

## WILD4 (2018) in Licola

We say that sponsoring a child on Wild4 is \$1,000. A better way to look at this is that \$1,000 is 5% of the annual funding necessary to make the Program happen. Every measure is taken to source a participant from the area the funds come from, but this is not always possible. We meet each referral face-to-face, usually in the presence of their care giver, we are honest with them, we stay in touch with them/ their families/ their school or other referral agency. However, there are many external factors beyond our control in the lives of these children that mean there can be no guarantees. In our first year of running Wild4, I was advised by a Berry Street rep, that an 85% turn up was an excellent result for this demographic. In 2017 we had 19 of the 20 allocated places turn up for the Program. If you choose to put sponsorship money into this Program, it must be seen as enabling the whole to happen, rather specific sponsorship for a specific participant. Without unconditional pledges of sponsorship, Wild4 could not run.

### Pre-camp

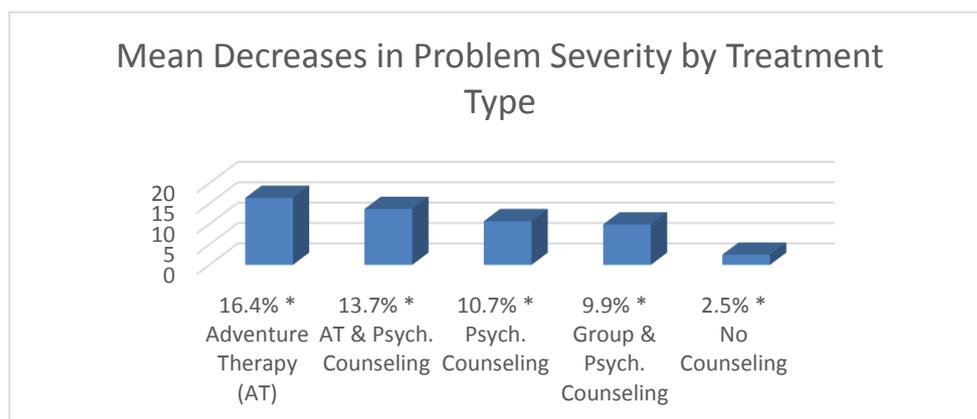
In order to meet all possible participants (and their care givers) I did a couple of big road trips from Licola to Geelong to the Mornington Peninsula, to Melbourne and all the way back to Gippsland and our local area.

This year, 2018, we had 38 possible names for the 20 places available. At various stages through the process many dropped out and we ended up having 21 places accepted by boys across the State. We agreed to 1 more than the allocated 20 places, anticipating that one or more would fail to show on Day 1 as explained above. ALL 21 boys were waiting at the agreed pick up point by the time we arrived with the hire buses. So, 21 for 20 places – 105% turn out!

Due to some excellent training blocks in the field of Bush Adventure Therapy over the past 12 months, and our instructor's beliefs that the ratio of 1:5 (adult: participant) was not enough, we advertised in the Outdoor Industry for qualified instructors who might want to volunteer. We accepted 3 volunteers allowing for greater flexibility and space to facilitate and manage the group(s), and importantly any crisis if any occurred. Volunteers were invited to assist with a safety net of knowing the lead instructor could step in if or as needed. They then had the confidence to explore, learn and understand their own abilities.

There is no agreed definition of Adventure Therapy (AT), but I like ... *"The use of adventure experiences provided by outdoor specialists and facilitators, kinesthetically engaging clients on cognitive, affective, and behavioural levels."* We first set up a safe environment which starts before day 1 and can take the first few days of program. Then we test current belief systems and push them hard. AT looks like fun, but it is doing something very important under the skin. We expedition. We do a service project. We spend a night on solo. Then the last two days we start preparing the boys to transition back home again and discuss who can help them with their next steps to achieve what they want to achieve, short term and long term.

In 2013 an American study was completed in the use of Adventure Therapy in Community-Based Mental Health which saw a decrease in problem severity among youth clients. (Child & Youth Care Forum – published in Journal of Research and Practice in Children's Services). Whilst I have grossly over-simplified this, I still believe the findings are interesting shown in the table below;



This study shows that as a percentage \* "Considered Clinically Significant Levels of Change".  
Anita R. Tucker, Steve Javorski, Julie Tracy & Bobbi Beale.

### Ten days in Licola

Two boys who expressed an interest to come back again, having completed the course last year, joined us as Student Mentors.

The route was marginally altered this year to bring about changes suggested by last year's instructor facilitators which reduced the amount of transfers. Groups left camp on Day-1, straight into the bush. They emerged from the Valley of Destruction after 5 and 6 days respectively after expeditioning across the Wellington High Plain, then via The Sentinels, Millers Hut, and Tali Karng. After a day of service with Parks Vic Rangers, the boys went on to complete a solo bivvy through the night and then over one more mountain ridge (Mt. Tudor) to drop down into the Macalister Valley. After their last night in the bush, the groups rafted

the Macalister River on the penultimate day, back to base in Licola. The new route was a success helped by the little bit of rain we had leading up to this perfect day which lifted the water level by 19mm.

Two participants left camp on Day 7. Leaving camp early should not be seen as a failure. For some of these boys even starting the program is a success. To leave early because of them reaching capacity or "breaking point" as one boy honestly put it, when to remain on camp would risk further traumatising, then a decision with the YP is taken. Not a failure. A success for getting as far as they did. Well done. It is very difficult working out where that point is, to leave being better than to stay. Both boys had a positive experience and in at least one of these he had more success from this program than some may have got from completing all 10-days.

#### Feedback & Follow Up

In 2018 we added another "spin off" from Wild4. The "Frog" water-skiing day. A wonderful group of philanthropists came to Lake Glenmaggie, in March 2018, with two speedboats and all the gear. Frog Waterski is accredited with the Australian Water-ski & Wakeboard Federation to run these days for kids. For the cost of \$1 each, the returning boys got the opportunity to join in for a day of fun, water-skiing, wakeboarding and then later when the wind picked up a bit, biscuits towed behind the boats. This was a great and informal way to catch up and say goodbye. Follow up with the boys finishes at this time unless invited to join us again as student mentor the following year. Thanks too must go to Maffra Lions who pick boys up from Traralgon Train Station and lay on a fine BBQ on the banks of Glenmaggie.

During the year we received some lovely feedback about some of the boys on Wild4-2017. I received this a few months ago about one (name changed to YP = Young Person);

***"After the camp last year, YP had a good think about where his life was going. He credits a lot of this to "Malla" (and would like to say a big thank-you to him).***

***"He thought about how he was attending 3 half days of school (off-campus), and how he couldn't think of anything that he had actually learnt in that time. YP decided that he wanted to go back to full-time mainstream school. YP's Mum and I both warned YP about how this would be a huge struggle. But YP was persistent, and this was what he wanted.***

***"So, we organised meetings with school to ease him back. But during our second meeting the school refused him any classes to be undertaken on-campus. YP broke down during the meeting (It took all of his strength to not walk out). This was what it took for certain high up staff members to give YP another chance (they were very reluctant).***

***"Through careful planning with a new co-ordinator at school we planned out suitable classes and teachers. YP is now at a three-quarter class load, which he is likely to stick with for now. He is learning, and a lot of people at school have been surprised by his new attitude.***

***"He has played a season of football (great mentors) and begun part-time work. "He has even managed to admit when he has been wrong when he has had arguments with his Mum, and apologise.***

#### Post course

I will continue to monitor progress of the 2018 boys over the first few months of the new year but after that it is important that we hand over to someone else for their continued support. We assist this process by putting together an informal report on each of the participants (what helped and what didn't) to pass on.

Story of the Camp – one of the two groups came across a deer stalker who had, that morning, shot a deer but needed some help. Steve, the hunter, had only 2-weeks prior given away one of his kidneys to his sick daughter – a great story for the boys. He showed them the cut. Anyway, he needed help cutting it up and gave the two back legs to the boys who, being very close to a transfer point carried the legs out to the bus. One of our maintenance team here in Licola is a butcher by trade and he expertly butchered the legs into finest cuts of venison steaks, which the boys (both groups) enjoyed on their last night of Program.

Wild4-2018 would not have been possible without the financial support of the Paul Family Foundation, Geelong Corio Bay LC, Wheelers Hill LC, Box Hill LC, Rye LC, Boroondara Central LC, Sandringham LC, Heathmont LC, Maffra LC, Vermont LC, Simpson & District LC, and Fulton Hodges (through Altona LC). Thank you.

The Program will run again in December 2019. It is our goal to run a single group of 10-girls aged between 13-16 in 2019 as well as 2 groups of boys.

Adam Wake, Licola Wilderness Village – Wild4

