JOHNATHAN THURSTON ACADEMY

Evaluation of the 'JTYouGotThis' Program

Final Report

February 2026

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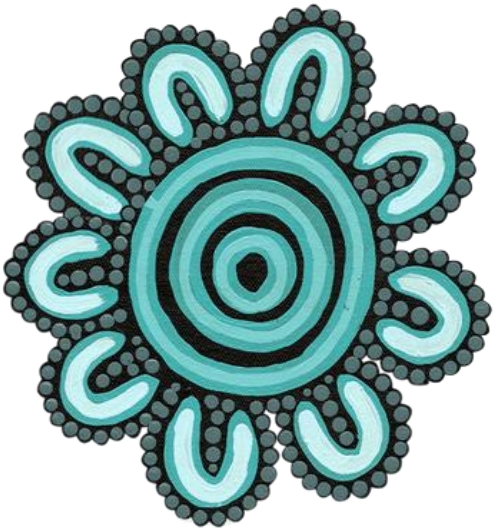
Project Sponsor:
James Cook Universeity Indigenous Education and Research Centre

Acknowledgement of Country

The team at Johnathan Thurston Academy acknowledge Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities, an pay respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as Australia's First Peoples and as the Traditional Custodians of the land and water on which we rely.



Glossary

Term or Acron	Definition
JT	Johnathan Thurston
JT Academy or JTA	Johnathan Thurston Academy
JTYGT	JTYouGotThis

QPS	Queensland Police Service
PCYC	Police Citizans Youth Cl
UniSC	University of Sunshine Coast

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1. Executive summary

JTYouGotThis (JTYGT) is a community-based, early-intervention program designed to support vulnerable young people who are at risk of entering, or becoming entrenched in, the youth justice system. The program focuses on strengthening self-efficacy – articulated as confidence, courage and self-belief – and on re-engaging young people with education, family, culture and prosocial community life as protective factors against offending. (JTYGT 2022-Final-Report.pdf) The program was initially evaluated in 2021–22 by the University of the Sunshine Coast using a realist and EMMIE framework (“Effects, Mechanisms, Moderators, Implementation, Economic value”). That preliminary evaluation found that JTYGT “shows promise” in promoting positive change for at-risk and justice-involved young people who complete the program, including:

- Increased confidence, courage and self-belief.
- Positive behavioural changes in school engagement, relationships and daily decision-making. Indicative
- reductions in offending, including a reduction in violent offences for Cairns participants over the short follow-up period.
- Improved relationships with police as an important, though unintended, outcome.

Since 2022, the program has been consolidated into a structured 8–10 week model (two sessions per week) aligned to the Australian Curriculum (Health and Physical Education), and expanded across three regional sites: Cairns, Townsville and Mount Isa. Routine monitoring now includes site-level Service Performance Reports, Outcome Reviews (pre/post assessments across multiple youth-justicerelevant domains), Stories of Change, weekly implementation reports and cross-site Significant Impacts summaries. (JTYouGotThis-9-Week Intensive.docx)

Across the three sites in 2024–25, this evidence base shows:

- Consistent reach to high-risk cohorts, with the majority of participants in each site aged 10–15 and very high proportions identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (up to 96% in Mount Isa). (Cairns-Q2-2025 Service-Performance-Report.xlsx)

- High proportions of young people demonstrating positive change across CORE risk, attitudes/orientation, personality/behaviour, peer relations, family circumstances, cultural connectedness, mental health, education engagement and general health. (Cairns-OutcomeReviews-2024.docx)
- Strong case narratives of re-engagement with schooling and alternative education (e.g. Queensland Pathways College), improved confidence and leadership, strengthened cultural identity, and more prosocial choices in daily life. (Cairns-Q2-2025-Stories-of-Change-YP-1.xlsx) • Service-level reports of reduced offending behaviours for many completers (where justice-related fields are recorded), and of “majority of needs met” for most closed cases in the reporting periods. (Mount-Isa-Q2-2025-Service Performance-Report.xlsx)

Implementation has been grounded in culturally safe, place-based and relational practice. Sites work in partnership with Queensland Police and Youth Justice, schools (including Queensland Pathways College), PCYC and local community organisations, often delivering the program in culturally significant or community-owned spaces (e.g. Wadda Mooli Park in Townsville, on-country and outdoor settings in Cairns, community events in Mount Isa). (Significant Impacts-Report-Q1-Jul-Sep-2025.pdf)

Taken together, the evidence indicates that JTYGT has evolved from an emergent, promising initiative into a maturing regional platform for early intervention with predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. The program now demonstrates measurable outcomes across domains central to youth justice and community safety, while embedding cultural safety and community partnership at the core of its design and delivery. (Townsville-Q2-2025-Service-PerformanceReport.xlsx)

Recommendation (high-level): That current government funding for **JTYouGotThis** be continued and, where possible, extended to:

- Sustain and deepen delivery in existing regional sites (Cairns, Townsville, Mount Isa).
- Strengthen evaluation, including longer-term justice and education outcomes and self-efficacy measurement.
- Resource structured post-program support and school-holiday engagement as integral components of the model.
- Support partnership and workforce development to maintain culturally safe, high-quality delivery at scale. (Mount-Isa-Outcome-Reviews 2025.docx)

2. Program context and rationale

JTYouGotThis operates in the context of increasing concern about serious youth offending, persistent disengagement from education, and the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the youth justice system, particularly in regional and remote Queensland. The program is delivered by the Johnathan Thurston Academy in partnership with the Queensland Police Service and, more recently, with broader Queensland Government early-intervention and youth justice initiatives. (JTacademy Cairns-Q2-2025-Service-Performance-Report.xlsx)

2.1 Target cohort and service footprint

JTYGT is an early-intervention, sport-mentoring and personal-development program for: (**JTYouGotThis**9-Week-Intensive.docx)

- Young people aged approximately 8–17 years who are at risk of, or already experiencing, contact with Youth Justice.
- Young people disengaged or at risk of disengagement from education and training.
- Young people experiencing multiple, intersecting forms of disadvantage (housing instability, family stress, exposure to violence, substance use, limited prosocial Report.xlsx) networks). (Cairns-Q22025-Service-Performance Reort.xlsx)

The current review focuses on three regional implementation sites:

- **Cairns** – a high-risk cohort with historically elevated offending rates and significant proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.Cairns-Outcome-Reviews-2025.docx • **Townsville** – a regional centre with large Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and longstanding concerns about youth crime and school disengagement.Townsville-Outcome-Reviews2024.docx
- **Mount Isa** – a remote mining town where the JTYGT caseload is overwhelmingly Aboriginal (96% of open cases in Q2 2025). (Mount-Isa Outcome-Reviews-2024.docx)

Across these sites, JTYGT is positioned as an early-intervention service rather than a tertiary justice intervention, and is therefore most appropriate for young people assessed as requiring low to moderate levels of intervention, but whose trajectories are of concern to schools, families, Youth Justice and communities. (JTYouGotThis-9-Week-Intensive.docx)

2.2 Program aims and rationale

The overarching aim of JTYouGotThis is to prevent escalation into more serious offending and long-term disengagement by building internal strengths and external supports that enable young people to “drive their own change”. The program does this by: (JTYGT-2022-Final-Report.pdf)

- Enhancing self-efficacy – operationalised through confidence, courage and self-belief – so that young people believe they can set and achieve goals, make prosocial choices, and persist in the face of setbacks. (JTYouGotThis-9-Week-Intensive.docx)
- Developing practical skills in emotional regulation, communication, problem-solving, goal-setting and relationship-building that are directly relevant to schooling, family life and community participation. (JTYGT-2022 Final-Report.pdf)
- Strengthening connections to school, alternative education, training and (for older participants) early employment or traineeship pathways. (Townsville-Outcome-Reviews-2025.docx)
- Rebuilding cultural identity, belonging and pride, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, by working with Indigenous staff, culturally safe practices, on-country and community-based delivery, and strong relationships with local partners. (Cairns-Q2-2025-Storiesof-Change YP-2.xlsx)

This rationale is consistent with contemporary youth justice thinking, which emphasises early intervention, strengths-based and trauma-aware approaches, local partnerships, and cultural safety for First Nations young people as key to reducing reoffending and improving community safety.
(Significant-Impacts-Report-Q2-Oct-Nov-2025.pdf)

2.3 Partnership with Queensland Police and government agencies

The program has been delivered since 2018 in partnership with the Queensland Police Service, with police, Youth Justice and other co-responders often participating as supporters and role models within sessions. More recent Queensland Government investment has enabled the expansion of intensive regional delivery and the embedding of JTYGT within broader multi-agency arrangements, such as Early Action Groups, PCYC partnerships and school-based collaborations. (jtacademy SignificantImpacts-Report-Q1-Jul Sep-2025.pdf)

This positioning means the program is not only working with individual young people, but is actively contributing to:

- improved relationships between young people and police; smoother, supported
- pathways back into education; stronger integration between Youth Justice, schools
- and community services; and
- place-based responses to youth crime and safety in regional communities. (Townsville-Q2-2025-Service-Performance-Report.xlsx)

3. Program design and theory of change

JTYouGotThis is a structured, group-based early-intervention program delivered in community and school-linked settings, designed to build young people’s confidence, courage and self-belief while strengthening their connections to school, family, culture and prosocial community life. The current model provides an 8–10 week, twice-weekly intensive designed for 8 17-year-olds, with cohorts commonly grouped by age bands (8–12 and 13–17 years). (JTYGT-2022-Final-Report.pdf)

3.1 Delivery model and structure

The JTYGT delivery model shares a common spine across all sites, with local adaptation to context:
(JTYouGotThis-9-Week-Intensive.docx)

Format and dosage
Duration: typically 8–10 weeks, with two sessions per week (17 sessions plus graduation/community events in the 9-week intensive sequence).
Group-based, mixed-gender sessions, often co-facilitated by JTA staff and local partners (school staff, Youth Justice workers, PCYC, other services). (Mount-Isa-Weekly-Report-7.10.2025-10.10.2025.pdf)

Session structure

Welcome/Acknowledgement of Country and grounding activities.
Thematic content (e.g. confidence, courage, self-belief, role models, values, resilience, identity, relationships, decision-making). (Mount-Isa-Weekly-Report 7.10.2025-10.10.2025.pdf)
Experiential and reflective activities (yarning circles, worksheets, creative and practical activities such as barbering, nail care, beading, team-building games). (JTYGT-2022-Final-Report.pdf)
Closing reflection and linking to goals beyond the program (school, family, community). (Mount-Isa-Weekly-Report-17.11.2025-21.11.2025.pdf)

Settings

Delivered in community-based locations selected for safety, cultural resonance and reduced distraction (e.g. Wadda Mooli Park in Townsville, on-country and outdoor sessions in Cairns, PCYC and community venues in Mount Isa). (Significant-Impacts-Report-Q1-Jul-Sep-2025.pdf)
Strong emphasis on creating a youth-friendly, non-judgemental environment where young people feel safe to speak openly and try new behaviours. (JTYGT 2022-Final-Report.pdf)

Post-program support

Follow-up contact, participation in community events, and coordinated referrals to education and community services (e.g. Queensland Pathways College, alternative programs, traineeships).
(Significant-Impacts-Report-Q2 Oct-Nov-2025.pdf) Emerging “post-program phase” at sites like Mount Isa, with extended support, case-work check-ins and wrap-around service coordination. (Mount-Isa Weekly-Report-17.11.2025-21.11.2025.pdf)

3.2 Curriculum and learning intentions

The JTYGT curriculum is explicitly structured around social-emotional learning and personal development topics, with documented learning intentions and success criteria for each session. Key program-level learning intentions include: (JTYouGotThis-9-Week-Intensive.docx) Encourage attendance and positive school engagement or return to school.

Increase confidence, courage and self-belief. Increase emotional regulation and coping skills.

Support goal setting and decision-making.

Develop healthy relationships and communication skills.

Strengthen connections to employment and workforce training opportunities, particularly for older participants. (Cairns-Outcome-Reviews-2024.docx)

The curriculum is mapped to the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (Years 5–8), including content areas such as:

- personal identity and changes across adolescence; recognising
- and regulating emotions; building and maintaining respectful
- relationships; making healthy, safe and active choices; working
- in teams and contributing to positive environments.
-

Weekly reports from sites such as Mount Isa illustrate how these intentions are enacted in practice. For example, “confidence” weeks integrate structured discussion about why confidence matters with reflective worksheets and creative self-care activities, while “courage” weeks focus on facing fears, positive risk-taking and linking personal values to behaviour. This mirrors the emphasis in the 2022 evaluation on experiential learning, safe environments and positive role modelling as the core vehicles for change. (Mount-Isa Weekly-Report-7.10.2025-10.10.2025.pdf)

3.3 Theory of change

The UniSC evaluation articulated JTYGT’s theory of change using a realist and EMMIE lens: exploring what works, for whom, in what circumstances, and how. At its centre is the idea that if young people experience a safe, inclusive and engaging environment, are exposed to relatable role models, and are supported to build their own confidence, courage and self-belief, they will be more likely to make positive choices, persist at school, and reduce offending over time. (JTYGT-2022-Final-Report.pdf)
Key components of this theory include: (Cairns-Q2-2025-Stories-of-Change-YP 1.xlsx)

Context (C)
Young people are experiencing multiple stressors: school disengagement, family conflict, unstable housing, exposure to violence, contact with Youth Justice, peer networks that normalise antisocial behaviour.
Many are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in regional and remote locations, with experiences of cultural disconnection and systemic exclusion.

Mechanisms (M)
Self-efficacy and identity: Reframing how young people see themselves (from “trouble-maker” or “failure” to someone with strengths, goals and cultural pride) through structured reflection, strengthsbased activities and success experiences.
Safe, inclusive environment: Creating youth-friendly, non-judgemental spaces where participation is voluntary, mistakes are accepted, and trust is built over time.
Role modelling and relationships: Leveraging Johnathan Thurston’s story and the presence of culturally safe staff, school staff and other adults as positive role models; building strong, consistent relationships with facilitators.
Skills practice: Using experiential activities (group tasks, communication challenges, creative projects, problem-solving scenarios) to practise emotional regulation, communication, decision-making and conflict management.
Cultural connection: Working with Indigenous staff, delivering on country or in culturally significant spaces, and affirming identity and values as central to who the young person is becoming.

Continuity and wrap-around: Maintaining contact through school holidays, post-program check-ins and facilitated referrals to schools and services, so that new patterns are supported in real-world contexts.

Outcomes (E)

Short-term: increased confidence, courage and self-belief; improved emotional regulation; stronger prosocial peer and adult relationships; improved attitudes towards school and authority; early changes in daily decision-making. (Cairns-Outcome-Reviews-2025.docx)

Medium-term: improved school attendance and engagement; uptake of alternative education and training options; reduced frequency and severity of offending; stronger family relationships; increased cultural connectedness and sense of belonging. (Cairns-Q2-2025-Stories-of-Change-YP-2.xlsx)

The EMMIE framing used in the 2022 evaluation is still a useful way to summarise current evidence: (Townsville-Outcome-Reviews-2024.docx)

Effects: Quantitative outcome reviews in all three sites show substantial numbers of young people making positive change across key domains (risk, behaviour, relationships, education, cultural connectedness, health), with service performance data reporting “majority of needs met” for the large majority of closed cases. (Cairns-Q2-2025-Service-Performance-Report.xlsx)

Mechanisms: Stories of Change and weekly reports illustrate how confidence-building activities, cultural support, safe spaces and strong relationships are experienced by young people as drivers of change. (Cairns Q2-2025-Stories-of-Change-YP-3.xlsx)

Moderators: Attendance, post-program support, local service ecology, school partnerships and community contexts (e.g. parks, PCYC, on-country venues) shape the extent and sustainability of outcomes. (Significant-Impacts-Report Q1-Jul-Sep-2025.pdf)

Implementation: Delivery quality is influenced by facilitator skills, cultural competence, collaboration with schools and services, and the ability to maintain continuity during school holidays and transitions. (Significant-Impacts Report-Q2-Oct-Nov-2025.pdf)

Economic value: Not yet systematically assessed, but the model’s focus on early intervention, reduced offending and re-engagement with education suggests a reasonable case for future cost-effectiveness analysis.

In summary, the program’s design and theory of change are coherent and now well-articulated in both curriculum documents and evaluation materials. The current data indicate that the mechanisms anticipated in the original program theory – particularly self-efficacy, safe environments, role modelling, cultural connection and continuity of support – are visible in the lived experiences and outcomes of young people participating in JTYGT across Cairns, Townsville and Mount Isa. (TownsvilleOutcome-Reviews-2025.docx)

4. Evaluation approach and data sources

Evaluation of **JTYouGotThis** has evolved from a one-off, university-led preliminary study in 2021–22 to an embedded, multi-site monitoring and outcomes framework across Cairns, Townsville and Mount Isa. Together, these strands provide a coherent, if still developing, evidence base for assessing program effectiveness and informing continuous improvement. (JTYGT-2022 Final-Report.pdf)

4.1 2021–22 UniSC preliminary evaluation

In 2021–22, the Queensland Police Service commissioned a preliminary evaluation of JTYGT, undertaken by the University of the Sunshine Coast. The evaluation adopted a realist approach (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) and reported findings using the EMMIE framework (Effects, Mechanisms, Moderators, Implementation, Economic value). Key features included:

Design: theory-driven, mixed-methods evaluation focused on “what works, for whom, in what circumstances, and how”.
Data sources: Program and clinical data routinely collected by JT Academy (demographics, referral and attendance records, workbooks/worksheets, “change videos”).
Semi-structured interviews and focus groups with young people, staff and stakeholders.
Aggregated Queensland Police data on pre- and post-program offending (including offences against the person, property offences and other offences).
Sample: 39 young people with program data across Cairns, Logan, Mareeba and Zillmere; 25 with linked pre/post police data; 15 young people and seven staff/stakeholders in interviews/focus groups.
Limitations: small samples; no comparison group; short and unequal follow-up periods across locations; limited availability of pre/post self-efficacy questionnaires; evolving program model and tools.
Despite these limitations, the evaluation provided a rigorous starting point, concluding that JTYGT “shows promise” in building confidence, courage and self-belief, supporting behavioural change and curtailing offending for completers, and creating safe, inclusive environments for complex and at-risk youth.

4.2 Current monitoring and outcome measurement

Since 2022, JT Academy has implemented more systematic monitoring and outcome measurement across the three regional sites. The key components are:

Service Performance Reports (SPR)
Quarterly site-level reports for Cairns, Townsville and Mount Isa, summarising: (Cairns-Q2-2025Service-Performance-Report.xlsx)
Number of distinct clients with open case profiles in the period, disaggregated by age, gender and cultural background.
Referral sources and acceptance rates.
Case closure categories, including whether the majority of needs have been met.
Youth justice-related impacts where recorded (e.g. reduction in offending behaviours, successful completion of orders). (Townsville-Q2-2025-Service Performance-Report.xlsx)

Outcome Reviews (Outcome Assessments)
Annual site-level reports summarising pre- and post-assessment scores across multiple domains for young people with both initial and interim/closure assessments: (Cairns-Outcome-Reviews-2024.docx) Domains include CORE risk, attitudes/orientation, personality/behaviour, leisure/recreation, substance use, peer

relations, education, employment, family circumstances and parenting, housing, gender identity/sexual orientation, cultural connectedness, mental health, disability/focus and attention, general health, and domestic and family violence. (Cairns Outcome-Reviews-2025.docx) Mandatory outcome questions capture specific capacities such as emotional regulation, healthy relationships, communication, stress management, prosocial choices, self-control, routines, substance use awareness, 10 education/training engagement and respect for boundaries at home. (Townsville-Outcome-Reviews-2024.docx)

Stories of Change (individual-level vignettes)

Structured case vignettes generated from Youth Justice Services templates, capturing demographic details, referral pathways, outcome ratings and narrative accounts of the young person’s situation, support provided and changes observed: (Cairns-Q2-2025-Stories-of-Change-YP-1.xlsx)

These highlight key needs identified at intake, interventions delivered (including cultural support), and impacts on education, behaviour, relationships, cultural identity and offending. (Cairns-Q2-2025Stories-of Change-YP-2.xlsx)

Weekly implementation reports (Mount Isa)

Short narrative reports outlining session content, attendance, activities and reflections, including explicit links to confidence, courage and other curriculum themes, and to program management tasks such as assessments, case plans and graduation planning. (Mount-Isa-Weekly-Report-17.11.202521.11.2025.pdf)

Significant Impacts Reports (cross-site summaries)

Quarterly briefs synthesising notable achievements and impacts across Townsville, Cairns and Mount Isa, with a focus on mechanisms such as location choice, connection to country, multi-agency collaboration, culturally safe practice, continuity during holidays and post-program support.
(Significant Impacts-Report-Q1-Jul-Sep-2025.pdf)

4.3 Strengths and limitations of the current evidence base

The current monitoring framework represents a significant strengthening of the evidence base compared with 2021–22. Strengths include: (Townsville Outcome-Reviews-2025.docx)

Routine collection of pre- and post-outcome assessments across multiple domains in all three regional sites.

Site-level reporting of demographic reach and case closure outcomes.

Rich qualitative material (Stories of Change, weekly reports, impact briefs) that make mechanisms visible.

Demonstrated alignment between the program’s stated theory of change and the kinds of changes being documented.

However, limitations remain:

No formal comparison or control group, limiting causal attribution.

Follow-up periods are still relatively short, and justice outcomes beyond the program period are not systematically tracked.

Some data quality issues appear in administrative reports (e.g. “missing” closure reasons in Mount Isa, incomplete justice impact fields in some Townsville quarters). (Mount-Isa-Q2-2025-Service-PerformanceReport.xlsx)

Self-efficacy measurement, while central to the program’s theory, is not yet consistently embedded in routine pre/post assessment across sites.

These limitations are understandable in a maturing early-intervention program, but they point to clear priorities for the next phase of evaluation and funding: consolidating self-efficacy and wellbeing measures, extending follow-up windows, improving justice and education data linkages, and strengthening data quality and analysis capability across sites. (Mount-Isa-Outcome Reviews2025.docx)

5. Evidence of outcomes

This section summarises key evidence of JTYGT outcomes across the three regional sites, drawing on the 2021–22 University of the Sunshine Coast evaluation, 2024–25 Outcome Reviews, Service Performance Reports, Stories of Change, weekly reports and Significant Impacts briefs. (Mount-Isa Outcome-Reviews-2024.docx)

5.1 Individual-level outcomes across domains

Across Cairns, Townsville and Mount Isa in 2024–25, Outcome Reviews show that substantial numbers of young people with both initial and follow-up assessments demonstrate positive change in multiple domains central to youth justice, wellbeing and education. (Cairns-Outcome-Reviews2024.docx)

Cairns

2024: 37 young people had initial and follow-up assessments; positive change was recorded across domains including CORE risk (10), attitudes/orientation (12), personality/behaviour (10), leisure/recreation (13), peer relations (11), education (8), cultural connectedness (8), general health (10).

2025: 32 young people had initial and follow-up assessments; increased numbers of young people demonstrate positive change in CORE (16), personality/behaviour (15), peer relations (13), education (13), family 12 circumstances (16), housing (13), cultural connectedness (18), mental health (15) and general health (17).

Townsville

2024: 45 young people had initial and follow-up assessments; positive change is recorded for many in CORE (25), attitudes/orientation (23), personality/behaviour (25), peer relations (19), education (19), family circumstances (22), housing (17), cultural connectedness (21) and general health (20).

2025: 31 young people had initial and follow-up assessments; positive change continues across CORE (8), attitudes/orientation (8), personality/behaviour (8), leisure/recreation (8), substance use (7), peer relations (6), education (6), family circumstances (7), housing (7), cultural connectedness (5) and general health (6).

Mount Isa

2024: 19 young people had initial and follow-up assessments; high counts of positive change across CORE (16), attitudes/orientation (14), personality/behaviour (16), leisure/recreation (16), substance use (13), peer relations (12), education (9), family circumstances (16), cultural connectedness (12) and mental health (14).
2025: 39 young people had initial and follow-up assessments; positive change remains strong in CORE (19), attitudes/orientation (18), personality/behaviour (18), leisure/recreation (19), peer relations (18), education (15), family circumstances (20), cultural connectedness (15), housing (14) and general health (17).
Mandatory outcome questions show similar patterns. Across the three sites, appreciable numbers of young people are rated as now able to manage their emotions, maintain healthy relationships, communicate appropriately, manage everyday stresses, make prosocial choices, accept accountability, maintain healthy routines, engage in education/training and respect boundaries and rules at home. (Cairns-Outcome-Reviews-2025.docx)
These cross-domain improvements are consistent with the program’s focus on self-efficacy, emotional regulation, relationships and engagement with prosocial activity, and suggest that the mechanisms described in the theory of change are generating observable shifts in young people’s lives. (Mount-Isa Weekly-Report-7.10.2025-10.10.2025.pdf)

5.2 Offending and justice-related outcomes

The 2021–22 UniSC evaluation provided the first quantitative indication that JTYGT may contribute to curtailing offending behaviour. Aggregated police data for 25 young people who completed the program showed:
Reductions in charges for property and other offences for Logan and Zillmere participants in the postprogram period compared with the 12 months pre-program.
A modest reduction in average charge rates in Cairns, with a particularly notable decline in offences against the person despite the cohort’s high pre-program charge profile.
While follow-up windows were short and there was no comparison group, these trends aligned with staff perceptions that young people were “making better choices” and spending less time in offending situations.
In the current data, Youth Justice impact fields within Service Performance Reports provide more limited but still useful information. For example: (Significant-Impacts-Report-Q2-Oct-Nov-2025.pdf) In Cairns Q2 2025, 92% of closed cases are recorded as having an impact on “reduction in offending behaviours”, with all closed cases recorded as having the majority of needs met.
In Mount Isa Q2 2025, 95% of closed cases are recorded as having the majority of needs met, with separate records noting that the service’s response impacted on “reduction in offending behaviours” in relevant cases. (Mount Isa-Q2-2025-Service-Performance-Report.xlsx)
Stories of Change from Cairns and Mount Isa add qualitative depth, describing young people whose anti-social behaviours and court involvements have reduced alongside improved routines, prosocial connections and engagement with other services. (Cairns-Q2-2025-Stories-of-Change-YP-1.xlsx) Taken together, these strands indicate that JTYGT is contributing to reductions in offending and justiceinvolved behaviour for many participants who complete the program. At the same time, the absence of longer-term, individual-level justice

follow-up and comparison groups means these findings should be interpreted as promising rather than definitive, and they point towards a clear agenda for
strengthened justice-outcomes evaluation in the next phase. (Significant-Impacts-Report-Q2-Oct-Nov2025.pdf)

5.3 Education, training and employment outcomes

A central aim of JTYGT is to re-engage young people with education and, for older cohort members, to support pathways into training and employment. Evidence from outcome reviews and Stories of Change across all three sites highlights:
Increased commitment to and engagement with education/training, with notable numbers of young people demonstrating positive change on mandatory questions relating to commitment, skills and actual engagement in education. (Townsville-Outcome-Reviews-2024.docx)
Multiple instances of previously disengaged young people returning to school, improving attendance, or transitioning into alternative education such as Queensland Pathways College or other tailored programs. (Townsville-Q2 2025-Stories-of-Change-YP-2.xlsx)
Early steps into work experience and traineeships, often combining continued schooling with part-time employment preparation. (Cairns-Q2-2025-Stories-of Change-YP-3.xlsx) For example:
In Cairns, Stories of Change describe a 14-year-old Torres Strait Islander girl who was disengaging from school and intending to leave, but through JTYGT re-engaged with education, entered work experience and considered a traineeship while deciding to remain at school. (Cairns-Q2-2025-Storiesof Change-YP-2.xlsx)
In Townsville, one young man with low attendance (around 70%) is reported to have improved his attendance, developed leadership and cultural pride, and taken on public roles at school (cultural dance, Acknowledgement of Country) after participating in the program. Another, previously excluded and highly reluctant to leave home, moved from isolation to forming friendships, rebuilding confidence and being accepted into the Silver Linings program. (Townsville-Q2-2025-Stories-of-Change-YP-1.xlsx) In Mount Isa, weekly and Significant Impacts reports highlight a young person who was disengaged from formal education but, with JTYGT support, enrolled in Queensland Pathways College after tailored guidance, enrolment support and assistance with school clothing. (Mount-Isa-Weekly-Report-17.11.2025 21.11.2025.pdf)
These examples, backed by domain-level and mandatory outcome data, suggest that JTYGT is operating as a practical bridge back into education and training, particularly for young people for whom mainstream schooling has been experienced as unsafe, inaccessible or unresponsive. (Townsville Outcome-Reviews-2025.docx)

5.4 Psychosocial, relational and wellbeing outcomes

The most consistently documented changes concern psychosocial functioning, relationships, routines and overall wellbeing – precisely the areas 15 the program’s curriculum is designed to address. (Mount-Isa-Weekly-Report 7.10.2025-10.10.2025.pdf)
Across the three sites, outcome reviews show many young people demonstrating positive change in domains such as personality/behaviour, peer relations, family circumstances, housing stability, cultural connectedness,

mental health and general health. Mandatory outcome questions record increased ability to manage emotions, maintain healthy relationships, communicate appropriately, manage stress, make prosocial choices and respect boundaries at home. (Mount-Isa-Outcome-Reviews2025.docx)
Stories of Change provide vivid illustrations of these shifts:
Young people describing increased ability to “speak up”, “be kind” and manage conflict with family and peers. (Townsville-Q2-2025-Stories-of Change-YP-1.xlsx)
Improved routines and sleep, more structured daily activities, and reduced time spent in risky peer environments. (Mount-Isa-Outcome-Reviews 2024.docx)
Growth in cultural pride, identity and belonging, including taking on visible cultural leadership roles in school and community settings. (Significant Impacts-Report-Q1-Jul-Sep-2025.pdf)
These psychosocial and relational changes are important outcomes in their own right, but they also underpin the program’s contributions to education and justice outcomes, reinforcing the logic of the self-efficacy-centred theory of change. (JTYouGotThis-9-Week-Intensive.docx)

6. First Nations impact and cultural safety

JTYouGotThis engages very high proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in regional and remote Queensland, and positions cultural safety and identity as central to its design and delivery. (JTYGT-2022 Final-Report.pdf)

6.1 First Nations participation

Across the three regional sites, First Nations participation is substantial:
Cairns – around half of the Q2 2025 caseload identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. **Townsville –** approximately three-quarters of young people identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
Mount Isa – 96% of open cases in Q2 2025 identify as Aboriginal.

These figures reflect the program’s intentional focus on locations and cohorts with high proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people experiencing significant educational, social and justice-related disadvantage. (JTYGT-2022-Final-Report.pdf)

6.2 Culturally safe design and delivery

Cultural safety is embedded in JTYGT through:
I**ndigenous staffing and facilitation**
Stories of Change from Cairns and Townsville highlight the importance of Indigenous staff who share cultural backgrounds with young participants, simplify complex content into accessible language, and create space for young people to speak openly about their experiences. (Cairns-Q2-2025 Stories-ofChange-YP-1.xlsx)

Young people report feeling understood and supported in ways that connect directly to their identity and lived experience. (Townsville-Q2-2025-Stories-of Change-YP-1.xlsx)

Cultural practices and spaces

Sessions often begin with Welcome or Acknowledgement of Country, and yarning-style dialogue is used to support reflection and peer learning. (JTYouGotThis-9-Week-Intensive.docx)

In Townsville, delivery at Wadda Mooli Park – named with the Bindal Traditional Custodians – provides a place that is explicitly welcoming and culturally resonant.

In Cairns, connecting participants to country and moving from classroom into outdoor, on-country environments has been noted as having a "profound impact" on engagement and cultural identity.

Cultural identity and leadership

Stories from Townsville describe young Aboriginal participants who, after engaging with the program, take on cultural leadership roles such as performing dance and delivering Acknowledgement of Country at school events, reflecting strengthened identity, pride and self-belief.

Outcome Reviews show positive change in cultural connectedness for many young people across all three sites. (Cairns-Outcome-Reviews-2024.docx)

6.3 First Nations outcomes

The combination of high First Nations participation, culturally safe practice and positive outcomes across multiple domains suggests that JTYGT is making a significant contribution to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in these regions. (Cairns-OutcomeReviews-2025.docx)

In particular:

Young people are reporting and demonstrating increased confidence, cultural pride and leadership. (JTYGT-2022-Final-Report.pdf)

Many are re-engaging with schooling or alternative education pathways, often in partnership with culturally responsive education providers. (Townsville Q2-2025-Stories-of-Change-YP-2.xlsx)

Families and communities are being engaged through community-based delivery and partnerships with local organisations, contributing to stronger support networks. (Significant-Impacts-Report-Q2-Oct-Nov2025.pdf)

There remains scope to further formalise and evaluate these First Nations impacts – for example, by integrating culturally specific self-efficacy, identity and belonging measures, and by deepening direct engagement with Elders and community-controlled organisations in governance – but the current evidence base already demonstrates meaningful, culturally grounded impact. (Mount-Isa-OutcomeReviews-2025.docx)

7. Implementation, partnerships and regional delivery

The strength of JTYGT lies not only in its curriculum and theory of change, but also in the way it has been implemented in partnership with local stakeholders in each region. (Mount-Isa-Weekly-Report-17.11.2025-21.11.2025.pdf)

7.1 Implementation features

Key features of implementation across Cairns, Townsville and Mount Isa include:

Consistent core model with local adaptation

All sites implement the 8–10 week, twice-weekly group program, but tailor delivery to local context, including site selection, partnership mix and emphasis on particular themes (e.g. confidence, courage, identity). (Mount-Isa-Weekly Report-7.10.2025-10.10.2025.pdf)

Weekly reports from Mount Isa show careful alignment between session content, assessments, case planning and graduation preparation. (Mount-Isa Weekly-Report-3.11.2025-7.11.2025.pdf)

Relational and trauma-aware practice

Staff prioritise building trust and rapport, recognising the impacts of trauma, instability and systemic exclusion on young people’s engagement. (Significant Impacts-Report-Q2-Oct-Nov-2025.pdf)

Stories of Change repeatedly emphasise the importance of safe, non-judgemental spaces where young people can “open up” about complex issues such as residential care, court involvement, and fear of school. (Cairns Q2-2025-Stories-of-Change-YP-1.xlsx)

Continuity of contact, including holidays and post-program phases

In Mt Isa, JTA maintained service delivery and contact during school holidays, recognising this as a high-risk period, and implemented an extended post-program phase with intensive follow-up and referrals. (Mount-Isa-Weekly Report-17.11.2025-21.11.2025.pdf)

Young people continue to invite JTA staff to graduations and community events, indicating ongoing relational connection beyond the formal program period.

7.2 Partnerships and multi-agency collaboration

Partnerships are a central implementation mechanism:

Queensland Police Service and Youth Justice

JTYGT originated as a QPS-sponsored initiative and continues to work alongside Youth Justice staff and co-responders, often with police and Youth Justice workers participating in program activities as supporters and role models. (Significant-Impacts-Report-Q2-Oct-Nov-2025.pdf)

This has contributed to improved perceptions of police among young participants and more integrated responses to risk. (Significant-Impacts Report-Q2-Oct-Nov-2025.pdf)

Education providers

The program partners with schools and education departments, including Queensland Pathways College and specialist programs such as Silver Linings, to support re-engagement and transitions. (Townsville-Q2-2025-Stories-of Change-YP-2.xlsx)

In Townsville, collaboration with the Early Action Group (EAG) has facilitated smoother pathways back into school and improved attendance and academic performance.

Community organisations and PCYC

In Mount Isa, partnerships with PCYC and other community organisations enable co-facilitated prosocial activities and community events such as “Chillin’ in the Park”, expanding opportunities for safe, positive engagement. (Mount-Isa-Weekly-Report-17.11.2025-21.11.2025.pdf)

In Cairns, collaboration with multiple service providers and use of diverse community locations has broadened participants’ support networks and provided real-world contexts for applying skills.

Traditional Custodians and local communities

Use of spaces like Wadda Mooli Park – named in consultation with the Bindal people – and oncountry sessions in Cairns reflects deliberate efforts to align program delivery with local cultural and community contexts.

7.3 Regional delivery and place-based impact

Regional delivery brings both challenges and strengths:

The three sites operate in contexts with high visibility of youth crime and public concern, but also strong local networks and place-based initiatives. (Cairns Q2-2025-Service-Performance-Report.xlsx) JTYGT has been able to integrate into these local ecologies, offering a coherent, strengths-based program that complements existing services rather than duplicating them. (Significant-Impacts-ReportQ1-Jul-Sep-2025.pdf)

Place – parks, on-country settings, community venues – operates as a mechanism, shaping how safe, welcome and engaged young people feel, and reinforcing the connection between personal change and community life. (Mount-Isa-Weekly-Report-7.10.2025-10.10.2025.pdf)

Overall, implementation across the three regions demonstrates fidelity to the core model alongside appropriate contextual adaptation, supported by strong partnerships and relational practice. This is a solid foundation for further scaling and deepening of the program, provided that partnership and workforce capacity continue to be supported. (JTYGT-2022-Final-Report.pdf)

8. Program development since 2022 and areas for strengthening

Since the 2021–22 UniSC evaluation, JTYouGotThis has developed substantially in its curriculum, reach, measurement systems and partnership architecture. (Mount-Isa-Outcome-Reviews-2024.docx)

8.1 Key developments

Curriculum consolidation and alignment

The program now has a documented 8–10 week intensive curriculum with explicit learning intentions and success criteria, mapped to the Australian Curriculum (Health and Physical Education). (JTYouGotThis-9-Week Intensive.docx)

Weekly reports and Stories of Change show that this curriculum is being implemented in a way that resonates with young people and reinforces the core themes of confidence, courage, self-belief and cultural identity. (Cairns Q2-2025-Stories-of-Change-YP-2.xlsx)

Geographic expansion and site maturation

JTYGT has expanded and consolidated its presence across three key regional sites – Cairns, Townsville and Mount Isa – with routine reporting indicating increasing numbers of young people assessed and reviewed each year. (Townsville-Outcome-Reviews-2024.docx)

Strengthened monitoring and outcomes measurement

Outcome Reviews now provide systematic pre-post data across multiple domains, and mandatory questions capture specific capacities like emotional regulation, prosocial behaviour and education engagement. (Townsville Outcome-Reviews-2025.docx)

Service Performance Reports and Significant Impacts briefs add site-level and cross-site perspectives on reach, case closure, justice impacts and key mechanisms. (Townsville-Q2-2025-Service-PerformanceReport.xlsx)

Enhanced post-program and holiday support

Sites, particularly Mount Isa, have begun to formalise post-program phases and holiday engagement as core components of the model, recognising these as critical for consolidating change and mitigating risk. (Mount-Isa-Weekly Report-17.11.2025-21.11.2025.pdf)

8.2 Areas for strengthening

The evidence base also highlights areas where further development would strengthen both practice and evaluation:

Self-efficacy and wellbeing measurement

Given that self-efficacy is central to the theory of change, there is a strong case for embedding a brief, validated self-efficacy and wellbeing measure pre and post across all sites, building on but improving the 2022 attempt. (Mount-Isa-Outcome-Reviews-2025.docx)

Justice and education outcomes tracking

Future funding could support ethical, de-identified linkage of JTYGT data with Youth Justice and education datasets to enable more robust analysis of reoffending, police contacts, school attendance and progression over 12–24 months. (Mount-Isa-Outcome-Reviews-2025.docx)

Data quality and analytic capacity

Addressing issues such as “missing” closure reasons, inconsistent completion of justice impact fields and variation in assessment timing would improve confidence in the quantitative findings. (Mount-Isa-Q2-2025-Service Performance-Report.xlsx)

Building analytic capacity within JTA (or partnering with a university) could enable more regular, deeper analysis of site-level and cross-site trends.

Post-program support as a defined phase

Formalising post-program support (through a Lionhearts-style model or similar) as an integral and funded component – with clear dosage, goals and outcome indicators – would build on the promising practice already evident in Mount Isa and other sites. (JTYGT-2022-Final-Report.pdf)

Governance and community voice

There is an opportunity to further embed First Nations governance and community-controlled voices in program oversight, ensuring that program evolution continues to reflect local priorities and cultural protocols. (Significant Impacts-Report-Q1-Jul-Sep-2025.pdf)

These areas for strengthening do not detract from current achievements; rather, they provide a clear, constructive agenda for the next phase of investment and evaluation.

9. Conclusions and recommendations

The available evidence indicates that JTYouGotThis is a maturing, culturally grounded earlyintervention program delivering measurable benefits for high-risk young people and communities in regional Queensland, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. (Cairns-Q2-2025-Storiesof-Change YP-3.xlsx)
Across Cairns, Townsville and Mount Isa, the program:
Reaches the intended cohort – predominantly 10–15-year-old young people at risk of or involved with Youth Justice, with very high First Nations participation. (Cairns-Q2-2025-Service-PerformanceReport.xlsx)
Demonstrates consistent positive change across domains central to youth justice and wellbeing, including risk factors, behaviour, relationships, cultural connectedness, education engagement and general health. (Cairns Outcome-Reviews-2024.docx)
Provides qualitative evidence – through Stories of Change, weekly reports and impact briefs – of strengthened confidence, courage, self-belief, cultural pride, schooling re-engagement and, in many cases, reductions in offending behaviour. (Townsville-Q2-2025-Stories-of-Change-YP-3.xlsx)
Operates through culturally safe, relational, place-based and partnership-driven mechanisms that align well with contemporary youth justice and First Nations policy priorities. (**JTYouGotThis**-9-WeekIntensive.docx)
On this basis, the review supports the continuation and strengthening of government funding for JTYouGotThis. Specifically, it is recommended that:
Core program funding be continued for JTYGT in Cairns, Townsville and Mount Isa to maintain and deepen delivery to high-risk cohorts, with flexibility to respond to local conditions.
Evaluation and data capability be enhanced, including consistent self-efficacy and wellbeing measurement, improved administrative data quality, and longer-term tracking of education and justice outcomes through appropriate data linkages and/or external partnerships. (Mount-Isa-OutcomeReviews 2025.docx)
Post-program support and school-holiday engagement be funded as integral components of the model, recognising their importance for consolidating gains, managing risk and supporting transitions. (Significant-Impacts-Report Q2-Oct-Nov-2025.pdf)
Partnership and workforce development be resourced, particularly in relation to First Nations governance, Indigenous staffing, and multi-agency collaboration with Youth Justice, Education, PCYC and community-controlled organisations. (JTYGT-2022-Final-Report.pdf)
Future scaling be considered, where feasible, to additional regional and remote sites facing similar youth justice and education challenges, with careful attention to maintaining cultural safety, relational quality and local adaptation.
These recommendations position **JTYouGotThis** not simply as a standalone program, but as a key component of a broader, place-based response to youth justice, education engagement and First Nations wellbeing in Queensland.