

Our Unique Team



PK Family Care Team: L to R: Bec Schulz, Erica Southern, Melinda Eckert, Rebekah Sellars

Thanks to a Special Youth Grant (SYG) awarded in December 2013 by the Department of Community and Social Inclusion, the **PK Family Care Team** was formed. It is a three year pilot program to steer vulnerable children of prisoners away from contact with the Justice System. **The measure of our success is that 99% of our PKs have avoided contact with the Justice System.**

A typical case study goes like this, "A teenage boy I worked with was in trouble with the law and disengaged from school. He struggled to transition from living in an unstable home with his mum while his dad was in jail, to living with his aunty and cousins for safety reasons. I was able to get alongside him, work out supports at school, organise for him to go on 'Teen Boys Camp', and equip him to reengage in high school."

Since its formation in January 2014 the PK Family Care Team has:

- Formed a four person professional team with complementary skills.
- Developed **122 partners**; other agencies and schools to benefit PKs through referrals.
- Recorded over **814 PKs** on our secure database.
- Made over **600 home visits** across 11 Council areas in Metropolitan Adelaide.
- Established strong relationships with over **350 PKs**.
- Created over **220 goal plans** with PKs.
- Formed direct client relationships with over **182 families**.
- Supported **43 grandparents** who became caregivers through a parent's imprisonment.
- Provided vocational training to **25 PKs** during 2015.
- Purchased brand new school/sports uniforms and shoes to **12 PKs** in the City of Salisbury.
- Delivered over **80 Christmas hampers**.
- Connected **10 PKs** to Church youth groups across Metropolitan Adelaide.
- Took **hundreds of PK Birthday presents** to the birthday boy or girl in their birthday week.
- Supplied **40 'Back to School' starter packs** to young PK students.
- Supported PKs attending all eight PK Mentoring Camps each year.
- Encouraged PK emerging leaders who attend the annual three day training weekend.
- Promoted services for PKs in the Adelaide Womens Prison.
- Engaged **42 young people and 7 caregivers** in a pilot Art Therapy program over two months.
- Launched the Davoren Park Drop-In Centre where **20 PKs attend**.
- Completed an independent evaluation of all services up to March 2016.

As this pilot program has been successful by demonstrating that continued support for PKs produces positive outcomes, it is our desire to take the team beyond 31 December 2016. We are the unique service in SA solely dedicated to reaching and rescuing PKs from crime. **South Australia needs the PK Family Care Team as an ongoing specialised service which focusses on children being steered away from anti-social behaviour and crime.**



Melinda Eckert

A hearty big welcome to our new Team Leader **Melinda Eckert** who commenced in February and is leading the PK Family Care Team into the next phase of its development.

Mel has completed a Bachelor degree in Social Work and brings years of experience and knowledge regarding the plight of what most PK children face on a daily basis. She personally understands what it's like living in a single parent home and even what it is like to become a client of Families SA.

Melinda plans to strengthen the work processes and ensure children benefit fully from a team working cohesively with PK Mentoring Camps and each other. Changes in collecting data will be introduced. Mel is the only full time employee with two working three days and one two days a week.

Independent Evaluation

At the two year mark we knew it was time to seek an evaluation which could give us indicators and recommendations to take the team to the next level especially after having proven the pilot a success.

The 22 page report by **Align Advisors** notes 13 areas for improvement with three related directly to data collection. Other areas include improving internal processes and increasing liaison with external agencies.

The report states, 'The model employs some of the best practice approaches identified in the field of crime prevention. It targets young people at high risk that uses individual goal orientated case management.....it addresses the risk and protective factors for offending and creating links into community support.....it also focuses these interventions at a key 'transition point', middle school aged children from geographic areas of high risk.'

As one team member said, 'The team is achieving good things that are very necessary and I think it needs to keep developing and becoming more and more professional in how we do it.'



PKs are seven times more likely to go to prison than their peers