

AN EVALUATION OF YOUTH JUSTICE CONFERENCING FOR YOUTH MISUSE OF FIRE



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Youth misuse of fire

Any illegitimate use of fire or incendiary materials by a person under the age of 18 years



Youth Justice Conferencing

A juvenile justice mechanism that brings stakeholders of an offence together

Youth Justice Conferencing for youth misuse of fire is a tertiary prevention mechanism, implemented after a young person has been apprehended, and has admitted guilt, for a fire-related offence. In New South Wales, the program is managed by a Memorandum of Understanding between Fire and Rescue NSW and Juvenile Justice NSW. This MoU facilitates firefighter involvement in Youth Justice Conferencing, and has formally been in operation since May, 2006.

“The first step to beating arson is to encourage stakeholders to work together.” McKim, 2006.

Evaluation

A research-oriented evaluation was undertaken to provide an evidence-base to inform program verification or modification.

This evaluation revealed that firefighter involvement in Youth Justice Conferencing:

- Facilitates the provision of fire safety education within the conference,
- Enables the inclusion of fire-specific tasks within the outcome plan,
- To improve fire knowledge and fire safety skills and reduce the risk of recidivism,
- In young people whose misuse of fire manifests from normal developmental behaviour.
- However, program modification, including collaboration with the NSW Rural Fire Service and proponents of child-centred disaster risk reduction, is required to improve program efficacy.

“Who better than an experienced firefighter to reinforce the serious consequences of the offenders’ behaviour.” Kelly, 2006.

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