

'The Real Deal'

Youth justice playing cards

Evaluation

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Executive summary

Background

In 2006 Macquarie Legal Centre (MLC) was funded by the National Community Crime Prevention Programme to conduct a series of workshops in local high schools and youth organisations focussing on illustrating young people's rights and responsibilities. As part of this project MLC developed the "Real Deal" Youth Justice Cards. The Law and Justice Foundation (LJF) provided \$5,000 of funding to support the production of the Playing Cards.

In 2008 4,488 sets of cards were produced and distributed primarily in schools from December 2008 to March 2009.

In 2009 Macquarie Legal Centre was planning to run a further series of Community Legal Education Workshops in 2010 and 2011 pending funding. As part of this process MLC requested funding from the Law and Justice Foundation to fund a second production run of the "Real Deal" Youth Justice Cards (with minor updates to the legal messages).

After some discussion about the project the Law and Justice Foundation funded MLC \$20,000 for a pilot project to print and distribute a further 5,000 packs of Playing Cards that include printed legal information on the cards relevant to young people. The project was required to include an evaluation.

Evaluation questions

The evaluation was intended to answer the following questions:

- a) Do the Playing Cards provide legal information which is useful and relevant to different groups of young people?
- b) Do different groups of young people use and retain these Playing Cards?
- c) Have different groups of young people used/acted upon legal information found on the cards?
- d) Are there other legal questions relevant to young people that are missing from the cards?

The evaluation has not fully answered these questions. The evaluation has, however, gathered case studies showing constructive uses of the Playing Cards.

Uses and constructive uses of the Playing Cards

The Playing Cards were used in three ways:

- a) They were given away at the end of CLE sessions or other events such as open days and youth expos of youth activities
- b) They were used at Court Assistance Schemes in NSW
- c) They were used as a tool during CLE sessions.

The majority of the decks of Playing Cards were given away at the end of CLE sessions or other events and the benefits of this strategy seem minimal.

A smaller proportion of decks of cards were used at Court Assistance Schemes and as a tool in CLE sessions. In these two situations where there has been very positive feedback about the use of the Playing Cards.

What happened: Emerging issues

As the project and the evaluation have proceeded some of the emerging issues have been:

- a) The idea of legal information on Playing Cards for young people is an innovative idea and intuitively sounds like a good idea.
- b) A systematic process analysis of what would have been required for the Playing Cards to be actually useful to young people was not done.
- c) Value for money alternatives were not explored.
- d) The evidence for proceeding with the production and distribution of the cards as a universal legal education resource was flimsy.
- e) There were two productions of the decks of cards; the first production and distribution was not evaluated.
- f) There was a loss of corporate knowledge within MLC about the Playing Cards and the community legal education project with changing staff; this led to the evaluator not being provided with the details in the funding agreement until the Evaluation Report was to be written.
- g) The context for the use of the cards changed with the changing availability of funding to run legal education workshops.
- h) Three quarters of young people did not give permission to be followed up to see what they did with the cards; this significantly impacted on the ability of the project to determine their usefulness.
- i) Several of the initially planned evaluation strategies were not implemented.
- j) Constructive uses of the Playing Cards were identified.

Principal findings

The principal findings are:

Giving the cards away at the end of CLE workshops in schools as a universal strategy

- 1) Most young people in the schools in Western Sydney do not regularly play cards.
- 2) Most young people given the Playing Cards at the end of CLE events or other events most likely do not use the Playing Cards.
- 3) It is likely that less than 15% of people given the Playing Cards used them.
- 4) Whether or not these 15% benefitted from the legal messages on the cards is an open question.

Use of the cards at Couth Assistance Schemes

- 5) When used appropriately by staff in Children's Court Assistance Schemes the Playing Cards:
 - a. Help staff engage with the young people
 - b. Help young people connect with each other
 - c. Sometimes also help informally connect the police and the young people
 - d. Increase young people's awareness and knowledge of relevant legal issues.

Use of the cards as a tool in Community Legal Education

- 6) When used appropriately as a tool in CLC Workshops the Playing Cards:
 - a. Are a useful 'easy to use' aid
 - b. Help young people engage with the content and discussion in community legal education sessions
 - c. Are a great engagement tool; they help young people to tell their own stories so they can connect with each other and staff can connect with them
 - d. Increase young people's awareness and knowledge of relevant legal issues.

The Evaluation

- 7) Several planned evaluation strategies to answer important evaluation questions were not undertaken.

Principal recommendations

The principal recommendations are:

- 1) Printed information on Playing Cards not be used as a universal strategy for delivering legal education messages (unless it can be shown that most young people frequently play cards & they subsequently use the cards and legal information).
- 2) The remaining cards be targeted to:
 - a. Court Assistance Schemes where the cards are used appropriately (see case study 1 above);
 - b. Use as a tool in Community Legal Education workshops (see case study 2); and given to participants as part of that strategy;
 - c. Other creative constructive uses by youth workers and legal educators and others (which are then documented in case studies if successful).
- 3) Other constructive uses are identified and documented from the distribution of the cards made to date (including the distribution by Hunter Community Legal Centre).
- 4) If the LJF wants to know if the cards were effective as an information strategy for card players a case study would be required that would follow up with some of the schools where cards are distributed in particular to describe:
 - Actual usage of the cards
 - Whether or not the tips are read while Playing Cards
 - Young people views on future relevance of the information in practice.