

**THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASHLEY YOUTH  
DETENTION CENTRE MET AT 212 CASHELL STREET, CHRISTCHURCH, NEW  
ZEALAND ON WEDNESDAY 24 MAY 2007.**

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DISCUSSION WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF YOUTH AND CULTURAL  
DEVELOPMENT (YCD), INCLUDING Ms ANNIE WATKIN.

*(The primary male witness was not introduced - we do not know his name, nor do we know  
what position Ms Watkin holds in the organisation.)*

**WITNESS** - I will run you through the key things. Here I have a standard timetable of what  
we do each day. This is one of the modules of our core program. We also have an  
evening program. Lastly, we have a booklet that our team has put together. It is  
something that gets passed on to young people when they are leaving. It has a huge  
amount of information on all sorts of things that can be helpful to them.

The programming department provides a range of activities and programs to young  
people during their stay in residence. The purpose of these programs is to promote  
young people's strengths and to learn skills that will assist them. We have standards that  
we adhere to as a programming team, and you will have heard about those.

Where we fit in the scheme of things, if you can imagine a young person sitting in the  
middle of this diagram, we have him involved in programs that are in here - the  
community and field are heavily involved. The field social worker and other youth  
workers are involved with that. The Kingsley school is linked in with that for the  
duration of their stay here. A safe environment is created here. They also have an  
allocated case worker and that person is overseeing the case. Alongside that, our staff is  
working in a creation and social milieu, being positive role models.

Our mandate, which isn't actually huge as a department, talks about the provision of a  
variety of programs of special training and rehabilitation. It is under the Children,  
Young Persons and Their Families Act. We also have a standard under the code of  
practice which says we are to provide specialised programs that assist children and  
young persons to understand why they are here and what measures they can take to stop  
or reduce their offending. Lastly, in our national residential business plan there is a  
statement that says we are to use relevant, purposeful, integrated programs. There is not  
a lot of stuff written about exactly what we should be doing.

**Mr WILKINSON** - It gives you discretion, doesn't it?

**WITNESS** - Yes, it does, which is good. The principles that we adhere to within the team is  
that we believe that programming is a specialist role here on site and therefore  
programmers received dedicated specialist supervision and leadership for the role. We  
follow a model of best practice and evidence regarding rehabilitation in the program.  
Integrity of the programs delivered is essential and maintained by a manual-based  
curriculum, which you have seen a little bit of. We have peer and manager feedback and

robust reporting systems, clear program objectives and suitably skilled, qualified and trained staff.

Under the model that we are working on, most of our staff here on site are residential social workers. Almost a third of the staff out on the floor in our communities are youth workers and that has enabled us to bring in people who might have a psychology background, a therapeutic recreation background or a teaching background. We are able to colonise our allied professions and acknowledge that they have a place here. Most of our staff are well qualified to a degree.

It is important that the programs we run are developmentally appropriate, considering the needs of the youth in the population and their normal adolescent development, and also that we have clarity about what we are doing - and that is that we want to maintain a primarily education focus and have life-skills-based programs rather than going into psychotherapy or anything like that. Safety is our bottom line in anything that we do.

We have a suite of core programs that have been developed by a guy called Kim McMasters, in conjunction with our site managers and some of the leading professionals in this area. They are being implemented nationally and are educational and life-skills-based programs. There are two sections to those programs that we run. One is a skills-in-remand program and is co-facilitated by programming staff who have completed specialised training. I have a group of staff at the moment who are completing that specialised training. There are about seven of them out there doing that at the moment. Those groups are run Tuesday to Friday between 11 a.m. and 12 o'clock. They come out of school and are involved in those programs in their units. Alongside that, we have a reducing offending program that is facilitated by an external facilitator who has formal qualifications and specialised skills and experience. That also runs in the same time slot. These two programs are catering for the two different groups that we have, one of which is on remand. I guess it is saying that the ones who are on remand haven't necessarily offended according to the letter of the law and so we are not challenging them specifically about their offending but we are doing a whole lot of things around that that are ultimately going to help reduce their offending.

**Mr MARTIN** - Is there a problem because you don't know how long they are going to be there when they are on remand?

**WITNESS** - This suite of programs that we offer is around 12 weeks. It just rotates over and over and a young person can join that at any time. For most of them, they would be here long enough to go through that 12-week program.

**Ms WATKIN** - The reducing offending program is a closed program so you have a set group that is there at the start and are grouped through the program together.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - And their education program is compulsory, as in school out in the community?

**WITNESS** - Yes. The programs are all monitored and evaluated to support these young people.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Are your education classes based on the groups in the unit?

**Ms WATKIN** - They are. The classrooms are within the unit.

**WITNESS** - For the groups, it used to be that we were combining two units to come together with two facilitators. Without increasing numbers we are not going to be able to do that. To bring in 16 to 20 young people the groups can be too big.

Some of the topics that we are going through with the young people are identity, where are their values, self-esteem, communication, assertiveness, parenting. We are not covering sexuality; we are doing it through our health program. We also look at Youth Justice processes - that is teaching them about the judicial process - alcohol and drug information, increasing their motivation for change, perspective taking and problem solving. Those topics will be covered within our skills in remand program. They are the ones under section 238. These ones here are looked at within that closed group: issues such as anger management, managing mood states, managing peers, relapse prevention, substance abuse and those kinds of things are covered. This is a diagram about the processes that we have in place to maintain integrity and ensure that correct reporting has occurred.

We have some core values with our programming time - and this goes for any program that is run on site - and those are safety and respect. As part of the incentive system that we have, young people are measured on a shift-by-shift basis in terms of how well they are doing. They are given a colour - either red, blue or green - and those colours basically equate to a number and at the end of the week there are some incentive rewards for them. Part of participation in new programs relates to how well they are doing with the colour system.

**Mr MARTIN** - So that is done at the end of every shift?

**Ms WATKIN** - Yes. Twice a day.

**WITNESS** - The staff are sitting down and going through a variety of categories.

**Ms WATKIN** - They have the soccer colours there for core behaviour.

**WITNESS** - We use the soccer cards for our core programs. To be honest, when the programs are being run well and they are interesting and exciting you are not having to deal with challenging behaviours. Often it is the newer young people who are causing problems.

We have health programs running on a Monday that are overseen by our on-site nurse. Basically she is focusing on family planning, alcohol and drug issues and hygiene. A local police officer comes in. He goes into a variety of schools but he comes in here and does three or four weeks with the young people around some of the legal processes and such things and builds a relationship with the young people.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Do they touch on things like AIDS?

**Ms WATKIN** - Yes, they do. A lot of kids come in here with addiction issues so it is a huge transition for them as well.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Do you have a detox unit of some sort if the kids come in clearly intoxicated?

**WITNESS 2** - We would use secure care.

**WITNESS** - Last year when we were running high numbers of young women we had a group that was running weekly. They got together and did beauty, hair and nails and all those sorts of thing, but also used it as a time to do some teaching around relationship issues. That is not currently operating. We would like it to happen but it is beyond our capability to get staff to do that.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Talking of beauticians, do you have a policy of fingernail length? I was just thinking that fingernails can be a fairly good weapon.

**WITNESS 2** - Not many of them would have fingernails. A lot of them are nail chewers.

**Ms WATKIN** - I was talking to a young woman this morning who had chewed them to the quick.

**WITNESS** - I know I am generalising, but a lot of the young women coming through haven't had that care and attention from the people around them to teach them about such things.

Another program that happens on a monthly basis is a program we call 'The Five Rs'. I will be able to give you a copy of this if you'd like to look at it. It looks at regulations, routines, rules, rights and responsibilities. Many of these things are touched on when a young person first arrives in the admission process. Obviously when you are being admitted a lot of things are going in one ear and out the other and it is good for this to be reinforced. A copy of this is available for the young people at any time for them to have a look at. We try to balance the rights and the rules and everything. It used to be the Four Rs.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - You could make it the Six Rs and put 'resources' in there, for everybody else.

**Ms WATKIN** - That's what the book is about, resources.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - How do you manage literacy problems if you give the kids a booklet when they come in and they aren't literate?

**Ms WATKIN** - We would expect that the case worker would go through it with them.

**WITNESS** - In the afternoons during the week programs are held. Ultimately at the moment the young people are just going to our general sports fields and having some recreation time. Dispersed amongst that we have things like a driver's licence program. We have an external person coming in to teach them about getting their driver's licence. We have a drama program happening at the moment as well. Every couple of weeks in the evenings we have a youth group and some external youth workers come in and run a youth group program. It is a Christian-run program. That is also a great way to get them

from here out into the community. They are being involved with some very positive role models.

In the holidays it is an incredibly busy time for our team. Obviously school is not happening and we need to keep the young people active and doing something creative. We often spend a bit more money at this time on external facilitators. We try to create pretty much as much as they would be doing on a school day.

**Mr MARTIN** - There are discussions going on at the moment in Education about extending the school year.

**WITNESS 2** - Even if they can't extend the school year, we would like them to because of our kids and the way they move through, but at least acknowledging that they should be providing some resources.

**WITNESS** - For example, on a given day they have the core programs still happening during the holidays. We have had stone carving and a therapeutic recreation program. Alongside that, as different options, we have had rollerblading and things like that.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Do you have culturally specific programs as well, running in tandem or separately?

**WITNESS** - For these styles of programs all of the young people are expected to participate. In the evenings we have taka haka happening and it has been happening fairly regularly. Lately the staff who have facilitated that are on leave so at the moment it has become a little more irregular, but we are looking at an external facilitator but I'm not sure when that's happening.

**Ms WATKIN** - They take some responsibility in mentoring and supporting at-risk people as well.

**WITNESS 2** - One of the things we are fortunate about is that we get quite a bit of support throughout our residential centres from national and representative sports players. That is great as a role model.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Do you use external mentors on a one-to-one basis?

**WITNESS** - That is something that has been implemented over the last month. There is an organisation called Big Brothers, Big Sisters which has come on board in a relationship with us.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Would you have the capacity, if the young person lived further away, outside the Christchurch area, to follow that through?

**WITNESS** - Not at this stage. We don't with that particular trust, but it could be something that their field social worker within that particular site is following through.

**Ms WATKIN** - The ideal is that if young people are able to establish their relationship while they are here it is more likely to be a success on their discharge. In Christchurch we

have a youth work collective. There are hundreds of youth workers who belong to it, so it is a huge resource.

**WITNESS** - As I am running you through these programs - and there are more that we facilitate - it is our goal over the next year to two years to implement more vocational programs so that what is happening here is linked into some things that they can do on the outside.

We have a dedicated music room that the kids utilise. Graffiti art – there is a trust under the District Council that come over here and encourage and teach the young people. It is teaching them to use their artwork positively.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Do you ever have an open day where the public can come in and see what the kids have done?

**WITNESS 2** - In the business plan this year we have an open day for all the stakeholders. But this isn't a zoo.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - I agree.

**WITNESS 2** - That is the difficulty with a general public open day, but we certainly want to invite the stakeholders in so that they understand what goes on.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Have an art exhibition and put a play on.

**WITNESS 2** - Again, we have done some programs. We did it down at Kingsley. We had therapy through art, I suppose that is the best way to describe it - Jim Moriarty's program. It came out of *Once Were Warriors* and was very similar. It was on these kids' backgrounds. Jim put together a theatre production.

**Ms WATKIN** - It was called *Somebody's Son, Somebody's Daughter*.

**WITNESS 2** - We did it here, in Auckland and at Palmerston. In the finish we did it across the three Youth Justice residences and we did open up the gym on those nights for the public exhibitions. That is the only time we have done it. These kids told their story and it was very graphic and very moving. It was wonderful what he got out of those kids, but the talent that resided within the kids was just unbelievable. He now runs a program in Wellington based on that - he has a community-based program where he takes kids from a point of coming into the program to a point of production.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Does he have a web page, do you know?

**Ms WATKIN** - Google his name and it will come up. He runs a lot of programs.

**WITNESS 2** - One of the difficulties is how you support the kids when they go back because they get built up to this sort of crescendo, this huge night with all these people, and then they are on their own again.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - That is the sad part about a lot of this.

**WITNESS 2** - A part of it is great. It is how you manage them back into the real life. Here we were able to do it because we still had the kids after the production.

**Ms WATKIN** - In fact some of them became part of this group and went off and toured the country with the program.

**WITNESS** - Cultural programs - as I mentioned before, the most prolific one is the kapa haka.

**Ms WATKIN** - It is open to all, not just Maori. A woman who suicided was always in the front row and absolutely loved it. She was a young woman. It is about song and dance and customs and protocols. Young people enjoy it because it has a different mental view.

**WITNESS** - There are national kapa haka competitions now. It has really caught on in a big way.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Excuse my ignorance, is it dance? It's not just like the haka before a rugby game?

**Ms WATKIN** - No. They learn songs and actions, they learn about protocols and the cultural reasons behind why particular processes are done. It is an opportunity for these young people to get back some of their mana and status because it has been eroded through their behaviours.

**WITNESS 2** - They build knowledge, self-esteem, confidence but are also able to express themselves through dancing and singing. The haka is a small part; it is a challenge. This is a wider perspective on all of that.

**WITNESS** - There is a real atmosphere or tone of respect throughout these programs.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Would there be any place in transferring that program to the white population, or do you think they wouldn't have the empathy?

**WITNESS 2** - Kapa haka has become a big thing throughout the country. There are now national competitions for kapa haka. For a lot of kids probably their first foray into understanding something about Maori culture is through kapa haka. It gives them fun, expression and an energy but it also builds in behind that knowledge and understanding.

**Ms WATKIN** - The number of people claiming to have Maori blood is increased all the time because of intermarriage and that sort of stuff, so there is a lot of identification with the Maori culture.

**WITNESS** - The other main thing that would happen is that we would occasionally take young people off site to what we call wananga for two, three, four days.

**Ms WATKIN** - It is usually quite isolated.

**WITNESS** - Staff go with them, obviously. There are different emphasises: one might be flax weaving.

**Ms WATKIN** - It is usually around leadership.

**WITNESS** - They are using these things as tools to teach the young people.

**Ms WATKIN** - It is run by a community organisation and their main area of work is working around drugs and alcohol and violence, so there is a strong emphasis on this. Often there will be up to 90 young people there who have come from all different community groups and they have their support. It is an opportunity as well for our young people to mix with a more positive peer group than they normally would be.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - So it is a weekend camp type of thing?

**Ms WATKIN** - Yes, but it could go for up to five days. They have a process where they are assessed and have a graduation process. It is called wananga.

**WITNESS** - Obviously with young people going off site there are a lot of risks involved so there is a pretty robust assessment process that requires them to sign off on all sorts of things.

**WITNESS 2** - People have to meet certain criteria.

**Ms WATKIN** - In five years we have had one absconder who conned us into letting him go and he had arranged for his girlfriend to meet him up the road.

**WITNESS 2** - They don't just get to go.

**Ms WATKIN** - It is about the acknowledgment and the trust that we have put into the young persons. We talk to them about the risk that we are taking. We were talking about the Army before because we are interested in our relationship with them. That is one of the programs that we have run at the Burnum military camp.

**WITNESS** - If you interested in finding out about any of the processes that we are using, I am happy to do copies of them for you.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Thank you.

**Mr MARTIN** - Are these all programs that you run, not the Education department?

**WITNESS** - School runs alongside this. It is a traditional school, a traditional curriculum that goes on from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**Ms WATKIN** - Except that we have negotiated a spot in the school time, between 11 and 12, and part of that has been to have an optimum time slot where young people are very receptive and open to learning. If you are doing it later in the day, often the focus isn't there.

*(Break in recording.)*



**Ms WATKIN** - We are a non-government community-based organisation. Whilst we have operated for 14 years, for the last nine-and-a-half years we have focused on Youth Justice. We were a youth centre that dealt with some of the conflicts and issues of young people in the inner city. I started here 10 years ago and I have a history of being a offender myself. As I transitioned out of that lifestyle, I worked with adult offenders and then with young offenders. That became really my focus and my passion. As a young person, there were no services for young kids. You were treated quite broadly as a young person in the late 1960s and early 1970s. You were treated more like an adult. With the introduction of the Child, Youth and Family Act in 1989 I became really interested in what was being offered in terms of youth justice.

When I started managing YCD they were unclear what direction they wanted to go in. I was quite clear at my interview that I had a clear motive in wanting to work here. So we moved into working with young people on community-based sentences. Young people were going through the Youth Court and there was a lack of personnel within Child, Youth and Family to support young offenders. There was also a lack of support for young people who got things like community service hours to complete and community-based sentences. We started coordinating some of those support services. One of them was if a young person, through a family group conference and then through Youth Court, was sentenced to community service hours, we developed a database and found providers around Christchurch who would offer supervision to a young person to work within the community and give something back.

**Mr MARTIN** - Where is your funding from?

**Ms WATKIN** - Child, Youth and Family mainly, also Social Development. We have one project that sits outside of Youth Justice and that is the project working with under-age sex workers on the street.

From there we also run a course which was Ministry of Development funded and that was for young people under 20. We were actually attracting 15- to 17-year-olds and it was young people who were offending and getting into trouble - negative behaviours - so we set some funding to run another course alongside it. So we had two courses here and they answered to young people who offend. We are dealing with issues such as family relations, all the things that contribute to offending, really - drug and alcohol, violence, abuse and relationship issues. They are full-time courses - they were 20 weeks in duration but we now run it through the whole year. It is lifestyle based so it is very practical, it is learning to read and write. There are about 70 per cent of young people 14 and up who cannot read and write, so we address the literacy issues.

**Mr WILKINSON** - You do that here?

**Ms WATKIN** - We employ youth workers. We have been fortunate to attract youth workers who also have teaching degrees, so we have two trained teachers who are youth workers here. We have a psychologist who is employed as a youth worker, who doesn't like the clinical structure of working with young people, he likes the youth development practice and incorporates the training.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Are you the only one of your type?

**MS WATKIN** - We are.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - In Christchurch or South Island?

**Ms WATKIN** - There are few services that we have been able to identify and none that we have been able to identify that works on every tariff of sentence, apart from residence. The only thing we don't offer is residence and what we are chasing at the moment is some funding to offer the transitional accommodation support of young people coming out of care, or out of sentence, because we are finding a number of young people are falling over when they are released.

**Mr MARTIN** - Has the centre any options for doing that?

**Ms WATKIN** - No.

**Mr WILKINSON** - So what would you do? Tasmania doesn't have any either.

**Ms WATKIN** - What we would do, we have an ideal and that would be that we be able to lease or purchase a block of motels. We would like eight units, with a facility for two to four young people in each unit and that young people learn to take care of themselves. So that they take care of their own budget, their own cleaning, everything that goes with living. They pay a rent, or a portion of rent based on the number of people in the unit, and they learn the basic skills of living and they are supported into independent living from there.

I guess I base it a little on a rehab centre I went into when I had a young daughter. I went into a supported-living environment where after I dealt with the drug addiction. I went in there and learnt how to live on a basic income rather than a drug business, and it was all the real practical things of how to budget, how to plan my week - those sorts of things. And having a house manager - the thought of a motel complex has the facility for a manager to live on site and then you would have the young people taking care of their place, as in the unit.

**Mr WILKINSON** - As their manager, would you be the one then that would make sure the child went to drug and alcohol counselling or went to anger management or whatever it might be?

**Ms WATKIN** - As we do now, we have case managers that take care of the release plan, take care of the court order.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Would you get that as well, as the manager?

**Ms WATKIN** - Yes. What we have been able to do here is develop a database that is online, linked, so we would use that as our information sheet. All our documents are online for every client that we have here and we have had that database developed by the same company that developed the Child and Family database. So we have all the information online.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Do you see that as a combination with the services running here or would you combine them? Would that be practical at all, as in residential day-care, as it were?

**Ms WATKIN** - As a transition?

**Mrs JAMIESON** - With hindsight.

**Ms WATKIN** - We would like to have it as a project of YCD so we would have the facility off site. Hopefully just out of the inner city, I think the inner city is not an option.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Would you use those premises, because detention is the last resort, especially for young people, for people prior to going to detention, to go there and you could say, 'We're going to order that you reside at', your address, the motel, 'you abide by all the reasonable directions' of your manager and health care worker, or whoever it might be, and should you have that as the last step before prison?

**Ms WATKIN** - I think there would be room for the likes of supported bail; we also provide supported bail here. We have a real concern about young people who do not have family support, they go into youth court and they do not fit the criteria for supported bail because they don't have a supportive family environment in which to reside. So we would like for that facility to take care of them. So it would be a supported environment.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Could it also be used as an overnight crisis accommodation, if you like, for someone the people may have picked up and say, 'What do we do with Jonny?'.

**Ms WATKIN** - Child, Youth and Family are meant to provide that service but they don't have the beds. There is a crying need for emergency accommodation for young people in Christchurch. There are a lot of forums being held at the moment around that very issue and, yes, we would be really interested in either supporting another agency that provide these or to administer it ourselves. We see a lot of young people getting into trouble, we see a lot of young people entering the sex industry because they have nowhere to live and when we talk to young people that we engage with within the sex industry that comes up a lot, that they have no money and nowhere to sleep.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Do you find that drugs are part and parcel of the sex industry?

**Ms WATKIN** - I do not think that is a contributing factor in the sex industry. I think it is something that some young people are going to take to because of the people around them. I think this is a bit of a gang influence in terms of street work and they try to capture young people.

**Mr MARTIN** - Somewhere in the last few days someone mentioned that gangs run most of the sex industry.

**Ms WATKIN** - They try to. I think they try to dominate the street sex industry but there is a real street in Christchurch. There is a, I suppose you could call it a bit of sisterhood, where they look after each other. Our project has supported the workers to look after each other. They do things like take down numberplates or see who got in a car and what time they left and what type of car it might be.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - What about the health of the sex workers? Is there any ease into the health system?

**Ms WATKIN** - We run a clinic -

**Mrs JAMIESON** - You run a clinic here?

**Ms WATKIN** - on a Thursday night. The New Zealand Prostitutes Clinic also run a clinic. They work very closely with adult sex workers and we work with the young underage sex workers and we work very much in partnership.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Is the pregnancy rate fairly high?

**Ms WATKIN** - Teen pregnancy is reasonably high in New Zealand, it is one of the highest, and we are not sure what that's about. In the sex industry that's not particularly high, there has been a real push for safe sex to be practised, and I think that's had an affect on the pregnancy rate. There are a lot of -

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Venereal disease?

**Ms WATKIN** - That's dropped in the sex industry.

**Mr MARTIN** - I would have thought that if you legalise prostitution you do away with the demand for drudge. Has that happened?

**Ms WATKIN** - No, there has been no increase in underage sex workers but there will always be the purchasers of the service who want and target young people and would much prefer to pay a younger person.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Does that include the male prostitutes too?

**Ms WATKIN** - Yes. We have no obvious male sex workers on the streets.

**Mr MARTIN** - Can you tell us a bit more about the detail of the programs you run?

**Ms WATKIN** - Starting with the information centre, we run workshops for young people, mainly at night. We find the majority of young offenders tend to be very talented people in either art or music so we have music as he trots down the stairs - things that attract them to some positive activities - break dancing and art work. Then we have the two courses we run and a community service called 'Nations and its Young People' who have community service or community work orders. Supervision of activity is having a complete around the young person seven days a week and that is about identifying all the things the young person is going to do. If they are sentenced to that, they have to be accountable for their days, and that's every day. We monitor those plans, so we keep in touch with the family or carer to ensure that they are doing what they're required to do. That is also addressing the issues that tend to leave them into offending - it might be drug and alcohol.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - What are your actual staff levels here?

**Ms WATKIN** - We have 16 staff.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Full-time?

**Ms WATKIN** - We have one part-time, 15 full-time, trained in youth work teaching, one psychologist - but not employed as a psychologist, but just happens to have those skills - and two social workers. All are employed as youth workers.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Employed by you as an organisation?

**Ms WATKIN** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - So, Annie, the path for youth justice per se, and you talk about the post-detention, then you talked about the motel complex and you talked about homeless kids having a drop-in-type place, if the government had a heap of money, what do you think would improve youth justice?

**Ms WATKIN** - I believe youth work is the way to go rather than social work. I think there is room for social workers in terms of that statutory obligation but I think as far as -

**CHAIR** - That's the front end you are talking about now?

**Ms WATKIN** - That's right. You can go into high schools - and I have been very involved in a high school on the board of trustees, doing a lot of work - and identify year after year the young people who will end up being our clients. If you can get some people alongside young people while they are still at school - and it might be from a much younger age than 14 or 15 - and do the work then, and there are some groups in Christchurch that are starting to do that preventative work, supporting young people to stay at school. I think if we got proactive and worked from that level, it would decrease the number of young people just starting to move through the youth justice system.

Unfortunately there are those who you will never steer away from it. I am actually writing an abstract for a conference in Singapore in November on youth justice. They asked me some questions about the abstract and I thought if you could just hold families accountable. There are some young people, regardless of what their upbringing is, who decide to go off the rails - I was one of them. You have an unfortunate experience as a child and it affects your direction. But there are those who just do not have a hope in hell of making it, simply because of the environment in which they're brought up and I think if the government could put some money into ensuring that people who have children learn some skills to bring their children up and are kept accountable for the way in which they treat their children. I know it's a massive big ask -

**Mr WILKINSON** - It sure is.

**Mr MARTIN** - I've been pushing this point for 13 years. Speaking to a lot of the people we have spoken to over the last few days, New Zealand wants the same thing but like us, it's in the too hard basket.

**Ms WATKIN** - That's right. I think there are a lot of examples of just touching on it with some groups that are working in early intervention but they are under-resourced both

financially and manpower. You have to be the right person to do the job. We have some excellent outcomes here based on the people who do the work. We have a mixture of people who are trained in a specific area of youth work or who have, such as myself, experience. We have somebody who is a serious youth offender who is deemed to be by many the best youth worker in Christchurch, working here. He does some amazing stuff with young people; he just knows how to engage with some of those difficult young people.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Do you have the capacity if Johnnie or Mary comes along and becomes part of your service to work in tandem with the family?

**Ms WATKIN** - Yes.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - And maintain that for any length of time?

**Ms WATKIN** - We do, we don't have a cut-off date. Some of our projects do but we, as workers, don't, we just continue to work and that is often we work in a financial deficit because we don't give up in terms of saying, 'That's it'. We do quite a bit of work with families and the young person to understand each other and I think if you can overcome the barriers, 'I don't understand where they're coming from', that's the beginning of building a relationship. We don't work specifically in a clinical way with the families but we do refer to a lot of agencies that work specifically with the counselling.

**Mr MARTIN** - Is your funding per case?

**Ms WATKIN** - It depends on the project.

**Mr MARTIN** - Where's your overhead funding come from?

**Ms WATKIN** - Child, Youth and Family fund us for separate projects and each project has a different criteria around it. We have monitoring, for instance, we will be invited to attend a group conference, we won't know the young person but it will be identified that they have a reasonably supportive family who needs some support to support the young person to take care of the court-ordered plan and comply with that. So our worker will work with that young person in conjunction with the family. So that is about supporting the whole unit. We are contracted to deliver 25 plans per year so the act is funded.

**Mr MARTIN** - A lot of NGOs who year by year is funded? You spend three quarters of your time as manager -

**Ms WATKIN** - I'm for every saying 'Gosh, are we going to make it next month or not' but that's how we've operated and we have had a couple of contracts that are three years, then the rest year by year. So depending on what's happened this year with the youth justice roll out - so there is the new model of youth justice roll out at the moment - there is quite an emphasis put on the importance of youth justice.

Previously we were the poor partner of Child, Youth and Families so we got the dregs of funding, because if there was a child being abused in the home at five years old, they are more likely to respond to that than a young person who is entering the court system.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Do you have the capacity to drive the types of policies and programs that you are running here or is it more driven by government policy and you tap into the funding? In other words, do you fit your program to the government funding or can you be more flexible?

**Ms WATKIN** - I have actually designed all the programs, apart from supported bail. That was government designed and funded.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Full credit to you.

**Ms WATKIN** - It is the team really. We look at the gaps that need to be plugged. Fortunately for us I am a member of the independent advisory group - the IAG. It is a ministerial appointed advisory group. There are a number of us who meet with the five ministers around Youth Justice issues. It is meant to be six times a year.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Would it be the biggest and best thing you could do if you are starting from scratch to try to identify who are the at-risk families or people? Is that a starting point? If you do that, people wouldn't like to be identified - this is before they have even stepped into any offending.

**Ms WATKIN** - Interestingly, as a region Christchurch has been really proactive in identifying the 10 high-priority families in Christchurch and the 40 most serious young offenders, and yet we have one of the highest statistics of apprehension rates in Christchurch. We have one of the highest number of young people going into residence on lower tariff sentences. The statistics coming out of Christchurch are really quite abysmal. I am constantly challenging the system that operates there.

**Mr WILKINSON** - So the answer then would probably be that by identifying the people it does not really help.

**Ms WATKIN** - No. We have the Youth Crime Unit in Christchurch - and there is only one Youth Crime Unit in New Zealand and that is in Christchurch. What they do is stick the photos of 40 young people on the wall in the police station. If a young person gets arrested and walks down the hallway the police see somebody's photo and say, 'You're one of the worst in Christchurch', and they say, 'Right, I'll have to live up to that'.

**Mr MARTIN** - You're been facetious, aren't you?

**Ms WATKIN** - No, I'm being upfront. That is absolutely what is happening. What I am saying to the police is, 'You give them that title and they're going to do their very best to live up to it'.

**Mr MARTIN** - They're going to try to get their photo up there.

**Ms WATKIN** - Absolutely. What we are saying to the police is the we have some pretty colourful young people on our courses and we have them in the kitchen with pinafores on making scones and pikelets and whipping cream. They come up here and have fun.

**CHAIR** - Why do you think it is, Annie, that you have that above the national rate, when Christchurch is a fairly conservative sort of a place anyway, and your Maori population is probably greater in the north island as well? Is there any answer to that?

**Ms WATKIN** - We have one of the highest rates of Maori apprehensions in New Zealand as well. We are quite a city. I think there are a number of issues and I think our regional commissioner would say it is the quality of policing in Christchurch. A really good example of that is we had a young person who left here, ran down the road and saw somebody he knew. Six months before this guy has stolen his cap so he ran up to him and pushed him off the seat he was standing on. The guy fell off and he grabbed his cap and ran off. He was charged in the Youth Court with aggravated robbery.

**Mr MARTIN** - We had a meeting with Wellington Police yesterday and I was very impressed with their attitude towards youth and you are now giving me a totally different picture.

**Ms WATKIN** - Christchurch is something else.

**Mr MARTIN** - I shouldn't disbelieve everything I heard yesterday at Wellington?

**Ms WATKIN** - No, not at all. Who did you speak with at Wellington? Was it Bill?

**Mr MARTIN** - Yes, and his whole team.

**Ms WATKIN** - Bill is reasonably new in the job and he is doing some really good stuff. He has some good attitudes and he recognises what is happening in Christchurch, but understanding that Christchurch has a regional commissioner who is the highest-ranking only regionally commissioner who is female and has felt, in my belief, that she has to live up to the ability to be a hard police commissioner.

**Mr MARTIN** - So is the problem at police level or is it at politician level?

**Ms WATKIN** - No, I don't think it is at politician level; I think it is a police issue. But, equally, I don't believe their Child, Youth and Family are advocating enough for reduced charges and I don't think that their youth advocates are doing their job in terms of advocating for a lesser charge to be laid. I think if we had the sort of collaboration between people who support young people and those who charge them - we have to get rid of that collaboration because I think it's not benefiting young people really. We have started to become really proactive around a young person, especially on supported bail. It goes to court and the plan is that they go and do a residential program and we are saying, 'This young person has been on supported bail, they haven't reoffended for six weeks. They have complied with all the court order for their bail conditions and they now have a full-time job. What on earth would you want to put them in residence for. Could we please look at a order which allows them to remain in the community?' If we didn't push that it would go through as a supervision with residence. It is the job of the youth advocate and the Youth Justice coordinators to be actively promoting the lesser sentence, but it is just not happening.

**Mr WILKINSON** - But the judge would be in agreeance with you with a lot of that. The judge should be saying -



**Ms WATKIN** - The judge more often than not goes with the recommendation of the family group conference because a family group conference is all around accountability and ... what is best for the young person. To be frank, some parents feel that Johnny has done a disservice to the community and their victims and will feel better if Johnny pays his dues by going away for two months and give them a bit of a rest. That often happens. Sometimes it helps for somebody to sit outside and that is why we have been attending a lot of the family group conferences of late.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Do you feel the victims of the youth offenders are getting enough support? Do you have anything to do with the victims at all?

**Ms WATKIN** - Victims, ideally, attend the family group conference. We have found that the best family group conferences are the ones where the victims attend. What often happens is they go in with vigour and aggression and thinking, 'You're going to pay for this', and some of them end up saying, 'I fully understand. I'm really happy. Don't worry about the reparation. I'd like to just see you not offend again'. I think that conference process is a real healing process for victims.

**Mr MARTIN** - We have been told by someone that the family conferences are in a fortunate position where a large number of family members attend. It would be a little bit intimidating for the victim.

**Ms WATKIN** - I think the act is excellent in terms of the family group conference process. Youth Justice was eroded somewhat from 1989 to about 1993. Youth Justice conferences were going really well; they were well-resourced, there was lots of staff to deal with the workload. Then Care and Protection took over that role so that took priority and Youth Justice became eroded, tired and under-resourced. This is where the ... now is that the funding is ring-fenced and the human resources are ring-fenced so they are YJ and they cannot go into Care and Protection. What has happened is that there is more energy in getting -

*(Tape change - some missing)*

**Ms WATKIN** - Youth Justice coordinators responsible for ensuring that the victim feels okay and safe. More often than not, the victim used to go to the so that hasn't happened quite so much lately. The difficulty also has been that we have had a bit of a cynical police force that, when a victim is visited by the police, they often say, 'There's no point going to the FGC because it's a waste of time'. Those are normally frontline police. You get the Youth Aid officers who are just excellent and they are able to -

**CHAIR** - Are we talking about the 120 police throughout New Zealand who are trained as Youth Aid officers?

**Ms WATKIN** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - How many of those do you have in Christchurch?

**Ms WATKIN** - Probably about 12.

**CHAIR** - You would like to see more of those?

**Ms WATKIN** - Yes. I would like to see frontline police officers getting better training in how to deal with young people. I think what we have is a culture where young people are a nuisance. You get a police officer who goes out at the beginning of his shift and goes to a group of young people and he deals with it reasonably well, but by the end of the night he is over young people. I will not go as far as to say that they are kicking them around the place, but they may as well be. I think that is human nature but I believe that the police create some of the problems that happen with young people. A young person walked down the road here, lifted his foot and pressed the button on the street light to go across the road and a police officer grabbed him and threw his arm around his back and said, 'Wilful damage', and marched him off to the police station. That is not a productive way of dealing with a young person. It was simply because he was known to the police, not that he was in any current trouble.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - There's no doubt about it, the police do hone in on some kids just because, say, they wear a motorbike helmet or something like that.

**Mr WILKINSON** - So therefore they shouldn't be targeted early on?

**Ms WATKIN** - I don't think so.

**Mr WILKINSON** - How do you catch them before they commit offences?

**Ms WATKIN** - Keep them in school. I think our education system is letting young people down as a whole.

**Mr WILKINSON** - By keeping them at school, should you then try to identify them to get people in to work with them in primary school or high school?

**Ms WATKIN** - Yes. I have a limited number of people working on primary schools already, and that is the social workers in schools. They are overworked and undervalued. I think if the Government had a broad understanding of the effects of intervention at a young age -

**Mr WILKINSON** - So therefore should it come into doing your teaching degree? In Tasmania you can either do it by doing a number of degrees or then do the Bachelor of Teaching afterward or, alternatively, you can just do a Bachelor of Teaching - which is a four year course in Launceston. Should you then be taught more social work as a teacher or a unit of social work as a teacher to be able to identify these people and to then think those people up at a later stage with others who can assist them?

**Ms WATKIN** - I think a pre-requisite for a teacher is that they like children.

**Mr WILKINSON** - I suppose that is why they are doing it in the first place, to some degree.

**Ms WATKIN** - You would hope so. I think there is a belief in the education system now that 'I will teach this group of young people to read and write and take care of their academic needs. It is not my responsibility to take care of the social needs of the young

person'. That is a belief system very much in New Zealand and it is something I fought for a long time as the chair of a school board.

**Mr WILKINSON** - So that could be a starter then, couldn't it?

**Ms WATKIN** - Yes, absolutely.

**Mr WILKINSON** - We could come back with recommendations - and I will have to check up again to see exactly what is there - to look at that in the education system within the course they are doing to make them more aware of not the three Rs but also the social side of things.

**CHAIR** - Some schools do employ specialist youth workers and that sort of thing. It all depends on what extent and what degree and how much funding there is.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - And our schools work on that cluster system now, so it is up to the principal to decide where the money is going to be directed. So you might have a very basic core but it is up to the principal to decide where the money is going to be directed. You might have a very basic core but it is up to the principal to decide where the money is to be focussed.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - As you say, if you went in there you would have a fair idea as to who could cross the line and cause difficulties, what do you do then? You are the teacher, you identify that person to the headmaster or headmistress, what do you do then? Do you contact an organisation like yours and say, 'I've got a problem'?

**Ms WATKIN** - Or you would have somebody within the school so you are not identifying that student as different. You have somebody within your own system in the school. Surely you would have a pastoral team and you could say to them, 'These are my concerns'. It does happen in some schools in Christchurch where there is a youth work team - at little cost to the school, I might add - and they work in the schools. A teacher may say, 'I'm a bit concerned about where Johnny's at', and a formal engagement happens with the youth worker. The minute you make it formal you get resistance. That is why I am so supportive of the youth development model of working with young people. That is about getting alongside them and engaging with them, without the formal 'Here's an assessment form I'd like you to fill out and then we'll go from there and see what your needs are'. It is rather get in and find out a little bit about the young person.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Do you have school nurses now?

**Ms WATKIN** - Yes.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Could that not be part of their role? Everybody eventually goes through the school nurse.

**Ms WATKIN** - Not all schools have school nurses. The nursing first-aid is a need in schools, someone with a first-aid certificate. Some schools recognise that a school nurse is and so that comes out of their bulk grant. Schools choose whether they have a nurse.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - We have a situation now where teachers have to monitor medication, as well as behaviour. We are supposed to have teacher assistants but that hasn't come out. They have implemented the inclusion policy so that everybody goes to the school. You might have a young diabetic, a cerebral palsy and an ADHD kid but the poor school teacher has to monitor them, as well as teach the class, as well as react when the kid has a coma, or the ADHD swings from a chandelier. It is a hell of an ask of teachers these days.

**Ms WATKIN** - It is. I think that is the importance of the development of the pastoral team, and a nurse is part of that team.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Is that religious based at all?

**Ms WATKIN** - No. The pastoral team is the social service team.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - We have a Prime Minister who has been putting the chaplaincy in schools to do a lot of this more social type of stuff too.

**Ms WATKIN** - I think the sense is that there is a real - I don't know about Tasmania - drive in New Zealand toward people becoming affiliated to a faith or a church. Those churches, which are very financially driven, start off running services to schools and they do not put a dollar figure on it so schools are opening their arms because somebody is prepared to do something for nothing. Then, when the question is asked, 'What are you doing for these disruptive or unwell young people?', they say, 'We've got the Baptist Church down the road and we're here now doing some work'. Don't get me wrong, there are some faith-based organisations that do some amazing work with young people. I think government needs to drive it; I think government needs to get in there and recognise that there is no point in saying, 'We're going to contribute \$1.4 million next year to getting social workers into schools'. One social worker for 900 students doesn't work. They need to actually develop the packages for each school and say, 'This is the package for you, based on your school population and your decile rating'.

**Mr MARTIN** - I have been incredibly impressed in the last few days with the amount of resources the Government seems to be putting in compared to Australia, certainly the Federal Government. Politicians and government generally seem to be pretty supportive of youth issues.

**Ms WATKIN** - In theory. I think because it is at the top of the radar at the moment, too. But what they are offering is fragmented. They are not saying, 'Let's look at all the issues and we will package them up'. There was an issue with youth gangs in south Auckland so the Government said, 'Oh, now what will we do? We will just give them \$10 million and they can take care of the issue'. That was for youth workers. They gave them \$10 million and there is this fragmentation of services throughout south Auckland, which is the largest population of Maori and Pacific in the region. They haven't identified what was contributing to the issues or what was underlying. They just said, 'Here's some money. Go and attend to it'.

**Mr MARTIN** - I flicked through that leaflet yesterday and it seems to be pretty good way forward. Have moneys been put into funding that?

**Ms WATKIN** - It is starting. We are under way with a rewrite of the youth offending strategy. The AIG group came out of that strategy. What we are finding is that it is just starting to gain some momentum now in terms of looking at the issues. Part of that is the YJ roll out.

**Mr MARTIN** - Is that owned by the Government?

**Ms WATKIN** - Yes, the Ministry of Justice. Funnily enough, the Ministry of Justice owns that. We, as an agency, get no funding whatsoever from the Ministry of Justice. We have five ministers who have responsibility to the YJ portfolio and the Ministry of Justice is the leading minister in Youth Justice but contributes the least to service delivery. What I have been saying is that Child, Youth and Family is under the Ministry of Social Development, and so is the Ministry of Youth Development. They are the greatest contributors, but the Ministry of Justice is the one that writes the policy.

**Mr WILKINSON** - You said you jumped off the rails there for a while and you were talking about one of the people you had who jumped off the rails significantly for a while. What turned you around, what turned that person around, what turns most people around?

**Ms WATKIN** - I think what we focus on is working out the best part of the young person and developing that. There is good in everybody. For me, it was probably the risk of losing my daughter. I gave birth to a methadone baby and it was the trauma of watching my baby going through withdrawals until she was six days old. That really triggered it for me, apart from the fact that I was put in custody for two weeks. I had never had all my powers taken away from me ever and I never wanted that to happen again. That was the biggest thing for me. Some people can go to prison and it doesn't have the same effect but, for me, I knew I would never ever risk being sent

**Mrs JAMIESON** - A lot it depends on why you go down that track in the first place, doesn't it?

**Ms WATKIN** - Yes. Thankfully now there are services and people who are really prepared to put out there. When I was young I was the only person ever who had been sexually abused because I had never heard of anybody else talk about anything like that before. For me, I was very lone and it was all my fault whatever had happened, it hadn't happened to my sister, my parents didn't know. I think thankfully today, although we have probably empowered young people far too much in some ways, we have empowered them to speak out. I think that has been of benefit. I think what turns young people around is a mixture of maturity, just getting them young person. I know very clearly for some young people it is just knowing - and it might sound very woolly and wishy-washy - that somebody cares about them.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - The trouble is we are not allowed to cuddle them any more.

**Ms WATKIN** - Well, we don't listen to that.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - No, I appreciate that, but the reality is -

**Ms WATKIN** - The whole has reached the point where - we are very clear about our .... and what is okay and what is not okay.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Some people take it to the nth degree and you can see them getting ready to say, 'Oh Johnny, I'm really sorry you're hurting like that', and then pull back thinking, 'I might get fined'.

**Ms WATKIN** - I have a husband like that. I got married 10 years ago and we have brought up both of our children together, so we collectively have eight children. When my 30-year-old daughter - she was my methadone baby - had a child two and a half years ago we babysat one night. My husband was in the bath and I just plonked the baby on his lap in the bath and he said, 'Oh no, I don't know about this'. I said, 'Don't be ridiculous'. He works for sexual abuse and he said his biggest was his fear simply because of the work he does within Mental Health. We have to be really careful that we do not create this massive gap between people because of the few. It has affected the masses a lot.

**Mr MARTIN** - There is no trust in priests now because of the 1 per cent who offend.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - That's right, and it's the same in society, we just don't trust anybody any more. We are not allowed to trust them.

**Mr MARTIN** - You can't get football coaches or athletics coaches.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - And male school teachers.

**Ms WATKIN** - Yes, the teaching profession has really taken a downturn.

**CHAIR** - Annie, is there anything else you think we ought to know or that might be applicable to what we are doing?

**Ms WATKIN** - I think what needs to be researched is the effectiveness of sending young people into residence. We are just going through a process at the moment. IAG have asked for some research to be done on outcomes for young people who get a residential sentence. I don't really think it teaches them a lot. We take young people out of circulation, their memories are long and by the time they get out it is a celebration of, 'I'm back'. Everybody makes a fuss of them because they have been out of circulation for a while. They feel important, and sometimes it is the first time they have ever felt really loved and missed so they think, 'That was all right. I might just go back there and experience this again'. Some go into residence get that real sense of family and want to be there. We had one young person who did seven 3-11s - that is, he was sentenced seven times to residential between the age of 14 and 17. The day he turned 17 he said, 'That's it. I'm not offending any more', and he hasn't. He is now 19.

**Mr WILKINSON** - That would be the interesting stat that I was trying to find out yesterday. All this sounds terrific, but is it working?

**Ms WATKIN** - Did you talk to Judge Bancroft?

**Mrs JAMIESON** - No. We got to meet Judge Walker.

**Ms WATKIN** - Through Judge Bancroft we have asked for some of that research to be done as to the effectiveness. In New Zealand at the moment we are talking about increasing the time spent to six months. I am saying, 'What's the point in doing that until we find out whether it is actually effective?'.

**Mr MARTIN** - About a decade ago I went to a crime prevention type of thing in Queensland. It was based on research that showed that the majority of juvenile offenders have previously been a victim of crime. Is there any research on that?

**Ms WATKIN** - There has been research done around sexual offending. I do not know about general offending, but I certainly abuse issues.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - Annie, have you come across kids who have offended maybe just because they are deaf? We have heard a little bit of evidence - and there have certainly been some people with anecdotal evidence to suggest that some kids are just not hearing so they get aggressive and fall out of line. They get frustrated and take it out on someone. Are some of the kids ending up in the system simply they are frustrated.

**Ms WATKIN** - There has been some research done in one of the of schools in Christchurch around both hearing loss and eyesight. It was identified out of 190 young people who were tested for hearing and eyesight that 80 of those young people who had colourful behaviours had eyesight problems and 60 had hearing problems. That is a pretty high percentage. I am profoundly deaf in one ear and have 60 per cent hearing in my left ear and I cope very well. I never put any of it down to hearing loss, but certainly some instruction I might have decided not to hear. Hearing loss can be very frustrating.

**Mr MARTIN** - Politicians are very good at that.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - That is selective deafness.

**Ms WATKIN** - I think our politicians in New Zealand are the worst role models for young people that we have. The behaviour in Parliament in New Zealand is absolutely appalling. I don't know whether you have heard about the Ron Mark's serious crime bill. It has gone to select committee. Ron Mark decided that around that the age of responsibility should be lowered to 10. It has now been increased to 12. He believes that serious crimes any repeat offence. He is the man held his middle finger up at another politician in the House.

**Mr MARTIN** - I am told the Government hasn't yet decided whether to support or oppose that bill.

**Ms WATKIN** - I think it will be lost. It was a new MP agreement between Labor and New Zealand First at the last election that it would be heard. It has gained some momentum and has been a very long process. I spoke to the select committee last week about the submission I made. It effectively does away with the Youth Court. All young people will appear in the District Court. My argument is that is a 12 year old can be held accountable as an adult they should be able to leave school, get a job, get married, have children, drink alcohol, drive cars, vote. If they are to be treated like adults as an





happens too often. Not that the young person discloses who made them do it, but it happens too often. It is a family-driven offending.

**Mrs JAMIESON** - And usually drug-based?

**Ms WATKIN** - Absolutely.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much, Annie.

**DISCUSSIONS CONCLUDED.**