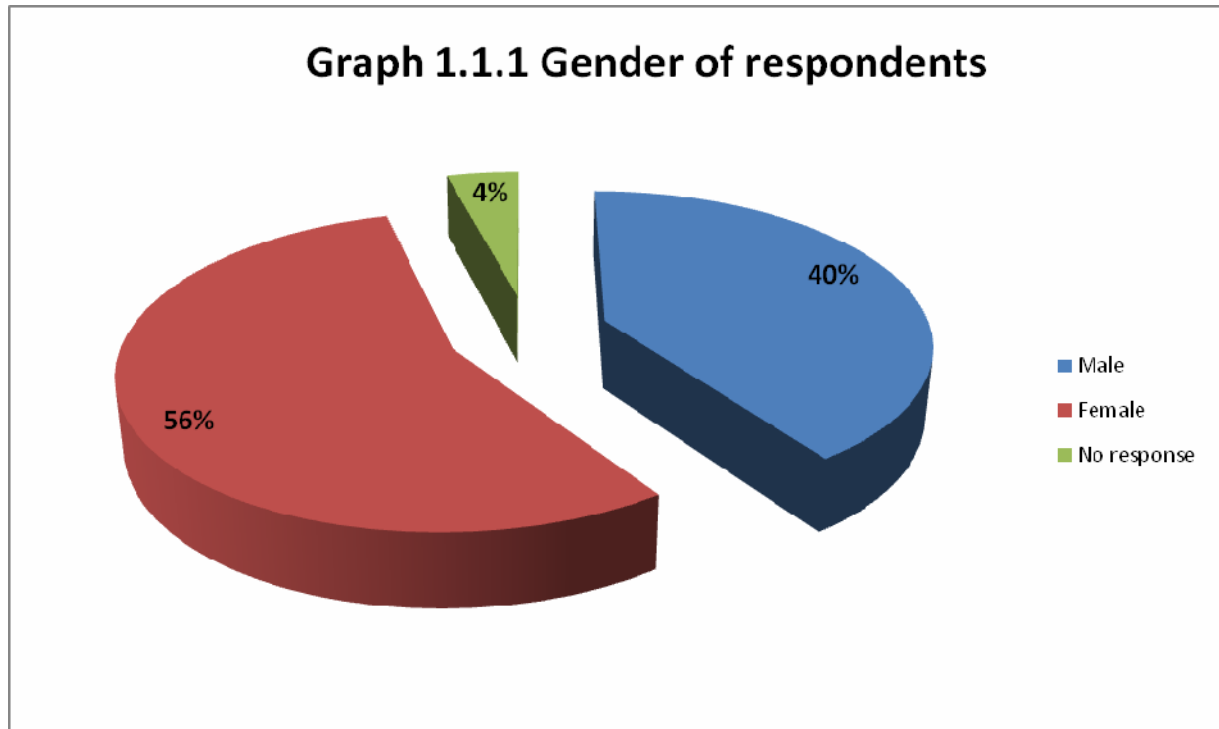


Table 1.1.1	#	%
Male	58	40
Female	80	56
No response recorded	6	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100</b>

A fairly comparable representation of both male and female survey respondents were received, and the statistical data, used in this report.

When both surveys were compared, a higher proportion of the respondents were female in both cases and constituted the larger percentage of the data received.

Graph 1.1.2 Age of respondents

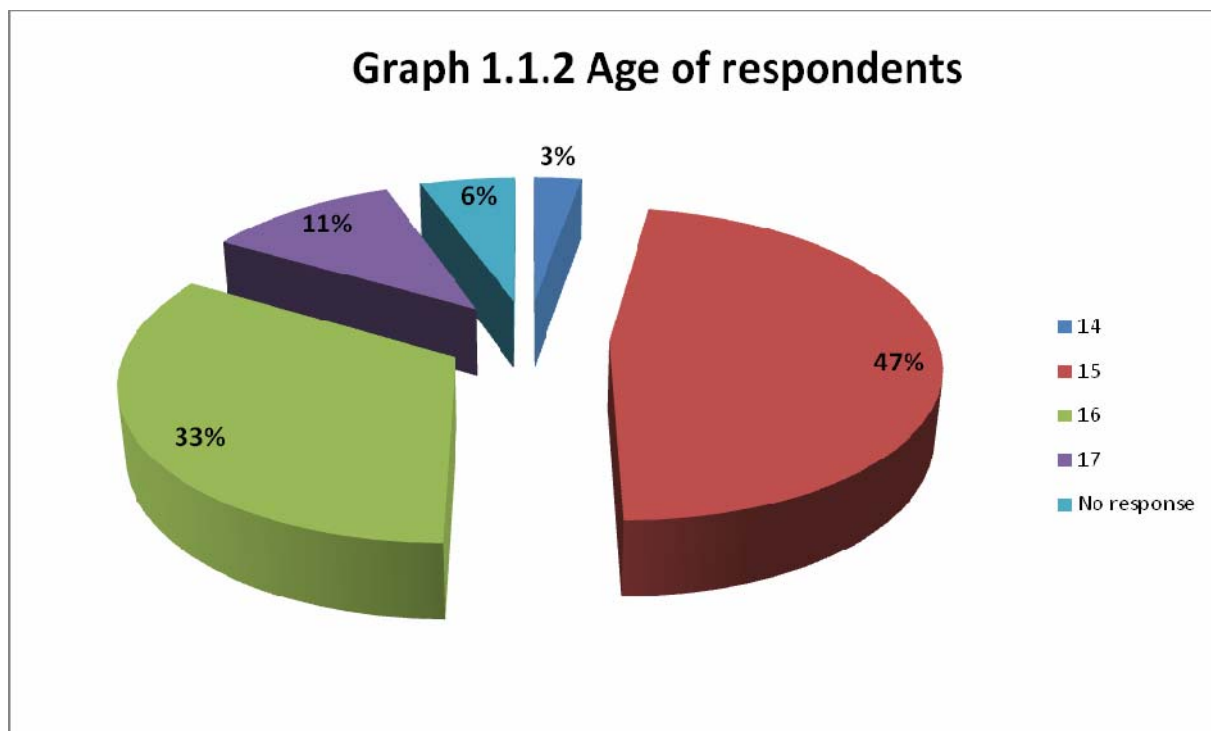


Table 1.1.2	#	%
14	4	3
15	68	47
16	48	33
17	16	11
No response recorded	8	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100</b>

The graph above indicates that a majority of the young people that were surveyed would be considered to be at a crucial stage of their life where they are required to make decisions about their future. The target age range that the MST initially identified is successfully represented and makes for an excellent base for this report.

Graph 1.1.3 Cultural identity of respondents

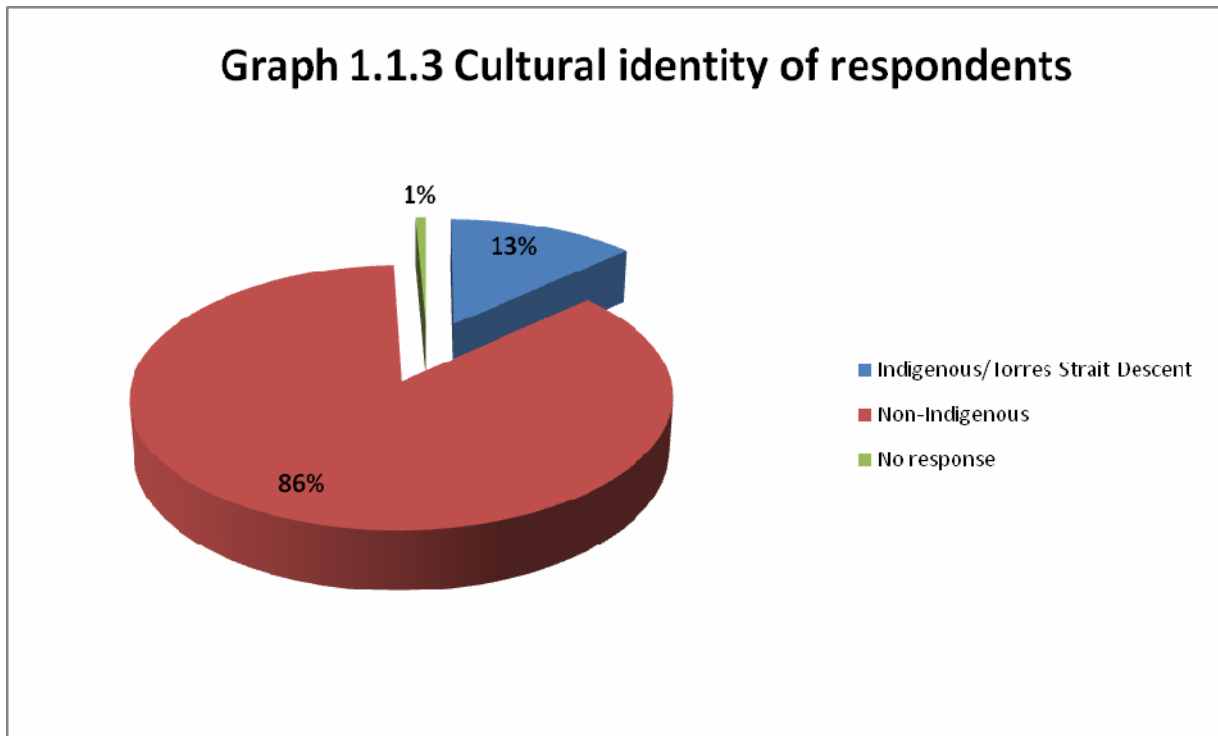


Table 1.1.3	#	%
Indigenous/Torres Strait Descent	19	13
Non-Indigenous	124	86
No response recorded	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100</b>

Based on the number of respondents surveyed within the targeted cohort 13% identified as Indigenous/ Torres Strait Islander compared to the 86% represented which identify as non-Indigenous. The MST felt that this was a good representation of an Indigenous perspective on this issue. In comparison, the Out of School Survey captured 70% of young people who identified as Indigenous.

Graph 1.1.4 Main language spoken at home by respondents

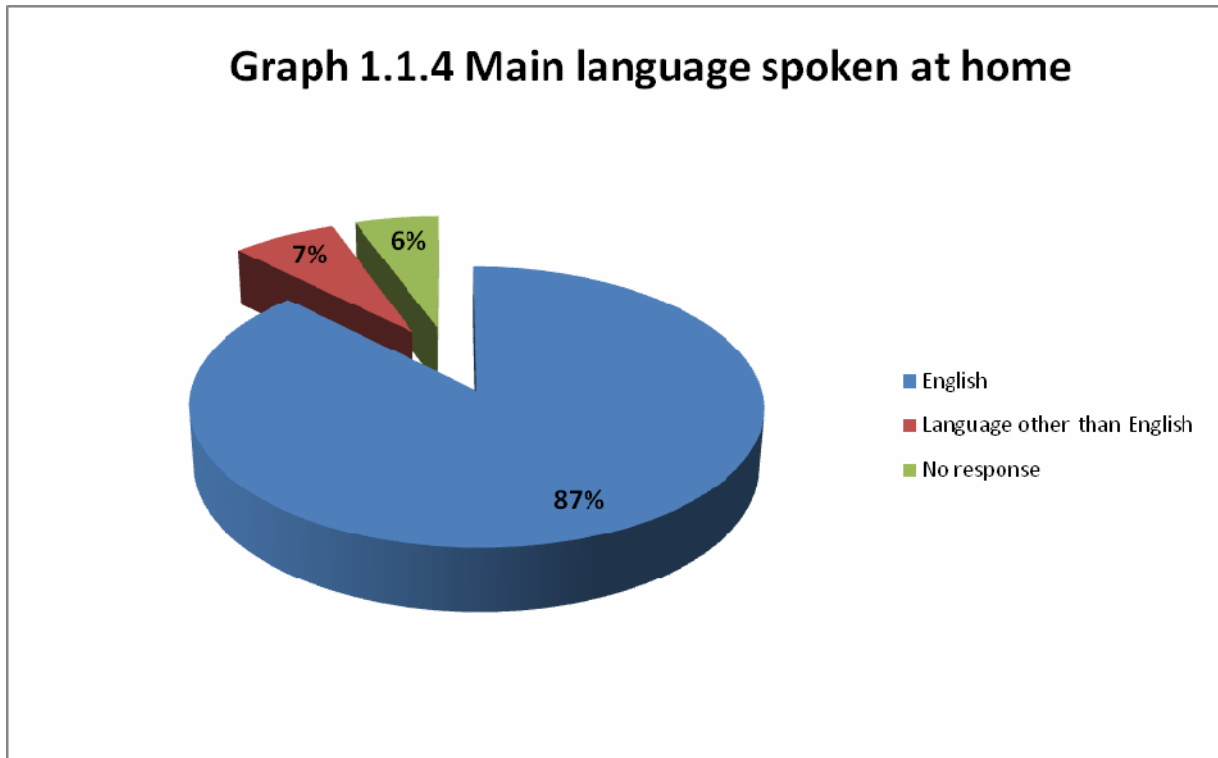


Table 1.1.4	#	%
English	126	87
Language other than English	10	7
No response recorded	8	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100</b>

As reflected in the above graph, English is the primary language spoken at home for most survey respondents. Other languages spoke included: Vietnamese, Japanese, Indonesian, German, Russian, Chinese, Filipino, Bosnian and Walmanpa.

Graph 1.1.5 Geographical distribution of Respondents

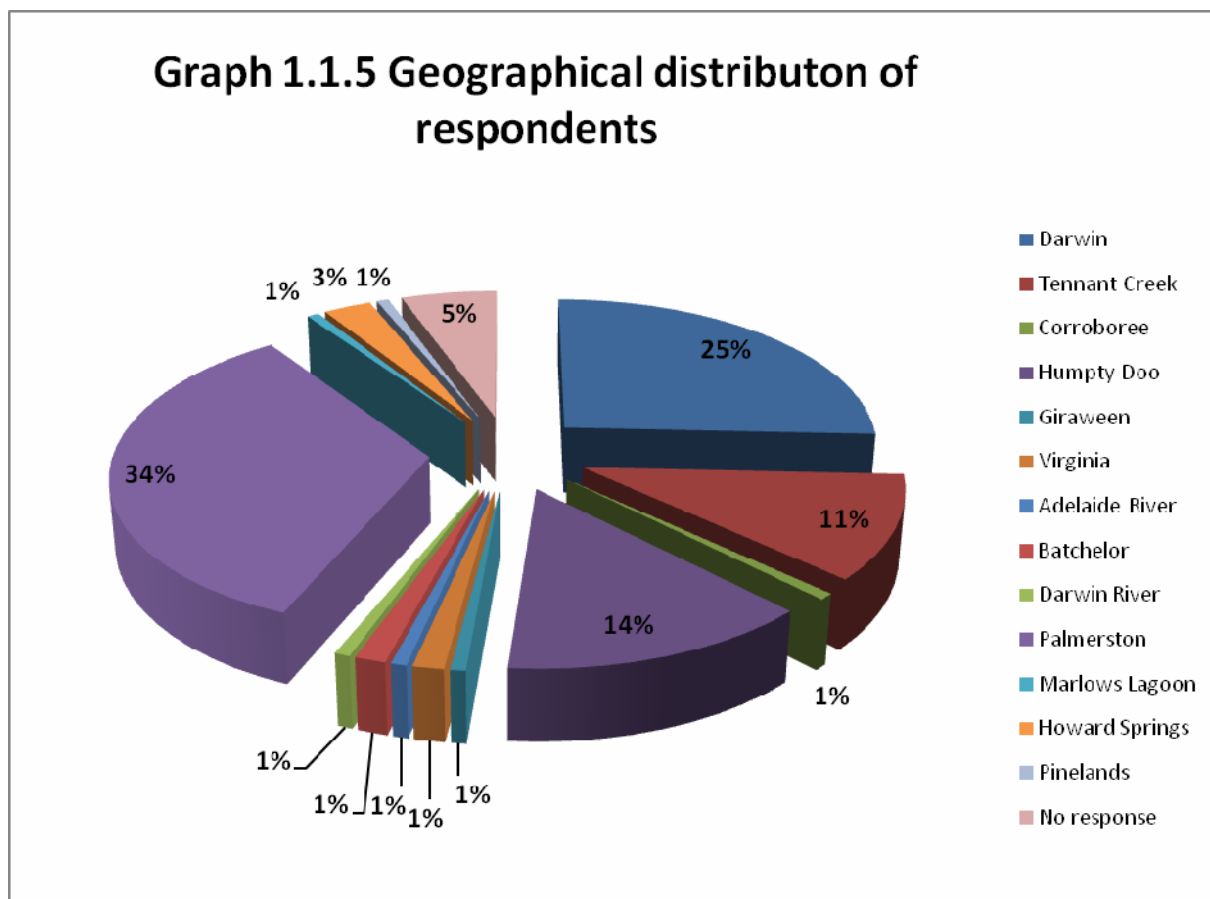


Table 1.1.5	#	%
Darwin	37	25
Tennant Creek	16	11
Corroboree	1	1
Humpty Doo	20	14
Giraween	1	1
Virginia	2	1
Adelaide River	1	1
Batchelor	2	1
Darwin River	1	1
Palmerston	49	34
Marlow's Lagoon	1	1
Howard Springs	4	3
Pinelands	1	1
No response recorded	8	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100</b>

The graph above shows the areas the MST targeted including Darwin, the greater Darwin region and surrounding regional areas. It provides varied geographical distribution of survey respondents within the target survey areas. From personal experiences and consultation with

young people there is a general perception that the further you live from an urban area the harder it is to access certain programs and initiatives.

Graph 1.1.6 School/Workplace of Respondents

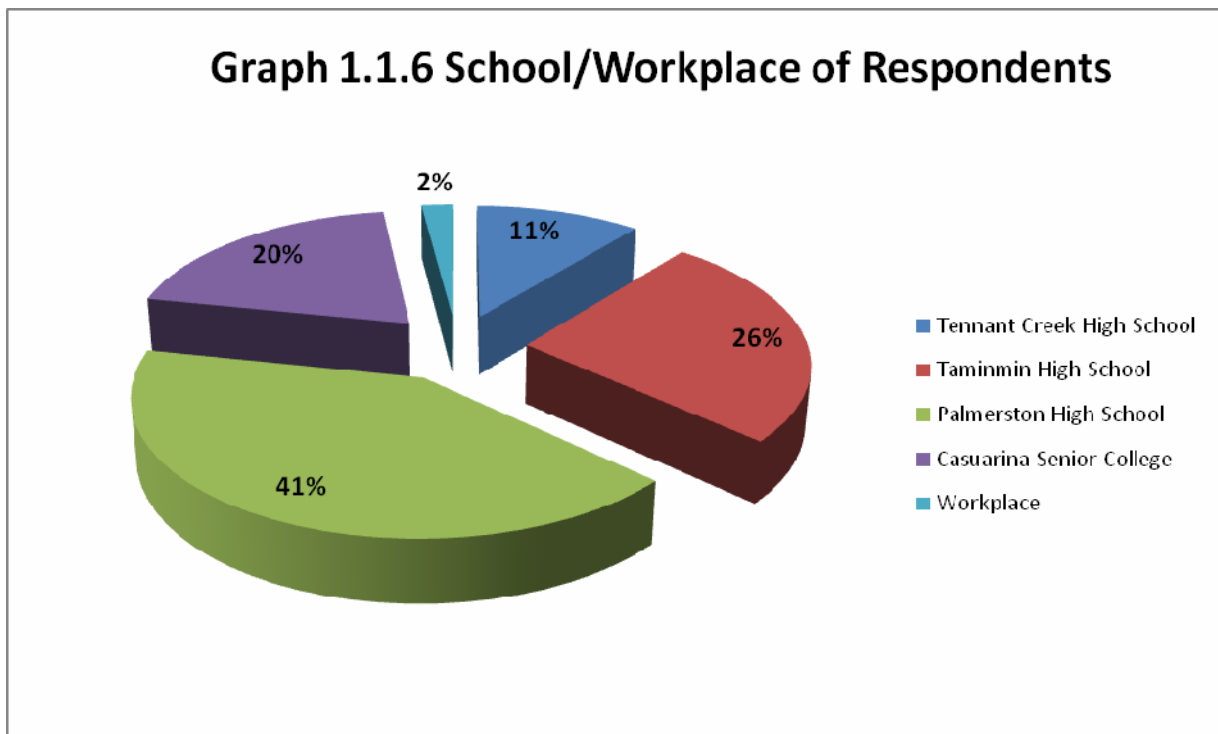


Table 1.1.6	#	%
Tennant Creek High School	16	11
Taminmin High School	38	26
Palmerston High School	61	41
Casuarina Senior College	29	20
Workplace	3	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100</b>

This graph indicates the number of surveys received from targeted schools from which the team obtained data. It also indicated that three individuals stated that they are employed part time as well as attending school, hence why the total is 147 not 144 as in the rest of the graphs.

Graph 1.1.7 Current Year at School

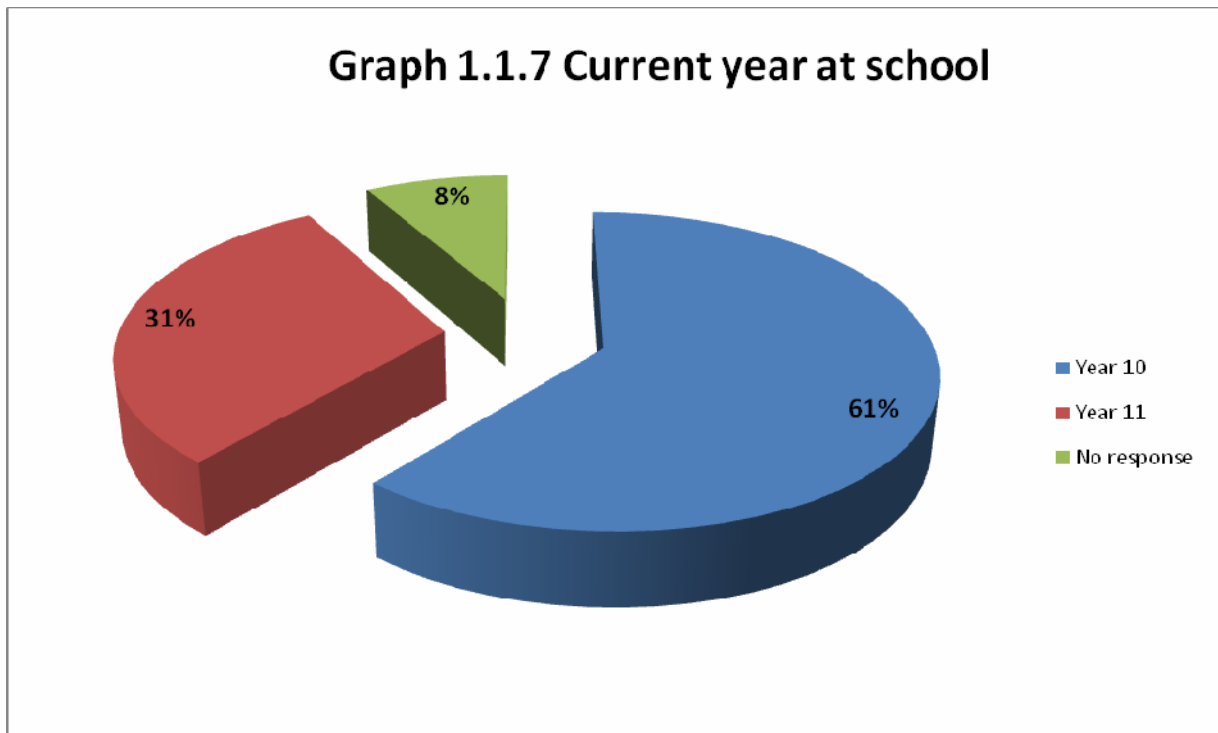


Table 1.1.7	#	%
Year 10	88	61
Year 11	44	31
No response recorded	12	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100</b>

A large proportion of the respondents surveyed were in the process of completing year 10 and 11. The team feels that the number of responses collected within the target group provides a strong basis for our report due to the targeted year groups being successfully represented.

## 2. Personal Values around Education

Graph 1.2.1 Truancy rates of respondents

Question asked: Have you ever skipped or waggged school?

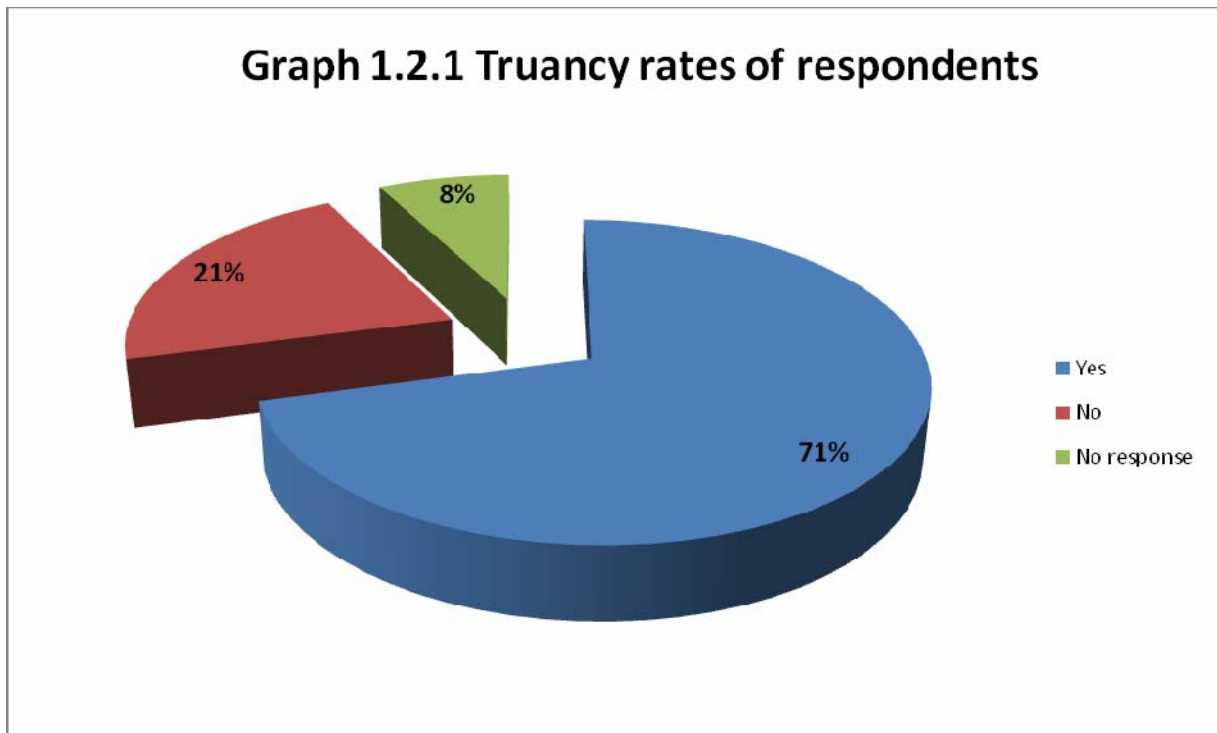


Table 1.2.1	#	%
Yes	102	71
No	31	21
No response recorded	11	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100</b>

Survey responses indicate that 71% of young people surveyed identified that they had made a conscious decision to not attend classes at some stage. There are a variety of reasons for that decision, and the MST conducted this research to gain a better understanding into the specific reasons for truancy and early school leaving.

Data collected suggests that the reasons for truancy ranged from not liking the classes and the teachers to just not caring about knowledge lost due to missing classes. The most predominant reason provided was that many young people felt that they were not being supported enough in their studies and that not enough time was being spent with individuals to further their aspirations. A common cause of truancy identified by respondents was they felt that their teachers were disinterested and that they did not get along with particular teachers thus missing the class where they felt uncomfortable was a means of dealing with their problems.

The first section of the survey was aimed at evaluating the general values around education for young people in year 10 and 11 currently attending high school. Some of the responses when asked “What do you think is the most important about getting an education and why?” included:

- “In a nutshell, so you can have a future, be intelligent and get a good job.”
- “So I can get a good job so I have the ability to support a family when I decide to start one.”

- “The most important thing about education is that it makes your life easier, you can get jobs more easier with a higher level of education.”
- “It teaches you the basics to survive in modern society.”
- “Because it entitles you to learn skills and get employment for an income.”

When asked “What was the reason for your decision?” some of the responses by young people who had indicated that they had decided to not attend classes included:

- “I didn’t think that the class was necessary.”
- “Because sometimes there are no classes at the end of semester yet were made to come, by the government.”
- “Teacher was an idiot who couldn’t teach and was annoying and crazy.”
- “Didn’t need to go to that class because it not one of my goals of getting a job.”
- “Fell behind on assignments so wagged and did my assignments in the library.”
- “Because I couldn’t be bothered – stupid teacher – stupid class.”
- “Because of family problems, my head wasn’t at school.”

When asked “How do you feel about missing classes?” some of the responses by young people who had indicated that they had decided to not attend classes included:

- “Don’t care, my life not yours, worry about yourself.”
- “Well I don’t feel good about doing it, it just happens.”
- “It isn’t really a good thing to do, but if you really don’t like the subject you shouldn’t have to do it.”
- “I feel bad but also I don’t give, so it doesn’t matter to me anymore. If teachers were a bit nicer then maybe I would turn up.”
- “I don’t really care to be honest, it’s better than sitting at a table and listening to a teacher brag on and on about nothing in particular.”
- “I feel nothing.”

From the survey 71% of young people indicated that they had decided to not attend classes at some point. Some respondents felt some sense of remorse, but in their eyes had justifiable reasons for missing classes. Reasons ranged from being bored in class, disliking the teacher, class being irrelevant or just not caring in general.

Graph 1.2.2 High school certificate completion aspirations  
 Question asked: Are you considering completing year 12?

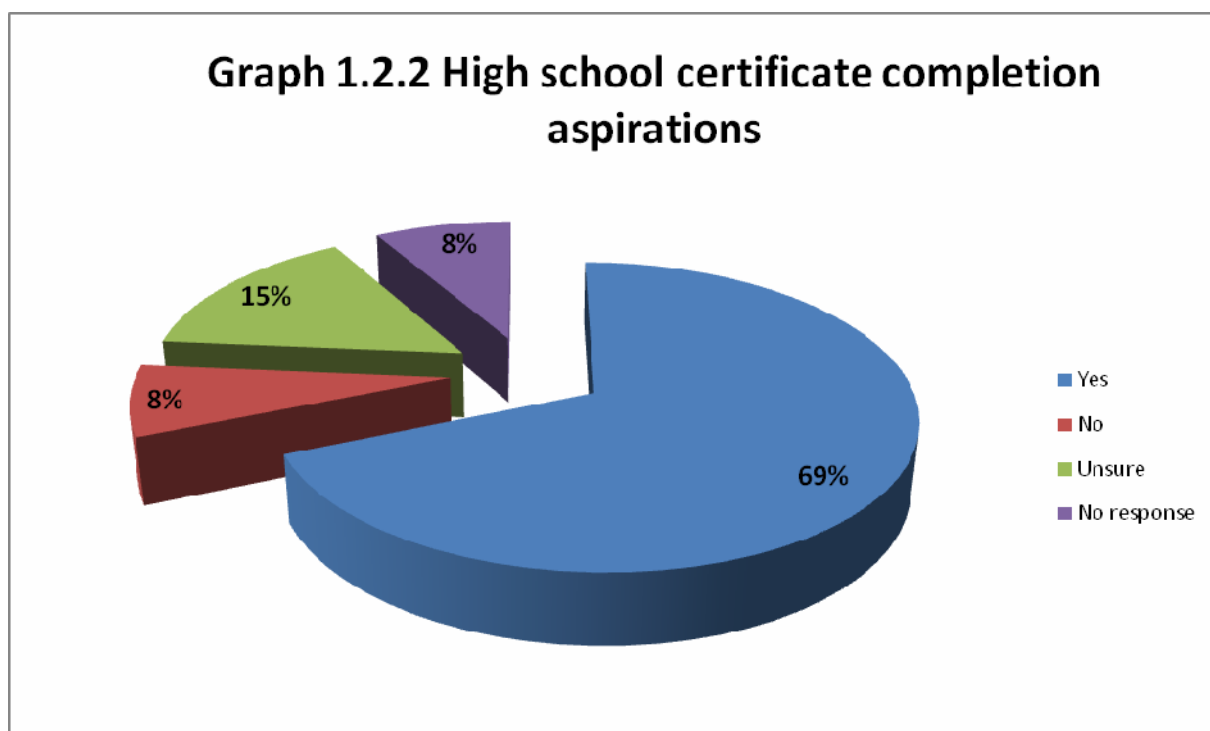


Table 1.2.2	#	%
Yes	99	69
No	11	8
Unsure	22	15
No response recorded	12	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100</b>

The majority of respondents 69% indicated that they want to complete their NTCE, where 8% definitely did not want to complete NTCE, 15 % were unsure and 8% did not post a response.

Reasons for wanting to complete their NTCE included:

- “The reason for me wanting to complete year 12 is because I want to get a great career when I finish school”
- “It opens doors and will let me learn things I would have to pay more for in uni, now is the best time to learn”
- “I want to go to Uni”
- “It’s my bludge from getting a real job in society”
- “Because I have to I don’t have a choice”
- “To be somebody that don’t go and live in the street”
- “To achieve what my dad didn’t and to prove I can complete”
- “To join the defence force and to go to Uni for sciences”
- “Because it means a lot to me and my family for me to finish school”

Responses for not wanting to complete their NTCE included:

- “Because I’m not interested in school and don’t really want to be here”

- “School is pointless”
- “Cause I’m too dumb”
- “Because I have a job lined up”
- “Sick of arrogant teachers”
- “I just really hate school and don’t want to go all the way to year 12”
- “Because I dislike school”

Responses for being unsure included:

- “Because I don’t know what I want to do yet so if I don’t do year 12 what am I going to do”
- “I probably will finish year 12, but I don’t want to”
- “Might get an apprenticeship”
- “It might be hard and I want to enjoy childhood”
- “Don’t really need year 12 for what I wanna do”
- “I know I should do it and I probably will but not 100% sure”
- “I don’t know if I will make it with my attendance and everything else. I don’t hand in my work.”

Looking at the above responses it can be said that most young people do have high aspirations and would like to complete their NTCE to be able to go on to obtain higher education, to gain full time employment or an apprenticeship/traineeship. Based on the responses young people have different motivations for wanting to complete high school.

Whilst some of this motivation is positive, the MST also believes that mounting pressure on a student to perform to a certain standard in school can lead to long term damage such as depression or even suicide. “Gould and colleagues (1996) reported that the risk of suicide was elevated among young people with low educational attainment, including those who had dropped out of school.”<sup>19</sup>The stress that is experienced during final years of study and the pressure to get high scores to get into a ‘good university’ can be overwhelming for many young people.

Explanations given and the statistics collected from this particular portion of the survey reasonably suggest that young people do genuinely care about their education and future, but personal values and outside influences can create negative distractions. As a result, attendance is often the first thing that can suffer due to the many external and internal pressures on young people of school age.

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<sup>19</sup> National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy – Setting the evidence-based research agenda for Australia (A literature review), Department of Health and Aged Care, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 1999, Page 143

### 3. Individual Support of Respondents

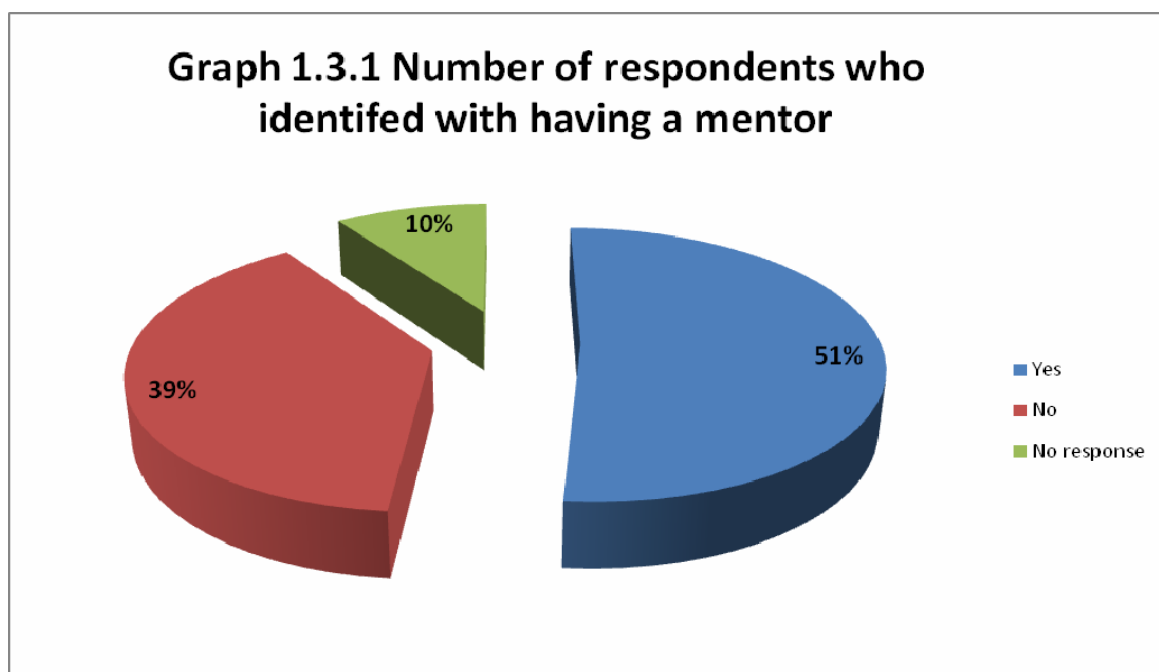
From a personal view it is always beneficial to have another individual in your life that supports your life goals and motivates you to achieve these goals. Especially for young people attending high school, who are going through finding their way to becoming an adult and juggling the pressures of making critical decisions for their future. Mentoring can “improve academic performance, attitudes towards education, attendance, retention rates, self-esteem, motivation and may decrease risk taking behaviour.”<sup>20</sup>

**Mentor dictionary definition - mentor** [mén tawr] **1. Experienced adviser and support** somebody, usually older and more experienced, who advises and guides a younger, less experienced person – Encarta Dictionary English (UK)

Specifically in regards to educational mentoring, a mentor is “a volunteering adult or someone employed by a school to provide one-to-one educational support for pupils that need it the most. Educational achievement, career plans and options, behavioural concerns and school or college attendance can all be discussed in these sessions.”<sup>21</sup> Further there is peer mentoring which is “based on the idea that an older pupil acts as a 'buddy' and a listening ear for younger pupils. They can also help pupils find practical solutions if they find schoolwork and/or socialising difficult.”<sup>22</sup>

The MST feels that it is important for young people to identify a mentor in their life, whether it be a sports coach, teacher, mum, dad, brother, sister or your next door neighbour. From personal experience of attending high school the MST found that those young people who had a mentor were more likely to finish their NTCE. This ultimately depends on the direction the student’s future aspirations i.e. apprenticeships, employment or higher education.

Graph 1.3.1 Number of respondents who identified with having a mentor  
Question asked: Do you have a mentor?



<sup>20</sup> <http://www.thesmithfamily.com.au>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.thesite.org/workandstudy/studying/howtostudy/havingamentor>,

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<b>Table 1.3.1</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Yes</b>	74	51
<b>No</b>	56	39
<b>No response recorded</b>	14	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100</b>

As can be seen from the data, 51% of young people surveyed indicated that they have a mentor in their life. In comparison 39% felt that they did not have a mentor to support them and 10% did not give a response.

The data suggests that a significant number of young people have a mentor. For those who indicated that they do not have a mentor in their life, it could be argued that they may not be aware of possible mentors around them, as it most likely occurs through informal arrangements such as in the form of a role model.

The Out of School Survey indicated that only 35% of respondents identified with having a mentor in their life. This suggests that a mentor is more likely to be present in young person's life who is still attending school. It is the MST's opinion that reasons for this could be due to influences within the school environment such as teachers, youth leaders and other support staff.

Graph 1.3.2 Influences/support for individuals' Educational goals  
 Question asked: Is there someone that influences/supports your educational goals?

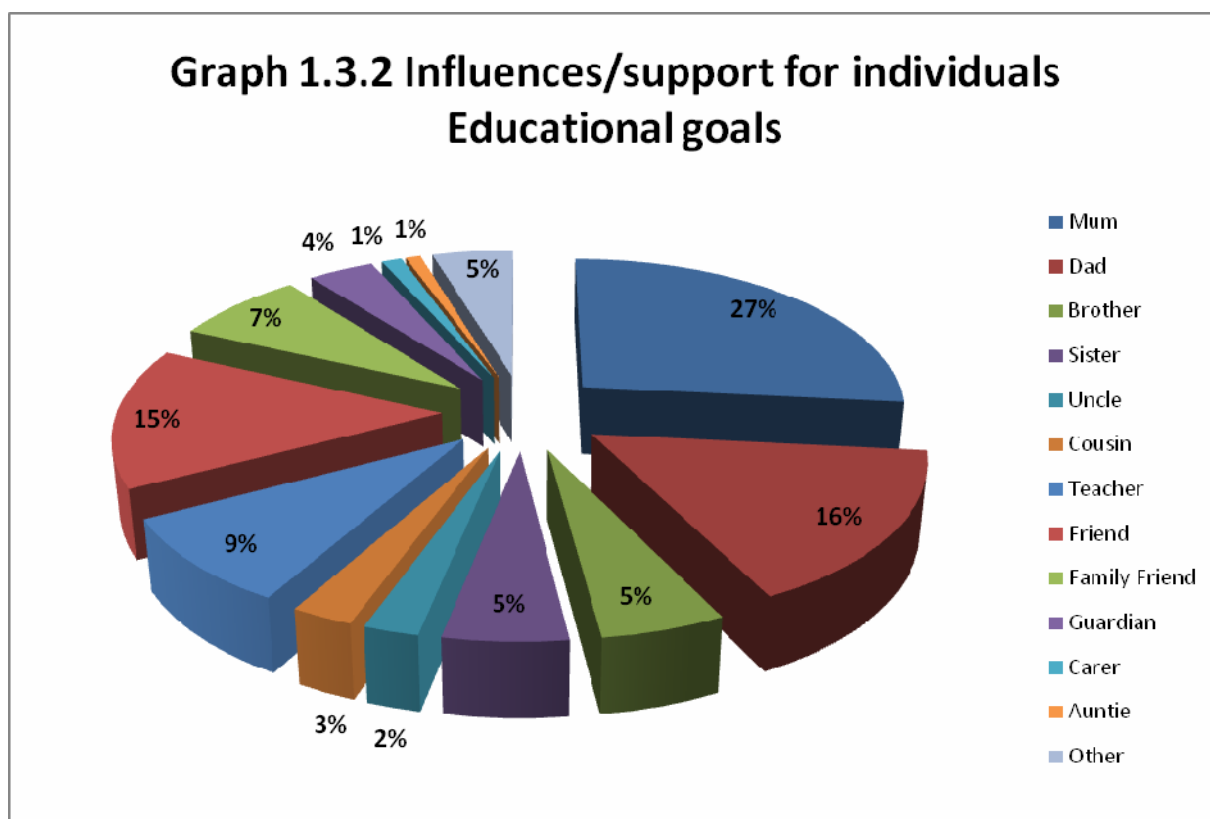


Table 1.3.2	#	%
Mum	91	27
Dad	55	16
Brother	18	5
Sister	18	5
Uncle	8	2
Cousin	9	3
Teacher	31	9
Friend	50	15
Family Friend	26	7
Guardian	13	4
Carer	4	1
Auntie	3	1
Other	16	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>100</b>

The illustration above provides an indication of the individuals that young people feel make up their personal support systems relating to their educational goals. As previously thought by the MST, mums and dads made up the largest proportion of response (mum 27%, dad 16%) followed very closely by friends at 15%. The total number is higher due to participants being able to choose more than one answer.

Other responses that were recorded included:

- “Grandparents”
- “IT nerds”
- “Whole family”
- “My animals”
- “No one influences me really. I am myself and I always will be”
- “Myself. No one can help me now until I meet the right people and am in the right time, but now is not it”
- “Step dad”
- “Best friend”
- “Boyfriend”
- “Workplace”
- “Basketball coach”
- “Myself”

No additional comments about what sort of support these people provide was given.

#### 4. Support programs and initiatives identified which support individuals

Graph 1.4.1 Support program awareness

Question asked: Are you aware of any programs that can assist you to stay at school?

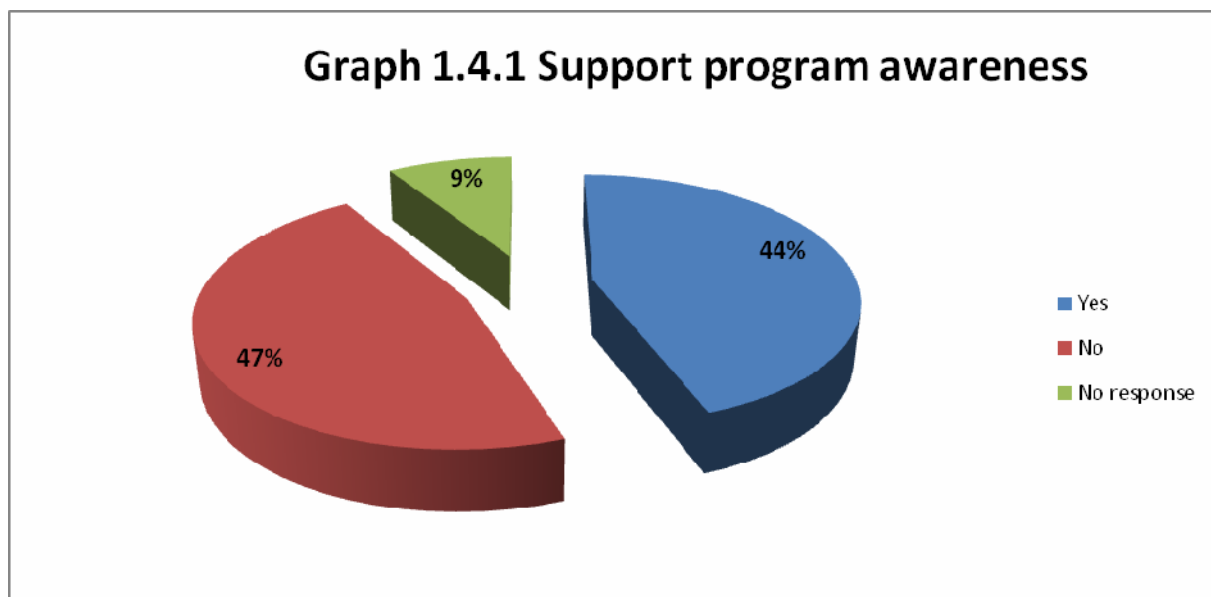


Table 1.4.1	#	%
Yes	64	44
No	67	47
No response	13	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100</b>

Responses to this question turned out to be quite disappointing. The MST agreed that essentially students at this level should have a higher awareness of the support programs available to them.

According to 47% of respondents, they were not aware of existing programs that could support them through school with 9% not responding to the question.

The 44% that did indicate knowing about existing programs that could assist them to stay at school provided the following when asked to list them:

- Leadership
- Sports
- VET
- More art programs and VET for year 10's who are not in special Ed because that's just stupid and unfair
- Hospitality Cert 1 and 2
- Conservation land management
- Cert II in sports, recreation and coaching
- Workready programme
- Australian Technical College
- Performing, arts, music and drama
- Cert I Automotive
- School based Apprenticeship
- A sporting scholarship down south to a boarding school, away from everybody and family
- Teachers say stay in school
- Pre-vocational program
- How to write good letters
- St John's Ambulance Cadets
- Science awards

- Engineering
- I need PE
- Indigenous leadership and mentoring program
- Cert III Outdoor Ed
- Clontarf Academy in 2009 for Indigenous kids and it aims at keeping them at school through footy
- Interstate comps
- Work placement
- Career
- VET course in retail and metal work
- The Smith Family Mentoring Program

In comparison 24% of the Out of School Survey respondents indicated that they were aware of support programs available to them as opposed to 41% stating they were not aware of support programs available and 35% not posting a response.

Graph 1.4.2 Participation in support programs

Question asked: Do you participate in any programs that develop your future aspirations and career or educational goals?

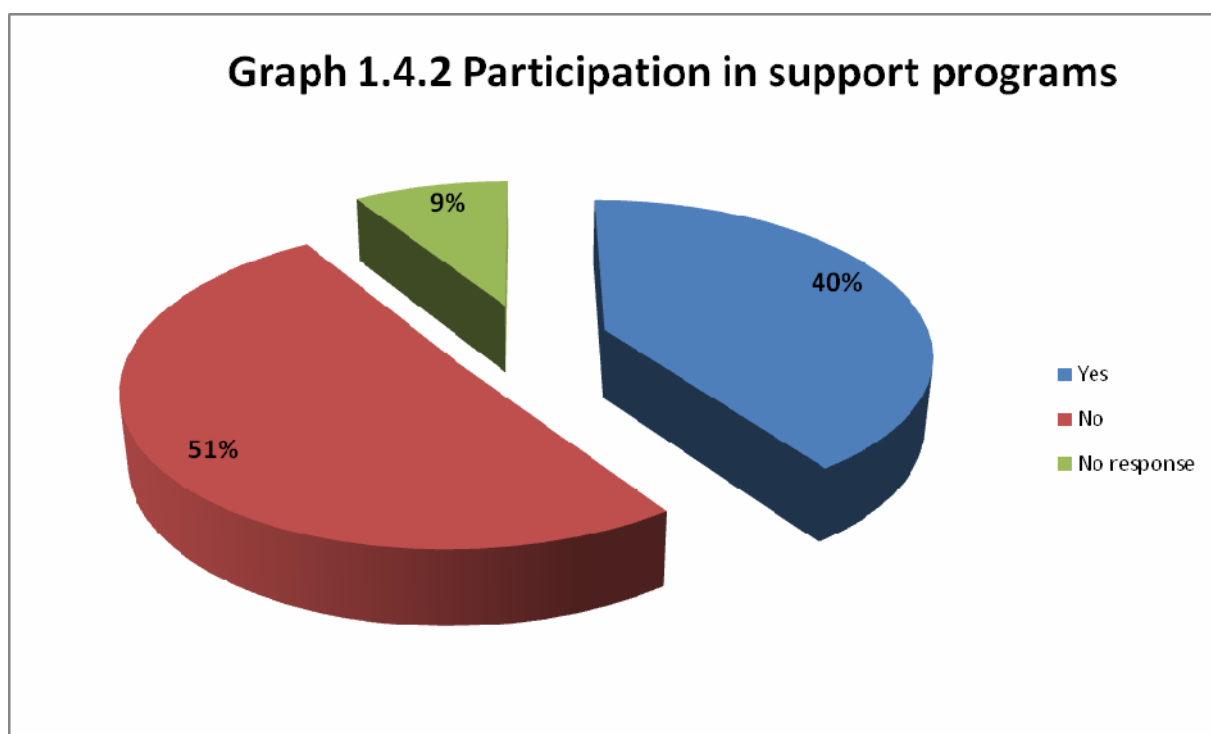


Table 1.4.2	#	%
Yes	58	40
No	73	51
No response	13	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100</b>

When asked whether participants were involved in any programs that develop their future goals or aspirations, 40% of respondents answered yes, 51% answered no with 9% not giving a response.

Programs that respondents identified as being involved in include the following:

- I'm doing a certificate 2 Business and learn a lot from it
- Cadets
- Australian Army Cadets
- Sports (13 respondents)
- Training
- Sports day
- Conservation land management
- Certificate 2 Business (2 respondents)
- Sports NT ICP – NT Intensive Training Centre Program
- Karate
- Home Ec
- Soccer and Indoor Soccer
- Science programs
- Art programs
- Computer programs
- I used to do Tae kwon do, swimming club and chess club but after my dad was posted I had to leave them and have been unable to continue in

- Work
  - I have a part time job doing hospitality
  - VET programs
  - PE coaching
  - IPP
  - Music
  - Information Technology
  - Engineering for girls
  - Hospitality
  - Right now its VET music, Art classes & my motivation love for both visual arts and music
  - Rural operations
  - No Geology at Taminmin
  - School sports
  - Vocals, performing arts, drama & music
- Darwin
- Pyrotechnics
  - Australian Airforce Cadets
  - Basketball – Northern Suburbs schools, Nationals Country Cup
  - Certificate 2 in Music
  - I play Volleyball as a sport outside of school
  - St John Ambulance Cadets – Senior Corporal
  - Vehicle management
  - Netball
  - Art, Tap English
  - But they need to get school based traineeship, because it's all for boys
  - Indoor Soccer
  - Work experience
  - Basketball player and coach
  - Rugby League

As can be seen many of the respondents are involved in programs to help motivate and encourage them to stay at school and develop their future career or educational goals.

One student felt that there needs to be more options for school based traineeships for female students stating “They need to get school based traineeship, because it's all for boys!” VET is an area that is continuously growing and expanding as industry demand increases, this may indicate that students need to be consulted in the delivery of VET qualifications within schools in terms of the type of courses they might like to see available. As well as better promotion and information available to do with school based VET courses.

One student was quoted saying that there are “no programs for sport available in s\*\*t NT”, it is unclear as to which sports the student was referring to. The MST feels that this may indicate that sports programs that are available for school based students such as School Sports NT are not marketed and promoted widely enough for students to be able to find the information easily. In a recent address to Parliament, the Sessional Committee on Youth and Sport commented on the “benefits in the re-establishment of the Junior Sport Reference Group, under the auspices of the Division of Sport and Recreation in the Department of Local Government, Housing and Sport. This group would provide ongoing advice to government and relevant Ministers on the needs of sport for young people.”<sup>23</sup> By allowing this to come to fruition young people will have more input into the availability and focus of future sports programs.

### Graph 1.4.3 Awareness of school to work transition programs

<sup>23</sup> Sessional Committee on Sport and Youth, Chair's Statement, 21 February 2008, pg 8

Question asked: Are you aware of any programs that can assist you with moving from school to work if you do not want to finish school?

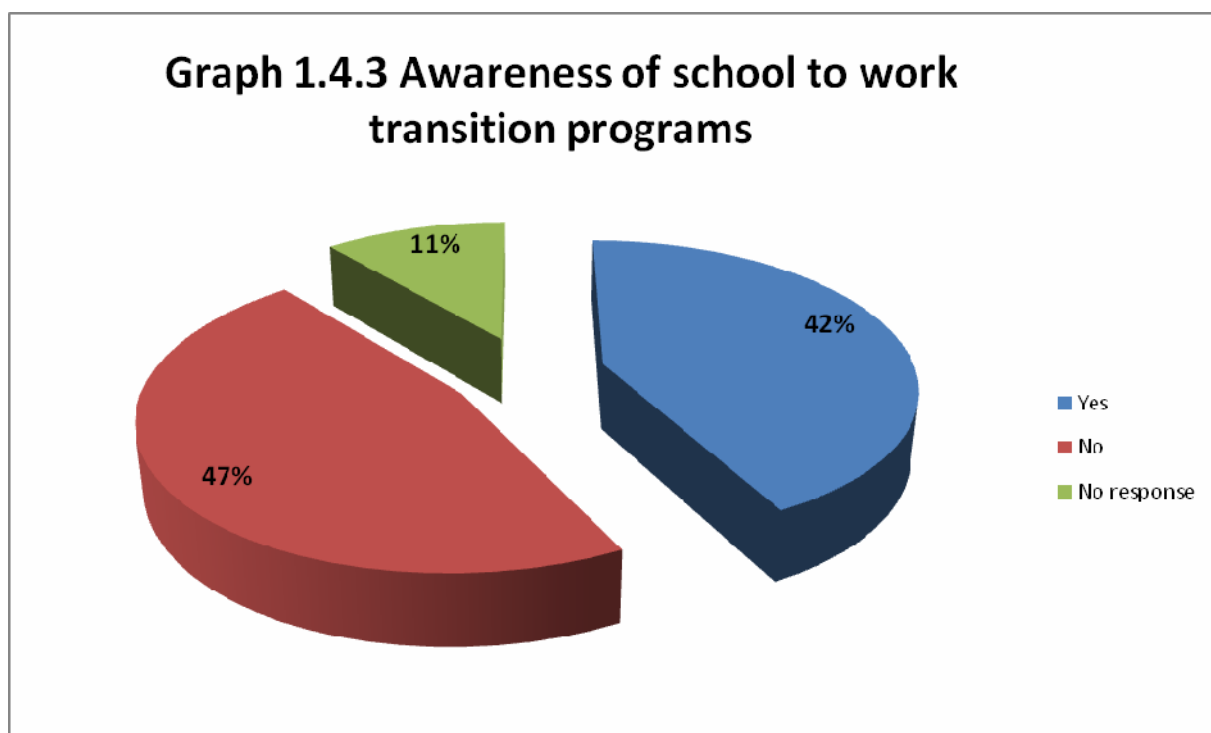


Table 1.4.3	#	%
Yes	61	42
No	67	47
No response	13	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100</b>

The MST felt that this was also an area where young people's awareness of school to work transition programs could be increased. Of those surveyed, 47% were not aware of school to work transition programs with 11% not responding to the question. In total 42% of young people stated that they are aware of school to work transition programs and gave the following as examples:

- School based Apprenticeship
- Placement program
- Running shoes, clothes
- Workready program (6 respondents)
- Australian Technical College
- Group Training NT
- Work experience
- Apprenticeship
- But not good ones for girls
- Pre-Voc
- Part time schooling and work
- Pathways
- Work Study
- Apprenticeship, TAFE
- Work
- Don't know the names
- VET
- CDU
- ATI
- Apprenticeship Award

## 2. Out of School Survey

### 1. Composition of Survey Respondents

Graph 2.1.1 Gender of Respondents

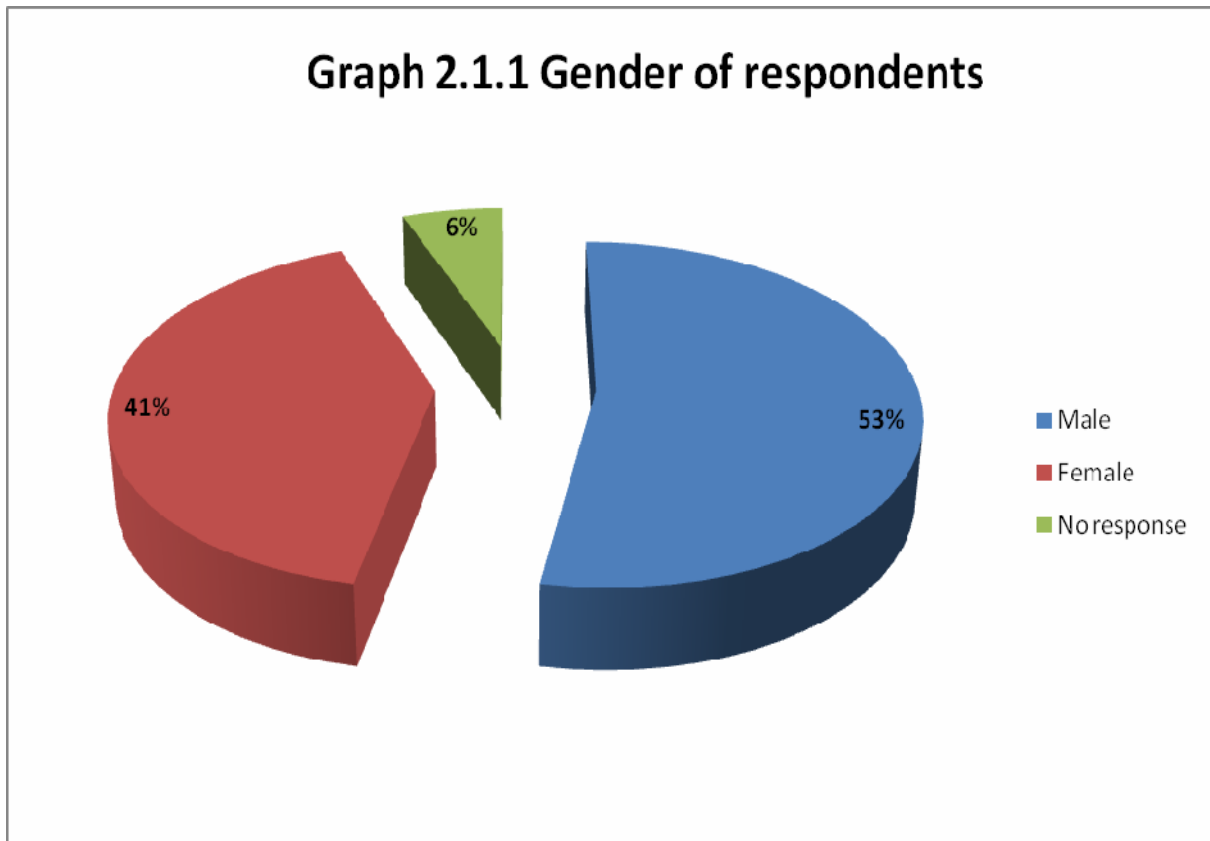


Table 2.1.1	#	%
Male	9	53
Female	7	41
No response	1	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

The MST was able to source a fairly comparable representation of both male and female respondents for the surveys, and the statistical data, used in this report.

Graph 2.1.2 Age of Respondents

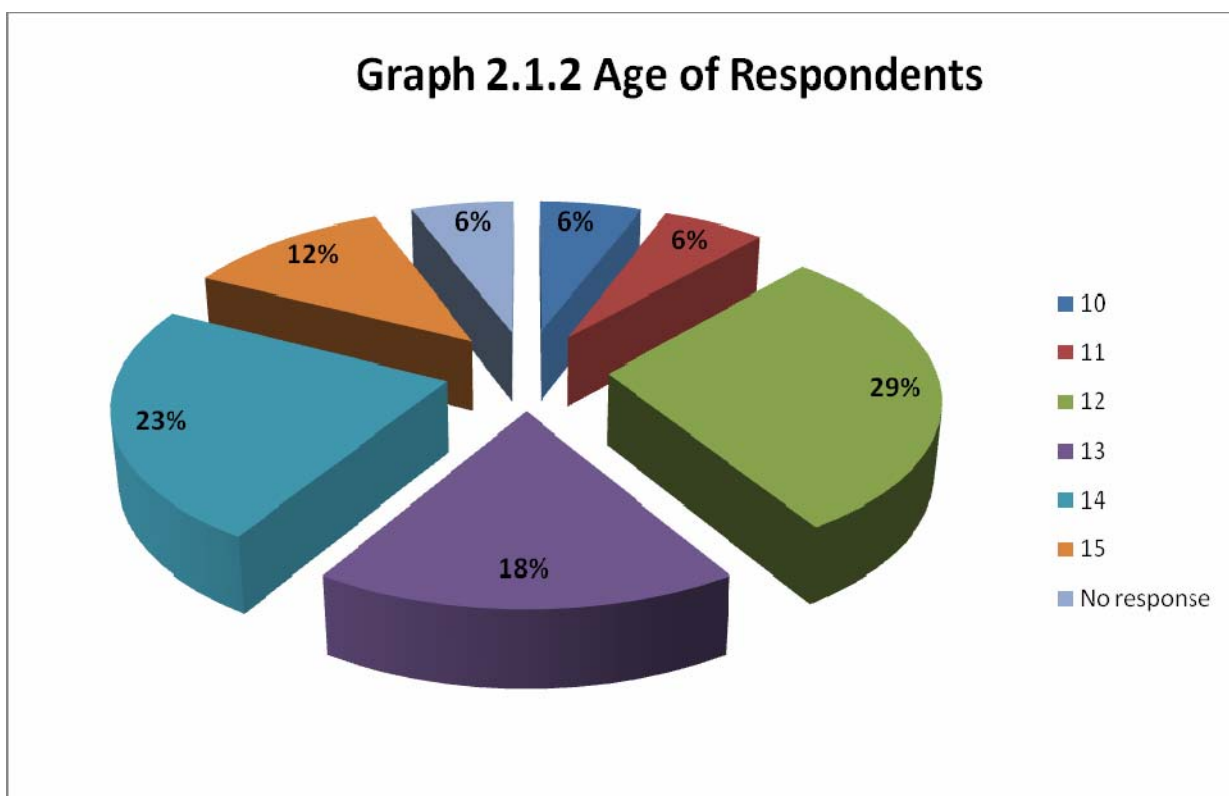
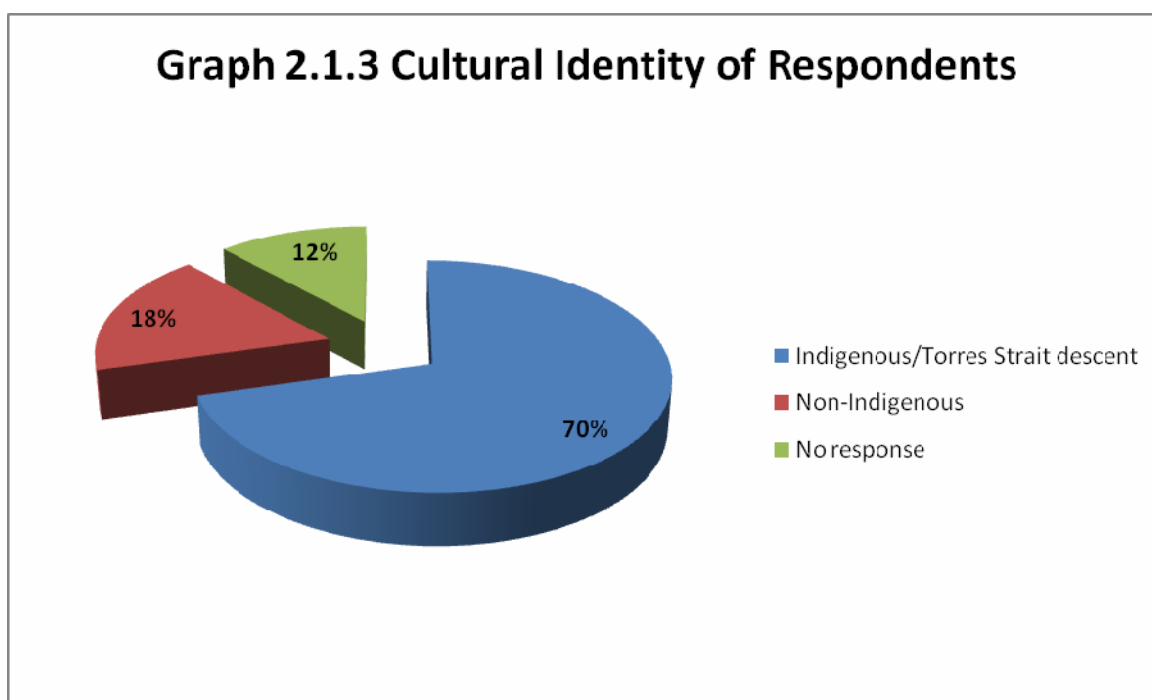


Table 2.1.2	#	%
10	1	6
11	1	6
12	5	29
13	3	18
14	4	23
15	2	12
No response	1	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

The age range slightly differs in this section of the findings compared to the In School Survey, as the organisations targeted deal with young people of all different ages that have left school early. The MST feels that this still makes a good contribution to the written and statistical data gathered from surveys, used in this report.

Graph 2.1.3 Cultural background of Respondents



	#	%
<b>Indigenous/Torres Strait descent</b>	12	70
<b>Non-Indigenous</b>	3	18
<b>No response</b>	2	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

Based on the number of respondents surveyed within the targeted cohort 70% identified as Indigenous/ Torres Strait Islander compared to the 18% represented which identify as non-Indigenous. The MST felt that this was a good representation of an Indigenous perspective on this issue. In comparison, the In School Survey captured 13% of young people who identified as Indigenous. Unfortunately the higher number of Out of School respondents identifying as of Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander descent is reflective of the higher ratio of young Indigenous people disengaged from school.

Graph 2.1.4 Main language spoken at home

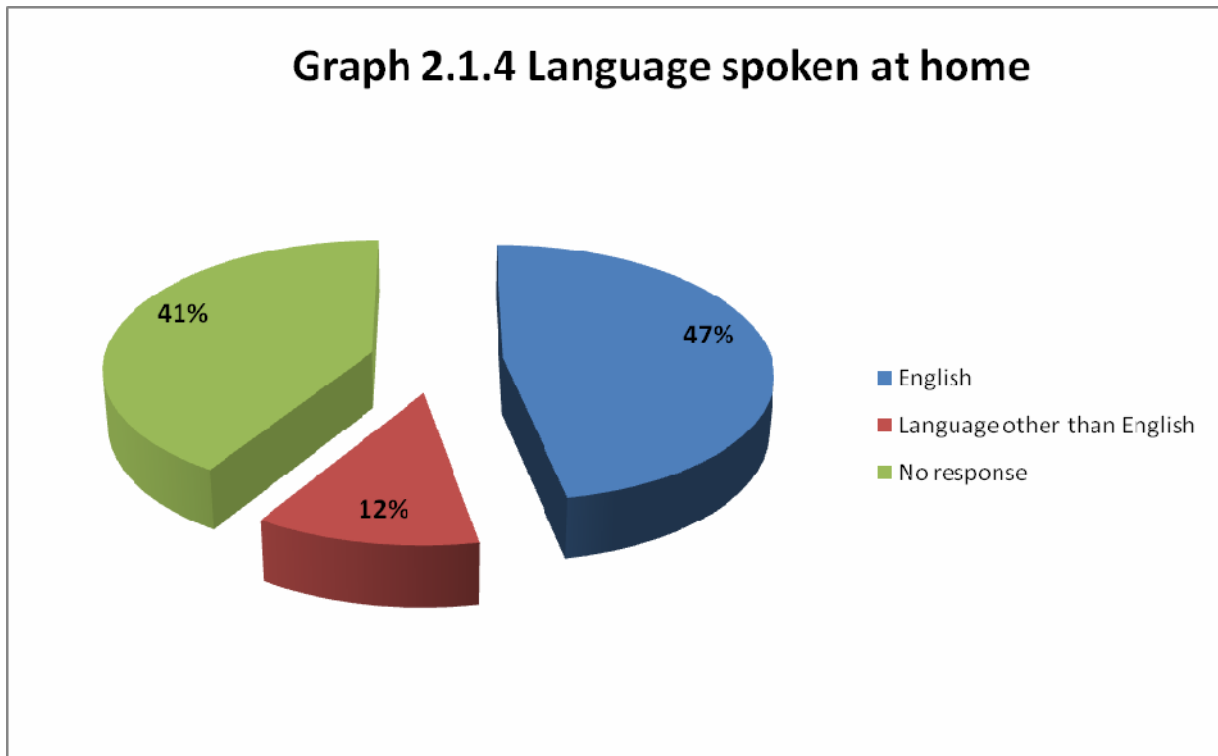


Table 2.1.4	#	%
English	8	47
Language other than English	2	12
No response	7	41
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

As reflected in the above graph, English is the primary language spoken at home for most survey respondents. Other languages spoken included: Timorese, Pidgeon, Greek and Serbian.

Unfortunately the majority of survey respondents decided not to respond to this question. The MST did not receive an indication as to their decision to do so.

Graph 2.1.5 Highest level of schooling obtained

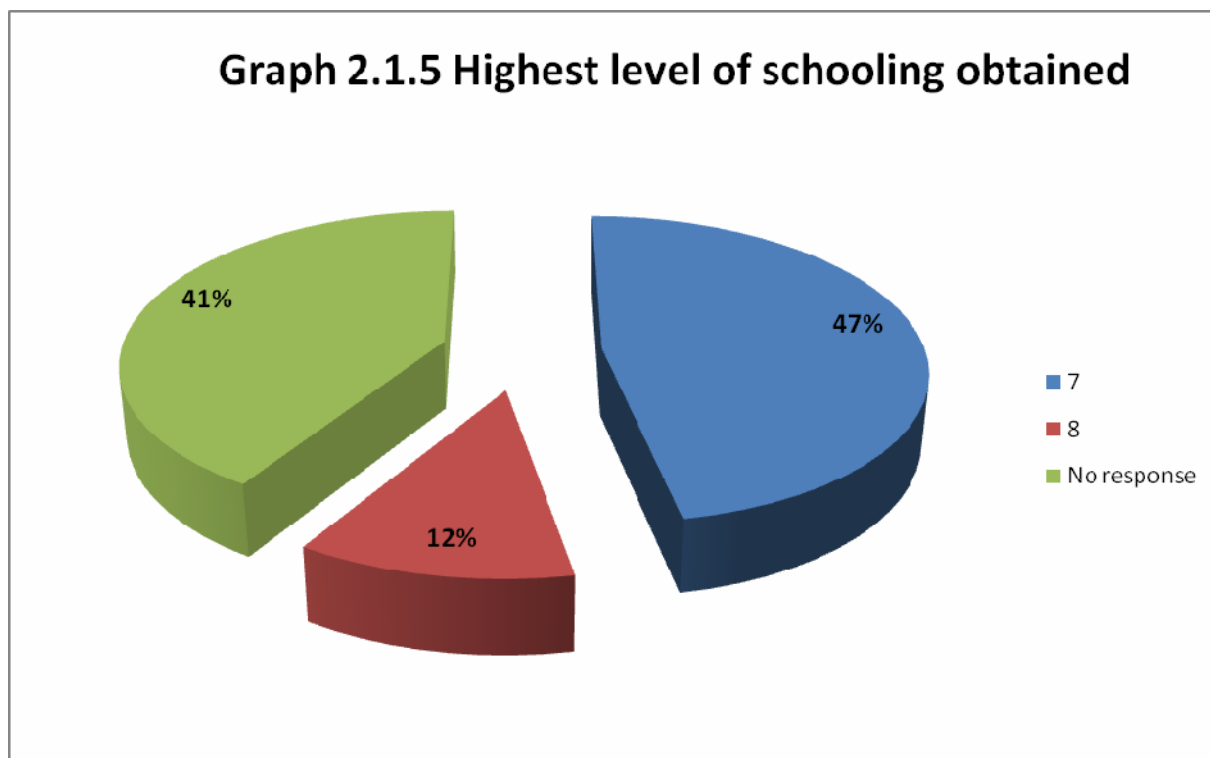


Table 2.1.5	#	%
7	8	47
8	2	12
No response	7	41
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

The majority of respondents left school as early as year 7 at 47% where 12% only completed year 8 and 41% did not respond to this question.

Considering that the legal compulsory school age is up to 15 years (*Education Act 1979*), it was interesting to note that the majority 47% of early school leavers had only completed year 7. Most students at this stage in their schooling are aged 12 and 13 years. This begs the question as to what avenues are available to young people before the prescribed legal age of employment (also 15 years of age– *Education Act 1979*).

Unless permission is granted by the Minister for Education (which this target group would be unlikely to pursue without assistance), employment at this age is illegal which also rules out participation in a full time apprenticeships or traineeships. If a young person decides not to continue with their education, it not only leaves them at a disadvantage later in life when looking for employment, but can also potentially lead to engagement in ‘at risk’ activities. This only leaves the option for a young person that has left school early to either continue at school or to wait until the legal age of employment to gain employment or further (vocational based) training.

These results compared to the In School Survey indicate that the critical age for encouraging and supporting young people to stay in school is lower than initially thought. However, the MST believes that no matter what age, all young people require adequate support to motivate them through the course of their education.

## 2. Values around Education

In this section of the survey we wanted to determine the values around education for the survey respondents.

When asked whether and education is important to them, answers were as follows:

- “I like going to school, but there is too much hum bug”
- “Because it will take you further in life. Hopefully get a good job and good life”
- “Yes, or you won’t get anywhere in life”
- “So that I can get a good job in the future”
- “To be able to read and write and get a job”
- “You get more education”

Many of the respondents that indicated that they had left school early indicated that obtaining some form of training or improving their options through alternative pathways was important. For many different reasons circumstances can impact on a young person’s values around education such as peer or family influences, the school environment. Many factors need to be considered when looking at why some young people decide to leave school early.

Graph 2.2.1 Family/ Friends who left school early  
Question asked: Do you have friends or family who left school early?

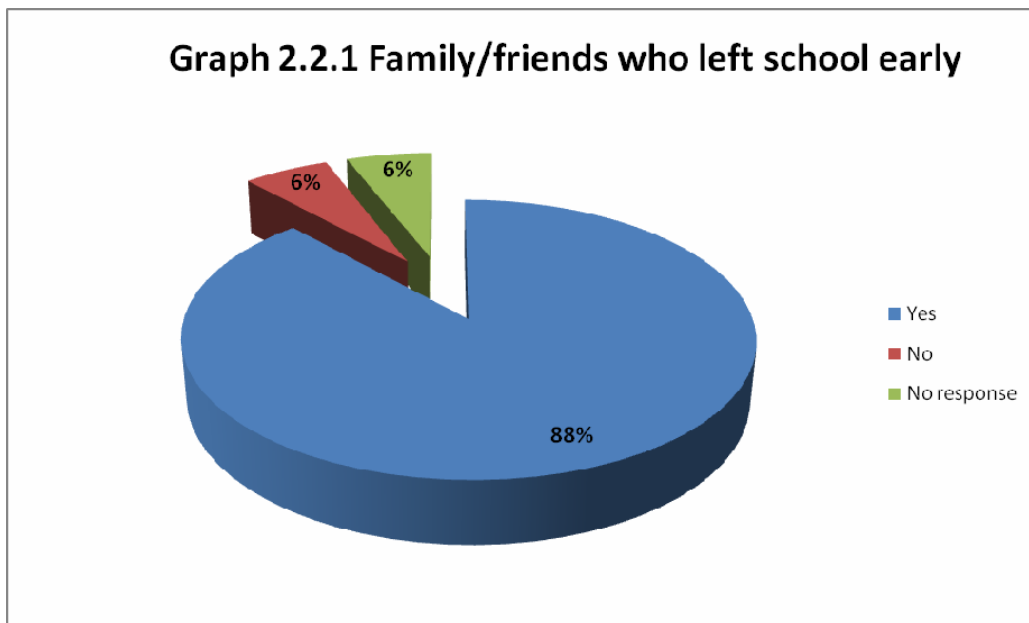


Table 2.2.1	#	%
Yes	15	88
No	1	6
No response	1	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

The MST found that 88% of respondents had family or friends who had left school early with 6% equally saying no and not responding at all.

Respondents were then asked to indicate whether family/friends leaving school early had any influence on their decision to leave school early.

Graph 2.2.2 Influence on Respondents

Question asked: If yes, did they influence your decision to leave school?

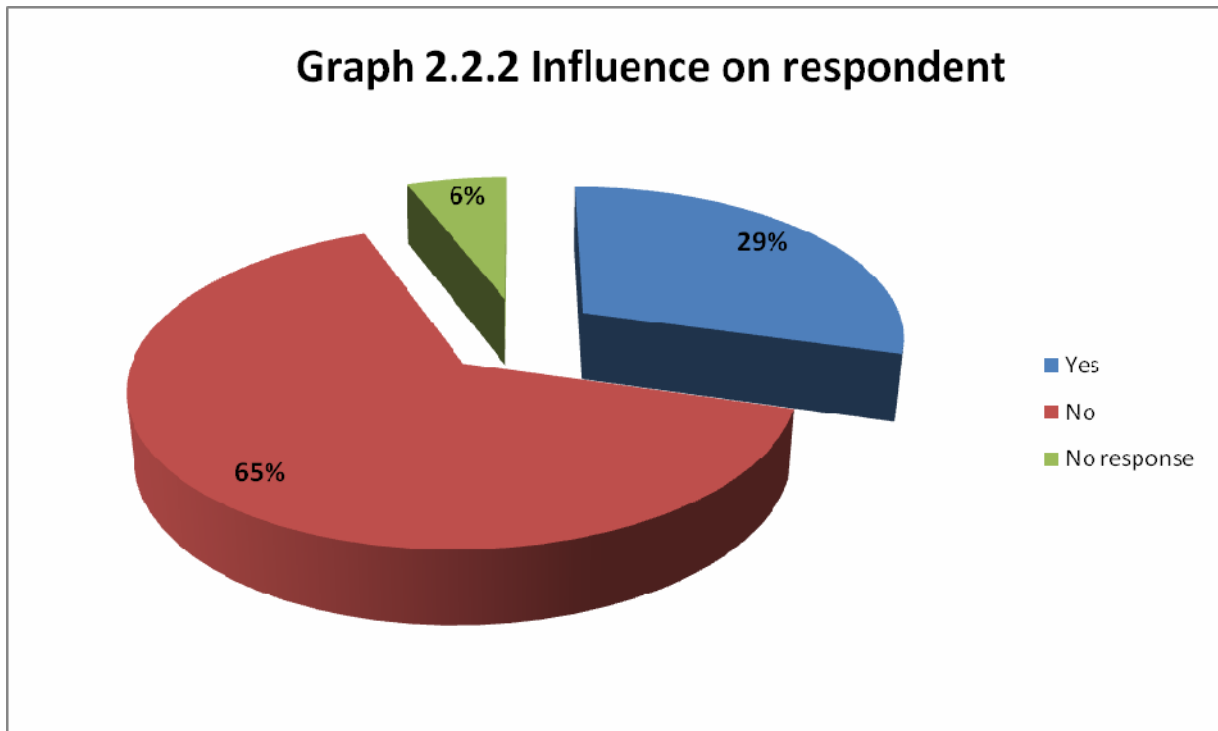


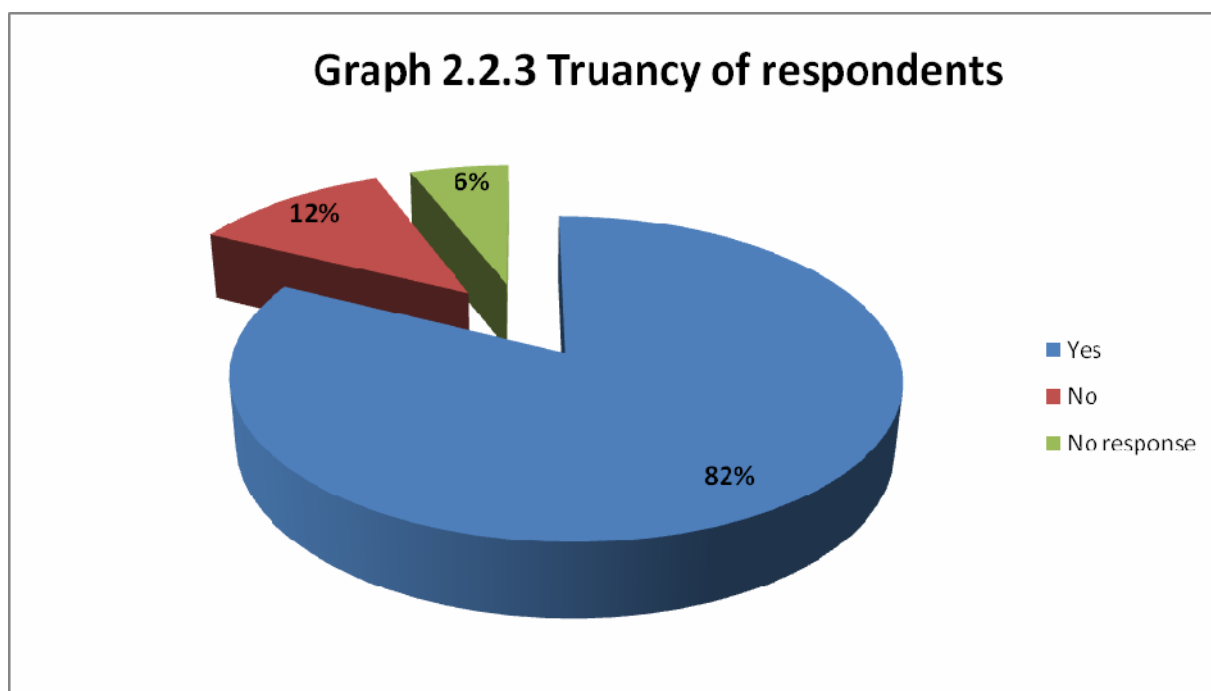
Table 2.2.2	#	%
Yes	5	29
No	11	65
No response	1	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

It was found that 29% of respondents felt that their family/friend having left school early had an impact on their decision to do so with 65% saying it had no effect and 6% not responding at all.

No feedback was provided as to how these individuals influenced the respondent to leave school early.

Graph 2.2.3 Truancy of Respondents

Question asked: Whilst at school did you ever skip school or wag school?



	#	%
Yes	14	82
No	2	12
No response	1	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

This graph shows that a large proportion of respondents had at one stage in their high school years' skipped classes for various reasons.

When asked "What was the reason for your decision?" some of the responses by young people who had indicated that they have wagged/skipped school included:

- "Didn't like school, too much work"
- "Because I didn't want to go to a particular class"
- "Mum needs to do important things for us and I have to look after my little brother"
- "Because sometimes it gets boring and you just don't feel like being at school"
- "Class was boring"
- "Tired"
- "Because I don't like the class"
- "To join in with friends"
- "People annoying me teachers were annoying and picked on me"

When asked "How do you feel about missing classes?" some of the responses by young people who had indicated that they have wagged/skipped school included:

- "I didn't really care, it was hard to catch up on the lessons we missed"
- "Bad but in a good way"
- "Worried about missing classes"

- “I had no help at high school”
- “Guilty sometimes because I missed some fun stuff”
- “Not bad because what difference is it going to make rather than being at school”
- “A bit better”
- “Felt uncomfortable”
- “Fun and guilty”
- “Don’t care but felt bad about mum paying the bills”

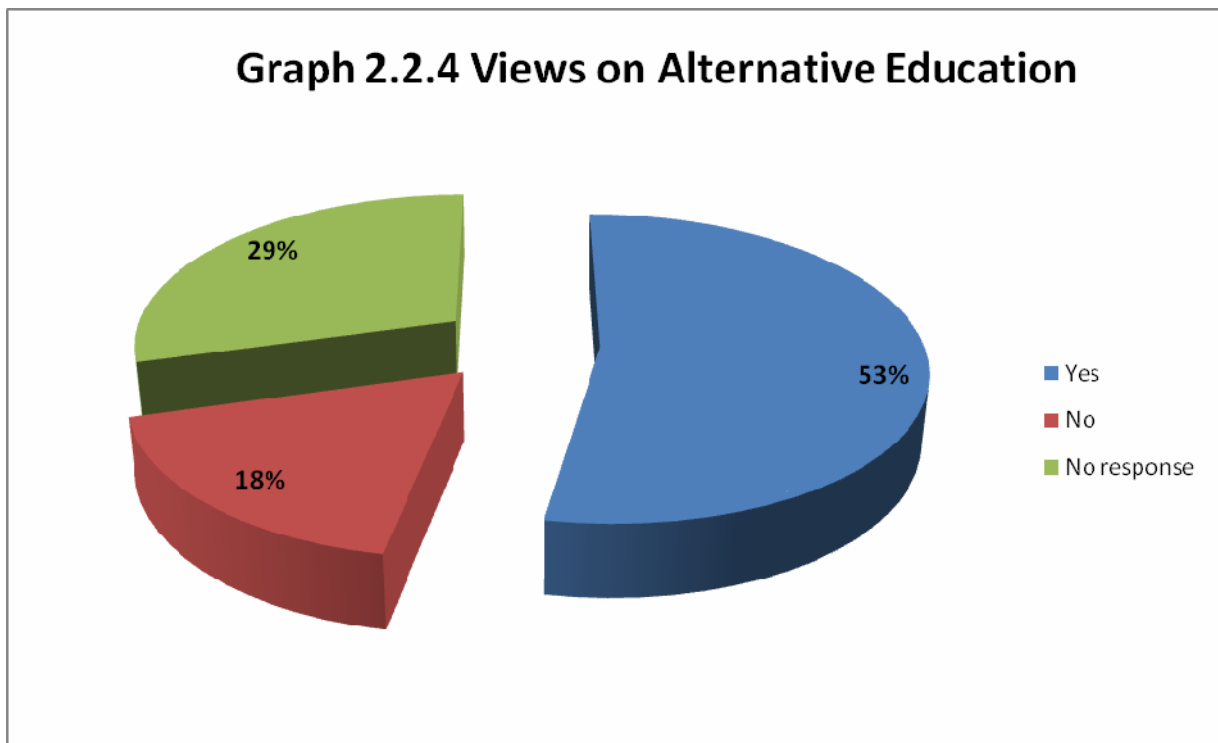
Similar responses were recorded by the MST in the In School Survey with students stating that “I don’t really care” and “it doesn’t bother me”. However even though some missed classes they stated that “It doesn’t bother me however I would not miss too many – education is actually important to me”.

The 82 % of young people surveyed who indicated that they had waggged/skipped class at some point felt some sense of remorse, but in their eyes had good reasons for missing classes. Reasons ranged from being bored in class, hating the teacher, class being irrelevant, just not caring to peer pressure.

In comparison, the In School survey found that 71% of young people indicated that they had decided to not attend classes at some point. Reasons ranged from being bored in class, hating the teacher, class being irrelevant or just not caring in general.

Graph 2.2.4 Views on Alternative Education

Question asked: Do you think other types of education are of more benefit than finishing high school?



<b>Table 2.2.4</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Yes</b>	9	53
<b>No</b>	3	18
<b>No response</b>	5	29
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

The MST wanted to get the respondents view around alternative education and found that 53% of all respondents stated that they felt alternative education pathways are of more benefit with 18% stating no and 29% not responding.

This is supported by one young person saying that it's "Better than school and you're still getting somewhere in life!" This indicated to the MST that young people are not as concerned about how they get their education and that the Alternative Education Provision Program is a great example of alternative programs that are supported by young people who choose to leave school early.

### 3. Individual support of Respondents

Graph 2.3.1 Number of respondents who identified with having a mentor  
Question asked: Do you have a mentor?

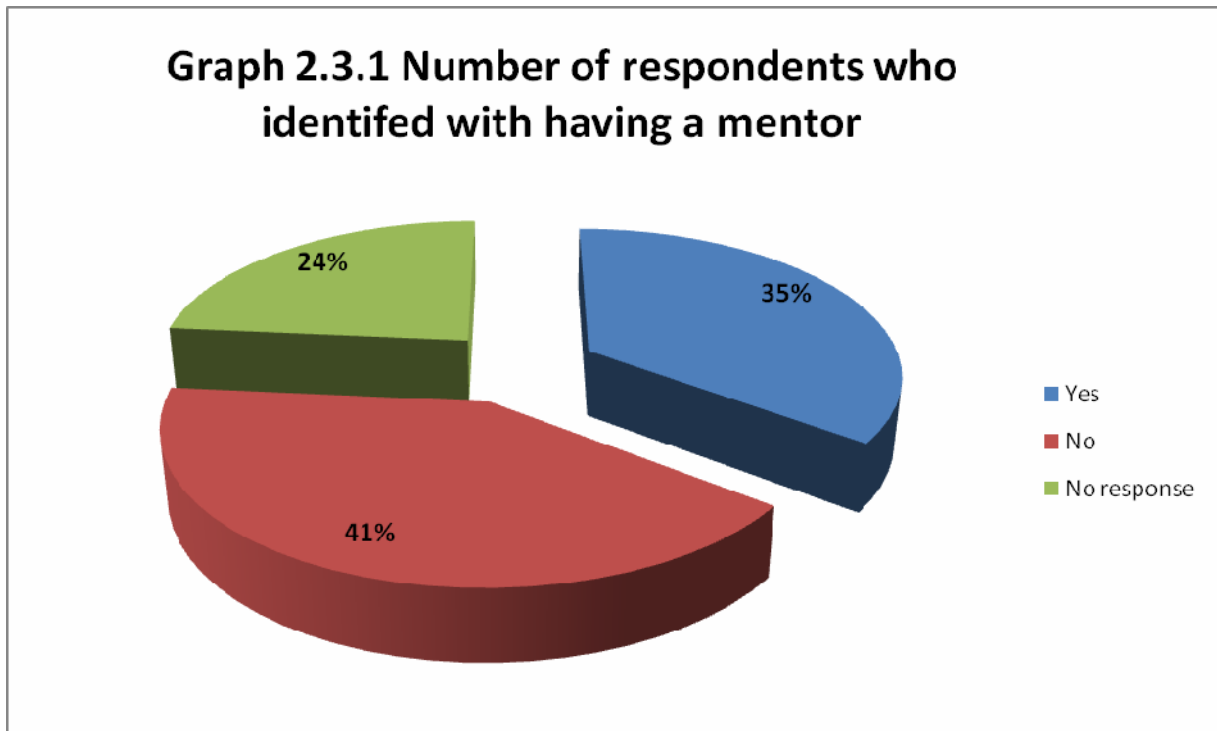


Table 2.3.1	#	%
Yes	6	35
No	7	41
No response	4	24
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

As can be seen from the data, 35% of young people surveyed indicated that they have a mentor in their life. A total of 41% felt that they did not have a mentor to support them, where 24% did not give a response. In comparison the In School Survey found that 59% of respondents identified with having a mentor, where 31% did not and 10% did not respond. As stated under the In School Survey data, the MST feels that the in school environment is more likely to increase the number of students who identify with having a mentor due to the exposure of many different individuals that they could identify as mentors.

This indicates that just over a third of all young people surveyed have mentors. For those who have indicated that they do not have a mentor in their life, it could be argued that they may not be aware of possible mentors around them, as it most likely occurs through informal arrangements such as in the form of a role model.

Graph 2.3.2 Influences/support for individuals educational goals  
 Question asked: Is there someone that influences/supports your life goals?

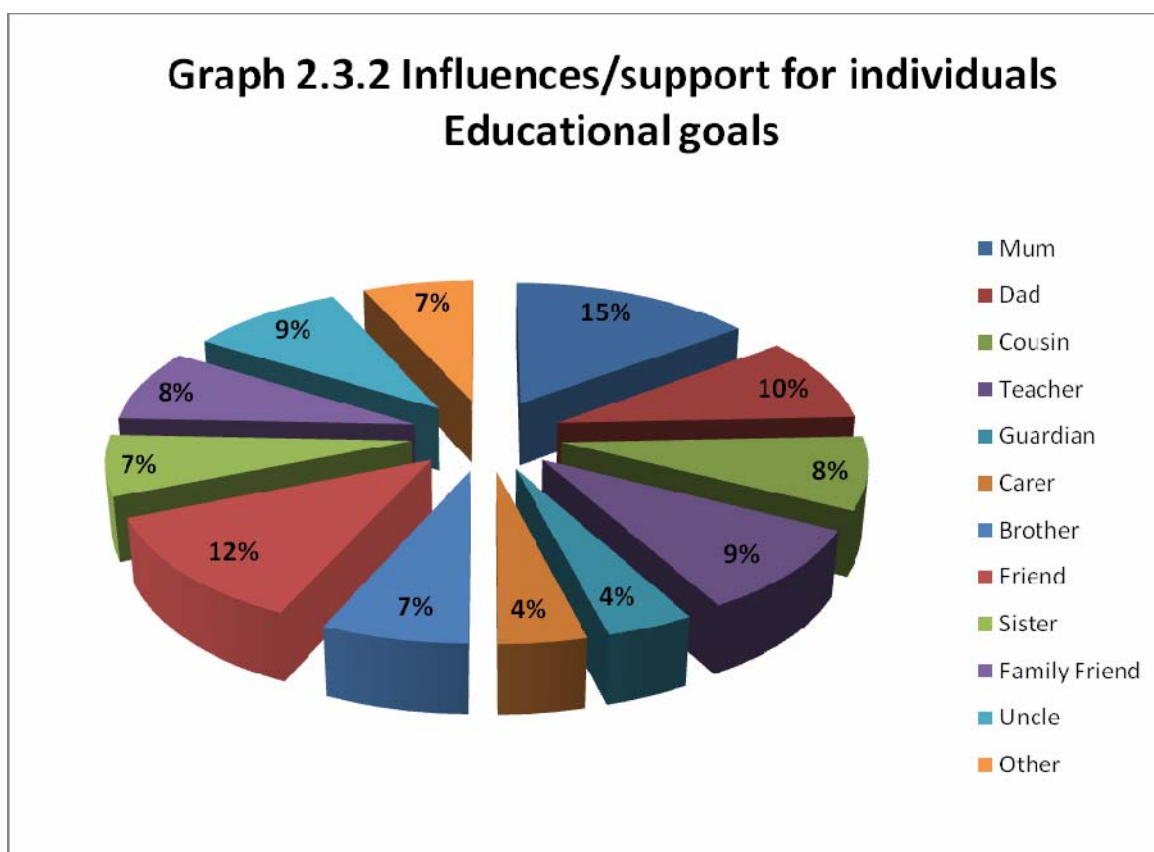


Table 2.3.2	#	%
Mum	11	15
Dad	7	10
Cousin	6	8
Teacher	7	9
Guardian	3	4
Carer	3	4
Brother	5	7
Friend	9	12
Sister	5	7
Family Friend	6	8
Uncle	7	9
Other	5	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100</b>

The illustration above indicates the individuals that young people feel make up their personal support systems relating to their educational goals. Mum again was listed as the highest support/influence by the survey respondents at 15% closely followed by friends at 12% and dad at 10%. The total number of responses received differs from the rest of the totals, as

respondents were able to make more than one choice. The top three individuals identified within the Out of School Survey were the same as in the In School Survey.

Respondents indicated that the sort of support provided by these individuals includes the following:

- “Go to school!”
- “Talk and encourage me”
- “Help me with whatever I need to do or fulfil – tell try in anyway.”
- “They teach me how to talk and do math stuff”
- “Every support that I need”
- “I don’t know”
- “Everything”
- “Sleeping out, giving me money, let friends come over”
- “Advice about looking after myself”

Graph 2.3.3 High School Certificate completion aspirations  
 Question asked: Are you considering completing Year 12 or its equivalent in the future by returning to high school, TAFE or trade school, night college or through a bridging course?

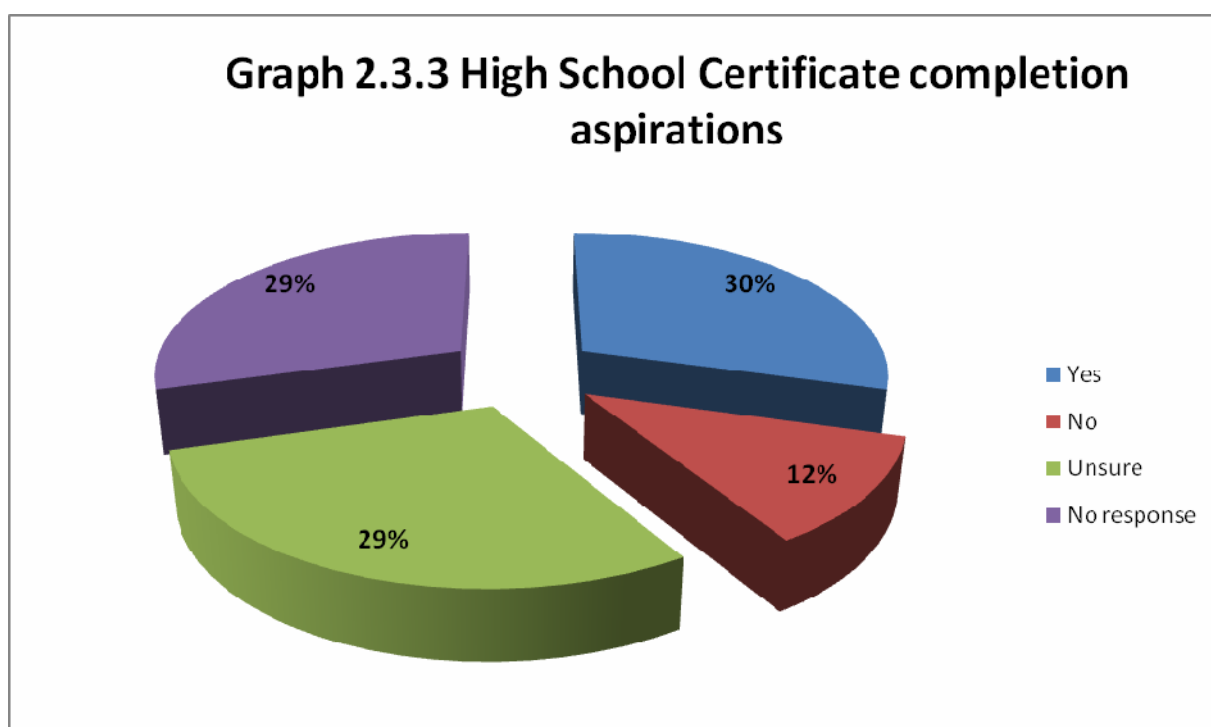


Table 2.3.3	#	%
Yes	5	30
No	2	12
Unsure	5	29
No response	5	29
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents were asked through what alternate method they were looking at completing their high school education. The following avenues were indicated:

- CDU
- Wherever available

Respondents were also asked why they would be looking to complete their high school education in the future, answers included:

- “Wanna finish school to get somewhere”
- “Because I have realised that I want to do good from now on. I’ve made bad decision and I want to change”
- “To get a good job”
- “Cause I might be doing something important and I won’t have time for it”
- “It’s better to finish school and get a good job than being on the dole”

Looking at the above responses it can be said that 30 % of young people who dropped out of school prematurely that were surveyed do have future aspirations and wish to completing their full education to be able to go on to obtain higher education, full time employment or an apprenticeship/traineeship. Based on the responses young people have different motivations for wanting to complete high school. These range from parental pressure, personal goals, wanting to achieve higher than their parents and other family members and to live up to family expectations.

In terms of the respondents that indicated that they were unsure or did not respond there was nothing more the MST could gain from these responses as no qualitative responses were provided.

#### 4. Support programs and initiatives identified which support individuals

Graph 2.4.1 Awareness of support programs

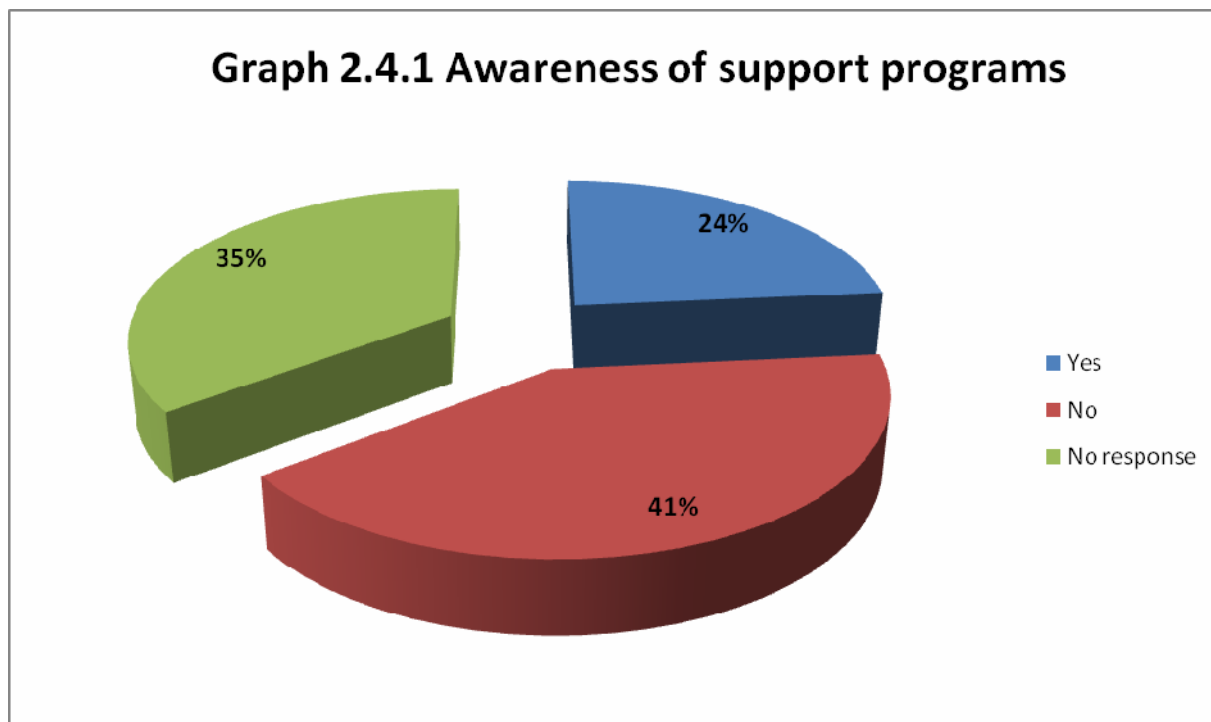


Table 2.4.1	#	%
Yes	4	24
No	7	41
No response	6	35
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents were asked to answer whether they were aware of any programs that could have assisted them to stay at school, and their responses suggested that not enough was being done to entice young people into programs as they were not aware of the options available to them.

The 24% that did indicate knowing about some sort of program or initiative did not provide a listing of the program or initiative.

No further observations were made about the no and nil responses as respondents did not provide any qualitative data in relation to this.

In comparison the In School Survey indicated that 44% of respondents were aware of existing programs that could support them through school as opposed to 47% of respondents who were not aware of existing programs and 9% not responding.

Graph 2.4.2 Participation in support programs

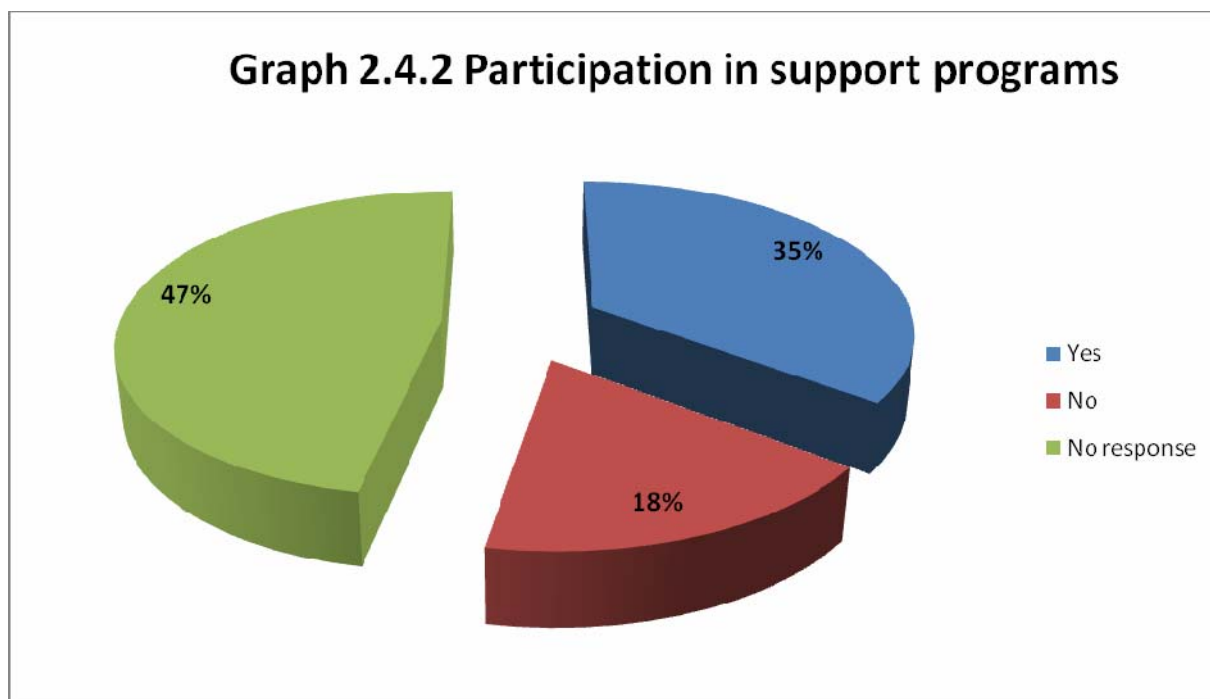


Table 2.4.2	#	%
Yes	6	35
No	2	18
No response	8	47
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

When asked whether participants were involved in any programs that develop their future goals or aspirations, 35 % of respondents answered yes, 18 % answered no with 47 % not giving a response.

The sorts of programs respondents are involved in include the following:

- Art
- Open Education
- Clontarf
- In working with the Alternative Education
- Art
- Rugby and basketball
- School Sport

Graph 2.4.3 Awareness of school to work transition programs/initiatives

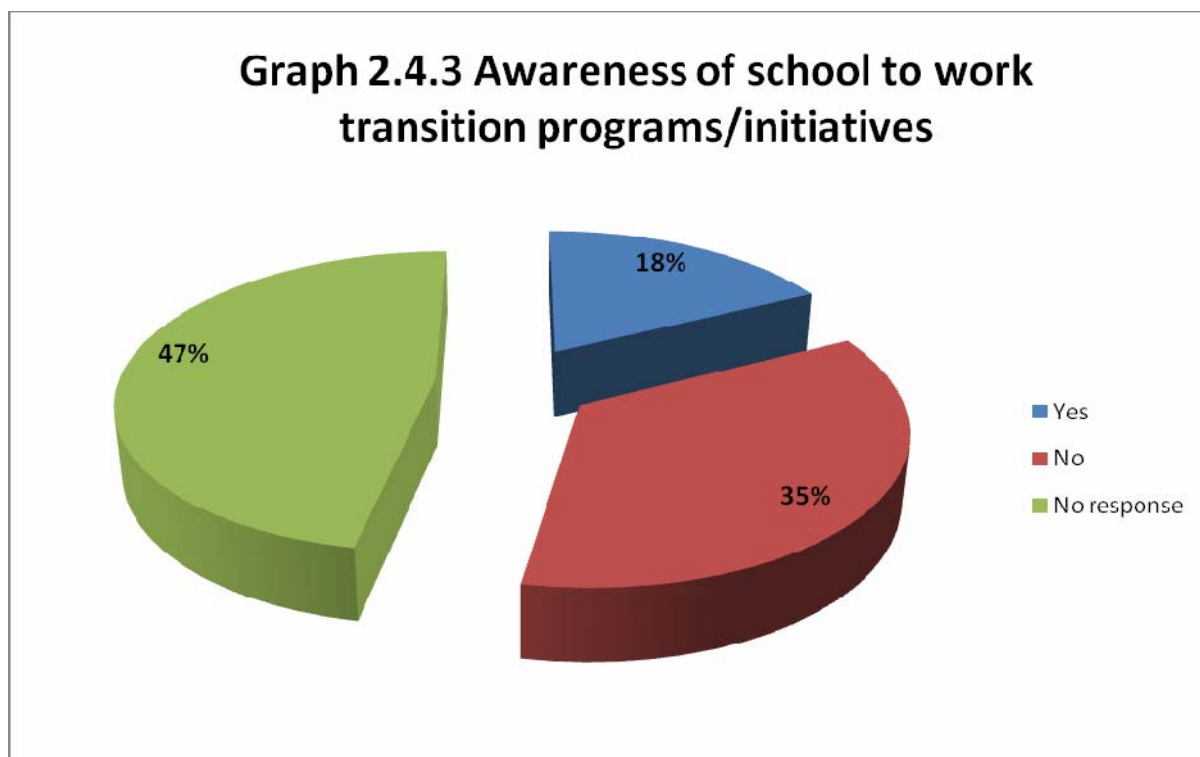


Table 2.4.3	#	%
Yes	3	18
No	6	35
No response	8	47
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

The MST felt that this was also an area where young people's awareness of school to work transition programs should be increased. A total of 35% of respondents were not aware of school to work transition programs with 47% not responding to the question. The 18% of young people who stated that they are aware of school to work transition programs gave the following examples:

- TAFE
- Job Network Agencies
- Centrelink
- Group Training Organisations

As evident by the above responses in relation to programs and initiatives that could assist young people to stay at school, program participation and access employment and training, more education and promotion needs to be done around these sorts of initiatives.

The cohort of young people surveyed in the Out of School Survey were quite different to the In School Survey, in terms of individual situations, motivations and aspirations that it is difficult to define reasons for the limitations in each of their responses.

## 5. Suggestions for Improvements to Education from a Youth Perspective

Below are some of the responses to the questions surrounding suggestions for improvements to education:

- **Relevance:** Many young people often question how their learning is being used in the future. For example one member of the MST has a younger brother who never had a strength in mathematics and could not see the point of undertaking this subject as he could not see the relevance to his future, but when he started his Electrical apprenticeship where quantum physics and mathematics is a vital part of the qualification, it finally made sense to him why he needed to know the basics that were being taught in school. A strategy to improve career pathways based on the subjects learned within school would be regarded as beneficial. Instead of a student committing themselves to subjects that they may not see the benefit from, relevance could be added to the subject or course material to relate these to real world situations and using a practical approach to teaching rather than an academic approach. One young person commented that “Make lessons more hands on with more real life situations, no boring lessons that don’t help people later in life”.
- **Flexibility:** Creating the opportunity to attend school within negotiated timeframes. Young people have suggested that changing times to their schooling day would be a better way to approach their education as well as having benefits of addressing anti-social behaviour incidents that occur at night time when young people roam the streets. When asked the questions “How do you think school could be made more flexible? E.g. Option to attend school at night?” some very interesting and positive responses were received by survey respondents. Young people commented that “less school hours” and “school starting later” would be a good way to keep young people at school. Another interesting comment that was noted mentioned that “Year 11 and 12 should be taught at University” and that you should be able to ‘do year 12 from home i.e. web classes where the teacher goes on webcam and teaches classes individually”. The MST thought it was vital to mention the trial done at Yuendumu community where night school was trialled and endorsed by the young people in that community. Quote: "There was a whole bunch of young people in Yuendumu who were approached by the Mt Theo program and asked 'how do you guys want to get back into the education system?', and they said 'We want night school'<sup>24</sup>. Although the trial generated interesting responses from young people it is not evident whether this trial has been implemented full time.
- **Appropriate support:** Move away from allowing the stigma of ‘programs are for squares’ or for ‘stupid kids’, so to develop a more efficient manner of communicating the benefit of program and initiatives but try to create options for students who may not necessary access the support because they don’t see the point. Young people commented that the schools should have “people who understand what we are going through in our lives today”, which indicated to the team that students feel they are surrounded by people who do not understand what they are going through and supports that more young people should be brought in as mentors and leaders. One student also commented that “there needs to be some sort of incentive, people need to have a class that talks about their future goals and how they can achieve them. They need role models to come in and tell us why they should complete school.”
- **More space, more teachers:** A number of comments were directed at the teachers of the schools that we targeted. Students felt that the class sizes were too big and that they were not obtaining the support that they needed to do well.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/01/18/2141891.htm>

- A follow up report should be conducted by either future Round Table members, a relevant NGO or the NT Government to assess the level of participation by young people within services and programs offered in schools and also those of which are offered by target organisations.

## Literature Review

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In the context of this report, the MST felt it necessary to accompany our findings with data and references to both Australian and Territory wide initiatives and programs.

Many of the programs and initiatives mentioned throughout this report have vastly different implementation methods however their goal remains the same – to improve attendance and retention rates in schools across all social and cultural backgrounds, regardless of individual financial availability or educational ability.

The MST has found many references relating to the importance of education and how it impacts on career pathways and future options. According to research conducted by the Australian Centre for Education and Research (ACER), “early school leavers are more likely to become unemployed, stay unemployed for longer, have lower earnings, and accumulate less wealth over their lifetime.”<sup>25</sup> The Northern Territory Government has directed a strong focus on creating options for young people to develop skills in areas that include trades and non academic aspirations such as VET. “One explanation is that non-academically inclined students are choosing the labour market or participating in post-school education rather than [to] complete school.”<sup>26</sup> According to the young people surveyed by the MST a university degree remains a primary objective to further education to lead into a successful career. However MST also noted that the findings of the surveys indicated that young people are beginning to move towards trade based career pathways. From a personal point of view the MST believes this trend may be due to the labour shortage currently being experienced within the Northern Territory.

The young people who were approached to complete the Out of School Survey ranged between the ages of 10 and 15 years old. Their ages may appear young however according to the report, *‘Learning Alternatives: A last chance or a real choice?’* conducted by John Spierings “the ABS reports that in 2000 more than 16,000 school leavers exited with Year 9 or a lesser qualifications.”<sup>27</sup> Although this is a national statistical representation the MST believes the relevance to this data links and highlights the important issue of young people leaving school at such an early and important time in their schooling. The issue becomes more imperative if these school leavers are not connecting to ongoing study, training or employment. The Spierings report further states that, “more than half (51%) were involved in ‘at risk’ activities in May 2001; 37% had gone on to a form of further education, predominantly lower level certificate courses.”<sup>28</sup> Alternative programs including the Alternative Education Provision Program provide early school leavers with the opportunity to complete their education in a flexible environment. It is important to ensure these programs are delivered to young people in a way that enables them to succeed.

Again referring to the Spierings report, “Frequently the local response to students with challenging behaviours, learning difficulties, who ‘don’t fit’ traditional schooling and maybe at risk of leaving has been to transfer them to alternative settings, community schools and teaching units,”<sup>29</sup> Spierings then goes on to say, “However these alternatives are chronically under recognised, underfunded, precariously placed in the structure of education administration and generally considered marginally or outcast to mainstream schooling. As a result they are limited in terms of what can be achieved, evaluated and transferred to ‘traditional’ schooling.”<sup>30</sup> According to the report; *‘Do Schools Matter for Early School Leaving? Individual and School Influences in Australia’* by Gary N Marks, “... policies implemented to increase participation include broadening the curriculum, restricting unemployment assistance for school leavers,

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<sup>25</sup> Marks, Gary N. (2007) ‘Do Schools Matter for Early School Leaving? Individual and School Influences in Australia’, *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 18:4, 429 – 450, Page. 429

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*

<sup>27</sup> Spierings, John (2003) ‘Learning Alternatives: A last chance or a real choice?’, *Dusseldorp Skills Forum*, Page 2

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*

<sup>29</sup> *ibid*

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*

expanding vocational education in secondary schools and increasing minimum school leaving age.”

As briefly discussed above there are a number of programs and initiatives available for students who would like to complete high school and for those who decide to leave. Students still within high school have the opportunity to participate in programs such as VET in schools, Work Ready, School Based Apprenticeships, Work Placement, Scholarships, and Cadetships. These assist in ensuring students can gain extra credits towards their high school certificate to either allow them to pass year twelve or gain the TER score needed to be eligible to study a certain course at university.

The MST thought it would be vital to mention the Northern Territory Government’s ‘Value of Schooling’ campaign due to its focus on improving attendance rates at NT schools. The campaign will run over 5 years and is one of the NT Government’s commitments in it’s *closing the gap* initiative, is aimed at raising awareness about the value of education and the importance of children going to school every day. This campaign targets a range of groups in differing contexts including children, parents, communities and school staff. “The key messages are directed at parents and children to reinforce the message of school being a positive place for children where they will be safe, welcome and will learn.”<sup>31</sup> Although there were no specific links to this campaign identified by young people who were surveyed by the MST, it was felt that the overall effects were more likely to be impacting on children attending primary school rather than secondary hence the lack of reference made by the MST’s defined target group.

Although the Northern Territory Government should be applauded for trying to address the issue of poor attendance, there should be more of a focus on the indirect influences that may be causing the very problem. This includes the impact of the rising cost of living in the Northern Territory mostly aimed at accommodation. “Rental housing availability is at crisis levels, with the Real Estate Institute reporting the Darwin vacancy rate at 0.3 per cent - down 0.4 per cent in the past year.”<sup>32</sup> One of the survey respondents that contributed to the Out of School Survey indicated that they ‘had to stay at home to look after their brothers and sister’ because their mother had to work two jobs to pay all of the bills. Housing is only one of many issues facing young Territorians there are many others that may be the cause of poor attendance which have been raised in numerous reports conducted by the Northern Territory and Australian Government.

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<sup>31</sup> Department of Education and Training, The Value of Schooling Campaign, [http://www.det.nt.gov.au/education/programs\\_initiatives/children\\_must\\_go\\_to\\_school\\_everyday/docs/faqs.pdf](http://www.det.nt.gov.au/education/programs_initiatives/children_must_go_to_school_everyday/docs/faqs.pdf), June 2008

<sup>32</sup> Darwin rental housing availability, <http://www.reint.com.au/>

## **Conclusion**

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The focus of this report was to identify a youth perspective on the reasons for poor attendance and retention of young Territorians at high schools. From this research the MST were able to identify possible improvements that can be made to increase attendance rates in Northern Territory high schools.

Through researching for this report the MST were able to identify numerous support programs and initiatives available to assist young people both in and out of school. Students still within high school have the opportunity to participate in programs such as;

- VET in schools, Work Ready, School Based Apprenticeships, Work Placement, Scholarships, and Cadetships.

There are many other options and avenues available to young people however a strong theme from the survey data collected remains with the provision of VET and mentoring programs. The MST developed the understanding that awareness of programs available to young people needed to be promoted more effectively to increase participation rates within existing programs. The respondents surveyed within the In School Survey indicated minimal awareness and involvement in programs available. In comparison the Out School respondents indicated a lack of awareness of programs in general.

In light of the information obtained through the teams literature review and through consultation with young Territorians it appears that the primary pathway young people wish to follow or aspire to, is to obtain their NTCE. Those who are less academically inclined are able to utilise a number of programs to gain employability skills while completing their NTCE or to be able to leave school early to seek an apprenticeship, traineeship or full time employment.

In terms of attendance many young Territorians felt that they were not receiving the support that they require to improve their performance in class and decided to skip those classes in which they lacked confidence. There were a number of students who confessed to skipping class because they wanted to but it does call into account a number of factors that were not necessary placed on paper due to sensitivities or individual personal situations.

Overall there appears to be a need for a new and fresh approach to education with a flexible learning capacity. Young people have suggested creating the opportunity to attend school within negotiated timeframes within their schooling day. They feel that this would be a better way to approach their education as well as having benefits of addressing anti-social behaviour. Many young people often question how their learning is being used in the future. A strategy to improve career pathways based on the subjects learned within school would be regarded as beneficial. Instead of a student committing themselves to subjects that they may not see the benefit from, relevance could be added to the subject or course material to relate these to real world situations and using a practical approach to teaching rather than an academic approach.

## **Recommendations**

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**Recommendation 1:** There is a need for more relevant and engaging curriculum to improve the interest of students in schools and promote positive learning in the home environment. The MST feels that student motivation and poor attendance at school would be improved by more engaging teaching methods and a wider variety of subject choices that are made relevant to real world learning and relate to future career pathways. Many young people often question how their learning will be used in the future. A strategy to improve career pathways based on the subjects learned within school would be regarded as beneficial. Instead of a student committing themselves to subjects that they may not see the benefit from, relevance could be added to the subject or course material to relate these to real world situations and using a practical approach to teaching rather than an academic approach.

**Recommendation 2:** Allow flexibility of school hours by creating the opportunity to attend school within negotiated timeframes. Young people have suggested that changing times to their schooling day would be a better way to approach their education as well as having benefits of addressing anti-social behaviour incidents that occur at night time when young people roam the streets. Young people commented that “Less school hours” and “School starting later” would be a good way to keep young people at school. Another interesting comment that was noted mentioned that “Year 11 and 12 should be taught at University” and that you should be able to ‘do year 12 from home i.e. web classes where the teacher goes on webcam and teaches classes individually”.

**Recommendation 3:** The Northern Territory Government to evaluate the most appropriate approach to addressing service provision to young people who are disengaged from the education system in partnership with target organisations such as the YMCA, Alternative Education Provision Program and other organisations delivering programs to young people in the community.

**Recommendation 4:** All Northern Territory high schools to implement peer mentoring programs to encourage a culture of support and leadership based on programs such as AITAP for all mainstream and Indigenous students. Promote programs in a way that removes the stigma that ‘they are for squares’ or for ‘stupid kids’, so to develop a more efficient manner of communicating the benefit of programs and initiatives to all students. One student commented that “there needs to be some sort of incentive, people need to have a class that talks about their future goals and how they can achieve them. They need role models to come in and tell us why they should complete school.”

**Recommendation 5:** The Northern Territory Government to make a significant invest in more resources for Alternative Education Programs to support those young people who choose to exit the mainstream education system and discourage involvement in ‘at risk’ activities.

**Recommendation 6:** Address the size of classes and skills of teachers. A number of comments were directed at the teachers of the schools that we targeted. Students felt that the class sizes were too big and that they were not obtaining the support that they needed from teachers to do well.

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## **Appendices**

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Appendix A – In School Survey

Appendix B – Out of School Survey

## Appendix A – In School Survey



Are you a student in Year 10 or 11 and living in the Northern Territory? If so, we need your help! This is a quick survey to find out what young people think about school attendance and your opinions on supportive programs/initiatives that are available.

All surveys will be kept private and confidential. Only members from the Youth Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians will have access for the purpose of data collection. Please do not write your name on the survey.

All surveys are due back on the **12 September 2008**.

<b>Age</b>	<b>Suburb/Community/Town</b>
<b>Gender</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male	<b>Name of school or work (If applicable)</b>
<b>What is the main language spoken at home?</b>	<b>What year are you in at School?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

1. What do you think is most important about getting an education and why?

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2. Have you ever skipped or wagged school?

Yes     No

2.1 What was the reason for your decision?

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2.2 How do you feel about missing classes?

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3. Do you have a mentor?

Note: A mentor is defined as a trusted person who can provide advice and guidance.

Yes     No

4. Is there someone that influences/supports your educational goals?

- Mum       Dad       Brother       Sister       Uncle  
 Cousin       Teacher       Friend       Family Friend  
 Guardian       Carer  
 Other – please specify
- 
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5. Are you considering completing Year 12?

- Yes       No       Unsure

What is the reason for your decision?

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6. Are you aware of any programs that can assist you to stay at school? E.g sports, leadership, Vocational Education and Training

- Yes       No

Please indicate which program/s.

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7. Do you participate in any programs that develop your future aspirations and career or educational goals? E.g. sports, leadership, Vocational Education and Training

- Yes       No

Please indicate which program/s.

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8. Are you aware of any programs that can assist you with moving from school to work if you do not want to finish school? E.g. Structured Workplacement Program

- Yes       No

Please indicate which program/s.

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9. How do you think education can be made more relevant to you? E.g Subjects or learning material.

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10. How do you think education can be made more flexible? E.g Option to attend school at night (flexible schooling)

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11. Please feel free to add any other comments you think will provide us with more information that will assist in increasing attendance at school.

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Thank you for your time,

please send through to the Office of Youth Affairs.

Office of Youth Affairs  
Level 11, NT House  
22 Mitchell Street  
DARWIN

GPO Box 4396  
DARWIN NT 0801

Telephone: 08 8999 3862  
Free Call: 1800 652 736  
Fax: 08 8999 3883

## Appendix B – Out of School Survey



Are you a young Territorian aged 12 to 25 who chose not to complete high school? If so, we need your help! This is a quick survey/interview to find out what young people think about school attendance and your opinions on supportive programs and initiatives that are available.

All surveys will be kept as a private and confidential with only members from the Youth Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians able to access for the purpose of data collection. Please do not write your name on the survey. All surveys are due back on the **12 September 2008**.

<b>Age</b>	<b>Suburb/Community/Town</b>
<b>Gender</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male	<b>Name of work place or educational institution (If applicable)</b>
<b>Highest level of school completed?</b>	<b>Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>What is the main language spoken at home?</b>	

12. Do you think it is important to gain a high school education?

Yes     No

Please comment on your above choice

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13. What was the reason for your decision to leave school?

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14. Do you have friends or family who left school early?

Yes     No

If yes, did they influence your decision to leave school?

Yes     No

15. Whilst at school did you ever skip school or wag school?

Yes     No

15.1 What was the reason for your decision?

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15.2 How did you feel about missing classes?

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16. Do you think other types of education are of more benefit than finishing high school?  
E.g. TAFE Courses; Traineeship/Apprenticeship.

Yes     No

Please comment on your above choice

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17. Do you have a mentor?

**Note: A mentor is someone that shares their knowledge and wisdom to allow another to reach their full potential.**

Yes     No

18. Is there someone that influences/supports your life goals?

Mum             Dad             Brother     Sister     Uncle  
 Cousin         Teacher     Friend     Family Friend  
 Guardian     Carer         Other

What kind of support do they give you?

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19. Are you considering completing Year 12 or its equivalent in the future by returning to high school, TAFE or trade school, night college or through a bridging course?

Yes     No     Unsure

If yes, where? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the reason for your decision?

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20. Are you aware of any programs that could have supported you to stay at school?  
E.g. sports, leadership, mentoring and support, VET in Schools course, School Based Apprenticeship

Yes     No

Please indicate which program/s.

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21. Did you participate in any programs that support your future aspirations and career or educational goals? E.g. sports, leadership, mentoring and support, VET in Schools course, School Based Apprenticeship

Yes     No

Please indicate which program/s.

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11. Are you aware of any programs/organisations that could support you with finding employment? E.g. Traineeship/Apprenticeship (TAFE's; Job Network Agencies; Centrelink; Group Training Organisations)

Yes     No

Please indicate which programs/organisations.

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12. How do you think your high school education could have been made more relevant to you? E.g. Subject choices, learning material, physical environment.

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13. How do you think high school education could be made more flexible? E.g. Option to attend school at night (flexible schooling)

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14. Please feel free to add any other comments you think will provide us with more information that will assist in increasing attendance at school.

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Thank you for your participation!!!

Please send through to the Office of Youth Affairs.

Office of Youth Affairs  
Level 11, NT House  
22 Mitchell Street  
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GPO Box 4396  
DARWIN NT 0801

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Fax: 08 8999 3883

## Evaluation

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At the beginning of the year we had grand plans of producing our report and making a major break through in the process of providing the opinions of young Territorians to government. We really wanted to investigate the projects that are currently available and the avenues that young people can take as alternative pathways as opposed to enduring the pressures of completing their NTCE.

As the year progressed it became very clear that our plans were going to have to be scaled down and we would do the best we could. With three very busy young people on board we often found it difficult to find the right amount of time to dedicate to the project.

Our survey took some time to perfect. We consulted with a range of individuals on the subject matter to ensure that the questions would be received by those we were trying to survey. After that process was completed we then sent off the template to be proofed by OYA, who then passed it on to DET for approval. We had a number of drafts that needed to be approved before we could distribute to our target schools.

We also produced our second survey (interview template) which was also proofed by OYA which was then distributed to target organisations. What was really disappointing was the lack of support and assistance regarding the distribution of the Out of School Survey. We found that although we contacted a number of individuals within project roles that worked with young people, unfortunately very few were willing to assist for varied reasons. Feedback received from one project officer in particular indicated that more time was required to organise sessions with the young people to conduct the survey.

The In School Survey was mailed out to the schools that we had identified as our 'targets'. Considering the time frame the MST were impressed with the timely return of completed surveys. Initially we did think that we were going to be receiving a massive return but were a little disappointed when we averaged only 30 per school.

Organising the data and presenting it in the best format took ages! Thankful we had one very computer savvy member who did an amazing job on the graphs and tables. We also managed to locate copious amounts of information relating to this subject and found it was an amazing effort to read through as much as we did.

Like many projects produced before ours, time was our enemy and contributed to many stressful moments trying to get all of the appropriate boxes ticked. However as much as we stressed and wondered if we were going down the right track we were lucky to have the support system of the OYA and also other Round Table Members. Not to mention our loved ones and work colleagues who through thick and thin provided support and advice.

We are very proud to have produced and completed our project and look forward to observing future developments in this area.