



# Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory

## STATEMENT

**Name:** Mandy Loundar

**Address:** Department of Justice, Juvenile Justice, GPO Box 31, Sydney NSW 2011

**Date:** 16 May 2017

1. This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I am prepared to give to the Royal Commission and Board of Inquiry into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory.
2. This statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.
3. I understand that it is an offence to provide false information to the Royal Commission/Inquiry.
4. This statement has been prepared on the basis that the Commission will issue a Notice to Produce under s 2(3A) of the *Royal Commissions Act 1902* (Cth) for the production of a signed copy.

### Background and Qualifications

5. I have been the Principal Project Officer for Youth on Track since September 2013. Youth on Track is a NSW Department of Justice early intervention scheme which targets young people who are at risk of long-term involvement in the criminal justice system.
6. I have 16 years' experience in the youth and criminal justice sectors. Since commencing work with the NSW Department of Justice in 2009, I have gained extensive experience developing and implementing criminal justice interventions for adults and young people. My CV is **Annexure A** to this statement.

### Youth on Track

7. The Youth on Track scheme is provided by non-government providers in six sites covering 13 police local area commands in NSW. The scheme, which commenced on 1 July 2013, has the benefit of multi-agency support and addresses the underlying causes of offending through individualised, targeted and evidence-informed interventions.
8. The scheme provides a system of one-on-one case management and offence-focused intervention for young people aged between 10 and 17 and their family. The scheme is voluntary. A Fact Sheet about Youth on Track is **Annexure B** to this statement.

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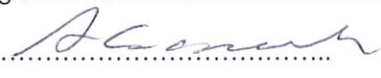
## Establishment of Youth on Track

9. The NSW criminal justice system diverts some young offenders out of the system through cautions and youth justice conferences. However, prior to Youth on Track, little was done to address the causes of young people’s offending through intensive interventions until young people were convicted by a court and received a sentence with some type of supervision by Juvenile Justice. Often this occurred after several formal contacts with police.
10. Youth on Track complements the existing justice system by engaging young people who have a medium to high risk of becoming entrenched in the criminal justice system. It is not a diversionary program, but operates alongside and after formal contact with the justice system.
11. The NSW Commission of Audit Final Report 2012 (the Report) recommended that the Government examine measures to promote a concentrated and whole-of-government approach to dealing with juvenile crime. It emphasised that the approach should be one of prevention and early intervention, in line with strong evidence that supports the effectiveness of these approaches. An overview of the research and evidence informing Youth on Track is contained in **Annexure C** to this statement. The Youth on Track scheme was developed in response to the Report.
12. In July 2013, the Department of Justice commenced funding a non-government organisation to deliver Youth on Track in three start-up sites. The scheme was extended to a further three sites in December 2016 following initial positive results. Sites were selected based on Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) analysis of the target group population in the area (see further below), and consultation with key government partners. A tender process was conducted and three non-government organisations were selected to deliver Youth on Track until September 2019.
13. A social outcome evaluation prepared by the Cultural Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA) (CIRCA Evaluation), a re-offending evaluation to be conducted by BOCSAR, and a cost-benefit analysis scheduled for 2018 will inform the state-wide expansion of the scheme.

## Youth on Track model

14. Key principles of Youth on Track include:
  - (a) Early intervention to reduce offending;
  - (b) One on one case management;
  - (c) Separating treatment from punishment;
  - (d) Responding to risk and need, not only crime; and
  - (e) Responding promptly.

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15. The Youth on Track model has five stages:

- (a) *Referral and Screening* – NSW Police Youth Liaison Officers and local schools refer young people to Youth on Track when the young person has a range of criminogenic risk factors, in addition to receiving at least one formal police contact. Young people who receive their second formal police contact are automatically screened to check their eligibility including if they are at medium to high risk of reoffending. Young people who have previously received a supervised order are ineligible. Once found eligible they are referred to the Youth on Track service provider.

The referral includes information about whether the young person has an existing case manager with another agency. The Youth on Track service provider contacts the case manager to discuss how Youth on Track can assist the existing case manager with addressing the young person's criminogenic risk factors. A Youth on Track Snapshot containing further information about referral sources and engagement is **Annexure D** to this statement.

Youth on Track case workers aim to make contact with the young person within 3 days of referral and proactively follow up. The contact details provided via the Screening Officer may be out of date and therefore the phone number is disconnected. The case workers will call the numbers, do a home visit, collaborate with the NSW Police Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer and Youth Liaison Officer, or attend court to find the young person. Once the young person is found the case worker may take up to four weeks to develop a rapport with the family and young person prior to the young person consenting to participate. As far as possible, the same case worker will work consistently with the young person and their family.

- (b) *Assessment* – Once a young person consents to participate in Youth on Track they are assigned a case manager who conducts a validated *Youth Level of Service / Case Management Inventory* (YLS/CMI). The YLS/CMI assesses eight areas of criminogenic risk in the young person's life such as family and living circumstances, peer relations, and personality and behaviour.

Young people referred to Youth on Track are screened for cognitive disabilities using a validated tool called the Child and Adolescent Intellectual Disability Screening Questionnaire. The tool does not assess whether the young person has a cognitive disability, but indicates whether the young person should be referred to an appropriate clinician to receive further assessment. The case manager must consider any identified disabilities when developing the case plan.

- (c) *Case Management and Engagement* – The Youth on Track case worker develops a case plan with the young person and their family that focuses on addressing the young person's individual risks/needs identified through the YLS/CMI. The assessment is reapplied every 12 weeks and a young person's case plan can be adapted to reflect the changing needs and outcomes achieved.

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- (d) *Interventions* – The Youth on Track service provider provides access to a range of evidence-informed criminogenic interventions that meet the needs of the young person and their family and address the underlying causes of offending behaviour. Interventions include family-based and behavioural intervention programs such as Changing Habits and Reaching Targets and Act Now Together Strong which are also used by Juvenile Justice.
- (e) *Exit* – Through the YLS/CMI assessment the Youth on Track case worker identifies if a young person has reduced their risk of reoffending and met their case plan goals and therefore completed the scheme. The case worker will work with the young person and family to develop an exit plan to facilitate access to ongoing non-Youth on Track community supports where required.

16. Youth on Track aims to coordinate services to young people before they have multiple and increasingly serious contacts with the criminal justice system. However, in some cases a young person will work with both Youth on Track and Juvenile Justice, for example, if the young person working with Youth on Track continues to progress into the criminal justice system and receives a supervised order or is referred to a Youth Justice Conference. Guidelines on how Youth on Track works with Juvenile Justice are **Annexure E** to this statement.

### Youth on Track target group

17. Youth on Track targets 10 to 17 year old offenders who have a high likelihood of re-offending. These young people have received one or more cautions, conferences or charges and are likely to also have other risk factors. The target group has not yet received a supervised order with Juvenile Justice however, based on an actuarial tool developed by BOCSAR, has a greater likelihood of further formal contact with police.
18. Using data from BOCSAR regarding juvenile offenders in 2015 it is predicted that approximately 1730 young people per year are in the Youth on Track target group in NSW and 900 young people are predicted to participate.

### Youth on Track participants

19. Between 1 July 2013 and 31 December 2016 a total of 926 suitable referrals involving 749 young people were made to Youth on Track. The majority of referrals come from the automatic Computerised Operational Policing System (COPS) referral process, then from police youth liaison officers, and a small amount from schools.
20. At December 2016 the Youth on Track providers had engaged 40% of all referred young people (46% at 30 June 2016) and 46% of those who case workers were able to contact (52% at 30 June 2016). The fall in engagement in 2016 was due to retendering and transition to new Youth on Track providers.

21. Of the 344 young people who voluntarily engaged:

- 75% were males.
- 56% were Aboriginal (compared to 46% of those referred).
- The average age was 14 years old.

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22. Information provided by Community Services at time of referral shows that 14% of young people referred to Youth on Track had current involvement with Community Services. At the time young people agreed to participate in Youth on Track approximately 40% were not enrolled or attending education.

### Youth on Track case workers

23. In addition to meeting minimum qualification requirements, Youth on Track staff complete 14 mandatory training modules. The Youth on Track Training Requirements are set out in **Annexure F** to this statement.

### Governance arrangements

24. The Youth on Track Implementation Committee was established in 2013 to oversee the high-level development, implementation and management of the Youth on Track scheme. The quarterly Committee meeting is led by Juvenile Justice and includes representatives of the NSW Police Force, Office of Aboriginal Affairs, Department of Family and Community Services, Department of Education and Communities, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Ministry of Health, NSW Treasury and the Youth on Track service providers.
25. The Youth on Track service providers are required to establish and chair a Regional Governance Committee in each of the Youth on Track sites. The Committees support the implementation by identifying and resolving barriers impacting effective Youth on Track service delivery in the local site, provide an escalation pathway for resolution of individual case plans, and promote best practice and local relevance of Youth on Track. Issues that cannot be resolved at the regional level can be escalated to the Implementation Committee.
26. The Department of Justice aims to identify and evaluate the efficacy of the Youth on Track early intervention scheme. The Youth on Track service providers are assessed against a range of performance measures and standards. This includes analysis of the service and interventions delivered to young people and their families, including the processes and procedures.
27. The Youth on Track Performance Framework is **Annexure G** to this statement. The Framework outlines the performance standards providers are expected to meet, which include:
- (a) Young people and their families engage positively and remain engaged in the scheme until meeting completion requirements.
  - (b) Young people and their families are provided with a quality service that follows evidence-informed practice and the 'what works' principles to address the individual's criminogenic risks.
  - (c) Case planning reflects the assessment and goals of the young person and family.
  - (d) Case planning reflects the cultural identity and needs of the young person and family.

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- (e) Local services are brokered where required to meet identified needs.
- (f) Service provision is efficient and responsive.
- (g) Appropriately skilled and experienced staff are recruited and trained.
- (h) Strong quality assurance and continuing improvement mechanisms are employed.
- (i) Strong relationships are made and maintained with key stakeholders to ensure collaborative service provision.
- (j) Relevant legislation, particularly in relation to child protection, records management and work, health and safety, is complied with.

### Youth on Track outcomes

28. In the period 1 July 2013 to 31 December 2016, the majority of participants who completed Youth on Track started on a Medium or Medium High YLS/CMI-AA risk assessment level. By completion, the majority of participants lowered their score to Low or Medium.
29. In addition, 71% of Youth on Track participants reduced or stabilised their offending risk score following 3 months of intervention. Of the young people who completed Youth on Track:
- (a) 66% improved their behavior;
  - (b) 64% improved their education engagement and family circumstances;
  - (c) 50% improved their attitudes; and
  - (d) 52% improved their peer relations.
30. The results are similar for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants in Youth on Track.
31. The CIRCA Evaluation found that evidence from qualitative consultations, analysis of change in YLS/CMI assessment scores and satisfaction survey results demonstrated Youth on Track has improved social outcomes for clients. Stakeholders, clients and staff reported positive outcomes as a result of the provision of one on one case management and coordinated service delivery, facilitation of access to supports and the delivery of interventions addressing the individual young person's criminogenic needs and that aim to increase pro-social behavior. Behavioural, family and educational interventions were all found to be particularly beneficial for the client. The performance of skilled and trained caseworkers, and the collaborative, non-judgmental and individualised approach were identified as key strengths. The CIRCA Evaluation is **Annexure H** to this statement.

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### Applying the Youth on Track model

32. Based on lessons learnt in the initial phases of Youth on Track, Juvenile Justice would suggest that the Northern Territory consider the following points if setting up a similar scheme:

- (a) as most non-government organisations usually work within a welfare/child protection framework it is important to build their capacity to deliver a service within the criminal justice framework by including mandatory training requirements, providing guidelines for 'what works' with young offenders, and having regular contract management meetings;
- (b) develop a performance framework that includes key performance indicators that are mostly outcome focused and measure process standards through a quality assurance procedure;
- (c) ensure the Youth on Track provider delivers the service in a culturally respectful way to meet the cultural needs of participants by including evidence of experience working with Aboriginal young people and families as well as strategies to engage and retain Aboriginal staff as a tender selection criteria, monitoring the implementation of the provider's Aboriginal Participation and Outcome Plan (requirement of the contract), including culturally relevant training in the mandatory training requirements, and by including evidence of culturally appropriate service delivery in the Quality Assurance Process;
- (d) develop strong relationships with key stakeholders in each site, particularly with police and local schools;
- (e) engage Youth on Track service providers who have creative strategies for engaging difficult to reach young people to ensure higher rates of engagement and retention by both young people and their families;
- (f) where possible provide at least a three year contract to the service providers to enable them to recruit, train, and maintain experienced staff; and
- (g) identify the most suitable sites by considering the number of possible referrals as well as geographical size of the site to ensure service providers can conduct outreach to all young people in the site.

33. The most frequently mentioned elements of the scheme that lead to positive outcomes were outlined in the CIRCA Evaluation as follows:

*"Early intervention focus addressing a service gap; capacity to provide holistic and tailored responses; performance of trained and skilled caseworkers; capacity to work with families and around family relationships; and collaboration with other services. Behavioural interventions were reported by stakeholders as invaluable to helping clients understand the consequences of their actions and learn to manage their behaviours so they do not react or engage in situations that could lead to antisocial behaviour and/or offending. Families who had worked directly with the family therapist reported*

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*strengthened positive relationships as a direct result of the practical and emotional support they had received through their engagement with Youth on Track. Clients' re-engagement with school and other learning environments was noted as one of the most successful outcomes of Youth on Track by all stakeholders."*

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Date: 16/5/17 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Date: 16/5/17 \_\_\_\_\_

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