



*Young people and mentoring:
towards a national strategy*

A Report prepared for Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia,
Dusseldorp Skills Forum and The Smith Family by Robyn Hartley



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Young people and mentoring: towards a national strategy

A Report prepared by

Robyn Hartley

Acknowledgements

Managers and coordinators of mentoring programs for young people and others with expertise in the area were consulted for the development of this paper. A draft of the paper was discussed at a Roundtable of agency representatives and other key individuals in the field held in Sydney on April 23, 2004. We sincerely thank all those who participated in the consultations and the Roundtable. Their experience, their insights and their thoughtful comments are greatly appreciated.

Members of the Advisory Committee shaped and guided the project and had a substantial input into the first and subsequent drafts. Their names are listed below. A list of those consulted and participants in the Roundtable are in Appendix 1.

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Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Foreword	2
Executive summary	3
1. Introduction	9
2. Rationale for mentoring young people	10
3. Need for a national strategy	13
4. Areas where mentoring is likely to be effective	15
5. Formal mentoring of young people in Australia	19
6. Resources and structures for maintaining and further developing mentoring	26
7. Effective overseas approaches	30
8. A proposed national strategy	34
References	39
Appendix 1: List of people consulted	42
Appendix 2: Brief descriptions of selected Australian programs	43
Appendix 3: Mentoring Australia National Benchmarks for Mentoring Programs	47

Foreword

If goodwill alone were enough, the proposal outlined in this paper would be jumping from the drawing board to a community near you by this time tomorrow.

The goodwill that has spurred this project along is indicative of the spirit that sustains hundreds of mentoring programs operating in schools, workplaces and communities across Australia. Mentoring is many things, as this paper's author Robyn Hartley points out, but at its heart lies an affirmation of human relationships and the capacity for good relationships to enable those involved (the young people and their mentors) to learn and to grow. At the same time mentoring is no soft option. Quality programs require hard work and tough decisions. They require firm undertakings from all involved. They operate with purpose and deliver real outcomes from rising self esteem, healthier behaviours, and improved school attendance through to better informed career choices and a more secure place in education or the workforce.

Goodwill of itself, however, is not enough. If we are "to encourage development of mentoring for young people and establish an environment where it flourishes" then we will need to be more considered about: the value of mentoring, what characterises the best mentoring programs, how can such programs be supported and promoted; what are the constraints on the expansion of young people's access to such quality programs. These are the questions with which we've been grappling.

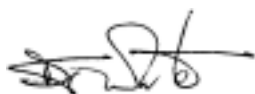
The proposal that follows makes it very clear that there is a vital role for the Federal Government in establishing and supporting such an environment. The current Federal Government and the Opposition have both staked a clear interest. Indeed, recent weeks have seen the Government accelerate the expenditure of funds under its flagship mentoring initiative, the Mentor Marketplace, and further promote mentoring under the banner of the Stronger Families and Communities strategy. For its part, the Opposition announced its plans for a national mentoring initiative underpinned by a proposed National Mentoring Foundation.

While the ALP's announcement has lifted the bar, there is no reason to think that this is the last word.

The proposal outlined in this paper has its roots in the longstanding engagement of our three organisations in mentoring for young people. We were very fortunate in having Robyn Hartley, the paper's author, agree to take on the task at short notice. Robyn has extensive research and public policy experience and was for some years Senior Research Fellow at the Australian Institute of Family Studies. She's done a great job but would be the first to admit that her job was greatly aided by the willingness of mentoring program coordinators, mentors, young people, policy makers, business people and others to freely give their time, share their experience and knowledge. The paper is much richer for their contributions and comments.

We commend this proposal to you. We believe it offers an exciting yet practical way forward.

Yours sincerely...



David White
Executive Director
Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia



Tjerk (Jack) Dusseldorp
Chair
Dusseldorp Skills Forum



Elaine Henry
Chief Executive Officer
The Smith Family

Executive summary

Formal mentoring aims to provide young people with support and guidance through planned relationships with positive adult and peer role models; it does so within a framework which includes experienced and qualified staff and trained volunteers. A large volunteer effort in Australia supports mentoring for young people from primary school age to young adulthood and from very diverse backgrounds. Formal mentoring is based in communities, in schools and other sites; it is funded by federal and state governments. Corporate and business support for mentoring of young people is at present relatively small compared to some other western countries, however there are some effective partnerships with community agencies and evidence of growing interest in the area.

It is time to promote and support a broader concept of mentoring than has been evident in Australia to date, and to foster cross-fertilisation of what is known about successful mentoring with other current developments and policy frameworks. For example, mentoring is integral to the larger policy framework of encouraging young people to maintain contact with education, training and employment. It has considerable potential to improve understanding and communication across different age groups and to strengthen common bonds between generations at a time when there is potential for divisiveness. In addition, quality mentoring for young people contributes to networking and community strengthening, builds on and enhances youth development frameworks and positively focuses on young people's skills and contributions to society.

It is time for a coordinated, resourced approach to mentoring. In countries where mentoring for young people has expanded beyond short-term programs, a broad approach and underlying support for ongoing development of mentoring has been necessary. The available evidence suggests that a primarily purchaser-provider relationship between government and agencies providing services has very real limitations for moving forward to a more integrated concept of mentoring, creating a climate of sustainability, ensuring long term benefit and fostering innovation and good practice.

There are well-established effective models on which to build a national approach. The range of agencies and the number of young people involved in mentoring has grown considerably in recent years and there is public interest in its possibilities. A strong national strategy is needed to support organisations and individuals working in the field, to encourage local initiatives, and to ensure that resources are used for the best possible outcomes.

As a result of consultations with key mentoring providers and others with expertise in the area, the following recommendations have been developed.

Recommendation 1. It is recommended that there be a national strategy regarding mentoring of young people.

Recommendation 2. It is recommended that a national strategy have the following aim:

Aim

The aim of a national strategy is to encourage development of mentoring for young people and establish an environment where it flourishes. Such an environment will: provide more young people with emotional and social support; directly assist young people at important points in their lives, and contribute to broader networking and community building.

Recommendation 3. It is recommended that a national strategy is guided by the following principles:

Principles

1. Formal and informal mentoring

There is a distinction between formal mentoring and informal or 'natural' mentoring which occurs in families and communities as children and young people grow and develop. Some young people have access to many resources; others need informal assistance to take advantage of the available resources. Yet others need one-to-one support, which will vary in level and intensity; this is the focus of formal mentoring programs.

2. Mentoring, a community function reflecting local needs

Communities can support young people through both formal and natural or informal mentoring. Formal mentoring programs need to come from communities and reflect their needs. While clear national goals, funding guidelines and benchmarks are needed to ensure that mentoring programs are of high quality, it is essential that they be flexible enough to cater for local needs and for diverse groups of young people according to their developmental stage, cultural background, personal circumstances, and so on. Further, embedding formal mentoring of young people firmly in local communities benefits the whole community through strengthening networks.

3. Enhancing existing policy frameworks

High quality mentoring for young people builds on and enhances existing policy frameworks, including those relating to community building, early intervention, school to work transition, careers advice for young people and youth development.

4. A broadly based strategy

Mentoring is a broadly based strategy. Children and young people need support at different times and points in their lives and formal mentoring programs can be organised around any and all of these times. It is a proven and appropriate strategy whatever particular funding priorities governments of the day have in regard to children and young people. Mentoring offers considerable support for disadvantaged young people.

5. Fostering economic and social participation

Mentoring is a vital link in assisting young people to better understand the education, training and work options open to them, maintain contact with education and training opportunities, and find pathways to employment and economic and social participation.

6. Early intervention

It is desirable that mentoring programs are based on early intervention principles and seek to assist young people e.g. before they leave school, before they come into the child protection system, before they leave the care of the state, before they are released from youth detention centres. Where this is not possible, mentoring should be available for young people who are not connected to systems and structures. The

evidence suggests that innovative and very flexible approaches are needed for young people disconnected from mainstream social structures.

7. Multiple ways of supporting young people

Formal mentoring programs are one effective means of supporting young people, not a single solution to complex social and individual needs. Especially in circumstances where young people face multiple disadvantages, mentors are best regarded as complementary to and an addition to the work of professionals and other supportive services, not as a replacement for them.

8. Sustainability of programs

It is fundamentally important that formal mentoring be available in ongoing and sustainable ways. Sustainability rests on factors such as adequate funding over an extended period, and building and maintaining a pool of mentors.

9. Participation of young people

Young people are key stakeholders in mentoring. Planning for mentoring programs should include their views wherever possible and in ways appropriate to their developmental stage. This may include consultation with young people, representation on advisory committees and planning bodies and training to take on peer mentoring and leadership roles within the program. It may also include innovative youth-driven ways of encouraging, facilitating and supporting young people's participation.

Recommendation 4. It is recommended that the following structures underpin a national mentoring strategy:

Underpinning structures

- A national peak organisation with responsibilities for: supporting the key community role of mentoring; promoting networking and partnerships; encouraging vibrant debate about mentoring; providing resources and support for mentoring programs; disseminating information; supporting evaluation of good practice; creating training and ongoing professional development opportunities for program managers and coordinators; updating and reviewing benchmarks; setting a learning agenda for mentoring; and scoping with more precision the mentoring provision that is required.
- Regional coalitions of mentoring providers that promote and support local development of mentoring, provide a forum for discussion, and provide a range of services including program coordinator training, mentor training, assistance with mentor matching, assistance with evaluation, and advice and support.
- The federal government, whose responsibilities include: expansion of access to mentoring; support for mentoring including funding for coordination, training, and evaluation of mentoring programs within their jurisdiction; funding for a small secretariat for a national body; and leadership in promoting the role of mentoring in the general community, and with other governments.

Recommendation 5. It is recommended that, based on the three underpinning structures, a national strategy include the following elements:

1. A clear definition of mentoring

Objective

Agreement among government, funding bodies, participating organisations and other key stakeholders on a definition of mentoring for young people that is inclusive but which clearly sets out the parameters of formal mentoring.

Areas for action might include

Agreement on the following definition of formal mentoring as a working definition until further discussions of stakeholders can take place: 'Mentoring is a mutually beneficial relationship which involves a more experienced person helping a less experienced person to identify and achieve their goals' (Mentoring Australia 2000).

2. Federal government leadership in promoting mentoring for young people

Objective

Federal government leadership in promoting the positive role of mentoring in children's and young peoples' lives and its role in community building.

Areas for action might include

Promoting a broader concept of mentoring for young people by encouraging and supporting cross sectoral and cross departmental approaches to mentoring.

Integrating and expanding mentoring possibilities into existing community building, youth development, early intervention and learning communities frameworks.

Having in place education, training and employment policies which support mentoring of young people in community and other settings as a key element.

Funding a small secretariat for a viable national mentoring body, to support further development of the considerable potential of mentoring for young people.

Tax incentives for businesses to become involved in mentoring partnerships.

Nationally funded but locally developed campaigns to promote better understanding of mentoring in the community.

Recognising and promoting the intergenerational benefits of mentoring young people, including its potential to increase understanding and communication, and promote common bonds between generations.

Exploring ways of providing incentives, including tax incentives, for retirees to become involved in mentoring programs.

Encouraging government employees to become youth mentors.

3. National support and resources for maintaining and developing community based and local mentoring programs for young people

Objective

To establish viable structures to provide support, resources and services to mentoring programs and to disseminate information about mentoring to a range of audiences.

Areas for action might include

Government funding support for a small secretariat to maintain and develop a national membership-based organisation which would foster the key community role of mentoring, promote networking and partnerships, encourage vibrant debate about mentoring, provide program support, disseminate information, promote discussion, and support and encourage locally based innovation.

Exploring ways in which regional coalitions of mentoring providers can be supported to provide a range of services to mentoring programs for young people, including program coordinator training, mentor training, mentor matching, program resources, evaluation resources etc.

Encouraging corporate support of mentoring in local communities.

4. Quality programs

Objective

To ensure that mentoring programs are of a high standard and achieve the best possible outcomes for young people.

Areas for action might include

Adoption, by the peak body and mentoring programs, of a set of benchmarks, e.g. the 'National benchmarks for mentoring programs' developed by Mentoring Australia (see Appendix 3), which are reviewed and updated over time.

Putting in place a mandatory set of standards for mentoring programs regarding the protection of children and young people.

Developing ways in which programs can aim for high standards and continual improvement, e.g. by funded peer or professional audits, regular regional meetings etc.

Enabling and facilitating organisations to research and develop new approaches.

Developing a quality framework for mentoring socially excluded young people, which recognises and makes the most of what they bring to a mentoring relationship.

5. Encouraging and promoting an enhanced role for business, employers and philanthropic foundations in supporting the mentoring of young people

Objective

An enhanced role for business, employers and philanthropic foundations in supporting mentoring of young people.

Areas for action might include

Identifying key corporate and community advocates to promote the community building role of mentoring young people.

Promoting, through peak business and industry bodies, through regional and local business associations, and through philanthropic foundations, local partnerships around community building which include mentoring of young people.

Exploring ways of building a more widespread culture of employers and more experienced staff mentoring young people in large and small enterprises both before they start work and when they are employed.

6. Promoting innovation and better practice

Objective

To promote and support locally based innovation in mentoring programs for young people.

Areas for action might include

Encouraging and supporting youth mentoring organisations, other stakeholders and researchers to develop a learning agenda to foster innovative approaches to better meet the needs of diverse groups of young people.

Exploring ways of promoting innovative business and agency partnerships around mentoring.

Encouraging and supporting young people to participate in the planning and development of mentoring programs, and where possible to become mentors themselves.

7. Increased and longer term federal funding for mentoring young people

Objective

Increased and longer term federal funding for mentoring models and programs for young people which have been shown to be successful. This would include complementary funding by the federal government of collaborations with state funded programs.

Areas for action might include

Consolidating the experience of successful programs as a basis for longer term funding commitments.

Partnerships and resources to support school-based mentoring programs.

Funding arrangements that acknowledge the key community building role of mentoring and the time and resources required to: (a) establish strong and viable networks (including school-community links) and (b) expand the diversity of mentors by drawing in isolated groups and community members who are not traditionally volunteers but may have much to offer in mentoring relationships with young people.

A national strategy for mentoring of young people with a clear aim, based on sound principles and with strong underpinning structures, could achieve much. It is likely to result in more young people: having satisfying, caring and supportive relationships with adults; making stronger connections to community networks; making stronger connections to education, training and work; and finding pathways to economic and social participation. It also has considerable potential to contribute to better understanding and stronger bonds between generations.

1. Introduction

The recent growth of mentoring for young people in Australia, and increasing public interest in its possibilities, demonstrates the importance of developing a national strategy. The Smith Family, the Dusseldorp Skills Forum and Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia therefore commissioned this paper outlining a forward direction for mentoring for young people in Australia. Audiences for the paper include the Australian Government and the Federal Opposition, both of which are currently engaged in policy development on mentoring, mentoring providers and agencies providing other services to young people, schools and youth partnerships, as well as state governments and other interested stakeholders.

The consultations and discussions which took place during the development of the paper identified the crucial role which mentoring can play in young people's lives by providing social and emotional support and nurturing their learning and skill development. They also identified a clear way forward for a national strategy - promoting a broader concept of mentoring and placing it in the context of community building.

The paper draws principally, but not wholly, on perspectives relating to 'youth' or 'young people', an age group defined variously but generally recognised to include 12-25 year olds. During the consultations, it became apparent that primary school aged children could and should be included. The largest community based and school based mentoring programs in Australia use a common set of principles to provide quality mentoring programs for primary school aged children and older age groups. This is not surprising, since there are some common principles underlying all formal mentoring. We use the term 'young people' (rather than 'youth') to be inclusive of different age groups. However, we acknowledge that the paper has clear limitations in regard to mentoring children and the issues that might arise at various stages of development. There is a need to talk more explicitly with those with expertise in childhood and work towards developing a more comprehensive strategy which specifically includes young people at different developmental stages if and where that is appropriate.

2. Rationale for mentoring young people

Although the past twenty five years have produced a vast amount of academic literature on mentoring, it has failed to achieve any consensus [in defining mentoring] (Colley 2003, p. 30). Nevertheless, there are accepted starting points. Informal mentoring is distinguished from formal mentoring. Informal mentoring is seen as occurring naturally in young people's lives, through the support they receive from parents, teachers and others, and in the normal course of their lives as they interact with, seek out, learn from and are guided by older people and quite often by peers with more experience.

Formal mentoring seeks to replicate some aspects of this natural mentoring. It aims to provide young people with support and guidance through planned relationships which are purposeful in that they focus on young people's social and learning development. Some refer to mentoring relationships as having a 'goal'. We use the term 'purpose' rather than 'goal' as the latter has certain connotations which do not sit easily with some mentoring situations where there is a primary focus on the emotional and social relationship. The purpose of mentoring varies with the needs of the young people and with the program setting and aims. Mentors are generally but not exclusively volunteers. The fact that most mentors give their time voluntarily is a powerful aspect of mentoring, signalling support and assistance willingly given. This can have a strong positive impact on the relationships established.

Mentoring relationships are different from the often numerous professional relationships young people experience e.g. with teachers, counsellors, police, social workers, in that mentors are generally volunteers and there is an emotional and social element to the relationship. However, some professional relationships might include an element of mentoring. Mentoring also differs from role modelling, although it can be regarded as a particular example of role modelling. 'Role modelling focuses on how the role model is perceived by the young people concerned and the young person's desired goal, whereas mentoring focuses on explicit action by the mentor to assist the young person to reach their goal' (MacCallum and Beltman 2002, p. 8). Mentoring is also sometimes associated with, but has features which distinguish it from coaching, tutoring and the 'buddy' systems operating in schools and amongst some other groups.

Effective mentoring:

- is a relationship that focuses on the needs of the mentee
- fosters caring and supportive relationships
- encourages all mentees to develop to their fullest potential; and
- is a strategy to develop active community partnerships.

(Mentoring Australia 2000).

This outline of effective mentoring brings together three key elements underlying the rationale for formal mentoring programs for young people. They are: a focus on the young person's needs; mentoring as essentially about relationships; and the close connection between mentoring and the wider community, whereby effective mentoring both develops and strengthens many levels of community partnerships.

It is generally accepted that the level of informal support available to young people in Australia as in many other western countries has declined over the the past couple of decades. The reasons for this are complex but the contributing factors include some recent and ongoing social and economic changes - to family structures and functioning, the uncertainties caused by globalisation and its impact on national and local

economies, changes to women's and men's work and family roles, and a falling away of the stability provided by strong communities. As a result, some young people are left with few or no adult supports. Male role models are absent in some families. At the same time, there are social and cultural pressures and expectations on young people to be more adult earlier, expectations which are often at odds with spending longer periods in school and educational institutions.

Young people are always to some extent 'at risk' due to their age, lack of experience and stage of development. But at present, there are particular gaps in social support and guidance for them. Increasingly, there are indications that a proportion of young people feel varying degrees of isolation, depression, rejection, loneliness and feelings of poor self-worth (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2003, pp. 89-112).

Risk and resiliency frameworks developed in the 1980s stressed the crucial importance of the 'protection' which a supportive and caring adult relationship can provide as children grow and develop (Werner and Smith 1982; Werner 1989). Werner further suggested there was no reason to think that a 'planned' relationship could not offer support for young people in the way that naturally occurring relationships did. Resnick, Harris and Blum (1996) note the importance of caring and connectedness for adolescent health and well being. This crucial importance of supportive adult relationships in children's and young people's lives confirms what we know to be true at a common sense and anecdotal level. The positive and life changing impact of a close and supportive relationship with a grandparent, other family member, teacher, adult friend or older person has been the stuff of literature for hundreds of years.

Nevertheless, there is still much that is not clear about how formal mentoring relations between adults and young people actually 'work'. Perhaps this is not surprising since relationships are one of the most complex aspects of human functioning. It may be that some young people naturally draw support from others, or it may be the involvement of a caring and supportive adult that engages the young person (Lovelock 1999).

Many formal mentoring programs aim to help young people's learning and/ or assist them to make more informed decisions about education, training and employment. Education, training and employment systems have become more complex. The different options and pathways available offer a greater range of opportunities but they sometimes make it more difficult for young people and their families to make the best informed choices. Some young people have access to resources, through schools, their families and communities, to help them navigate their way through the education and training systems. Many do not. Nevertheless, even those who are relatively well informed sometimes find it difficult to find their way 'through the system'.

In many respects, entering employment now has different challenges than in the past. Young people are generally expected to be 'work ready' when they enter employment. The capacity for employers and more experienced workers to provide mentoring and support in the early stages of employment has generally diminished. Schools and tertiary institutions have responded by putting considerable effort into preparing young people for employment and helping them through the various 'transition' points along the way. But for many and complex reasons some young people don't get the assistance and support they need.

The available evidence is that well planned and organised formal mentoring programs can provide strong individual support, advice and guidance for young people and help in practical ways at important 'transitions' points in their lives. Across the very diverse field of mentoring, and depending on the young person's needs, some mentoring focuses primarily on the relationship and the journey which the mentor and young

person share. Others see the relationship as the basis for a more clearly defined purpose such as helping young people to make more informed decisions in relation to education, work or life, helping them to set personal goals, and helping them to gain work experience and pathways to employment.

Whatever the particular focus, the relationship is always the context and the positive impacts of mentoring are likely to be greatly reduced or even harmful when this is not the prime consideration. In practice, the relationship and its purpose are frequently intertwined. In programs with a focus on direct assistance or skill development, relationships often reach a new level when an emotional and social bond is formed, and in programs built on providing social and emotional support, skills are developed and assistance given as part of the relationship (MacCallum and Beltman 2003).

Mentoring relationships are seen as mutually beneficial and reciprocal, having positive outcomes for mentors as well as mentees. In Australia, as well as overseas, well planned mentoring programs can be extremely satisfying for mentors (e.g. Bean 2002). They can lead to better understanding between generations and to adults gaining 'a new lease of life' as mentors (Faria n.d.). They can contribute to strengthening networks of support for young people in local communities, and facilitate partnerships between schools, local community agencies, youth organisations, service providers and business.

Mentoring in practice 1: a parent's view

'To whom it may concern. Ted has been an incredible mentor for L our son aged 15. He has talked to him as an adult. He has also encouraged L to be happy with his decisions. L certainly has more confidence since knowing Ted. Ted is a good thinker who can guide a young boy in the right direction. We thank him greatly. Bean (2002) *Wise Heads on young shoulders*: Plan-it Youth, Central Coast (NSW).

Mentoring in practice 2: a mentor's view

May has been involved in LAP (Learning Assistance Program) since it first began in the school. For her, it has been a challenge well worth the time and effort. Not only has it kept her on the ball, it has given her the rare opportunity of seeing how a child with learning difficulties is progressing and given her a reason to be interested in the welfare of that child. The growth in confidence, the developing of some personal goals and the realising of those same goals are some of the challenges that keep being met in the LAP programme. (Faria n.d.)

3. Need for a national strategy

It is appropriate to take stock of developments over the past couple of decades and work towards a national approach which sets mentoring for young people in a broader context, fosters integration with other policy frameworks, and provides a sound and supported environment for further development.

- The overarching aim of a national strategy is to encourage development of mentoring for young people and establish an environment in which it flourishes.
- A national approach is needed to promote community understanding of the role of mentoring in young people's lives, to strengthen community networks and to encourage more informal and formal mentoring in communities.
- A national approach is needed to better integrate the known benefits of quality mentoring with other policy frameworks and to foster the exchange of ideas across areas such as community building, youth development, education, training and employment, and intergenerational relationships.
- A general increase in the development of quality mentoring programs for young people in Australia is only likely to come with a more supported approach at a national level.
- A national strategy is needed to ensure that programs are based on the known elements of success. For various reasons, some programs are set up with much good will but without an adequate understanding of the complexity of mentoring relationships and without sufficient attention to basic principles. This is likely to greatly increase the likelihood of detrimental effects on young people.
- A national approach could reinforce and expand the range of mentoring opportunities. Currently, there is a considerable body of relevant expertise and experience in Australia which could form the basis of further expansion (see for example, national reports such as MacCallum and Beltman 1999; MacCallum and Beltman 2001; Attorney General's Department 2003 and reports of individual programs, such as Noosa Youth Service 2003; Bean 2002; Bull (n.d.); Lemmon 2004; Bruce Callaghan and Associates Ltd 2002).
- A national strategy is needed to consciously and actively support local initiatives.
- A more coordinated approach is ultimately likely to result in a better use of resources. Currently, there is a tendency towards proliferation of pilot programs and programs which are funded for a short term and then disappear. The review of Australian programs for young people at risk of offending noted that a 'snapshot' of the field at a particular time was being provided. During the period of investigation some projects became unoperational, and others were established (Attorney General's Department 2003 p. 7). Consultations for this paper confirmed a constantly changing profile of programs.
- A national strategy is needed to promote a learning agenda regarding mentoring, to promote research where there are gaps in knowledge and to raise the expertise and general level of understanding of those in the field.

- A national strategy is needed for better communication and sharing of information. There is reportedly increased communication between people involved in mentoring programs in recent years. However, it tends to happen in pockets, in some geographical areas more than others, and somewhat sporadically. The field has been described as 'fractured' with many programs working in relative isolation.
- Effective mentoring is being made available to young people in an increasing range of circumstances. A national strategy is needed to promote understanding of this diversity amongst governments, potential sponsors and funders, and the general community.

Mentor Marketplace, the Commonwealth government's initiative in response to support for youth mentoring in *Footprints to the Future* (Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Taskforce 2001, p. 35; Freeland et al. 2000) is currently the chief federal support for youth (aged 12-25) mentoring programs. There is an intention in the program Guidelines to launch and expand the range of mentoring activities, with a special emphasis on disadvantaged groups and localities (Mentor Marketplace Guidelines August 2003), and a diverse range of programs has been funded in the three funding rounds. However, there is a general belief in the field that Mentor Marketplace has not gone far enough to promote a national strategic approach and to put in place processes to support ongoing development and expansion of quality programs. It is time to move forward and take a broader approach to mentoring young people.

4. Areas where mentoring is likely to be effective

Many benefits for young people, mentors and the community are to be found in the mentoring literature (e.g. Freedman 1993; Tierney et al. 1995, Dondero 1997; Guetzloe 1997). Depending on the nature of the program, they variously include a range of measurable behavioural differences such as reduced likelihood of skipping classes, and broader outcomes such as improved school attendance and performance, improved relationships with family and friends, reduced likelihood of teenage pregnancy and increased feeling of self worth.

Taken as a whole, it is fair to say that the available evidence supports positive outcomes for young people under certain circumstances. It is only relatively recently that there has been enough information available from relatively rigorous evaluations of different types of programs to tease out the factors that are most likely to lead to positive outcomes (e.g. DuBois et al. 2002; Jekielek, Moore and Hair 2002).

Overall, the meta-analysis of 55 program evaluations carried out by DuBois et al. (2002) found that the programs included were effective and that effectiveness was not dependent on whether mentoring took place alone or in conjunction with other services; whether the program had general psycho-social goals or more focused goals; or whether or not it followed the model of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program (used as a measure because of its prominence as a 'good practice' model). The first of these findings tends to contradict other research suggesting that mentoring should not be regarded as a stand alone intervention and is most effective when seen as one of a range of youth services (Benard 1992).

However, not all programs are equal in their effect. Within this generally positive picture, some factors are related to more positive outcomes. Two of the most significant are the presence of a number of both theory and empirically based 'good practices', and the formation of strong relationships between mentors and mentees (DuBois et al. 2002, p. 157). Ongoing training for mentors, structured activities for mentors and young people, expectations for frequency of contact, mechanisms for support and involvement of parents were among the strongest predictors of reported positive outcomes (p. 188).

Recently, more careful attention is being paid to the relationship in mentoring. As mentoring programs have proliferated and been extended into different settings, this has not always been the case. Frequency of contact, emotional closeness and longevity in relationships all contribute to positive youth outcomes (DuBois et al. p. 188). Jekielek, Moore and Hair (2002), who compared a substantial number of programs according to a youth development model, report that significant positive effects increase with relationship duration, frequent contact, youth centred mentor-mentee relationships and the mentee's positive perception of the relationship.

Conversely, short-term relationships have the potential to harm children. Inadequate support for both mentors and young people can lead to the breakdown of mentoring relationships, leaving already vulnerable young people feeling abandoned.

Jekielek, Moore and Hair 2002, p. vi) also found that the quality of relationships was higher when there was a good program structure and planning, and importantly, consideration of mentor-mentee interests in the matching process, social and academic activities but especially social activities that reportedly help build trust, and adopting a 'youth driven' or developmental approach to the relationship (p. vi). The building of trust and attention to young people's interests and needs is particularly important. Colley

(2003) concludes from her own in-depth analysis of mentoring relationships and other research that 'when young people are able to negotiate mentor relationships on the basis of their own needs and concerns, they usually perceive mentoring in a highly positive way, and can identify important benefits they have gained ... (p. 162).

DuBois et al. (2002) found that the developmental level of the young person (whether they were in 'late childhood/early adolescence' or 'middle/late adolescence') did not significantly affect the size of the effect of a mentoring program. They report other research however that notes that there may be an optimal timing for mentoring as a preventative intervention and there are practical issues of implementation in regard to developmental stage such as 'the receptivity of youth to mentoring at differing stages of development' (p. 160). In the consultations for this national strategy paper, it was reported that a young person's capacity to understand what they might expect from a mentoring relationship is a key consideration in mentoring. In addition, an element of good practice is that young people are helped to understand what they can expect from the relationship.

Overall, the DuBois et al. (2002) meta-analysis found that the largest estimates of positive effect were for programs directed to young people in conditions of environmental risk or disadvantage, including low family socio-economic status. Conversely, positive effects seemed to be lacking where young people had been identified as being at risk 'solely on the basis of individual-level characteristics' such as academic failure. The authors suggest this may be because many such young people are likely to need a lot of specialised assistance rather than the volunteer non-professional assistance offered by mentoring programs (p. 189). There may however be other contributing factors, including the strength of the relationships established between mentors and mentees and the goal of the program.

The evidence suggests that well organised school-based programs where schools actively promote and commit to mentoring have particular advantages for young people. They are located in and backed by a wider system, and can be clearly focused on young people's learning and skill development, their understanding of training and work options and career pathways. In Australia, MacCallum and Beltman (1999) note that: 'Mentoring is a strategy with the potential to meet the individual learning needs of a wide range of students. It can provide regular individual attention to a student or group of students that is not always possible in the regular classroom ,, [and] lead to a range of enhanced learning outcomes for students – academic, motivational, social and personal, at the same time providing benefits to the mentors, the school and the community' (MacCallum and Beltman 1999, p. xi).

There is evidence then that mentoring programs which include known elements of good practice are effective; however there is still much to be learnt about how the various elements of the mentoring relationship work in different programs and under different circumstances. Most program evaluations understandably report on effects in a relatively global way.

The available evidence indicates that there are some core program elements for success. Mentoring Australia (2000) lists the following requirements for a good mentoring program.

- A well-defined mission statement and established operating principles
- Regular, consistent contact between mentor and mentee
- Establishment under the auspices of a recognised organisation
- Paid or volunteer staff with appropriate skills
- Written role statements for all staff and volunteer positions

- Adherence to Equal Opportunity requirements
- Inclusiveness in relation to ethnicity, culture, socio-economic backgrounds, gender and sexuality as appropriate to the program
- Adequate ongoing financial and in-kind resources
- Written administrative and program procedures
- Documented criteria which define eligibility for participation in the program
- Program evaluation and ongoing assessment
- A program plan that has input from stakeholders
- Risk management and confidentiality policies
- Use of generally accepted accounting practices
- A rationale for staffing arrangements based on the needs of all parties.

Placing programs and individuals within a network of supportive relationships

Mentoring is about relationships, not just between mentor and mentee, but 'the multiple relationships and support mechanisms involved in the mentor program as a whole' (MacCallum and Beltman 1999 p. ix). Having a strong network of relevant support groups for mentors and mentees is essential and paying attention to all the relationships is one of the marks of good practice. This includes relationships with similar programs, and with the other structures and processes of community agencies in which programs are placed (e.g. Noosa Youth Service 2003).

Coordination

Successful programs have good coordinators. The key elements for effective coordination are the capacity to manage and support people, and to facilitate and maintain a set of surrounding relationships at every level that both support young people's entry into networks and maintain the program itself. Coordinators need training and support. There are some well planned, evidence-based models of training available, one of which, *NRGize Workshops: Kickstart and Strengthen Your Mentoring Program* is being successfully used in Australia in conjunction with the development of the Plan-it Youth model for mentoring in schools. Developed in the US, it has been modified for use in Australia.

Online mentoring

While much of the existing literature emphasises the importance of a one-to-one, face to face relationship in successful mentoring, the potential of online mentoring is increasingly being explored. For various reasons, including geographical, time and resource constraints, face to face relationships are not always possible. Mentors Online (www.mentoring.org/mentorsonline) has been developed to support and facilitate online mentoring, either by itself or as an adjunct to face to face mentoring. It reportedly contributes to the development of caring structured relationships between mentors and young people and improves young people's technical literacy and communication skills. Longer term evaluations are necessary to show how and in what circumstances online mentoring is effective.

Some cautions

While mentoring has burgeoned over the past couples of decades, especially in the US, Canada and Britain, for almost as long, there have been calls for caution about its overwhelmingly positive image. It is not a social policy that will address 'underlying socioeconomic, systemic, structural roots of disadvantage' (Benard 1992). Research suggests that enthusiasm for mentoring should not be allowed to run ahead of the evidence. Mentoring is not a panacea for all young people and is problematic with some groups of young people. More generally, there is a dearth of evidence on the long term impacts of formal mentoring programs.

Roberts et al. (2004) argue that on the basis of the available evidence non-directive mentoring delivered by volunteers is not necessarily the best approach for young people 'at risk' or already involved in antisocial behaviour or criminal activities. They do not suggest that mentoring cannot work but caution that not enough is known about the circumstances that could make it work for some groups of young people, and the safeguards needed to ensure that they are not harmed by mentoring (p. 513).

Australian reports also suggest some caution. The review of mentoring programs for young people at risk of offending concluded that while mentoring showed positive outcomes for some young people, the overseas and Australian literature suggested that it was suitable for only some young people, and that mentoring is a 'promising but unproven strategy' (Attorney General's Department 2003 p. xv). Other reports suggest that more research about what makes for success is needed for mentoring programs for young offenders (ARTD Management and Research Consultants 2002) and 'disengaged' young people (NIECAP 2003). A pilot online mentoring program in Australia identified some substantial challenges for such programs (Muir 2004).

More broadly, Rhodes (2001) suggests that, while the research indicates that there is considerable value in well designed and supported mentoring programs, mentoring is not a substitute for a caring family, community support or a concerted youth policy agenda. Therefore, in addition to developing and strengthening mentoring programs, we should also look to strengthening other supportive contexts for young people – those provided by family and extended family members and others in the reach of young people who are closer to them, more likely to be around for the long haul and more in touch with their particular environment; school contexts and relationships with teachers; and networks beyond the classroom.

Many of the mentoring examples available, and much of the research on which practice is based, comes from the US. Despite many similarities, the nature of Australian society and communities and the values underlying them do differ from those in the US. While the mentoring path has much to offer in terms of supporting young people, we also need to be constantly exploring what is most appropriate and effective in the Australian context.

Finally, Colley (2003) provides a close and challenging analysis of mentoring relationships, especially in regard to what she calls 'engagement mentoring' with targeted groups of young people 'at risk' of disengaging or already disengaged from formal systems of education, training and employment. She argues that although much of the rhetoric of youth mentoring is about empowerment, in practice both mentors and mentees experience both empowerment and control. She suggests that mentoring to date lacks a theoretical framework, and only a framework that includes an understanding of the nature of power and how it functions in mentoring relationships, will allow us to move forward (p. 139). Colley further reminds us that the implications of models of mentoring based on nurture, which rely substantially on the large numbers of females who volunteer to be mentors, is as yet an under-examined aspect of mentoring (p. 38).

5. Formal mentoring of young people in Australia

In 1999, MacCallum and Beltman wrote: 'mentoring is largely a grassroots movement in [Australia], with some support from education systems, government and community groups' (MacCallum and Beltman 1999, p. v). Although there has been increased government and non-government agency interest in mentoring in the three to four years since this was written, the statement remains largely true.

Some programs have a relatively long history. The Big Brothers Big Sisters movement began in Australia some 25 years ago. It is based on Big Brothers Big Sisters in America, where it has been established for over 100 years. LAP (Learning Assistance Program), a school based program that brings together students, volunteers and teaching staff as partners in students' learning, began in the 1970s and now has international recognition.

During the 1990s, considerable development of mentoring programs took place in community, school-based and other settings. The Plan-it Youth model for mentoring in schools began in 1997. The NSW government now funds the model in six regions of the state. The model or elements of it have been taken up in other states. The School Volunteer Program in Western Australia is a well-established school-based mentoring program in primary and secondary schools. STAR, a cross-age, cross institutional program involving university students working with secondary school students in Western Australia, began in 1994.

Many of the major providers of youth services now have one or more mentoring programs. The Smith Family provides a suite of mentoring opportunities for students in secondary and tertiary settings. They regard mentoring as a key element of the agency's strategic approach and emphasise the emotional, behavioural, social and academic value of successful mentoring relationships for young people.

We have some understanding of the range and diversity of programs in Australia as a result of research funded by the federal government, especially programs in schools (MacCallum and Beltman 1999), broader role model programs (MacCallum and Beltman 2002), and programs for young offenders or those considered at risk of offending (Attorney General's Department 2003).

However, it is difficult to get a complete picture of the whole range of mentoring opportunities for young people. A comprehensive audit of programs was beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, a brief search and responses to messages posted about the development of a national strategy paper suggests that there are a substantial number of small, sometimes under funded and struggling local mentoring initiatives in addition to the better known and larger programs. Appendix 2 provides brief descriptions of a range of relatively large and some smaller programs.

The following list of groups of young people involved in mentoring initiatives is not likely to be exhaustive. However, currently, we can say there are programs aimed at or involving at least the following groups _ young people who are:

- considered at risk of leaving school early
- needing some additional assistance with school learning
- boys not living with their fathers
- under notification of child protection authorities
- involved in the juvenile justice system
- disconnected from their families and communities
- leaving or have recently left the care of the state
- indigenous

- young mothers
- experiencing factors in their lives (including mental illness, chronic physical illness) which are making it difficult for them to reach their full potential
- children of parents with a mental illness
- young refugees
- looking for an apprenticeship-type relationship with a professional
- hoping to gain leadership or entrepreneurial skills
- beginning post-secondary students in universities and TAFEs
- senior school students preparing for further education

Mentoring in practice 3: a participant's view

'Through work, I've learnt a lot of skills, and seeing people trust me has given me enormous strength. I work and I get a pay packet, but it's not even close to what I get out of it – knowing I can do it, and being accepted, that's what's important.'
(participant in the Whitelion Employment and Mentoring Program, Vic, taken from 'Making a Difference', a short CD about the program)

Mentoring in practice 4: a refugee experience

Zahra arrived in Australia from Somalia aged 21. She completed high school in Somalia but there had been no chance for further study or for employment due to civil war. After studying English, she began study at TAFE and eventually completed a degree in accounting. She applied without success for 90 jobs, with no interviews, nor feedback on her applications. None of her family had employment here and she had no networks to advise her on how to improve her chances. She joined the Given The Chance course (run by the Brotherhood of St Laurence in Victoria) in October 2002, was matched with a mentor and did work experience with a large government office under a very supportive manager. Zahra's mentor focussed on helping her improve her resume and apply for positions. Within a month she had an interview for a position with a small new business, was coached both within the course and by her mentor, and was successful. She is still working there and gaining new skills.

For the purposes of general discussion, programs can be broadly categorised as community based or 'site-based/ 'onsite'. Community based programs include such programs as Big Brothers Big Sisters where the relationship takes place in the community. Site based programs include mentoring in schools, other educational institutions and a wide range of other 'sites' such as juvenile justice centres, workplaces, community venues, etc. Some programs grow out of a broad youth development model, working with young people from diverse backgrounds to help them fulfil their potential.

In school based programs trained volunteer mentors regularly visit schools to work with individual primary or secondary school aged students, and assist them with general learning and career decisions. Other educationally based programs are in some universities and TAFEs, where older students mentor beginning tertiary students or secondary school students in their last years of schooling.

MacCallum and Beltman (2003) suggest that the formal Australian mentoring programs included in their studies reflect two broad program structures: programs involving one-to-one mentoring and programs involving group mentoring (and often some one-to-one mentoring).

While most programs include one-to-one mentoring, group mentoring is an essential element of some programs and/ or an additional means of support for young people. Group activities and meetings with paid staff and volunteers can help to build a supportive community base for young people who don't have such a geographical base, e.g. some young people leaving care. They can be a relatively non-threatening

means of introducing a group of mentors and a group of mentees; they can contribute to matching individual mentors and mentees. Some program coordinators talk of the importance of getting the timing, sequencing and mix of group and individual mentoring right so that both mentors and young people start to feel comfortable with each other and are supported through the development of a one-to-one relationship. This appears to be especially important with young people who are transient and/ or have to contend with major survival issues in their life.

Most programs use volunteer mentors; however some include a mentoring relationship between young people and employed professionals working in an area, e.g. in juvenile justice systems (Attorney-General's Department 2003).

Mentoring has been used effectively in programs for young indigenous Australians. An example is the Deadly Mob Career Mentoring Program working with young indigenous students in Alice Springs (see Appendix 2). Not surprisingly, mentoring for young indigenous offenders has been found to be most effective when there are strong links with Aboriginal communities and services, and when they are based on an understanding of the historical, cultural and social background factors which influence young indigenous lives (ARTD Management and Research Consultants 2001). The research suggests that there are a number of issues specific to indigenous mentoring programs, including adequate consultation with and promotion in indigenous communities, the need for flexibility in remote and isolated areas, and sensitivity to cultural requirements in matching indigenous mentors and young people (Attorney-General's Department 2003).

Numerous other mentoring initiatives, large and small, are working with different groups of young people throughout Australia and there are indications that mentoring is increasingly being included as part of a range of other support services. As yet, online mentoring has not been widely trialled in Australia, in programs where adults mentor young people. However, on-line communication between young people in a peer mentoring environment has been shown to be effective in supporting young people.

Sustainability is a major issue for most programs. Many, and certainly the smaller programs, are dependent on short term funding. Funding from multiple sources is a common feature.

Business and corporate involvement in mentoring of young people

It is very difficult to get an overall picture of the extent and type of business and corporate involvement in mentoring of young people in Australia. Much of the support is localised and therefore difficult to trace without speaking to individual programs. Australia does not have the long history of philanthropy and corporate involvement in community initiatives which is characteristic of the US, and to a lesser extent, Canada and Britain.

Some mentoring programs in Australia report that businesses are looking for ways of becoming more closely involved in their local communities. A number of the larger and more established programs have relatively substantial and ongoing corporate support. It is clear that it takes a great deal of time and effort to establish good relationships with local and regional businesses, but if they are established, the connections can be very fruitful and often generate new ideas for collaboration. The impetus for wider corporate and enterprise involvement sometimes comes from managers and other key people becoming volunteer mentors in their own communities. This can be a very powerful individual experience sometimes leading to ongoing personal commitment and to broader enterprise involvement.

Support from business takes many different forms, including:

- direct financial contributions
- sponsorship and gifts for mentees
- in-kind contributions, e.g. for promotional activities and fund-raising
- organising visits to enterprises and contributing to curriculum related activities in schools
- encouraging staff to become mentors, and occasionally allowing employees time off for participation in mentoring programs
- paying for staff members to participate in specific mentor training programs.

Partnerships with employers are an essential ingredient of successful programs which have a focus, short or longer term, on connecting young people with employment and training opportunities. They provide resources, sponsorship and work-related opportunities.

In the short-term, the trends noted above are not likely to be reflected in any large scale contributions or participation in mentoring programs for young people. Mentoring competes with numerous other avenues for the expression of corporate responsibility. It also competes with other forms of volunteering in any more formal partnerships whereby employees are supported in undertaking volunteer work, for example, by having some paid time off for volunteer work. The extent of corporate support tends to wax and wane and consistency of support is necessary for long term sustainability of programs.

However, there is a discernable shift towards more corporate social responsibility and to corporate community involvement in Australia. Whether corporate community involvement grows in Australia is dependent on whether the 'concepts of social coalition, partnership and social entrepreneurship flourish' in Australia (Cronin 2001). A British example is Business in the Community (BITC) which promotes and supports a number of broad programs. BITC lists research-based evidence for community, employee and company benefits of employee volunteering. The benefits to business include positive effects on a business's license to operate, change management and innovation, recruitment and staff retention, staff morale and work performance, and training and development (BITC 2003).

Mentoring in practice 5: employee volunteering

Following a successful partnership between Westpac Markets division and Cleveland St High School in Sydney, Westpac Institutional Banking, Melbourne teamed with Collingwood College in Melbourne. Institutional Banking staff were trained as mentors and matched with year 10 and 11 students. They met fortnightly for two hours for a period of roughly six months. The program involved a mix of team activities and either one-to-one projects or a group project. The program was successful in keeping a number of students at school for the remainder of the year and in helping others decide to return to complete their studies. There was an increase in students' self confidence during the course of the program. The program contributed to staff development for Westpac staff and increased their range of skills.

Westpac funded the projects undertaken and the general program costs.

Mentoring in practice 6: employers' and co-workers' views

'I hadn't given it one iota of thought before but I spoke to my manager and we decided to give the kids a go ... it's great to see the changes that happen with them ... my wife says I'm a changed person too now.' (employer)

'We get as much from her as she does from us. Her vitality has picked us up.'
(co-worker)
'If employers don't do anything and the community doesn't do anything, what's going to happen to these kids?' (employer)
'Having her here has made us think about how lucky we are with our background. It's made me not judge people so much.'
(co-worker)
(taken from 'Making a Difference', a short CD about the Whitleion Employment and Mentoring program, Vic)

Government support for mentoring of young people

The following outline is not an exhaustive list of federal government support for mentoring of young people. Such a list is beyond the scope of this national strategy discussion paper. In both federal and state jurisdictions, funding for mentoring occurs across a number of departments.

Federal government

The federal government has a tiered approach which includes the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy, youth leadership programs, programs to support school participation of at risk young people which include mentoring strategies, and the major youth (12-25 years) mentoring program, Mentor Marketplace. The main focus in this section is on Mentor Marketplace.

The *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy* has funded a number of mentoring and leaderships programs, and *Local Answers*, a key initiative of the strategy, will fund youth mentoring and leadership projects in 2004. These initiatives sit within a broad range of approaches aimed at providing opportunities for individuals, families and children to be actively engaged in their communities. *Local Answers* specifically reinforces the importance of local initiatives and solutions. While this support is welcome, it does not represent a national strategy.

Mentor Marketplace aims to assist young people in the transition from school to further education training or work. The program is aligned with broader themes of government policy including partnerships, prevention and early intervention, local solutions to local problems and building capacity (Mentor Marketplace Guidelines August 2003). While the aim is to expand opportunities for all young people, some groups are specifically mentioned: young carers, young people with disabilities, indigenous young people and those from disadvantaged groups and localities. The program began in June 2003 and comes to an end in June 2005. Approximately \$4.4 million was available over three years.

Four funding rounds were originally planned but there have been three, as there were reportedly a sufficient number of quality programs in round three to allocate the remaining funds available after the first two rounds. To date, three national programs and a range of other programs across states and territories have been funded. The target groups include disadvantaged young people at school and at risk of leaving and young people who had already left school, young people leaving care, young offenders and those at risk of offending, migrant and refugee youth and Indigenous young people. Diverse types of programs are represented. There are as yet no summary statistics available concerning outcomes from the program. An evaluation of Mentor Marketplace is planned.

The target groups for funded programs have a general youth and equity emphasis consistent with the focus on young people 'particularly those experiencing limited opportunities for participation in the social, cultural and economic life of their community' (Mentor Marketplace Guidelines 2003, p. 3).

There is an emphasis on programs becoming self-funding. While understandable from a government point of view, many practitioners point out the difficulties of doing so. To establish an effective mentoring program and to develop the necessary partnerships with business and other groups which may ultimately lead to being self-funded, takes some years. Programs funded in rounds one and two have funding for two years; programs funded in round three for 18 months. Often the coordinator is the only paid member of staff.

The Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) funds a number of programs which include mentoring or mentoring related activities. *Reconnect*, the early intervention program introduced in 1999, seeks to reconnect young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless with their families, education, employment and community. Some of the 98 services existing in 2003 include an element of mentoring in their 'toolbox' of approaches. The *Reconnect* evaluation noted substantially positive outcomes for the service model but did not make specific comment on the mentoring elements. It did however identify the importance of flexibility, having a range of interconnected services available, and the essential inter-relatedness of schools with family and community in best meeting the needs of young people at risk of homelessness (RPR Consulting 2003).

CATS (Career and Transition) pilots are testing and evaluating innovative ways of improving the quality of career information and advice to young people. A key component is the funding of CAT advisers supporting 13-19 year-olds in the development and implementation of Learning Pathways Plans. In January 2004, there were 20 pilot projects in selected regions across Australia.

POEMS (Partnership Outreach Education Model) pilots across Australia test new approaches for engaging young people who are at risk or who have become disconnected from mainstream education and sometimes from their families and communities. The pilots provide a variety of alternative education settings for small groups of young people, based around a broad approach to their needs and building strong links between different agencies in the community.

On Track Leadership Project is a community based leadership program for young people, which provides leadership training and mentoring within young people's communities, in conjunction with an agreed community based activity and a field activity. The project aims to foster youth leadership training and opportunities, to encourage and develop leadership and community participation and to enhance young people's self esteem.

Youth for the Future is a pan-Commonwealth initiative which includes a youth mentoring strand aimed at building youth entrepreneurial skills.

Other programs which include an element of mentoring within a broader program include the Young People in Rural Industries Program, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; and the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) funded by the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

Overall, the brief outline above shows that there is federal funding available for mentoring for young people. However, there are questions relating to the scale of

funding, integration of programs across areas of government responsibility, cross fertilisation, sustainability of programs, partnerships with other sectors, and whether they represent a long term strategy regarding mentoring.

State governments and mentoring

All state and territory governments fund mentoring initiatives for young people. As with the federal government, they are spread across more than one area of ministerial responsibility. They include school based and community based programs. The NSW, WA and Victorian examples below are indicative only of the range of programs and approaches.

MacCallum and Beltman (1999) note that there are strong arguments for state government departments encouraging and supporting mentoring programs in schools.

The NSW Department of Education and Training funds district coordination for Plan-it Youth school-based mentoring projects. This includes in 2002, 2003 and 2004 six full-time positions in seven school education areas. It also provides operational grants for each of the projects, and produces a range of products to promote and support the projects in local communities. Programs are supported systemically.

Paid mentors are also involved in programs sponsored by the Department's Aboriginal Programs unit. Gateways programs in NSW schools use a range of strategies and in some schools, both teachers and volunteers undertake mentoring as part of case management support for young people at risk.

The Western Australian Department of Education and Training contributes some recurrent funding to the School Volunteer Program of WA (SVPWA) and some funding is received through the Department of Community Development.

The Victorian government is currently moving towards a more strategic approach to youth mentoring by examining present programs, asking some key questions about the broader context of mentoring, and funding three Youth Mentoring Demonstration Projects run by community organisations with expertise in the area and in collaboration with broader government community initiatives. At present, funds are provided to a number of mentoring programs including programs for young people leaving care; young people in juvenile justice centres; young people facing multiple disadvantages and young indigenous people. Some MIPS (Managed Individual Pathways) in schools and YPP (Youth Pathways Program) in TAFE and ACE providers include opportunities for mentoring relationships.

6. Resources and structures for maintaining and further developing mentoring

A clear message from the consultations and the Roundtable discussion was that if mentoring is to develop further and have long term benefits for local communities and the young people who live within them, the key requirements are:

- a community based focus which places mentoring young people in a broad context and consciously and actively supports local initiatives;
- a viable national body which can actively support, advocate for, promote and continually take forward mentoring for young people; and
- increased resources and a range of services to support mentoring of young people in communities.

A community based focus

Broadening the focus of mentoring young people has the potential to bring greater benefits to young people and to communities. We see a community focus as being promoted by all stakeholders and supported by the structures and resources outlined in this section and in the recommendations.

A viable national support/ membership body

A viable national organisation is needed to provide ongoing support and advice to programs, disseminate information about good practice, provide a forum for vigorous debate and exchange of information, and promote relevant research. The organisation would need a small support secretariat and would be partly supported by membership fees. This would contribute to the development of good mentoring programs, promote vibrant discussion and innovation, and broaden understanding of mentoring in the community. A national organisation has been set up; however, without adequate resources, it has not been able to develop into a sustainable organisation able to fulfil the functions outlined above. The reported range of enquiries directed to the national organisation's contact person from within Australia and beyond, supports the need for such a body.

Increased resources and a range of services to support mentoring programs

A huge voluntary effort, extremely difficult to quantify, supports mentoring of young people in Australia. Some programs are now beginning to log volunteer hours, so there may be a clearer indication in the future of the extent of this effort. Perhaps partly because many mentoring programs use volunteers, there is often a perception that they are cheap to run. While it is true that the commitment and dedication of many volunteers, very often women, have kept some programs afloat with minimal funding, there is clear evidence that programs fail to become viable, are difficult to maintain and fail to develop further if they do not have adequate resources. The experience of other countries where mentoring young people has achieved a higher profile and spread than in Australia supports the need for resources at both a central and program level.

More realistic approaches to sustainability are required. Funding of pilot programs will not bring about long term change or sustainability. Sustainability of programs requires:

- a more strategic approach to funding;
- longer term funding; and
- encouragement and support for the development of community, business and service provider partnerships around mentoring programs in local areas.

Effective program coordination requires:

- adequate funding for coordinators with a range of skills appropriate to the area in which they are working;
- access to support in areas where they may lack skills, for example in business planning;
- a data base of program and other information to assist coordinators;
- a range of central and regional information sharing processes;
- access to specific training where necessary; and
- ongoing professional development through regular conferences and workshops.

MacCallum and Beltman (2003) note that there is a limit to the number of mentors and mentees that can be adequately served by one coordinator. Some Australian programs are exploring innovative approaches to coordination. The Plan-it Youth model, which uses a central (regional) coordinator and coordinators in each participating school, is trialling a system aimed at releasing central coordination time for extending the program into new schools. Once the program has run once in a school, a paid Community Liaison Officer takes over the central coordinating functions for a period of three months.

Effective mentoring programs require good induction and training for mentors. Mentor training is currently varied. Some programs run their own training; others have contracting out arrangements with TAFEs. Modules from the NSW accredited Mentoring in the Community certificate provide the basis for such training. There are potential benefits for mentors in having accredited training; however, not all programs can afford it. While there is a range of ways in which mentors can be adequately trained, all training needs to include a sound understanding of the role of mentoring and the responsibilities and boundaries of the mentor role; effective listening skills; an understanding of duty of care and safety issues; and an understanding of youth issues including racial, cultural and gender differences among young people.

Training and support for evaluation of programs is needed. Scarce funds mean that evaluation is not always a priority, yet it is often needed to demonstrate outcomes in order to get further funds. There is a place for both external and internal evaluation and monitoring. More effective evaluation of mentoring programs requires:

- structures and a process to identify what is possible for evaluating various types of programs;
- ways of disseminating this information to programs and to funding bodies in ways that are easily understood;
- linking evaluation with continuous improvement in practice;
- a set of flexible frameworks for evaluation and data analysis tools etc. which could be made available to individual programs; and
- a central point or points where programs can seek advice about evaluation.

A learning and research agenda is needed to further explore and clarify the role and impact of mentoring young people. An agenda could be developed and promoted by the national support/ membership body with broad input from researchers, and other stakeholders including young people. It could be linked to current Australian Research Council designated priority areas of research concerning strategies to promote the healthy development of young Australians (ARC 2003).

One of the early areas to be addressed is a scoping of the mentoring provision that is required. This paper has not been able to address what is needed in terms of the numbers and groups of young people who would benefit from mentoring. We see this scoping as a task for a national body to carry forward, and it being accomplished through access to government and other databases. It would also ultimately be useful to have a broad map of the extent of formal funded, unfunded or minimally funded mentoring initiatives for young people in Australia, including the numbers of mentors and mentees involved and the range of auspicing bodies.

Role of government

In countries where mentoring for young people has expanded beyond short-term programs, a broad approach and underlying support for ongoing development of mentoring has been necessary. The available evidence suggests that a primarily purchaser-provider relationship between government and agencies providing services has very real limitations for creating a climate of sustainability, long term benefit and innovative development.

Governments could promote an environment in which mentoring of young people thrives by taking a leadership role in some key areas. Such areas include a diverse range of promotional and funding initiatives and program related issues. They include:

- Promoting a broader concept of mentoring for young people by encouraging and supporting cross sectoral and cross departmental approaches to mentoring. While there is a welcome emphasis in some areas on the importance of integrating approaches and services, different mentoring initiatives remain largely separate from each other.
- Integrating and expanding mentoring possibilities into other policy frameworks. For example, mentoring sits very well with the larger policy framework of encouraging young people to maintain contact with education, training and employment. It has considerable potential to improve understanding and communication between the generations and to avoid potentially divisive and polarised views of older and younger people facing different life challenges.
- Funding a small secretariat for a viable national mentoring body to fulfil the functions outlined above. A national body is not achievable within the present purchaser-provider model. No one provider has the resources to foster and support such a body.
- Funding and supporting the membership network to foster peer or professional audits of mentoring programs. Peer audits would encourage communication and increase understanding across programs.
- Value adding to state education department programs.
- Providing tax incentives for businesses to become involved in mentoring partnerships.
- Funding locally developed and national campaigns to promote better understanding of mentoring in the community.

- Exploring ways of providing incentives, including tax incentives, for retirees to become involved in mentoring programs, thus building on the proven intergenerational benefits of mentoring.
- Encouraging government employees to become mentors. There is considerable scope for employees in a range of areas – education, housing, youth affairs, juvenile justice, family and community services – to be given some incentive to become volunteer mentors. Such an arrangement has many potential benefits, including an increased number of mentors and more partnerships between government and non-government agencies, and ultimately may lead to the development of policies that are more closely attuned to the issues which young people face and the needs of mentoring programs which work with them.
- Ensuring that all mentoring programs have in place risk management policies, child protection measures and screening procedures that are appropriate to the type of program. Well-publicised, clear and firm guidelines are fundamentally important for the protection of children and can act as a deterrent to predatory mentors. In regard to screening, the review of mentoring programs for young people at risk of offending suggests that a criminal record should not necessarily preclude someone from being a mentor and quotes evidence that reformed ex-offenders can provide excellent role models. However, conviction for sexual offences, offences against children, violence offences and serious offences within the past five years should preclude anyone from being a mentor (Attorney-General's Department 2003, p 42). It should be noted that security screening is only a part of the whole screening procedure for mentors.
- Setting up procedures, consistent with privacy legislation, for easy access to information across states so that screening of potential mentors can be done quickly and efficiently.

Mentoring in practice 7: program costs

The cost of mentoring programs varies according to the model which is being used, the setting of the program, the specific program goals and the stage of development. In general, the unit costs drops as programs become established and the number of long term matches in the program increases. School based programs tend to have a lower unit cost for an agency; however they are backed by systemic structures the costs of which need to be taken into account.

Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia, a well-established program, estimates that for the model currently in use, each match costs \$2000. The initial stage of recruitment, screening and training is the most expensive; matching, referral and assessment is the least expensive and ongoing support and supervision is between the other two. Big Brothers Big Sisters is continually reviewing its program model.

Mentoring in practice 8: National Benchmarks

The National Benchmarks for Mentoring Programs, developed by Mentoring Australia are reprinted at Appendix 3 and cover the following areas:

Statement of purpose
Program plan
Policy and procedures
Recruitment and selection process
Mentor preparation
Mentor/mentee matching and monitoring strategy
Mentor/mentee support
Closure policy
Evaluation and assessment

7. Effective overseas approaches

'Mentoring, as a planned activity, has undergone a spectacular expansion in North America, the UK and other countries over the past two decades' (Colley 2003, p. 1). While the 'rise and rise' of mentoring has occurred especially in the US, Canada, and Britain since the Blair government came to power, there has also been increased interest in Israel and Sweden, and reportedly growing support in Ireland, Norway and the Netherlands (Colley 2003). This section briefly outlines some approaches in the US, Canada and Britain, elements of which could serve as models for further development of mentoring in Australia. Key elements are central and regional organisations that serve as resources to local programs; well-developed program guidelines/ benchmarks; substantial corporate involvement; and partnerships between agencies, government and business.

US

Youth mentoring in the US has a long history and large scale political and corporate support. Programs have proliferated in the past fifteen years. An estimated five million American youth are involved in school-based and community based volunteer mentoring programs (Rhodes 2001). Big Brothers Big Sisters is said to have a quarter of a million volunteers in the US (Miller 2000 quoted in Colley 2003).

There is an array of federal, state and private foundation sources of funding which goes to non-profit community based organisations, faith based agencies, local education authorities, and youth and other organisations to conduct programs. Most local and state activities in the field are decentralised; however, Rhodes (2001) reports that the profile of volunteer mentoring in the US has been increased through the efforts of national mentoring organisations such as America's Promise.

Many programs focus on young people at risk of dropping out of school, especially in areas where there is a substantially black or Hispanic population. There is an observable tendency for programs to be separated into ethnic, religious, cultural or need based areas. The high prison population in many areas has led to the recent development of mentoring programs for children of prisoners. In January 2003, President George Bush announced a US\$450 million initiative to bring mentors to disadvantaged junior high school students and the children of prisoners.

The sector includes a number of well-established umbrella organisations supporting and coordinating numerous local initiatives. An example is National Mentoring Partnership (www.mentoring.org) which has state affiliates. The umbrella organisations support websites with an extensive range of support services which are aimed at both practitioners and community members seeking information about mentoring. They provide access to program information, program resources, research, information about how to become a mentor, learning activities for mentors, news of local and state workshops and conferences, and tips and activity suggestions for mentors. The National Mentoring Partnership also provides a downloadable Learn to Mentor toolkit.

The National Mentoring Center, a project of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory based in Portland, Oregon, is a national training and technical assistance provider for mentoring programs across the US. It was created by and is primarily funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. It provides a range of services including large-scale training, conference and workshop design and implementation, program consulting, print and electronic resources development and dissemination, data collection and evaluation and projects that support state and national initiatives. (www.nwrel.org/mentoring/)

Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) is the largest of the national organisations involved in mentoring. It has tried and tested practices based on years of experience and relies on national and local campaigns for recruiting mentors. The organisation has substantial corporate support. Local Big Brothers Big Sisters groups are affiliated with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, and pay an annual fee. In return for use of the BBBS name and benefiting from national training, public relations campaigns and conferences, they are required to comply with National BBBS business and program standards. Details of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Chicago and examples of a selection of programs in other US cities are in Tobin (2000).

Numerous state, regional and local partnerships between business and mentoring organisations support the mentoring effort. Many are focused around improving young people's chances of staying on at school, enhancing academic learning and ultimately having the skills to become productive members of society. An example is MBP Connections, a collaboration between the Minnesota Business Partnership and the Mentoring Partnership of Minnesota. Companies both contribute to mentoring programs and encourage employees to become mentors.

The Kesler Mentoring Connection grew out of a coalition of local mentoring programs and agencies in Northeast Florida formed to provide a forum for discussion and act as a support group. The need for a resource centre was realised and the Kesler Mentoring Connection was established. It is run by a Board of Directors. It does not provide mentoring but is a mentoring resource centre, supporting mentoring in the community by

- raising public awareness about mentoring
- recruiting new volunteer members
- training and screening new mentors
- helping existing mentoring programs maintain best practice
- helping to facilitate the development of new mentoring programs.

(www.mentoringconnection.org)

Such a regionally based mentoring organisation could provide a model for resource support in Australia. It provides many of the essential support and resources services outlined in the previous section, leaving programs to 'do what they do best' i.e. manage relationships between mentors and mentees.

Canada

Canada is well advanced in terms of national coordination of mentoring and has a large number of young people involved in a diversity of programs. There are a number of well organised and informative websites, providing information and support for programs, including Mentoring Canada, a comprehensive online resources and training library run by Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Canada. .

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada is the largest community based mentoring program providing support to more than 300 communities through 170 local agencies. The organisation has undertaken a number of developments to respond to changing social and cultural needs and includes in their range of programs Couples for Kids, Cross Gender Matching, Internet mentoring and In-school mentoring, BIG/Bunch and Kids 'n' Kops (for kids on the waiting list).

Interaction, mentoring and inspiration is one of five elements of Alberta's Promise, launched in 2003, a commitment to children. The Promise is a broad coalition of companies and agencies. Each of the Promise Partners (businesses) commit to

increasing their contribution to children and children's services by a minimum of 5 per cent over a year.

There are examples of collaboration between government, agencies and services to promote mentoring and the recruitment of volunteer mentors. One such initiative was funded by Alberta Children's Services, the Alberta Mental Health Board, and the Big Sisters Big Brothers Society of Edmonton and Area.

Of interest is United Generations Ontario, an incorporated not-for-profit organisation dedicated to cooperation among people of all ages and the promotion of intergenerational opportunities which lead to personal wellbeing and interaction throughout the life cycle. It is not directly involved in providing services but it assists programs bringing together two or more generations programmatically and financially, promotes and encourages local networking and collaboration through area councils, acts as an enabler to member organisations and responds to requests from other registered charities for information and advice about intergenerational programs.

England

While mentoring programs have a much longer history in the UK than in Australia, there are aspects of their development that are similar. They began as community based initiatives and on the edges of the education system. Interest spread as programs for young people considered 'at risk' began to show substantial changes in participants' confidence and attachment to education and learning. There was ultimately a shift to a national approach. The Blair government has overseen a very substantial expansion of and national funding for mentoring of young people, especially interventions that target young people 'at risk' of disengaging or already disengaged from formal systems of education, training and employment (Colley 2003).

In 1998, a UK Mentoring Strategy Group was set up. Its aims are to create a national body of influence and a voice for mentoring across the UK; to forge closer links with government departments; to identify key issues and themes and action to take them forward; and to highlight areas for working in partnership and collaboration. The group meets three times a year and includes representatives from government departments as well as experienced practitioners.

The National Mentoring Network, set up in 1994, is funded by membership fees and also has support from the Department of Education and Skills and the Active Community Unit of the Home Office. The aims of the Network are to promote the development of mentoring and quality standards, offer advice and support to those wishing to set up mentoring programs and provide a forum for the exchange of information and good practice (www.nmn.org.uk). An Approved Provider Standard for mentoring programs has been developed by the Network, with the Department of Education and Skills and the Active Community Unit of the Home Office.

The Approved Provider Standard (APS) is a national benchmark for organisations providing one-to-one volunteer mentoring, established to ensure consistency and quality of programs 'by sharing and guaranteeing best practice in such areas as referral and preparation of mentees and recruitment, preparation and training of mentors' (www.nmn.org.uk). Organisations apply for APS registration through submitting documentary evidence associated with their program. The National Mentoring Network provides guidance and support for organisations in this process. Organisations working towards the Approved Provider Standard award can also apply for pending registration 12 months prior to full registration. The Approved Provider

Standard is a benchmark accepted by UK government departments and other funding bodies, so there is considerable benefit for organisations gaining it.

As part of the *Excellence in Cities* initiative, the Department of Education and Employment in England has placed learning mentors in selected schools in six large conurbations. Local partnerships carry the Initiative forward. They include secondary schools and local education authorities in consultation with primary schools, other education providers, voluntary and community groups and local business. The overall role of learning mentors is to work with those students who need extra help to overcome barriers to learning (including both underachieving students and those assessed as gifted and talented) and provide a complementary service to existing teachers and pastoral care staff. As described, their role is quite broad, and includes assisting with effective exchange of information between local education authorities and other external support agencies, ensuring that students who are sick and away from school for long period with additional support, and assisting with access to sound career advice (*Excellence in Cities* 1999).

Learning mentors are centrally funded but schools have some flexibility in how funds are used. A number of factors have been identified as potentially limiting the effectiveness of the learning mentor initiative. A form of casework seems to be the dominant way in which mentors work, with little room to 'open up a dialogue with students and see how the school might ... better accommodate their needs' or for mentors to have the traditional role of a wise counsellor. There is also concern that the use of narrow outcome measures may limit the approaches which schools take to the work of learning mentors (Smith 2002).

8. A proposed national strategy

As a result of consultations and discussions with mentoring agencies and others with interest and expertise in the area, the following recommendations have been developed.

Recommendation 1. It is recommended that there be a national strategy regarding mentoring of young people.

Recommendation 2. It is recommended that a national strategy have the following aim:

Aim

The aim of a national strategy is to encourage development of mentoring for young people and establish an environment where it flourishes. Such an environment will provide more young people with emotional and social support; directly assist young people at important points in their lives, and contribute to broader networking and community building.

Recommendation 3. It is recommended that a national strategy is guided by the following principles.

Principles

1. Formal and informal mentoring

There is a distinction between formal mentoring and informal or 'natural' mentoring which occurs in families and communities as children and young people grow and develop. Some young people have access to many resources; others need informal assistance to take advantage of the available resources. Yet others need one-to-one support, which will vary in level and intensity; this is the focus of formal mentoring programs.

2. Mentoring, a community function reflecting local needs

Communities can support young people through both formal and natural or informal mentoring. Formal mentoring programs need to come from communities and reflect their needs. While clear national goals, funding guidelines and benchmarks are needed to ensure that mentoring programs are of high quality, it is essential that they be flexible enough to cater for local needs and for diverse groups of young people according to their developmental stage, cultural background, personal circumstances, etc. Further, embedding formal mentoring firmly in local communities benefits the whole community through strengthening networks.

3. Enhancing existing policy frameworks

High quality mentoring for young people builds on and enhances existing policy frameworks, including those relating to community building, early intervention, school to work transition, career advice, community renewal and youth development.

4. A broadly based strategy

Mentoring is a broadly based strategy. Children and young people need support at different times and points in their lives and formal mentoring programs can be organised around any and all of these times. It is a proven and appropriate strategy whatever particular funding priorities governments of the day have in regard to children and young people. Mentoring offers considerable support for disadvantaged young people.

5. Fostering economic and social participation

Mentoring is a vital link in assisting young people to better understand the education, training and work options open to them, maintain contact with education and training opportunities, and find pathways to employment and economic and social participation.

6. Early intervention

It is desirable that mentoring programs are based on early intervention principles and seek to assist young people e.g. before they leave school, before they come into the child protection system, before they leave the care of the state, before they are released from youth detention centres. Where this is not possible, mentoring should be available for young people who are not connected to systems and structures. The evidence suggests that innovative and very flexible approaches are needed for young people disconnected from mainstream social structures.

7. Multiple ways of supporting young people

Formal mentoring programs are one effective means of supporting young people, not a single solution to complex social and individual needs. Especially in circumstances where young people face multiple disadvantages, mentors are best regarded as complementary to and an addition to the work of professionals and other supportive services, not as a replacement for them.

8. Sustainability of programs

It is fundamentally important that formal mentoring be available in ongoing and sustainable ways. Sustainability rests on factors such as adequate funding over an extended period, and building and maintaining a pool of mentors.

9. Participation of young people

Young people are key stakeholders in mentoring. Planning for mentoring programs should include their views wherever possible and in ways appropriate to their developmental stage. This may include consultation with young people, representation on advisory committees and planning bodies and training to take on peer mentoring and leadership roles within the program. It may also include innovative youth-driven ways of encouraging, facilitating and supporting young people's participation.

Recommendation 4. It is recommended that the following structures underpin a national mentoring strategy:

Underpinning structures

- A national peak organisation with responsibilities for: supporting the key community role of mentoring; promoting networking and partnerships; encouraging vibrant debate about mentoring; providing resources and support for mentoring programs; disseminating information; supporting evaluation of good practice; creating training and ongoing professional development opportunities for program managers and coordinators; updating and reviewing benchmarks; setting a learning agenda for mentoring; and scoping with more precision the mentoring provision that is required.
- Regional coalitions of mentoring providers that promote and support local development of mentoring, provide a forum for discussion, and provide a range of services including program coordinator training, mentor training, assistance with mentor matching, assistance with evaluation, and advice and support.

- The federal government, whose responsibilities include: expansion of access to mentoring; support for mentoring including funding for coordination, training, and evaluation of mentoring programs within their jurisdiction; funding for a small secretariat for a national body; and leadership in promoting the role of mentoring in the general community, and with other governments.

Recommendation 5. It is recommended that, based on the three underpinning structures, a national strategy include the following elements:

1. A clear definition of mentoring

Objective

Agreement among government, funding bodies, participating organisations and other key stakeholders on a definition of mentoring for young people that is inclusive but which clearly sets out the parameters of formal mentoring.

Areas for action might include

Agreement on the following definition of formal mentoring as a working definition until further discussions of stakeholders can take place: 'Mentoring is a mutually beneficial relationship which involves a more experienced person helping a less experienced person to identify and achieve their goals' (Mentoring Australia 2000).

2. Federal government leadership in promoting mentoring for young people

Objective

Federal government leadership in promoting the positive role of mentoring in children's and young peoples' lives and its role in community building.

Areas for action might include

Promoting a broader concept of mentoring for young people by encouraging and supporting cross sectoral and cross departmental approaches to mentoring.

Integrating and expanding mentoring possibilities into existing community building, youth development, early intervention and learning communities frameworks.

Having in place education, training and employment policies which support mentoring of young people in community and other settings as a key element.

Funding a small secretariat for a viable national mentoring body, to support further development of the considerable potential of mentoring for young people.

Tax incentives for businesses to become involved in mentoring partnerships.

Nationally funded but locally developed campaigns to promote better understanding of mentoring in the community.

Recognising and promoting the intergenerational benefits of mentoring young people, including its potential to increase understanding and communication, and promote common bonds between generations.

Exploring ways of providing incentives, including tax incentives, for retirees to become involved in mentoring programs.

Encouraging government employees to become youth mentors.

3. National support and resources for maintaining and developing community based and local mentoring programs for young people

Objective

To establish viable structures to provide support, resources and services to mentoring programs and to disseminate information about mentoring to a range of audiences.

Areas for action might include

Government funding support for a small secretariat to maintain and develop a national membership-based organisation which would foster the key community role of mentoring, promote networking and partnerships, encourage vibrant debate about mentoring, provide program support, disseminate information, promote discussion, and support and encourage locally based innovation.

Exploring ways in which regional coalitions of mentoring providers can be supported to provide a range of services to mentoring programs for young people, including program coordinator training, mentor training, mentor matching, program resources, evaluation resources etc.

Encouraging corporate support of mentoring in local communities.

4. Quality programs

Objective

To ensure that mentoring programs are of a high standard and achieve the best possible outcomes for young people.

Areas for action might include

Adoption, by the peak body and mentoring programs, of a set of benchmarks, e.g. the 'National benchmarks for mentoring programs' developed by Mentoring Australia (see Appendix 3), which are reviewed and updated over time.

Putting in place a mandatory set of standards for mentoring programs regarding the protection of children and young people.

Developing ways in which programs can aim for high standards and continual improvement, e.g. by funded peer or professional audits, regular regional meetings etc.

Enabling and facilitating organisations to research and develop new approaches.

Developing a quality framework for mentoring socially excluded young people, which recognises and makes the most of what they bring to a mentoring relationship.

5. Encouraging and promoting an enhanced role for business, employers and philanthropic foundations in supporting the mentoring of young people

Objective

An enhanced role for business, employers and philanthropic foundations in supporting mentoring of young people.

Areas for action

Identifying key corporate and community advocates to promote the community building role of mentoring young people.

Promoting, through peak business and industry bodies, through regional and local business associations, and through philanthropic foundations, local partnerships around community building which include mentoring of young people.

Exploring ways of building a more widespread culture of employers and more experienced staff mentoring young people in large and small enterprises both before they start work and when they are employed.

6. Promoting innovation and better practice

Objective

To promote and support locally based innovation in mentoring programs for young people.

Areas for action might include

Encouraging and supporting youth mentoring organisations, other stakeholders and researchers to develop a learning agenda to foster innovative approaches to better meet the needs of diverse groups of young people.

Exploring ways of promoting innovative business and agency partnerships around mentoring.

Encouraging and supporting young people to participate in the planning and development of mentoring programs, and where possible to become mentors themselves.

7. Increased and longer term federal funding for mentoring young people

Objective

Increased and longer term federal funding for mentoring models and programs for young people which have been shown to be successful. This would include complementary funding by the federal government of collaborations with state funded programs

Areas for action might include

Consolidating the experience of successful programs as a basis for longer term funding commitments.

Partnerships and resources to support school-based mentoring programs.

Acknowledging the key community building role of mentoring by appropriately funding programs for the time and resources required to (a) establish strong and viable networks (including school-community links) and (b) expand the diversity of mentors by drawing in isolated groups and community members who are not traditionally volunteers but may have much to offer in mentoring relationships with young people.

A national strategy for mentoring of young people with a clear aim, based on sound principles and with strong underpinning structures, could achieve much. It is likely to result in more young people: having satisfying, caring and supportive relationships with adults; making stronger connections to community networks; making stronger connections to education, training and work structures; and finding pathways to economic and social participation. It also has considerable potential to contribute to better understanding and stronger bonds between generations.

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Roundtable attendees

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Judy MacCallum, Murdoch University, Western Australia
Christine Gray, School Volunteer Program, Western Australia
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Appendix 2: Brief descriptions of selected Australian programs

The following brief program descriptions include some of the major programs and models and a small selection of other programs. We are aware that a very large number of programs are not listed here, and inclusion or exclusion is not intended to be a measure of a program's success or value. Programs are described under major headings.

School based programs

Plan-it Youth model

Plan-it Youth is a program model which supports young people who may be considering leaving school early. Young people are matched with a volunteer mentor, often a retiree who meets regularly with the young person at the school for an hour and a half each week for ten weeks, to assist them with transition to work, further education or employment. Mentors are screened and undertake accredited training modules from the NSW TAFE Mentoring in the Community qualification. Students are assisted with career planning, and finding a positive way forward. The Dusseldorp Skills Forum owns the name Plan-it Youth, but all resources are available on the web for use. The Plan-it Youth model has been picked up by the NSW government which funds programs in six regions. As well as the programs in NSW, there are now Plan-it Youth programs in Queensland, Victoria, WA and Alice Springs (Deadly Mob – see below). In addition, other organisations have adopted parts of the model or based programs on the approach. In Victoria, a number of LLEN (Local Learning and Employment Networks) have taken up parts of the model.

Learning for Life Plan-It Youth Mentor Program focuses on the school-to-work transition. The Smith Family is working in partnership with Plan-It Youth to deliver a one-to-one mentoring program for students in Years 9 and 10 in Dubbo. The program is funded through Mentor Marketplace. It targets students thinking of leaving school early. Each student is matched with a mentor who can provide assistance with goal setting and support in a friendly, open and respectful way.

Learning Assistance Program (LAP)

LAP volunteers work with students on a one-to-one basis for one session a week, devising with the coordinator and student, a plan of activities tailored to that student's particular needs. The success of the program is based on five simple principles. These are that LAP:

- is always one-to-one
- is about relationships
- builds confidence and self-esteem;
- takes a creative approach to learning;
- promotes parent and community participation in schools

SVPWA

The School Volunteer Program of WA works with any child of school age, assisting with learning. The program is based on the principles of early intervention and the importance of establishing school-community links. Teachers coordinate the volunteer mentors in each school. They are supported by the organisation and by volunteer district coordinators who are reimbursed for their expenses. Volunteers initially commit to ten hours, an hour a week for one term, and this is built on.

student2student

In 1998 The Smith Family piloted a literacy mentoring project for students with reading difficulties on the *Learning for Life* program. *student2student* matches students with mentors who are their peers. Since the pilot, *student2student* has grown to be nationwide supporting hundreds of students. The benefits for the students are clear. Over 80 per cent feel that their reading has improved and that they have made a positive connection with their mentor. For the mentors, the experience has a significant impact on their self-esteem and awareness of issues

in the community. Over 90 per cent of mentors are keen to repeat the experience in the following year.

Post-secondary education programs

eXLR8 is an innovative mentoring program designed to assist young people to gain employability and enterprising skills through the support of a mentor. The program is a collaboration between The Smith Family, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Department of Education, Science and Training, highlighting the importance of developing community partnerships for mentoring programs. Young people taking part are undertaking vocational education, some are receiving a Learning for Life TAFE scholarship and are all committed to achieving their future goals. The pilot is being implemented in South Australia.

The Tertiary Scholarship Program is run by The Smith Family. In addition to gaining a financial scholarship, financially disadvantaged students who are accepted into university are matched with a mentor with a relevant occupational background. They see the student through to graduation, provide support and encouragement, help students to develop self-esteem and confidence, and offer the benefit of their experience in tertiary study and university systems, educational and career advice in the relevant field, and access to professional networks.

Community based programs

Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) is a community based mentoring model which matches disadvantaged young people with volunteer mentors who are screened and trained. Adults and young people meet and undertake activities together in the community. The focus is on developing a supportive and caring relationship between the mentor and the young person. Big Brothers Big Sisters is a national network with a central coordinating body based in Melbourne. It operates as a franchise. Providers are licensed to use the BBBS package. At present Australian programs tend to focus on the development of a significant relationship between the mentor and the young person as the key factor. There are plans however to incorporate school and work elements into the model. Some relationships last for a substantial period of time. There are programs in Adelaide, Perth, Melbourne, Sydney, Geelong and Roma. In Sydney, the YWCA Mentoring Services runs a Big Sister Big Brother program.

Mission B is a mentoring program run by CREATE for young people generally aged 14-18 in school or out of school who are in care or leaving care. It operates in all states and territories. The aim is to establish a network of community support for young people who often don't have a sense of place and community. Building such networks can help to sustain them and find ways of fulfilling their personal goals. Communities where the program operates are first mapped very carefully and the mapping is shared with young people. A support and delivery team is established. Young people participate in projects which tend to be around returning to school or further education, or a particular activity or event. The projects generally run for three months but the mapping and networking runs for much longer.

Uncles

Uncles is a mentoring program for boys aged 7-14 years whose fathers do not live with them. It includes one to one mentoring relationships with volunteers, and regular activities run by the organisation, including a three day camp. Most boys get into the program because their mothers contact the organisation. The need for such mentoring is very apparent. A recent television report on the organisation resulted in a flood of enquires. A national body has been started and the organisation is in the process of developing a national strategy. There is also a fledgling 'aunties' organisation.

Given The Chance

Since September 2002 the Eucumenical Migration Centre of the Brotherhood of St Laurence has run an employment focussed program called Given the Chance for refugees, in particular women refugees under 25, using mentors, work experience and a refugee-specific short course.

Programs based in other sites

Whitelion. works with young offenders on both custodial and community based orders. It operates in Victoria and Tasmania. It aims to 'connect disadvantaged young people with life changing opportunities, motivating experiences and valued relationships by providing role modelling, mentoring, employment and other support programs within the juvenile justice system and through preventative programs in the broader community' (Whitelion 2003 Annual Report). Services include the Employment Program, Role Modelling Program, Indigenous Program, Sports Program and an Outreach Service for young women.

The *Reach Foundation* has a leadership development program which has a large mentoring component. The young leaders, who come into the program from very diverse backgrounds, are mentored by the leadership 'crew' and they in turn are assisted to develop skills to mentor other young people.

Inspire Foundation is expanding its youth development model to include a more formal mentoring program.

Cairns Youth Mentoring Service is a community based mentoring program targeting all young people in the Cairns community aged between 12 and 21 years, who feel they have a need in regard to work, school or personal issues. Mentoring relationships are based on encouraging and supporting young people through friendship. Pairs are matched according to gender, location and interest or personality. Each cohort is encouraged to work on an activity together to promote time management, goal setting and to have a purpose for coming together for the minimum of two hours per fortnight.

Mission: Exchange, an initiative of Mission Australia, matches business executives with disadvantaged young people with the dual purpose of assisting young people and enhancing corporate and community understanding of youth issues (Mission Australia 2004). The executive volunteers and young people meet separately and go through carefully planned activities and discussion before matches are made. The program runs for nine months.

Youth Arts Queensland (YAQ) runs a mentoring program which links emerging artists and young people interested in some aspect of the arts with established professionals and with training opportunities. The mentoring relationship is seen as a willing arrangement between two people towards a purposeful outcome for the young person. The partnership provides professional, personal and emotional support, and is an alternative pathway by which young people can gain knowledge about an area of work and find employment. The period of the mentorship includes a period of employment.

Young parents mentoring program, Lifehouse Project Inc. Twelve volunteers work with young parents for a period of six months. The program targets the most isolated young parents, focuses on strengthening parenting skills and support networks, uses a youth developmental model to develop, monitor and evaluate the program and supports volunteer mentors to be flexible and discerning in the way they work with young parents. It operates on the Gold Coast, Queensland and is funded by donations.

McIntosh House, run by *Youth Off the Streets* is a semi-independent living and mentoring program for previously drug addicted, abused and/or severely disadvantaged adolescent males and females aged from 16 years. The program is designed for young people who have reached a point in their personal development where they are ready to pursue further education, training or employment and are ready to begin the process of reintegration into mainstream society. Each resident is supported by a caseworker and a mentor from the general community to help them reach personal goals.

The Haemophilia Foundation of Australia is establishing a *Youth Mentoring and Leadership Program* for youth with haemophilia, who are likely to have pressures additional to those of some other young people, in dealing with issues and emotions associated with the disorder

The Create-A-Link mentoring program for primary and secondary students was developed from the 'Connect-a-Kid Program', a mental health model for mentoring students with a range of difficulties, which brings together experts who work with a group of identified underachieving and high-risk young people in a collaborative approach to overcome their difficulties. The Create-A-Link Mentoring Program targets students who are struggling to maximise their schooling opportunities; who have behavioral, emotional, social or family difficulties; and who are at risk of early school-leaving. Students choose an individual trained mentor from a group of teacher/mentors, who then facilitates help for that student, working on issues such as peer relationships, self-esteem, being organised and relating positively with other school staff.

The *Making it Work* project run by the Royal Children's Hospital Education Institute in Melbourne has been fostering the skills and beliefs necessary for adolescents with diverse health and associated needs, to develop a connection to the future.

The Deadly Mob Career Mentoring Programme is funded through Mentor Marketplace. It utilises new strategies to improve results for indigenous student in the Alice Springs area. It is delivered by the Gap Youth Centre Aboriginal Corporation. Trained mentors provide one to one assistance in literacy and numeracy and attendance, targeting students in Years 9 and 10. The program is based on the Plan-it Youth manuals and follows a two-year pilot project. Students work with a career mentor in a structured way, using a career workbook. They visit workplaces, meet and are connected with indigenous mentors by email, search for careers online and set short and longer term goals. Key features of the program are outreach activities, a community development based approach, and the creative use of online mentoring.

Panyappi (formerly the Indigenous Youth Mentoring Scheme) in South Australia works with young Aboriginal people at risk or in the early stages of contact with the juvenile/ criminal justice system. Through the use of mentors, the program provides a positive and supportive intervention in the young person's life. Mentors provide assistance, encouragement, advocacy and support, as well as acting as a role model. (funded by the Attorney-General's Department).

First Australian Business, a national business mentoring program for young indigenous entrepreneurs aged 18-35. Mentors are volunteers, and the range of areas where mentee are developing business operations includes the arts, music, cultural education, employment services and multimedia communications. (funded by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services)

On-line mentoring

The STAR (Science/Technology Awareness Raising) Programme was established in 1994 through a partnership between BP Australia, Murdoch University and schools in Western Australia. Volunteer tutor/mentors (predominately university undergraduates) offer academic support and advice to school students.

On Track. In 2003, The Smith Family partnered with IBM, the Westpac Foundation and Plan-it Youth to develop On Track, an online mentoring program targeted at the school to work transition while extending the commitment to bridge the digital divide. Fifty Year 10 students from the Lake Macquarie area were matched with mentors from the business community in Sydney. Each week they communicated online via IBM technology and The Smith Family's *Ignite* website. The scope of the pilot included projects focussed on goal setting, leadership, resume building and interview techniques. Two thirds of the mentored students indicated that participating in *OnTrack* assisted them in deciding on pathways in their school to work transition. Another pilot of OnTrack, incorporated what was learnt from the pilot, will take place in 2004.

Appendix 3: Mentoring Australia National Benchmarks for Mentoring Programs

Preliminary Information

Mentoring:

BENCHMARKS FOR EFFECTIVE & RESPONSIBLE MENTORING PROGRAMS

In June 2000, Mentoring Australia, the national association for mentors and mentoring programs, convened a representative group of mentoring practitioners, all of whom had significant experience in the development and management of mentoring programs. The workshop was supported by the Dusseldorp Skills Forum, and endorsed by the Career Education Association of Victoria and VETNETwork.

The aim of the meeting was to develop a set of principles which would guide the development, management and funding of quality mentoring programs in Australia.

The principle aim of these 'benchmarks' is to enhance the rigour of mentoring programs by setting standards for responsible mentoring. The benchmarks are also recommended as a platform for government and other bodies to determine eligibility for funding support to mentoring programs.

This document outlines a core set of principles which is recommend for use in establishing and managing effective mentoring programs and is designed for use by mentors, managers, and government and other funding agencies.

This document is available to any individual or organization with an interest in promoting responsible mentoring. On behalf of Mentoring Australia, you are invited to share these principles with your colleagues.

Mentoring Australia
July, 2000

WHAT IS MENTORING?

For the purposes of this document 'mentoring' is defined as "a mutually beneficial relationship which involves a more experienced person helping a less experienced person to identify and achieve their goals".

Effective mentoring

- Is a relationship that focuses on the needs of the mentee
- Fosters caring and supportive relationships
- Encourages all mentees to develop to their fullest potential
- Is a strategy to develop active community partnerships

While, in the main, mentoring occurs on a one-to-one basis, elements of mentoring may be present in group situations where, under certain circumstances, a one-to-one relationship emerges as an important vehicle for growth and development for mentees. The one-to-one relationship is the key to effectiveness in mentoring.

While most mentors undertake the mentoring role as volunteers, there are circumstances where paid staff take on mentoring responsibilities. Whether paid or volunteer staff become mentors, the role extends beyond a 'mere' employment responsibility.

GOOD MENTORING PROGRAMS

A responsible mentoring program requires:

- A well-defined mission statement and established operating principles
- Regular, consistent contact between mentor and mentee
- Establishment under the auspices of a recognised organisation
- Paid or volunteer staff with appropriate skills
- Written role statements for all staff and volunteer positions
- Adherence to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) requirements
- Inclusiveness in relation to ethnicity, culture, socio-economic background, gender and sexuality as appropriate to the program
- Adequate ongoing financial and in-kind resources
- Written administrative and program procedures
- Documented criteria which define eligibility for participation in the program
- Program evaluation and ongoing assessment
- A program plan that has input from stakeholders
- Risk management and confidentiality policies
- Use of generally accepted accounting practices
- A rationale for staffing arrangements based on the needs of all parties

A Quality Checklist for Mentoring Programs

The following elements are recommended as a checklist for evaluating the effectiveness of mentoring programs.

1. A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

A statement of purpose developed in consultation with the stakeholders and participants which includes:

- A Mission statement for the program
- A clear statement of the values and philosophies underpinning the program

2. A PROGRAM PLAN

A realistic, attainable, and easy-to-understand operational plan that includes:

- A description of activities and profile of all participants and stakeholders
- An assessment of need
- Goals, objectives, and timelines, for all aspects of the program
- Funding and resource development requirements

3. POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Written policies and procedures which address:

- Rights and responsibilities
- Confidentiality and privacy
- Legal issues
- Insurances (including volunteer insurance)
- Duty of care
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Protection against harassment
- Grievance issues
- Ethical issues
- 'Get out' clauses
- Arrangements for future contacts between mentor and mentee

4 . A R E C R U I T M E N T & S E L E C T I O N P R O C E S S

A recruitment plan for both mentors and mentees that includes:

- Strategies that outline realistic expectations and benefits for those involved in the program
- Ongoing marketing and public relations
- Targeting mentees on the basis of their needs

Eligibility screening for mentors and mentees that includes:

- A formal application process for mentors and mentees
- An initial assessment of the mentee's needs & suitability
- Eligibility criteria for mentors and mentees that relate to the program statement of purpose and needs of the target population
- A personal interview for mentors
- Appropriate screening for mentors, which may include character references, child abuse registry check, and criminal record checks
- Assessment of each mentor's willingness to participate in training and/or orientation

5 . M E N T O R P R E P A R A T I O N

An orientation program for mentors and/or mentees that includes:

- An overview of the Program
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities
- Description of eligibility, screening process, and suitability requirements
- Clarification of the level of commitment expected (time, energy, flexibility)
- Confidentiality and liability information
- Do's and don'ts of relationship management
- Boundaries and limitations for the mentor's contact with the mentee
- Identification of the benefits and recognition available to mentors from involvement in the program
- A summary of program policies, procedures and guidelines

A training program for mentors and /or mentees that includes:

- Skilled and experienced staff trainers
- Cultural and social sensitivity, and acceptance of individual differences
- Guidelines on how to get the most out of the mentoring relationship
- Crisis management and problem solving
- Communication skills
- Referral points for other support services
- Ongoing skills development as appropriate

6. A MENTOR/MENTEE MATCHING & MONITORING STRATEGY

A matching strategy that includes:

- A link with the program's statement of purpose and the program's eligibility criteria
- A rationale for selection
- A statement of understanding detailing the conditions of the mentoring relationship

Value-Added components may include:

- Pre-match social activities between mentors and mentees
- Team building activities to reduce the anxiety of the first meeting

A monitoring process that includes:

- Consistent, scheduled meetings with staff, mentors, and mentees
- A framework for ongoing feedback
- Written records
- Input from community partners and significant others
- A process for managing grievances, recognition, re-matching, interpersonal problem solving, and premature termination of the mentoring relationship

7. MENTOR/MENTEE SUPPORT

Support to Mentors which includes:

- Regular debriefing
- Troubleshooting
- Recognition of the mentor's contribution - especially for volunteers

Value-Added components may include:

- Opportunities for involvement in other voluntary services
- A formal launch event
- Ongoing peer support groups for volunteers, mentees, and others
- Ongoing training and development
- Opportunities for discussion of relevant issues, and information dissemination as appropriate
- Networking with appropriate organizations
- Social gatherings of different groups as needed
- An Annual recognition and appreciation event
- Newsletters or other mailings to mentees, mentors, supporters, and sponsors

8 . A C L O S U R E P O L I C Y

Formal closure steps that include:

- Clear procedures for exiting the program
- Clearly stated policy for future contacts

Value Added components may include:

- Assistance for mentees in defining the next steps to continue achieve personal goals

9 . E V A L U A T I O N & A S S E S S M E N T

An evaluation process based on:

- Ongoing consultation with stakeholders
- Continuous improvement linked to the program's strategic plan
- Program criteria and statement of purpose

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Comments on the document are welcome, please forward any comments to Lesley Tobin at Dusseldorp Skills Forum (email: lesley@dsf.org.au telephone: **02 9212 5800**).

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