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**Title:**

Evaluation of Chances for Children 2015

**Date:**

2015

**Citation:**

KLATT, M., Gillis, S., Polesel, J. & North, S. (2015). Evaluation of Chances for Children 2015. Chances for Children.

**Persistent Link:**

<https://hdl.handle.net/11343/247832>

## Evaluation of Chances for Children 2015

*“The absence of money or support will not stand in the way of a young person achieving their potential. Dare to dream.”*



*15th birthday*

**chances** dare to dream





GRADUATE  
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Shaping minds, shaping the world

# Evaluation of *Chances for Children 2015*

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This study was funded by Mallee Family Care

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was undertaken to evaluate the Chances for Children program, established in 2000, which supports children and young people in the Mallee region of Victoria and south west New South Wales. It aims to remove financial barriers for those who, without financial support, would not be able to achieve their full potential (in tertiary education, secondary school, or sporting and musical activities). It also provides assistance for those with learning difficulties.

The report is based on quantitative surveys of past participants and mentors and qualitative analysis of individual interviews with past participants, as well as focus groups with various stakeholders.

### Key findings:

- A majority of past recipients were positive about the benefits they gained from participation in the Chances for Children program, including improving their confidence and providing on-going support.
- Nearly all past recipients would recommend the program to friends.
- Financial assistance was the main reason cited by past participants for participating in the program.
- A majority of past recipients were positive about the mentoring they had received.
- Past recipients indicated a willingness to be mentors themselves but did not believe they had actively been sought to perform this role.
- Most mentors had not been recipients of the Chances program themselves.
- Approximately two thirds of mentors had not had previous mentoring experience.
- Nearly half the mentors were unable to specify whether their mentoring had had an impact.
- Referring professionals repeatedly noted the impact of financial pressures on families in regional and rural Victoria.
- Many referring professionals noted the positive effect of the Chances program and its uniqueness in funding many young people who would be ineligible for other forms of support.
- Many referring professionals noted the flexibility of the Chances program and its ability to be useful in a range of circumstances and to support a range of study and career outcomes.
- Community and corporate stakeholders noted the value of the program in supporting the local community.
- Community and corporate stakeholders noted the continuing need of the Chances program due to the financial and social pressures in their community.
- Community and corporate stakeholders noted the uniqueness and flexibility of the program.
- Community and corporate stakeholders noted the need to maintain support for the program.
- Chances personnel confirmed the financial challenges faced by the local community and the continuing need for the program.
- Chances personnel confirmed the financial, social and personal challenges faced by young people moving to the city to study or work.

- Chances personnel believed that a major challenge for the program was to raise low aspirations amongst young people living in the local community.

This evaluation of the Chances for Children program made the following recommendations:

- Chances for Children should engage past participants into promotional activities as their willingness and satisfaction is high.
- Chances for Children should provide more information and marketing material to current mentees on how to become future mentors.
- Chances for Children should ensure that mentors without some previous experience in mentoring are provided with assistance needed to make sure they feel confident in that role.
- Chances for Children should encourage both mentors and mentees to meet at least once a month.
- Chances for Children should ensure that the referring professionals are supported in the application process especially in the stage of the 'budget' preparation.
- Chances for Children need to work out new strategies for engaging young people who dropped out of school and/or are not part of any social group.
- Chances for Children should follow up on the idea of 'workplace giving' as a way of ensuring on-going income.
- Chances for Children should ensure that the current flexible approach to funding is continued.
- Chances for Children should build a promotional strategy that both ensures the sustainability of income as well as marketing their brand in the community.

### 1.1 THE PROJECT AIMS

Chances for Children, established in 2000, is a fund that aims to remove financial barriers for children and young people in the Mallee to achieve their potential (be it in tertiary education, secondary school and sporting and musical activities, or by providing assistance for those with learning difficulties). Its **mission statement declares**:

*“The absence of money or support will not stand in the way of a young person achieving their potential. Dare to dream.”*

Since its establishment, the Chances for Children Program has assisted approximately 1500 children and young people in the Mallee Region through three separate funds:

- Chances Fund (financial assistance to pursue tertiary education)
- Keeping Kids at Secondary School Fund (supporting students in Years 11 and 12 who are at risk of dropping out)
- Connecting Kids with Community Fund (supporting extra-curricular activities).

Chances is a not-for-profit program, supported by the local community and local corporate partners. It aims to raise hope and aspirations in the local youth community by providing financial support to young people to pursue their dreams and aspirations.

Not-for-profit organisations (NPO) and charities have a long and successful history in Australia and according to the Productivity Commission’s estimates (2010) there were 600,000 not-for-profits in 2010. Additionally, the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates there were 6.1 million Australians working as volunteers across Australia (ACNC 2014). These figures demonstrate a strong sense of civil society in Australia which determines high levels of personal and social well-being.

Not-profit organisations’ effectiveness results from people's capacity to work together, the existence of established processes, good communication practices etc. Research, mostly from the management and business perspective, shows that there are various factors affecting the sustainability of not-for-profit organisations. The Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD 2013) emphasises the importance of good governance established on several important principles such as a well defined: Purpose and Strategy; Risk Management; Board Effectiveness; and Engagement, as the priority elements fulfilling the criteria. Researchers also emphasise that the effective NPOs are those that can build *“a sustainable organization that can continue to deliver social value via the pursuit of its social mission”* (Weerawardena et al. 2010). They argue that *“sustainability in the non-profit sector means that important societal needs will be met”* (ibid). This is an important insight as it focuses on the outcome or the impact of the NPO on the society – or their community.

In the case of Chances for Children its sustainability would be reflected through the scholarship recipients’ ability to use the funds to fulfil their goals, hopes and aspirations but also through their

re-engagement in the community. Another important component to the sustainability of the program is the continual financial and in-kind support for such a program from the community.

Consequently, the Chances for Children program sought the services of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne to evaluate the extent to which Chances for Children have met the needs and expectations of the local community (i.e., the local youth, the recipients and families, the mentors and the sponsors). Specifically, this evaluation study will examine the effectiveness of the processes and procedures used within the organisation to:

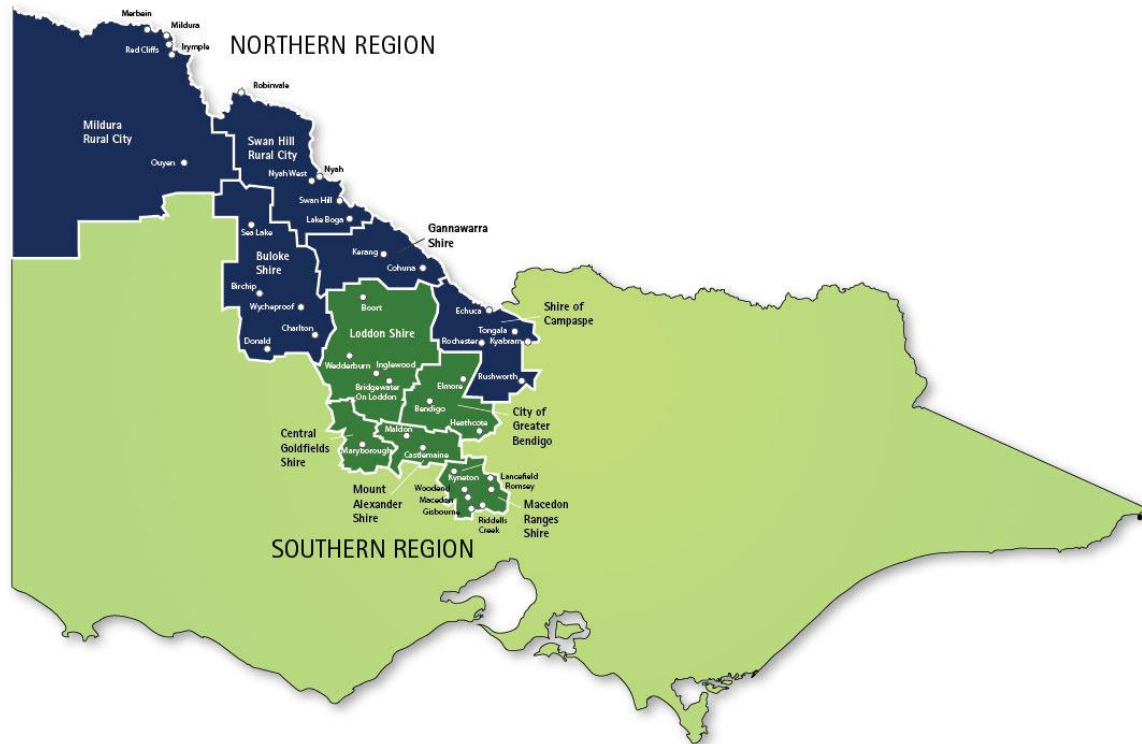
- identify the needs of the young people in the Mallee region;
- select recipients and allocate funds/support;
- Re-engage and prepare past recipients to engage in the mentoring program;
- Attract, secure and maintain local community sponsorship;
- Meet the needs of its key stakeholder groups (i.e., the community, the recipients, the mentors and the sponsors);
- Respond to the needs of the key stakeholder groups; and
- Raise the hopes and aspirations of the youth community within the region.

This evaluation study will also provide information on the overall implementation and success of the program over the last 15 years as well as identify its strengths. It will also identify elements that could be improved to strengthen the impact of the program on the local community, and in particular its youth, as well as ensure its long term sustainability.

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## 1.2 THE CONTEXT

Loddon Mallee region where the Chances for Children Program is located (refer to Figure 1 below) encompasses more than a quarter of Victoria. However, because of its size, it is often considered as two sub-regions, the north and the south, and the Program has been predominantly targeting the North which includes main the population centres of Mildura, Swan Hill and Kerang, as well as some parts of south west New South Wales.



**Figure 1: Image: Victoria Regional Development Australia Committee:** <http://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/regional-development-australia>

The North-West of Victoria remains in the bottom quarter of the most disadvantaged regions in terms of relative socio-economic disadvantage. Young people in this part of Victoria face adverse effects of remoteness, low socio-economic status as well as difficult labour market opportunities. Furthermore, research shows that young people from non-metropolitan regions have comparatively lower rates of tertiary entry (Teese et al 2007) and higher deferment rates of university places (Klatt & Polesel 2013; Freeman et al 2014)) than those from metropolitan locations. Programs that support young people in increasing their education chances, like Chances for Children, aim to address the immediate needs of these young people by providing financial support and mentoring. This is particularly important in the Northern Mallee region which has the highest number of disengaged young people across Victoria and well below average rates of participation in education compared to the rest of Regional Victoria and Melbourne (NMLLEN 2010).

The benefits of student financial support have been well documented in the literature. For example, student income support was recognised by the Victorian Parliamentary Education and Training Committee (2009: v) as a major contributing factor in university participation. However, the Committee also emphasized that the causes of geographic location in higher education participation “goes beyond the obvious barriers of distance and costs. They also stem from differences in the ambitions and aspirations of students and their families, school completion rates and academic achievement levels” (Victorian Parliamentary Education and Training Committee 2009: v) . Indeed, the Mallee Family Care submission for this Enquiry argued that

hopelessness was one of the observed collateral effects of the financial and distance disadvantage in the region. This contributed to the very low – less than 40% - Year 12 completion rates in the North West region, as well as the small proportion of young people enrolled at university.

In the context of youth work and education, the concept of hope has gained prominence as a result of growing youth unemployment and disengagement amplified by the global economic crisis. The ongoing economic adversity has come to bear significantly on youth's capacity for future thinking and this concept is important in sociological enquiries regarding youth (Bryant & Ellard 2015). In the Australian context, te Riele (2010) argues that hope inevitably involves obstacles but also assumes that these can be overcome. For example, she argues that the educators, community leaders and mentors need to promote the culture of hope about what the children can achieve, so in turn, the children can change their beliefs about what they are able to achieve (te Riele 2010: 42). The message of hope is stronger if it is reinforced by the whole community. Raising hope amongst youth in the Mallee Region is an important outcome to be achieved of the Chances for Children program.

The aspiration to continue education has also been found to be a critical prerequisite to participation in further education. Differences in the aspirations of young people across Victoria are an important contributor to differences in higher education participation rates (Victorian Parliamentary Education and Training Committee 2009: xvi). Raising awareness of opportunities, career education in secondary schools and parental engagement are among the activities seen as fostering aspirations in young people (Victorian Parliamentary Education and Training Committee 2009: xvi).

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### 1.3 FINDINGS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Chances for Children is supported by the local community and local corporate partners and reports regularly on the outcomes of the program. The Chances for Children committee also recognises the importance of evaluation and improvement of the program. Several reports have been published to date assessing the program.

In 2006, the first significant evaluation was undertaken and reported in **the Analysis of socioeconomic indicators of North West Victoria and South West New South Wales** by the Centre for Population and Urban Research at Monash University (Edwards & Birrel 2006) which included the recipient and community perceptions of the program. This report focused on analysing a number of social and economic indicators that enabled an assessment of the community's situation. It confirmed that there was "a considerable disadvantage in the region when compared to the rest of regional Victoria". One of the main contributing factors was the characteristics of the population of the region: acute lack of young adults in the region who escape to larger population centres; low family incomes throughout the region; growing reliance on welfare services and the predominant occupational make-up of low-paid and low-skilled jobs.

The 2006 evaluation also reported on the experiences of more than 100 recipients of the Chances for Children program. The respondents who represented various geographical locations and group ages agreed in the vast majority that the assistance from Chances for Children was appropriate to their needs. Most importantly, they testified that the funds enabled them to do something that they would otherwise have not been able to achieve.

In 2007, Daniel Edwards was again approached by Chances for Children to supplement the previous study with an evaluation report focused on the Mentor Program only. In December 2007 the **Mentor Program Evaluation Report** was published by the Centre for Population and Urban Research at Monash University (Edwards 2007). The Mentor Program matches individual tertiary students with a volunteer mentor in the city where they are studying. The mentors provide academic and personal support to the students. The report demonstrated that there was a substantial growth in the number of mentor/mentee matches and that mentoring could be of great benefit to young people. The recipients and mentors were very supportive and enthusiastic of the program. It was also emphasised that corporate or community supporters of the Chances for Children program were also very positive about it; however many business supporters were not aware of the program's existence.

In 2011, Chances commissioned a **Socio-Economic Analysis of North West Victoria and South West New South Wales and Chances program evaluation**. It analysed the 2006 Census of Housing and Population data in the region which showed the 'exodus' of young people, aged in their 20s and 30s, from the region influenced by lack of university, training and employment prospects (Iacono & Webb 2011). Another concern related to a high number of single family households – more than 22% - so the probability of the need for additional support for the children living in such households was high. There was also reported a very high proportion of young people (27%) aged 15-19 years who were not attending any educational institution in 2006 compared to Regional Victoria (8%) and Melbourne (9%).

The above findings confirmed that programs such as Chances for Children are essential for improving the prospects of young people in this region, not only by providing direct financial support to the families but also by representing the residents in various governing institutions. Mallee Family Care made several representations to the Victorian Parliament regarding geographical disadvantage and university participation.

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### 1.3. THE STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

#### Chapter 1:

Provides the project aims, the context for this study and a summary of previous evaluations of Chances.

Chapter 2:

Explains the evaluation methods. Provides the detailed description of methodological assumptions, development of instruments and the data collection procedures.

Chapter 3:

Examines the results of quantitative surveys with past recipients and mentors. It analyses the individual interviews and considers the responses from focus groups with referring professionals, sponsors and Chances personnel.

Chapter 4:

Provides findings and recommendations.

### 2.1 THE PURPOSE

This study sought to examine the processes and procedures used within Chances for Children to:

- Identify the needs of the young people in the Mallee region;
- Select recipients and allocate funds/support;
- Re-engage and prepare past recipients to engage in the mentoring program;
- Attract, secure and maintain local community sponsorship;
- Meet the needs of its key stakeholder groups (i.e., the community, the recipients, the mentors and the sponsors);
- Respond to the needs of the key stakeholder groups; and
- Raise the hopes and aspirations of the youth community within the region.

In doing so, the study sought to identify the strengths of the program and elements that could be improved.

To achieve this goal, it was imperative that feedback be sought from those that are involved in the program and have some interests in the outcomes of the review (i.e., the key stakeholder groups). For example, those who financially supported the program (i.e., the sponsors) would want to know to what extent their financial support has positively impacted on the lives of the recipients and whether the money donated had been well managed and spent by the program. Those that manage the allocation of funds and selection process (i.e., the Case Managers and Chances for Children personnel), would want to know how the organisation can improve its processes and procedures to better meet the needs of the local community. It was therefore imperative that this evaluation study collected feedback from all the key stakeholder groups to ensure that their needs/interests have been considered within the review. Table 3 displays a summary of the needs/interests of each of the key stakeholder groups associated with the Chances for Children program.

**Table 1: Stakeholder Groups and Needs**

Key stakeholder group	Needs/Interests of the evaluation
<b>Recipients (past and present)</b>	Whether the scholarship met his/her needs and expectations throughout all stages of the program.
<b>Mentors</b>	Whether mentors were well prepared and supported by the organisation throughout their role and how their role within the program could be improved.
<b>Referring Professionals/Case Managers/Chances for Children personnel</b>	Whether the administration processes for selecting, managing and monitoring scholarships and securing sponsorships could be improved.
<b>Sponsors (past and present)</b>	Whether the programs intended outcomes have been achieved and funds have been well spent (i.e., value for money).

## 2.2 THE DATA COLLECTION METHODS

To achieve these aims a combination of data collection methods were employed that varied according to the type of key stakeholder group outlined in Table 1. That is, on-line surveys were used with the mentors and recipients of the program for which valid email addresses were available from the organisation, in-depth telephone interviews were undertaken with a small sample of recipients who had responded to the on-line survey (i.e., four) and three focus group meetings were conducted with the case managers, referring professionals and program sponsors. A summary of the relationship between the key stakeholder group and data collection method has been presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: The methods employed as a function of target group type and size.**

Key Stakeholder Group	Data Collection Methods
<b>Current and Past Recipients</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On-line Census Survey (N=445)</li> <li>In-depth Telephone Interviews (x4)</li> </ul>
<b>Mentors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On-line Census Survey (N=49)</li> </ul>
<b>Corporate and community partners/sponsors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus Groups (4 representatives)</li> </ul>
<b>Case Managers and Chances for Children personal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus Groups (4 representatives)</li> </ul>
<b>Referring Professionals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus Groups (5 representatives)</li> </ul>

## 2.2 INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

The surveys, interview schedules and focus group questions were designed in close consultation with the Chances for Children program leaders. A summary of the major features of the data

collection instruments used within the evaluation study have been presented in Table 3. A copy of each instrument has been presented in Appendices A to E.

**Table 3: Summary of the major features of the data collection instruments used for the on-line survey, interviews and focus groups.**

Target Group	Issues to be explored	Type of Data Collection Instrument	Response Format(s)	Number of Items/issues	Time
<b>Recipients</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent is the program meeting the needs of the young people who are either recipients and/or mentees within the program? How could the program be better designed to meet these needs?</li> <li>To what extent has the program met the expectations of recipients? How could it be better designed to meet such expectations?</li> <li>To what extent has participating in the program helped to improve confidence, hope and aspirations? How could the program be better designed to raise confidence, hope and aspirations of participants?</li> <li>How could the program be better designed and/or expanded to meet the needs of the wider youth community within the Mallee Region?</li> </ul>	On-line Survey  (see Appendix A)	Predefined response format (i.e., in which the respondent had to select from a given list of options).	24 items	15 minutes
		Interview Schedule  (see Appendix B)	Open ended	<need to insert how many overall issues to be explored>>	30 minutes
<b>Mentors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the typical background characteristics of mentors within the Chances for Children program?</li> <li>Why do individuals choose to become mentors?</li> <li>What is the typical period of time within the role?</li> <li>What factors (background characteristics, interpersonal relationships, program experience, external competing demands etc.) influence the time spent within the mentor role?</li> <li>What is the typical role played by mentors within the Chances for Children program?</li> <li>How well prepared were individuals for such a role?</li> <li>What further support could be provided to better prepare individuals for a mentoring role and to maintain such a role?</li> <li>To what extent are mentors satisfied with the program? How could it be improved?</li> </ul>	On-line Survey  (see Appendix C)	Predefined response format (i.e., in which the respondent had to select from a given list of options).	22 items	15 minutes
<b>Referring Professionals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the needs of community/kids in the region?</li> <li>Were there any changes noticeable in the community since the program started?</li> <li>The awareness of the program purposes?</li> <li>Perceptions of the impact Chances for Children has on life of local kids?</li> <li>Are the right groups targeted? Could it be expanded to include more recipients?</li> <li>What is the satisfaction with the Chances for Children communication of the impact or the management of the program?</li> <li>What are the limitations to increase the impact of this program?</li> </ul>	Focus Groups Schedule  (see Appendix D)	Open ended	5	50 minutes
<b>Case Managers and Chances for</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the history and objectives of Chances for Children?</li> <li>Perceived needs of community/kids in the region?</li> </ul>	Focus Groups Schedule	Open ended	4	60 minutes

<b>Children Personnel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were there any changes noticeable in the community since the program started?</li> <li>• Awareness of the impact Chances for Children has on life of local kids?</li> <li>• Are the right groups targeted? Could it be expanded to include more recipients?</li> <li>• To explain the application process.</li> <li>• To explain mentor program.</li> <li>• To explain the marketing program.</li> <li>• Current limitations to increase the impact of this program.</li> <li>• Vision for the future.</li> </ul>	(see Appendix E)			
<b>Community Partners and Sponsors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background information on sponsors and the length of their involvement with Chances for Children?</li> <li>• In what way they support this program?</li> <li>• What is the motivation to provide support? (What are the needs in the community?)</li> <li>• Were there any changes noticeable in the community since the program started?</li> <li>• The awareness of the program purposes?</li> <li>• Perceptions of the impact Chances has on life of local kids?</li> <li>• Are the right groups targeted? Could it be expanded to include more recipients?</li> <li>• What is the satisfaction with the Chances for Children communication of the impact or the management of the program?</li> <li>• What are the perceived limitations to increase the impact of this program?</li> <li>• Satisfaction levels with how the program is managed. And how the funds are distributed.</li> </ul>	Focus Groups Schedule	Open ended	3	50 minutes
		(see Appendix F)			

## 2.3 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

### ON-LINE SURVEYS

#### Program Recipients

Four hundred and eighty-eight (N=488) past and present recipients of the three Chances for Children programs were invited to complete a 15 minute, anonymous on-line survey through email invitations sent by the Chances for Children program. Of these, 43 email addresses were no longer current, reducing the target sample to 455 individuals. The on-line survey was available for completion over a six week period. During this period, the Chances for Children program sent three email reminders to the 455 individuals with current and valid email addresses to encourage higher completion rates. Of the 455 email invitations sent to recipients, 134 were completed (i.e., 91 recipients and 45 family members of the recipient) over the six week period, resulting in a 29 percent response rate. Of the 134 completed surveys, 59% were female respondents and 41% were male.

## Mentors

Sixty-two mentors were forwarded an email invitation to participate in the evaluation study. However, 11 of the email addresses were no longer valid and another two mentors had automatic out of office replies as a result of leave. As such, the target sample for the mentor survey was reduced to forty nine mentors. Similar to the recipient survey, data collection occurred over a six week period, in which three reminders were sent to encourage higher response rates. Of the 49 email invitations sent, 17 were completed resulting in a 36% response rate for the mentor survey. A breakdown of the background characteristics of the mentor respondents has been presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Mentor Respondents' background characteristics**

Mentor Characteristics	Categories	Number	Proportion of sample (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	6	35.3
	Female	11	64.7
<b>Age</b>	16-20	2	12.5
	21-25	3	18.8
	>30	11	68.8
<b>Prior Recipient</b>	Yes	2	11.8
	No	15	88.2
<b>Current Mentor</b>	Yes	6	35.3
	No, but I used to be a mentor	11	64.7

It can be seen in Table 4 that the majority of mentors who responded to the survey were female (64.7%), greater than 30 years of age (68.8%), had not been a prior recipient when s/he was younger (i.e., 88.2%) and was not currently involved in the Chances for Children mentor program (64.7%).

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## RECIPIENT INTERVIEWS

At the completion of the on-line anonymous recipient survey, respondents were asked to indicate whether s/he would be willing to participate in a follow up telephone interview and if yes, to supply contact details. Of the 135 recipients who completed the on-line survey, 12 respondents indicated their willingness to participate in a follow up interview. Of these, four individuals were selected by the Chances for Children personnel to undertake a 30 minute telephone interview with members of the research team. These interviews were designed to showcase the impact of the program on the individual recipients.

The four case studies represented tertiary recipients who finished university study with the support from Chances for Children and who were able to reflect on their personal and professional choices and the impact the program had.

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## FOCUS GROUPS

Three focus group meetings (referred to as Focus Group A, B and C) were also held in Mildura with up to five representative members of the following groups:

- Focus Group A: Community and corporate partners/sponsors
- Focus Group B: Referring professionals
- Focus Group C: Case managers and Chances for Children personnel

For each focus group, participants were selected and directly invited to voluntarily participate in the study by the Chances for Children organisation. Each focus group was voluntary and ran for approximately 50 minutes.

Three participants representing community and corporate partners/sponsors took part in Focus Group A including:

- Wentworth & District Community Bank representative
- Saunders Design Group representative
- Rotary Club of Mildura representative

Five Referring Professionals took part in Focus Group B including:

- Three social workers
- Two secondary school teachers

Four Chances for Children personnel participated in Focus Group C including:

- Current Chances for Children Director Fiona Harley
- Manager for Chances for Children
- Two case managers

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## 2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative analysis of survey data and qualitative analysis of focus group issues and interviews was undertaken for this report and judged according to the following evaluation criteria:

- value for money (i.e., to what extent does the Chances for Children program provide some form of return of the investment by the community sponsors)
- sustainable (i.e., to what extent is the program sustainable?)

- Fit for purpose (i.e., to what extent does the program meet the needs and expectations of the key stakeholder groups?)

### 3. THE RESULTS

#### 3.1 THE RECIPIENTS

Of the 134 recipients surveyed, 84% did not experience any difficulties with the application process, with only two individuals reporting that they found the process very difficult (Table 5).

**Table 5: Difficulty with the application process**

Difficulty with the application	Frequency	Percent
Very Difficult	2	1.5%
Difficult	20	14.9%
Neither difficult nor easy	52	38.8%
Easy	48	35.8%
Very easy	12	9.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Furthermore, 93% of respondents also thought that the aims, visions and purpose of the program were clearly explained to them by the Chances for Children staff and 97% indicated that the contact with staff had been helpful to address their needs, as indicated in the following types of testimonials received:

*“Answered all of my questions, including a number I didn’t know I had.”*

*“Excellent response time and clarified the process.”*

*“Kept in regular contact, always replied when needed.”*

*“The staff would try their best to address things as fast as possible.”*

*“They were wonderful.”*

*“Takes some financial burden away.”*

Of the 134 recipients surveyed, the majority were tertiary education students who had received assistance from the Chances for Children program for either their accommodation costs (i.e., 57%) their books/materials (17%) or their fees (i.e., 10% for university fees, 3% for VET fees). Another 10% received assistance from the Chances for Children program for the costs of further study or training in a specific area such as music, sport or dance (Table 6).

**Table 6: Specifically, what did you ask for in your application?**

	Frequency	Percent
Assistance with university study fees	12	10.4%
Assistance with TAFE study fees	3	2.6%
Assistance with accommodation costs during my tertiary studies	66	57.4%

Assistance with books/material costs during my tertiary study	20	17.4%
Assistance with costs of buying tools or equipment related to employment	2	1.7%
Assistance with costs of furthering study or training in in specific area (e.g. music, sport, dance etc.)	12	10.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Nearly all of the respondents to the recipient survey indicated that the program had met their needs (i.e., 96%), with nearly 90% of respondents indicating that they were satisfied/very satisfied with the funding level received.

The survey also asked respondents to identify any potential barriers that may prevent him or her from reaching their aspirations (Table 7). It was interesting to note that three quarters of those surveyed indicated that the barriers were financially related. A small proportion of respondents considered lack of opportunity as a major barrier (9%), with an even smaller proportion indicating the family situation (6%), weak networks (6%), health issues (4%) and location (2%) as major obstacles.

**Table 7: What is the biggest barrier that may prevent you from realising your aspirations?**

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Financial</b>	94	75.2%
<b>Family situation</b>	8	6.4%
<b>Lack of opportunities</b>	11	8.8%
<b>Weak networks</b>	7	5.6%
<b>Health</b>	5	4.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

In addition to the financial benefits of participating in the program, 85% of respondents indicated that the program had improved their confidence in achieving their goals (i.e., 50% had indicated that the program has significantly improved their confidence and another 34% indicated that it has slightly improved their confidence). Approximately one in 10 stated that their confidence levels had not changed as a result of participating in the program (Table 8).

**Table 8: To what extent participation in this program improved your confidence in achieving your goals?**

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Significantly improved</b>	65	50.4%
<b>Slightly improved</b>	44	34.1%
<b>No change</b>	14	10.9%
<b>Not sure</b>	6	4.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

When the research team asked about the level of support received from Chances for Children, over 60% of respondents agreed that they were provided with strong or very strong support and another 28% agreed that the support was adequate (Table 9). Approximately one in 10 stated that the support was weak or that they lacked support.

**Table 9: How would you rate the ongoing support with your award from Chances?**

	Frequency	Percent
Very strong support	31	23.7%
Strong support	50	38.2%
Adequate support	37	28.2%
Weak support	7	5.3%
Lack of support	6	4.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The great majority (98.5%) of the past recipients would recommend Chances for Children to friends (Table 10).

**Table 10: Would you recommend Chances to your friends?**

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Yes</b>	128	98.5%
<b>No</b>	2	1.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Also, over half of the respondents (55%) indicated that they would be willing to take part in promotional activities for Chances for Children.

**Recommendation:** Chances for Children should engage past participants into promotional activities as their willingness and satisfaction is high.

### 3.1.1 INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

The individual interviews provide an interesting insight into the personal and professional life of young people who grew up in Mildura and who, with support from Chances for Children, were able to fulfil their potential by attending university or continuing with instrumental tuition. All four interviewees praised the program and expressed a willingness to give back to the community in the same way the community helped them.

#### ELIZABETH

Elizabeth is currently studying a Masters in performance teaching at the University of Melbourne and has been offered a teaching position at one of the schools in Melbourne.

She explained that Chances for Children had supported her since Year 10 and throughout her university studies:

*“I started getting support in high school, I think it was. My dad and brother passed away when I was in high school in year ten and my mum couldn’t afford to pay for my piano lessons or afford my high school tuition and all that sort of thing and Chances for Children really stepped in and helped out.”*

*“They paid for—not for a piano, we had a piano. They paid for my private lessons, they paid for theory lessons I think. And even at one stage I did violin. I went through quite extensively with violin as well. They really supported my piano lesson tuition.”*

*“They helped with payments. Then I moved to Melbourne and they helped with the relocation scholarship and they helped me get Centrelink. They got me a mentor. They helped me with moving costs and they helped me get set up in Melbourne and then they filled in where I didn’t have enough funds for rent or food. They got me a laptop cause my mum being a widow we didn’t have much money.”*

Elizabeth emphasised that Chances offered not only financial but also emotional support:

*“I’ve known that I always have a support network whether financially or emotionally. There’s always someone there and they know my family and me growing up. They’ve always been very supportive. I always get emails every now and again, someone checking up on me ‘how you going’ or they’ve always been very supportive and interested in what I’ve done and really helped me.”*

Elizabeth was provided with a mentor during her undergraduate studies. She established a very close relationship with her mentor.

*“It was my birthday yesterday and I wrote her a Facebook message, she moved to Tasmania now and she’s had a child and she called her Elizabeth. I don’t think it was cause of me. Yeah we got along really well and she took me out for coffees in Melbourne, she showed me cool restaurants and she really—we became friends, it wasn’t so much as a mentor but she was a mentor but I didn’t feel like she was above me in any way. She just nurtured me, I knew I could ring up the phone and say ‘oh my god this happened, what do I do’ if I had issues with any public transport or anything and I didn’t have anyone I could call her. Yeah it was just nice. She always touched base with me. We kept in contact and even—it’s been seven years later and we still keep in contact.”*

Her positive experience with mentorship made her interested in becoming a mentor for Chances for Children:

*“Well I’m happy to help out if they need someone. I know how valuable it was for me, just knowing there was someone you could pick up the phone or send a text message to when you move to a city where you don’t know anyone, it’s quite daunting...”*

She was certain that Chances for Children changed her life:

*“I wouldn’t have uni—I don’t think I would have even been able to start. I would have had to take time off at the end of high school to work and earn money and then I don’t think I would have even pursued music because that’s something you have to practice and continue with. If you take time off to work you’re not going to keep going with it.”*

In the future Elizabeth would see herself helping other young people from rural communities:

*“I really want to go to remote country towns and help develop music and start up groups and it’s why I did my course that I’m doing now because I got extensive education in the knowledge of conducting, running ensembles, running music programs, so I would be quite confident in being thrown into any school and getting a music program together and getting students to get them creating music.”*

*“And I would love to take my experience and what I’ve learnt here and travel to country towns and areas that don’t have music and I would like to be in the core of a music program at a school like ideally. So I’ve got my foot in the door at a good school now.”*

Message to Chances for Children sponsors and supporters:

*“They took a little girl’s dream and made it a reality. I always wanted to be—when I was fourteen I watched the Sydney International Piano competition and this was before my dad passed away, so years before anything like that I wanted to be a concert pianist and growing up in Mildura there’s no such thing as a concert pianist in a country town and Chances for Children obviously helped bring my dream to life. I’ve performed in concert halls, I’ve performed for crowds of people and I’m now doing education in music and I can pass that experience and love on to other students. So basically don’t stop support to Chances because they’ve really helped and I know not just me, I have other friends who have been supported in music who were able to pursue music, a career that’s not really something most people would pursue because it’s not like a proper sort of job if that makes sense.”*

## **NATHAN**

Nathan spent his childhood in Mildura then relocated to Melbourne to study music (piano) at the University of Melbourne at the age of 19. He currently lives in Hong Kong, working for Louis Vuitton as Events Director for North & South Asia and is responsible for client-based and any communications-based events in 14 countries. Nathan was one of the first recipients of the program.

He reflected on challenges he faced when growing up, mostly requiring mentorship and emotional support:

*“I didn’t really know where I wanted to end up. I don’t think my personality and who I am was really suited to a country Australia culture. I don’t think they quite knew what to do with me at high school.”*

*“I don’t think I had really been equipped properly as to what my options were. I think I kind of just meandered through in different roles trying to work out what I wanted and what I was passionate about to work out exactly where I needed to be.”*

Nathan first received his scholarship when he already moved to study in Melbourne. He struggled with fitting into Melbourne as well as accessing a piano to practice.

*“The Chances was incredible for me. It really was. I was quite lost—it was my mum’s idea. I was already living in Melbourne and struggling. Didn’t know what I wanted to do. Didn’t know where I wanted to go (...) at the time I was actually living on the Mornington Peninsula and travelling up to university every day, sometimes twice a day to use the rehearsal rooms at the university ‘cause I didn’t have a piano. So not only was I struggling fitting into a Melbourne lifestyle but I also didn’t have the means to make life easy at all. I was living a two hour trip away from the university that I had to study at because I didn’t know better.”*

Chances provided Nathan with a piano, additional financial support and a mentor.

*“(What) Chances offered me, is they gave me the finance to buy a piano so I didn’t have to travel to university every day and I actually still have that piano. It’s a beautiful piano. Basically they said to me go out and find the piano that you want, find three different pianos that you want and give us the quote and we’ll tell you what we can do.”*

*“And then the following year they—yeah it was amazing. And then the following year they actually offered financial support for my books. I think it was only like \$2000, maybe \$2000 per semester to go towards helping me get books and the rest of it.”*

Nathan emphasised the powerful impact his mentor had on his life:

*“He was fantastic. He was a senior partner Ernst and Young in Melbourne. And basically it was a good year after I started with Chances. This guy really took me under his wing and started talking to me about what I really wanted to do. He added a lot of value in a sense that he said ‘do you want to be a classical pianist?’ He questioned everything that I was doing initially anyway. So that’s when I started talking about the music industry, I’d love to be in a recording studio, I’d love to work as a producer. That was the first time in my life that I was actually able to start to express what I really wanted to do as opposed to what I thought I was supposed to do. And he had a friend that was, I think the first cellist in the MSO, so he started putting me in contact with that guy. He was like ‘well why don’t you meet with this guy who was the cellist for the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. If that’s the path you want to go down maybe it would be good for you to meet with him’. In the end he would get me tickets and I would go and see the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and talk with the cellist and really talk about the classical music industry and is this what I want to be*

*doing. We basically ended up catching up once a month for about a year and I would go to his family home. I think he recognised my need and my lack of direction. I had a little bit of a lost soul at the age of twenty-two or twenty-three. He really took me under his wing and tried to bring a little bit of direction to my life and a little bit of wisdom into the decisions that I was making which still to this day I'm eternally grateful. I think he made a huge impact, huge impact and to even what I am today, to question everything that I'm doing, why am I doing this, where am I going. So yeah he was fantastic, everyone needs a mentor."*

Nathan expressed his readiness to always support Chances for Children: *"I would do anything for those guys."*

## **MICHAEL**

Michael grew up in Balranald, a small town in rural NSW. He received a scholarship to come to Melbourne for year eleven and twelve in boarding school. After he finished high school, he finished medical training at university, and now he is managing doctors at Monash.

Michael was supported financially by Chances for Children during his university studies:

*"I'm not sure how much but it was anywhere from probably \$5,000 to \$10,000 a year. Oh just basic living expenses 'cause my university was full time, five days a week, so I obviously had to try and work around that. I had a part-time job also while I was at uni but sort of just for basic living necessities, rent and food and that sort of stuff."*

*"I wouldn't have been able to complete my studies without it. We weren't very well off financially so the cost to move to Melbourne and to continue to live here was quite significant."*

The communication with Chances for Children was in Michael's opinion "very easy"

*"They were really easy to deal with, just a phone call or an email and they'd always make sure I was looked after and as soon as possible."*

In evaluating the Chances for Children impact on his life Michael responded:

*"Yeah without their help I wouldn't be where I am today."*

He offered his assistance to Chances for Children if needed but he felt they did not offer any opportunities:

*"Yeah I continually offer my services to Chances for Children but so far they haven't really given me many opportunities to contribute back."*

## **TYLER**

Tyler is currently studying a Bachelor of Physiological Science at Latrobe University. He received the Chances for Children support in year nine to attend a nine-week leadership program.

Tyler was provided with financial assistance to cover the course expenses:

*“It was \$1000 for the program and I applied for Chances for Children for a scholarship for them to help me get there and they approved it and their funding helped me go. Helped pay for my experience.”*

But he also appreciated other resources available to him:

*“They’ve given me lots of resources and stuff and people to access if I need help with anything, particularly like homework or like any mental health issues and stuff.”*

Tyler indicated that the program and ’ help improved his confidence and provided number of skills:

*“It was a nine week program and it was one of the best experiences of my life. It was absolutely incredible. It taught me a lot of really, really valuable skills that I still use today. Even basic things such as like building yourself confidence and things like that, as well as learning like we got to do a first aid program. So everyone by the end of it was qualified in first aid and we got a food handlers certificate as well. I learnt a lot about team work and stuff.”*

Tyler also believed that Chances for Children helped to build his belief in success:

*“Well it was just an absolute privilege. And just the fact that they got behind me and supported me really motivated me to be a successful person, I guess. Just knowing that there’s someone there that believes in you and they’re going to give that kind of support. It’s a significant amount of money and just knowing that they put that kind of faith in you to— they believe that what you’re trying to achieve is worthy of that. It’s very motivating and encouraging.”*

*“Yeah the opportunity that they helped give me has pretty much defined a lot of um— helped me get where I am now and defined a lot of my decisions because of the experience that I have and the skills and qualities that I learnt. It helped shape me as a person and gave me so much more self-confidence and yeah it literally helped me to be where I am today and who I am today. It was an amazing experience.”*

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### 3.1.2 MENTEE-MENTOR PROGRAM

Eleven percent of the recipients surveyed indicated that s/he had also been assigned a mentor as part of the program. In total 17 recipients responded to questions related to the mentee-mentor program offered by Chances for Children; however about 10 respondents were about to begin the program in 2015 so they were not able to reflect on the program yet.

When this group of recipients (referred to hereafter as mentees) were asked why they had applied to join the mentor program, 35% indicated that they were not sure, while a further 24% had said that they had simply heard the program was great (Table 11). These responses suggest that some of the respondents were yet to begin the program. Another 29% indicated that they needed assistance with their academic/study commitments with less than 6% indicating that they needed emotional support or someone to talk to.

**Table 11: What are your main reasons for participating in the Mentor program?**

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Need assistance with academic/study commitments</b>	5	29.4%
<b>Need some emotional support</b>	1	5.9%
<b>Need someone to talk to</b>	1	5.9%
<b>I have heard it was great but not sure what to expect</b>	4	23.5%
<b>Not sure yet</b>	6	35.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

It was also interesting to note that there was no typical type of relationship between the mentee and mentor among those surveyed. For instance, 36% indicated that their relationship was a formal association specifically focusing on their tertiary studies while another 43% indicated that it was more semi-formal and 21% stated it was more friendship-based. The frequency of meetings also seemed to vary among the mentees surveyed, with 50% meeting at least once a month with their mentor. In relation to the usefulness and satisfaction with the program, more than half surveyed indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the program (Table 12) and that it had an impact on their studies (i.e., 53%).

**Table 12: In general, how would you rate your satisfaction level with the Chances for Children mentor program?**

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Very satisfied</b>	2	13.3%
<b>Satisfied</b>	6	40.0%
<b>Not sure</b>	5	33.3%
<b>Not very satisfied</b>	1	6.7%
<b>Not satisfied at all</b>	1	6.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

While 46% indicated that they would continue in the mentee-mentor program the following year, 94% stated that they would recommend the mentee-mentor program to their friends and 47%

indicated that they would become a mentor in the future. Half of the respondents also indicated that the program had some impact on them (Table 13).

**Table 13: How would you rate the impact your mentorship had on you?**

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Significant impact</b>	1	6.7%
<b>Some impact</b>	7	46.7%
<b>No impact</b>	2	13.3%
<b>Hard to say</b>	5	33.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

However, very few of those surveyed had received any information from the Chances for Children program on how to become a mentor, even though they had been in the program as a mentee (i.e., only 13% were informed in some way of the process). Such findings present a strong testament to the positive perception of the mentor program from the perspective of the mentees but suggest that the marketing and recruitment of mentors from within this program could be improved.

**Recommendation:** Chances for Children should provide more information and marketing material to current mentees on how to become future mentors.

### 3.2 THE MENTORS

In total 17 mentors responded to our survey, of which there were 11 female and 6 male mentors. The majority of respondents used to be a mentor for Chances for Children in the past and over 65% of respondents were over 30 years old.

**Table 14: Are you currently involved in the Chances for Children mentor program by gender.**

			Yes	No, but I used to be a mentor	Total
What is your gender?	Female	Count	2	9	11
		%	18.2%	81.8%	100.0%
	Male	Count	4	2	6
		%	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>
		%	35.3%	64.7%	100.0%

The majority of mentors came from metropolitan areas such as Melbourne (50%), Adelaide (14.3%), and Bendigo (14.3%). Some respondents were also from Mildura (14.3%) and Swan Hill (7.1%) and only two of the mentors had received assistance from Chances for Children in the past (Table 15).

**Table 15: Did you also receive assistance from Chances for Children when at school?**

	Frequency	Percent
No	15	88.2%
Yes	2	11.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The majority of mentors (82%) indicated that they held managerial or professional roles at their current workplaces and three quarters specified that they held a bachelor degree or above.

**Table 16: Did you have any previous mentoring experience?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	5	35.7%
No	9	64.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Many of the mentors (64.3%) did not have any previous mentoring experience (Table 16). Additionally, when asked about their confidence in their ability as mentors almost 40% were only 'slightly' or 'somewhat' confident (table 17).

**Table 17: How confident are you in your ability as a mentor?**

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Slightly confident	4	26.7%
Somewhat confident	2	13.3%
Quite confident	7	46.7%
Extremely confident	2	13.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

When we asked about their general satisfaction levels with the Chances for Children mentor program (table 18) almost half of the respondents were satisfied (47%) with three claiming high satisfaction levels (20%). While, at the same time 20% were not sure about it additional 13% were not very satisfied.

**Table 18: In general, how would you rate your satisfaction level with the Chances for Children mentor program?**

	Frequency	Percent
Very satisfied	3	20.0%
Satisfied	7	46.7%
Not sure	3	20.0%
Not very satisfied	2	13.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Additionally about 21% of respondents indicated that they did not receive enough support from Chances for Children. It seems that some mentors who did not have previous experience with mentoring and did not feel confident about their abilities as mentors need more support from Chances for Children in building their capacity as mentors.

**Recommendation:** Chances for Children should ensure that mentors without some previous experience in mentoring are provided with assistance needed to make sure they feel confident in that role.

On a positive note, none of the respondents had difficulty with becoming a mentor for Chances for Children. Almost half did not find the recruitment process “neither difficult nor easy”, while the reminder (57%) indicated that the process was easy or very easy.

It was interesting to see the variety of main reasons for being involved in the mentor program (Table 19). The majority of respondents indicated that they came from rural Victoria and knew how important mentoring was for young people from rural areas (28.6%).

**Table 19: What are your main reasons for being involved in the mentor program?**

	Frequency	Percent
I am a past recipient of the program and it allows me to show my gratitude	1	7.1%
I come from rural Victoria and know how important mentoring is for young people from rural areas	4	28.6%
I came from the country to study at University and really struggled to adjust in my first year	1	7.1%
Got involved through a friend and liked it	3	21.4%
Other	5	35.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

They also perceived the program as something valuable or just wanted to express their gratitude as the past recipient.

Other responses included:

*“From the country and wanted to help out.”*

*“Good program to get involved in.”*

*“I saw that the transition to uni was not easy for everyone and so I wanted to assist where possible.”*

*“My wife and parents come from rural Victoria and I understand how important mentoring is for young people from rural areas.”*

*“Was approached by a friend who worked in the program.”*

Several survey questions asked specifically about the details regarding their relationship with mentees. It seems that there was not one specific type of relationship prevalent in the program. Some of the mentors (28.6%) established a formal association involving discussions specifically related to mentee's tertiary study. The same number of mentors indicated that they had a close friendship with the mentee in which all issues, both study and personal, were discussed. A semiformal relationship which primarily involved addressing issues relating to study, but sometimes related to more personal issues, was established by almost 43% of respondents. The majority of respondents (66.7%) also confirmed that they met with their mentee less than once a month while only one respondent had meetings two or three times a month (table 20). It is interesting to notice that this particular mentor was the only respondent who rated their mentorship on mentee as ‘significant’.

**Table 20: The relationship between the frequency of meetings and the level of impact on mentee**

Throughout last year, how many times per month did you meet with your mentee?		How would you rate the impact your mentorship had on your mentee?			Total
		Significant impact	Some impact	Hard to say	
Less than once a month	Count	0	3	4	7
Once a month	Count	0	2	1	3
Two or three times per month	Count	1	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>

Other responses included:

*“My mentee was not overly engaged in the process and was not active in responding to contact.”*

*“We failed to get going with the relationship.”*

On a positive note, all respondents agreed that they would recommend becoming a mentor to their friends.

**Recommendation:** Chances for Children should encourage both, mentors and mentees, to meet at least once a month.

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### 3.3 THE REFERRING PROFESSIONALS

A ‘Referring Professional’ is a person who works on a professional basis with the child or young person and their family. This could be a sporting coach, classroom teacher, welfare officer or social worker. They help families during the submission process, they submit the application for funding and they are also notified in writing if the application was successful.

The researchers interviewed the referring professionals from Mildura in a format of a focus group which enabled their perceptions and voices to be heard and allowed them to think through questions and engage in discussion. They represented a local senior secondary school, social workers working with kindergarten kids with special needs and young people with mental and social problems. They represented various organisations: government, private and not-for-profit.

#### **Community needs:**

The discussion was dominated by the challenges the community, and particularly young people, currently face in the region. All participants emphasized the financial struggle of the local families:

*“There is an increasing number of children with additional needs and there is an increasing number of families that are struggling financially. Definitely. That has been quite noticeable in the last six years since I was in the early intervention.”*

*“They are kids who are 15-16 who want to go to TAFE but they do not have that money. So we will put in for Chances for those sort of things.”*

*“A lot of families are just struggling.”*

Many respondents also commented on a growing number of young people who need special assistance:

*“There is a real combination of financial and mental issues and so forth. Maybe a lot of parents are suffering a lot of financial stuff but the kids sort of are getting the flack. Flow on effect.”*

*“We just find in our service it is becoming more prevalent, there are more children with additional needs and occurrences of autism in Mildura is blowing out of all proportion.”*

The most apparent need for young people was the cost of education in Year 11 and 12:

*“We are the largest school here. We do quite a few referrals. The costs of books obviously and art kits, we put a lot of referrals for our kids. There is also compulsory camps in a number of programs in Year 11 and 12, for example outdoor ed, there is excursions they have to go on to be able to assess the environments part of what they do, books, art kits, when they do photography, they need support for photo paper. That support in Year 11 and 12 is vital as some parents would say ‘please don’t do these subjects because they will have these costs’ and even in dance and drama there is a compulsory excursion they need to go.”*

*“The number of VET programs have costs attached to them. Which are not the fees but the materials.”*

*“I work with VCAL kids and I put a lot of referrals for these kids. Many of them do arts as well. We put in for \$400 compulsory VCAL and for some of them who would do arts. The kids I work with they have got a lot of insight that they can’t afford it, they are concerned about it, and they quite responsive to the help. They think that it will take the load off their parents’ shoulders.”*

*“We have a few that need funding for school like clothes and like that. These children are coping with stuff from school because they haven’t got the right uniform, books. Sometimes, I think the family needs a break away for a week so we try to push for that as well. We notice that those in year 11 and 12 need a lot of extra stuff for school, but there is no money.”*

The group also commented on the lack of government support which contributes to the hardships the families in the region face:

*“There is funding available from the government to kindergarten children but the kids would have to be considered in danger or at risk to themselves or others. And that’s the main category that our children are eligible, or when they have got a medical condition that would require that support like severe epilepsy. But there is a number of children that do not fit into those categories but they still require support. These are the children we apply for [for Chances]. I guess, we have been very grateful for Chances for that reason because where KISP [government program] doesn’t cover it, those parents would never be able to cover those costs. For example, the last application I did, the child was granted about \$6,000 from Chances and that was enough to provide an aide for two terms and then the family ended up funding themselves for the next two years as they could see the difference.”*

*“Education maintenance allowance that has been removed - it becomes evident that families are struggling for those types of items.”*

**Chances for Children impact:**

The impact of the Chances for Children program was evident from all the responses offered. The participants provided a number of success stories facilitated by Chances for Children:

*“There is definitely a positive impact on community.”*

*“I can give you an example of a teacher who is teaching with us at the moment who received the chanced funding when she was at school, her mum was single mum, she is an amazing dancer and singer and she wanted to pursue the musical theatre career. Chances supported her to pay for the tuition for dance and singing lessons; they also supported her when she got to a performing arts tertiary course. She had a 10 year career in musical theatre, also did a degree in teaching. She is now teaching dance and drama and theatre at our school. Without that support she would struggle to develop the skills. It is evident that Chances really assisted her. I have got lots of examples.”*

Interestingly, it was also noted that Chances for Children’s impact on the community may not always be described in terms of a ‘big success story’ but there were examples of small contributions which had an emotional or social impact:

*“We have got one boy that has Asperger’s and he wanted to join in a group something to do with cards, but there wasn’t the financial help available but also there was the struggle socially. So we got some funding and he was able to join the group. It is only once a week but he goes, gets out of the house, whereas the rest of the week he will be at home. To me that’s been a really big step for him.”*

*“Impact definitely. The difference in terms how it may be once they receive the money...I even noticed, once they received the money, the kids would turn up in their school uniform quite proud for having the school uniform.”*

*“So with the little children I work with they haven’t fully flourished to that stage but certainly without the funding they would be so much worse off.”*

*“The students that were able to do subjects they thought they were not able to do – it builds their confidence and they become more engaged and so you may not have evidence of success but they had opportunities. That can make a world of difference to them.”*

**Funding amounts:**

In terms of the funding amounts offered by Chances for Children all respondents agreed that any financial support has been really appreciated.

*“It is great! We are delighted we can provide any amount. They all have various needs, urgencies so the money is provided for it.”*

*"I am not aware of any other support like Chances."*

One respondent noticed that the growing popularity of the program, and a growing number of applications, limited the funding availability:

*"When I first applied [as referring professional] the funding was provided for a year. The program was not that well known. The last round, there was more applications so they decided they even it out so each family gets \$6,000 each for lesser time."*

**Application process:**

As the referring professionals, the participants had a very good insight into the reality of the application process. Most agreed that it was a simple process:

*"The process is really good. We support them in the Chances application."*

*"The kids do not have an issue with the application process. It is pretty easy and it is all confidential. They are very well aware that they can't afford it if they do not get help."*

Although the application process itself was generally viewed as a simple process, many participants pointed out that the requirement of providing 'a home budget' with the application was problematic for some.

*"In some ways it is a quite an invasive application process because the families need to disclose their budget – their income and expenditure – so that's quite daunting. So, for our low SES families or just time poor families, like for example the families I work with – with children with special needs – you know they are struggling anyway, to sit down and have to complete that budget it is really daunting."*

*"I haven't made this too difficult for families. I have taken this responsibility on myself. However, I guess, when they look at the budget, that's always a dread 'Oh my gosh how am I going to do this'."*

*"Usually the budget side is very daunting for the families so we support them to go through this budget with them."*

*"Sometimes I felt uncomfortable because they all send me their Centrelink statements, their budgets, income tax assessment – a lot of personal information, that I always just say 'I need that as part of the application but I will not look at it, just put it in the envelope' but I suppose they just trust me on that."*

**Recommendation:** Chances for Children should ensure that the Referring Professionals are supported in the application process especially in the stage of the 'budget' preparation.

Despite the difficulty 'a home budget' item creates it was recognised that this was an important element of the application.

*"Most of the families have also said that it was therapeutic doing that as well, beneficial and helpful, because it is a very well devised simple budget."*

There was also an awareness of Chances for Children flexibility and assistance available in devising the budget:

*"The families can approach the financial counsellor provided for Chances."*

*"I was considering doing an application for a child from a Non-English speaking family. The Mum knew only a couple of words in English. It was really quite tricky to do the application with her so I rang [Chances] and they agreed we just provided the Centrelink statement and not worried about the budget."*

The local senior secondary school's representative emphasized an important role the Chances personnel played in helping with the application process by attending the school enrolment evening:

*"When we have got our enrolment night that's when families receive booklists and their costs and often freak out when it all is added up. The last two years we had Chances come on the night and actually be a stall set up on the night and so we worked to have them there so our wellbeing coordinator would catch those families who may need the Chances support and guide them to the Chances."*

#### **Raising awareness about Chances for Children:**

The participants also discussed ways of raising the awareness about Chances for Children to maximize the outreach to those not engaged or not aware of the program:

*"I think people are aware of it but I do not feel they know how exactly to start: where to, how to. I think they know it is there but they do not know how to take that next step. Or should they take the next step."*

*"I am a private organisation and there is quite a few like me out there. I do not know how much they know about Chances for Children..."*

*"I work with lots of disadvantaged kids and when you ask them: 'did you do sport', or 'did you do something outside of school' they might not because they couldn't afford it. It would be good to pick some of those kids in the early age to get them into some positive stuff. So sometimes it is getting the message through to the families..."*

*"The information to the providers is really important like organizations and groups that they know the kids are choosing not to do things because they can't afford to. Linking them with community organisations like dance school, scouts..."*

**Recommendation:** Chances for Children need to work out new strategies for engaging young people who dropped-out of school and/or are not part of any social group.

One participant suggested that Chances could utilise 'workplace giving' more as the way of raising the funds:

*"Workplace giving is something that needs to be encouraged to boost the funding. Mallee Family Care - we have this option of giving - \$5 a fortnight deducted out. That could be implemented across the other workplaces across Mildura. \$2.50 a week is not much."*

**Recommendation:** Chances for Children should follow up on the idea of 'workplace giving' as a way of ensuring on-going income.

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### 3.4 COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE PERSONNEL

The involvement of community partners and sponsors is paramount to the success of Chances for Children. At a small discussion group, the researchers asked about the perceptions of community needs as well as the motivation behind supporting Chances as well as about the perceived benefit of Chances for Children to the local community.

#### **Motivation and ways of supporting Chances for Children:**

It was clear from the focus group discussion that the community and corporate support for Chances for Children takes many forms. For example, the Community Bank focused on providing scholarship funds:

*"A lot of our board members have university degrees and did not want any children to be underprivileged because of the money or the cost factor. So we looked at doing scholarships. We do a \$5000 scholarship and now we do four a year, so we give \$20,000 a year to Chances for anyone wanting a scholarship on the NSW side of the border. One of our board members is heavily involved with Chances and understands the scholarship model so we have done a lot of research."*

Andrew from Saunders Design Group explained that their input involved both funds and in-kind support:

*"The company started 1997, (and) my involvement started on Chances' first birthday. I was filming the night and I was there when the governor general was here so that was a bit of a*

*buzz. I got overwhelmed by the night and got more understanding about the impact it was having on the community. The network of people who were involved was very diverse so... that's a very strong program you just wanted to be involved in. I got a chance to contribute through this company but also got involved in the promotion side. The majority of what we do is in-kind support, mostly through developing fundraising and promotion."*

Another way of supporting Chances for Children is represented by the Rotary Club of Mildura which organises the annual Tour de Murray competition that attracts a lot of participants and media:

*"I have changed the Rotary Clubs last year and was handed a portfolio of a Tour de Murray which was organising their major fundraiser that they have run for 15 years under Chances for Children, Rotary club of Mildura and Mallee Family Care. So, we had another successful year, we raised around \$23,000 - that quite improved this year... a lot participating."*

### **Needs of the community:**

All the participants were acutely aware of the community struggles. They all reflected on increasing pressures on the local families:

*"Demand on the program is going to increase. The socio-economic bracket that you thought will not be requiring Chances support will start coming through. So there are some challenges on how we can be more responsive to also the immediate needs, not only the long-term investment. Look it's..., with technology these days it's easy to donate."*

*"With our scholarship we do not specify what kind. It doesn't have to be an academic scholarship; it could be musical, or agricultural. It was important for our board not to be restrictive because the actual Bendigo scholarship is only academic and a lot of children from here, they don't want to do just the academic..."*

*"The gap is getting wider. The whole tertiary education is getting less and less affordable so for our board members it is a big thing to keep that alive."*

*"It is the isolation here as well."*

*"It is not only uni fees but also accommodation, and everything..."*

### **Benefits to community:**

The community partners reflected on various benefits they could see Chances for Children provided. One of them was community happiness:

*"It is the assistance the program can provide to the families. It creates a chance for a happier community. One at the time – it is another good thing about the program, it doesn't simple tie up for a lot of bigger factors and statistics, it is just go one at a time and we just see how it goes. And the potential will stem from there."*

*“It gives a broader outcome ‘cause they can look at lots of different areas that normally they would not be able to go to...”*

The flexibility and the model used by Chances for Children was a big factor:

*“Obviously the model they use was a big factor...and there is no one else locally that offers the scholarship sort of program. We could have done it through Bendigo Bank but they couldn’t guarantee that we would get a local recipient and we thought our money is local, we are spending a lot of our community’s money so we thought it should stay local...that why we decided to stay local.”*

*“We roll it out through schools and we become really connected with local careers offices. The hardest thing we find is actually finding the people to do the scholarship as there are a lot of people that do not even have the resources to know where to look for these sorts of things”*

*“It is a pretty simple application form on the website, that’s pretty good.”*

*“A lot of programs do not necessarily provide you with the solutions. You just need to roll up your sleeves and do it. And Chances is like that. We are not going to be waiting for the government to try to solve this or...get logged in with a national organisation which is just...this is a program started by the community, for the community. That’s why the Chances program is good. It taps into things that policy can’t capture.”*

**Recommendation:** Chances for Children should ensure that the current flexible approach to funding is continued.

Some also realistically assessed the expected return on the investment:

*“Investment is not guaranteed to come back to the community. But this is not something we think about. It is a long term investment and hopefully the recipient will come back as an engineer or whatever to help to enrich the community in that way. It is just a hope that may be an outcome. It is one of the unique... that is another way of solving/shifting the skills professionals back to the region.”*

### **Challenges:**

One of the most prevalent issues relating to challenges facing Chances for Children in the future was the sustainability of community support and promotion of Chances for Children’s success.

*“We both have problems because the Chances has been so long out there that all the media are a bit... about the story and every time you put ‘bank’ into it people get bored with it so I am forever trying to come up with creative ideas about it. Whenever I do a media release there is a photo to go with it. The recipient will come and will get a photo taken.”*

*“Unfortunately, there is some compliancy issues with some media outlets so there is always a challenge for the promotions working group. Because Chances is a long term investment it’s not about responding to a quick event so everyone can jump on and see an end result...you can’t...it’s hard to get that momentum.”*

*“That is a real challenge to try to sustain some buzz. There is a lot of work that goes into it.”*

**Recommendation:** Chances for Children should build a promotional strategy that both ensures the sustainability of income as well as marketing the brand in the community.

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### 3.5 THE CASE MANAGERS AND CHANCES PERSONNEL

The conversation with Chances for Children personnel commenced with the current Director Fiona Harley explaining how Chances for Children came into being:

*“There were a group of businessman, including our CEO, having lunch one Friday at a cafe, and there was a young girl waitressing who they were chatting to. And she was finishing Year 12 and they asked “what are you going to do?” and she said she didn’t know, probably just continue working in the cafe. She was living independently, she was supporting herself through year 11 and 12 and she said “I would love to go to uni to study law but obviously I can’t afford to go to Melbourne to study law”. They chatted about it and decided that it was a disgrace and that should not be allowed to happen. And so they then got the Water Authorities on board who each chipped in \$10,000 and it was at that point when I got involved. We went to the Senior College and said “give us the names of the four kids who without financial support wouldn’t be able go to university next year”. And really that’s how it was. That girl was one of them. She’s got to study law and she did very well. So that’s how it began.”*

*“In that point in time we didn’t have any processes in place, we didn’t have any application forms, we didn’t have anything. They just developed over time. The aim was that we would get financial support from the community from trust funds to be able to build the program. At that point in time we had \$40,000 and that was it. Since then we have gone on and we now have got around \$1.3-1.4 million in reserve. We have spent around \$4.0 million for about 1500 young people. The community support has just been remarkable. I think it’s one of those things that the community took the ownership of it and have invested in it.”*

#### **The community needs:**

All of the participants, including two case managers who are both ex- chances tertiary recipients, shared their reflections on community needs, emphasising that they have not changed in the 15

years since Chances for Children began. The **crisis with youth disengagement, in particular**, was cited as a paramount issue for the community.

*“In terms of our catchment area, there is an appalling crisis with disengagement. 16-25 year olds, its... one in four. It is getting worse. 25% are not engaged in education, training or employment. It’s quite startling.”*

*“Year 12 completion rate is very low as well. Family incomes are much lower than average. So it is a perfect storm in a sense...”*

*“There is a lot of young people in our catchment area who are not engaged in anything and research demonstrated that the longer it occurs the worse the life outcomes that happen. Unfortunately in this community there is an underclass that has been continuing to occur. We do pick up some of them, some young people who managed to have that aspiration...”*

**Lack of aspirations** was seen as a major challenge for Chances for Children and the local community, which was pointed out by one of case managers:

*“That’s another issue: a lot of young people don’t see the point of continuing on due to isolation, family factors, so there is entrenched poverty. There is a lot going on up here. In terms of not just Mildura, but the region.”*

*“It is entrenched poverty and kids failing to take up school but the keyword is the aspirations of the kids which they inherit from their families, they inherit them in prep, if mum and dad went to university...we now have a big group of siblings on our books...we see whole families go through... by the time they go to the last sibling they’ve got the skills and experience to do it themselves. If you can keep them engaged from primary school, be that in sport or school camp, it is a real continuum, that’s where Chances has a chance to change.”*

The Chances for Children representatives also suggested that there were several major hurdles for young people who wanted to study at university. These were accommodation, transport and lack of know-how.

*“Our demographics haven’t changed. We haven’t gotten closer to Melbourne or Adelaide so those costs of effectively running a second household for families will never change.”*

*“The biggest killers are the accommodation costs. There is no doubt about it. They are the killers. If they are eligible for youth allowance then that probably covers their living but the accommodation... particularly when they are in their first year of college accommodation, that is really expensive.*

*“For kids who have not had much experience of the city you know you want them to succeed and giving them the college accommodation gives them the best chance to succeed. For families who have never been to university, putting them in the college accommodation that is across university is probably the only option for their young kids and they are more likely*

*to put them in college accommodation whether they can afford it or not to make sure they're safe".*

Having an in-depth understanding of these challenges by Chances for Children personnel means that the program has been established to respond to these needs in as flexible a way as possible. As Fiona Harley explained:

*"Success isn't always tertiary education. Another valuable thing about the program is its ability to tailor its support to the need of a young person."*

The flexibility and personal tailoring were mentioned as the outstanding features of the program:

*"We are very flexible in what we fund. I would hate to ever see that we lost that ability, that's really one of these things that does set us apart from other programs."*

*"I bought three pianos and violins, lots of computers."*

*"Our tertiaries do only one application and then it's reviewed six monthly so they don't need to do more paperwork. We fund them at the level they require for the duration of their course."*

*"We have always asked for a lot of information to really get to know and understand the young person and their family. Because at the end of the day we can be investing anything up to \$40,000 -50,000 dollars per young person. We need to know that we have a sound investment. We have a stewardship of the community dollars. So it's trying to get the balance right."*

It is also evident that Chances for Children has positioned itself in the community not as 'a charity' but as a 'scholarship program' where wide range of support mechanisms may be provided:

*"I have seen an increase in the number of applications from what you would consider (to be) people who do OK. On paper, or by the car they are driving..... But they are just short \$2,000-3,000 dollars to get them over that line. It would be a real issue for them to come to an agency which is a charity... The community has to see that you don't have to be on a healthcare card to apply for the main fund. Sometimes the mentoring or advice is enough but if the wheels get wobbly we are here".*

*"There has been a number of families where the kids are not eligible for youth allowance, the family doesn't have a health care card, so on paper they are reasonably good but their expenditure is up there and they don't have that \$15,000 spare to send their kids to university."*

*"There are lots of farming families like that. They are asset rich so not eligible for Centrelink support. We always support them."*

The Chances for Children personnel were quite confident about the current financial standing of the program and its visibility within the community. However when asked about the biggest

challenge for the next couple of years, the responses focused on the ability to engage wider groups of young people:

*“Some of what needs to happen and is sitting now alongside Chances as a project is really unpacking the aspirational-cultural issues that exist in our community that are probably preventing kids reach their full potential. Kids are conditioned from a very early age not to aspire to be a doctor or to be a lawyer because it’s not what our family does... so it would be good to do some work around changing that.”*

*“I think how we can continue is to remove the barriers that are preventing the kids achieving their full potential. And I think as time has gone on we realised that the finances are really only one of the barriers. They are the barrier, there is no doubt about that, but it is about Chances changing that culture and that perception of what you can do or what you have a right to achieve...”*

*“Those that are not here I am worried about. Those who are conditioned since primary school and we do not see them, this is our challenge, how to engage them.”*

## 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1 THE EVALUATION

Chances for Children, established in 2000, is a fund that aims to remove financial barriers for children and young people in the Mallee to achieve their potential (be it in tertiary education, secondary school and, sporting and, musical activities, or by providing assistance for those with learning difficulties). Its mission statement declares:

*“The absence of money or support will not stand in the way of a young person achieving their potential. Dare to dream.”*

Since its establishment, the Chances for Children Program has assisted approximately 1100 children and young people in the Mallee Region through three separate funds:

- Chances for Children Fund (financial assistance to pursue tertiary education)
- Keeping Kids at Secondary School Fund (supporting students in Years 11 and 12 who are at risk of dropping out)
- Connecting Kids with Community Fund (supporting extra-curricular activities).

This evaluation of the Chances for Children program sought to examine the processes and procedures used to:

- Identify the needs of the young people in the Mallee region;
- Select recipients and allocate funds/support;
- Re-engage and prepare past recipients to engage in the mentoring program;
- Attract, secure and maintain local community sponsorship;
- Meet the needs of its key stakeholder groups (i.e., the community, the recipients, the mentors and the sponsors);
- Respond to the needs of the key stakeholder groups; and
- Raise the hopes and aspirations of the youth community within the region.

To collect this information, it sought data from those who are involved in the program and who have some interests in the outcomes of the review (i.e., the key stakeholder groups). This includes those who financially support the program (i.e., the sponsors) and who would want to know to what extent their financial support has positively impacted on the lives of the recipients and whether their money has been well managed. It also includes the young people themselves who have been recipients of the program’s funds and services. The evaluation also sought information from those who manage the allocation of funds and the selection process (i.e., the Case Managers and Chances for Children personnel), to provide feedback on how the program’s processes and procedures could better meet the needs of the local community. To achieve these aims a combination of data collection methods were employed that varied according to the type of key stakeholder group. That is, on-line surveys were used with the mentors and recipients of the program for which valid email addresses were available from the organisation, in-depth telephone

interviews were undertaken with a small sample of recipients who had responded to the on-line survey (i.e., four) and three focus group meetings were conducted with the case managers, referring professionals and program sponsors.

The evaluation sought the following types of information from each of the participating research subjects:

- Recipients (past and present) - Whether the support met his/her needs and expectations throughout all stages of the program.
- Mentors - Whether mentors were well prepared and supported by the organisation throughout their role and how their role within the program could be improved.
- Referring Professionals/Case Managers/Chances for Children personnel - Whether the administration processes for selecting, managing and monitoring the support and securing sponsorships could be improved.
- Sponsors (past and present) - Whether the intended outcomes have been achieved and funds have been well spent (i.e., value for money).

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## 4.2 THE FINDINGS

This evaluation of the Chances for Children program found that:

- A majority of past recipients was positive about the benefits they gained from participation in the Chances for Children program, including improving their confidence and providing on-going support.
- Nearly all past recipients would recommend the program to friends.
- Financial assistance was the main reason cited by past participants for participating in the program.
- A majority of past recipients were positive about the mentoring they had received.
- Past recipients indicated a willingness to be mentors themselves but did not believe they had actively been sought to perform this role.
- Most mentors had not been recipients of the Chances for Children program themselves.
- Approximately two thirds of mentors had not had previous mentoring experience.
- Nearly half the mentors were unable to specify whether their mentoring had had an impact.
- Referring professionals repeatedly noted the impact of financial pressures on families in regional and rural Victoria.
- Many referring professionals noted the positive effect of the Chances for Children program and its uniqueness in funding many young people who would be ineligible for other forms of support.
- Many referring professionals noted the flexibility of the Chances for Children program and its ability to be useful in a range of circumstances and to support a range of study and career outcomes.
- Community and corporate stakeholders noted the value of the program in supporting the local community.
- Community and corporate stakeholders noted the continuing need of the Chances for Children program due to the financial and social pressures in their community.
- Community and corporate stakeholders noted the uniqueness and flexibility of the program.

- Community and corporate stakeholders noted the need to maintain support for the program.
- Chances for Children personnel confirmed the financial challenges faced by the local community and the continuing need for the program.
- Chances for Children personnel confirmed the financial, social and personal challenges faced by young people moving to the city to study or work.
- Chances for Children personnel believed that a major challenge for the program was to raise low aspirations amongst young people living in the local community.

From the above list of findings we conclude that the program plays a significant role in the community through providing all eligible young people with financial, organisational and emotional support. It is important to emphasise that so far all eligible applicants have been accepted by Chances for Children for funding and support. Its status in the local community is very high and the program is well recognised in the community.

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#### 4.3 THE RECOMMENDATIONS

This evaluation of the Chances for Children program made the following recommendations:

- Chances for Children should engage past participants into promotional activities as their willingness and satisfaction is high.
- Chances for Children should provide more information and marketing material to current mentees on how to become future mentors.
- Chances for Children should ensure that mentors without some previous experience in mentoring are provided with assistance needed to make sure they feel confident in that role.
- Chances for Children should encourage both mentors and mentees to meet at least once a month.
- Chances for Children should ensure that the referring professionals are supported in the application process especially in the stage of the 'budget' preparation.
- Chances for Children need to work out new strategies for engaging young people who dropped-out of school and/or are not part of any social group.
- Chances for Children should follow up on the idea of 'workplace giving' as a way of ensuring on-going income.
- Chances for Children should ensure that the current flexible approach to funding is continued.
- Chances for Children should build a promotional strategy that both ensures the sustainability of income as well as marketing their brand in the community.

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## APPENDIX A: RECIPIENT SURVEY

Dear Chances for Children Recipient,

This survey relates to your contact with the Chances for Children program and the assistance received by you through the program. You have been invited to participate in this survey by Chances for Children as part of a review of the program. Your answers will be analysed by researchers from the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne.

This survey is part of the research project which seeks to gather information on the overall implementation and success of the program. At the end of the project researchers will report on the strengths of the program and what elements could be improved. This study provide useful feedback to the community that has supported the program with the objective of strengthening the impact of the fund on local youth and involving past recipients in future programs as potential mentors, supporters and contributors.

This survey targets all past recipients of the program and will take approximately 5-10 minutes.

Participation in the study is voluntary and you may discontinue participation at any time.

This survey is completely anonymous and the confidentiality of your responses will be protected subject to legal limitations. Data collected during the research process will be stored, according to the University of Melbourne regulations, in a private and secure location at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education for a period of five years and will then be destroyed.

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Melbourne. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, please contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, the University of Melbourne, on phone: (03) 8344 2073 or fax: (03) 9347 6739.

If you have any further queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at the University of Melbourne on phone (03) 9035 4975, or email: [klattm@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:klattm@unimelb.edu.au).

Thank you for your participation.

Dr Gosia Klatt

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### 1. Please select the appropriate box confirming your status



I am a parent of a child who received the support from the Chances program

I am a past or current recipient of the support from the Chances program  
Other (please specify)

**2. What is the recipient's gender?**

Female

Male

**3. How did you find the application process for assistance?**

Very Difficult

Difficult

Neither difficult nor easy

Easy

Very easy

**4. Do you think that the aims, vision and purpose of the program were clearly explained to you by the Chances for Children staff?**

Yes

No

**5. Are you involved in the Chances for Children mentor program?**

Yes

No

**6. What are your main reasons for participating in the Mentor program?**

Need assistance with academic/study commitments

Need some emotional support

Need someone to talk to

I have heard it was great but not sure what to expect

Not sure yet

**7. Which is the closest to the sort of relationship you have formed with your mentor? Please select one option**

A formal association involving discussions specifically related to my tertiary study

A semi-formal relationship which primarily involves addressing issues relating to study, but more personal issues

A close friendship in which all issues, both study and personal are discussed

**8. Throughout last year, how many times per month did you meet with your mentor?**

- Less than once a month
- Once a month
- Two or three times per month
- Four or more times per month
- Not Applicable

**9. Are you planning on continuing participation in Mentor program next year?**

- Yes
- No

**10. What are the main reasons for NOT continuing in the program?**

- I reached the end of the one-year program
- I am confident now and do not need any further assistance
- This program did not really help me
- Too busy with work and study commitments
- Not sure
- Not applicable

**11. In general, how would you rate your satisfaction level with the Chances mentor program?**

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Not sure
- Not very satisfied
- Not satisfied at all

**12. How would you rate the impact your mentorship had on you?**

- Significant impact
- Some impact
- No impact
- Hard to say

**13. Would you recommend this program to your friends?**

Yes

No

**14. Are you planning to become a mentor in the future?**

Definitely yes

Yes

Maybe

Not sure yet

Not really

Definitely not

**15. How would you rate your knowledge of a process on how to become a mentor?**

I am fully aware of the process on how to become a mentor

I have received information from Chances on how to become a mentor and will get back to ready

I am not sure how to become a mentor and will need more information

I have not received any information from Chances on how to become a mentor

I am not interested

**16. Was the contact with Chances staff adequate to address your needs?**

Very helpful

Helpful

Not helpful

Please comment

**17. Please indicate to what extent the assistance from Chances met your needs?**

Significantly

To Some extent

Not met my needs

Not sure

**18. Specifically, what did you ask for in your application?**

Assistance with university study fees

Assistance with TAFE study fees

- Assistance with accommodation costs during my tertiary studies
  - Assistance with books/material costs during my tertiary studies
  - Assistance with costs of buying tools or equipment related to employment
  - Assistance with costs of furthering study or training in specific area (e.g. music, sport, dance etc.)
- Other (please specify)

**19. How satisfied are you with the funding level received?**

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Not sure
- Not very satisfied
- Not satisfied at all

**20. What is the biggest barrier that may prevent you from realising your aspirations?**

- Financial
  - Family situation
  - Lack of opportunities
  - Weak networks
  - Health
- Other (please specify)

**21. To what extent participation in this program improved your confidence in achieving your goals?**

- Significantly improved
- Slightly improved
- No change
- Decreased
- Significantly decreased
- Not sure

**22. How would you rate the ongoing support with your award from Chances?**

- Very strong support
- Strong support

Adequate support

Weak support

Lack of support

**23. Would you be willing to participate in promotional activities for Chances?**

Yes

No

**24. Would you recommend Chances to your friends?**

Yes

No

**25. If you would like to be contacted for further research following up on this survey, please provide your contact details below.**

## APPENDIX B: RECIPIENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### Questions to past recipients

Dates: 4-24 April 2014

Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please, introduce yourself – what is your current occupation/study?</li> <li>• Where are you located?</li> </ul>
Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When did you receive the support from Chances?</li> <li>• How did you find out about the program?</li> <li>• How was the application process?</li> <li>• Was your scholarship monitored in any way?</li> <li>• Did you have a mentor? Did you find it useful?</li> </ul>
Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why did you apply for Chances program?- what were your needs?</li> <li>• Did the program meet your needs?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ if yes in what ways?,</li> <li>○ if not – what would you expect/prefer?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Do you think the Program targets the right groups? Could it be expanded to include more recipients?</li> <li>• How satisfied were you with the support received from Chances?</li> </ul>
Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why did you apply for Chances program? - what were your needs?</li> <li>• What are your goals/aspirations for the future?</li> <li>• What is the biggest barrier that may prevent you from realising your aspirations?</li> <li>• To what extent participation in this program improved your confidence in achieving your goals?</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX C: MENTOR SURVEY

Dear Chances for Children Mentor,

This survey relates to your contact with the Chances for Children program and the assistance you provided as a mentor to the program. You have been invited to participate in this survey by Chances for Children as part of a review of the program. Your answers will be analysed by researchers from the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne.

This survey is part of the research project which seeks to gather information on the overall implementation and success of the program. At the end of the project researchers will report on the strengths of the program and what elements could be improved. This study provide useful feedback to the community that has supported the program with the objective of strengthening the impact of the fund on local youth and involving past recipients in future programs as potential mentors, supporters and contributors.

This survey targets all past and current mentors of the program and will take approximately 10-15 minutes.

Participation in the study is voluntary and you may discontinue participation at any time.

This survey is completely anonymous and the confidentiality of your responses will be protected subject to legal limitations. Data collected during the research process will be stored, according to the University of Melbourne regulations, in a private and secure location at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education for a period of five years and will then be destroyed.

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Melbourne. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, please contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, the University of Melbourne, on phone: (03) 8344 2073 or fax: (03) 9347 6739.

If you have any further queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at the University of Melbourne on phone (03) 9035 4975, or email: [klattm@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:klattm@unimelb.edu.au).

Thank you for your participation.

Dr Gosia Klatt

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<p><b>1. What is your gender?</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Female</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Male</p>
<p><b>2. What is your age?</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> 16-20</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 21-25</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 26-30</p> <p><input type="radio"/> &lt;30</p>
<p><b>3. Did you also receive assistance from Chances when at school?</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p>If, yes - for how many months?</p>
<p><b>4. Are you currently involved in the Chances for Children mentor program?</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No, but I used to be a mentor</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>
<p><b>5. What is (was) the period of your mentoring assistance?</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1-6 months</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 6-12 months</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1-2 years</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 2-3 years</p> <p><input type="radio"/> over 3 years</p> <p><input type="radio"/> N/A</p>
<p><b>6. How difficult did you find the recruitment process?</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Very Difficult</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Difficult</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Neither difficult nor easy</p>

Easy

Very easy

**7. What is your occupation?**

MANAGER AND ADMINISTRATOR e.g. Specialist Managers, Farm Managers

PROFESSIONAL e.g. Science, Health, Education, Building and Engineering Professionals

ASSOCIATE PROFESSIONAL e.g. Sales, Services, Administration, Nursing

TRADESPERSON AND RELATED WORKER e.g. Electrical, Mechanical, Horticultural Workers

ADVANCED CLERICAL AND SERVICE WORKER e.g. Secretaries and Personal Assistants

INTERMEDIATE CLERICAL, SALES AND SERVICE WORKER

INTERMEDIATE PRODUCTION AND TRANSPORT WORKER e.g. Plant Operators, Machine Operators

ELEMENTARY CLERICAL, SALES AND SERVICE WORKER e.g. sales and services

LABOURER AND RELATED WORKER e.g. cleaners, factory workers

**8. What is the highest level of school that you have completed?**

Level 1 – Certificate I

Level 2 – Certificate II

Level 3 – Certificate III

Level 4 – Certificate IV

Level 5 – Diploma

Level 6 – Advanced Diploma, Associate Degree

Level 7 – Bachelor Degree

Level 8 – Bachelor Honours Degree, Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma

Level 9 – Masters Degree

Level 10 – Doctoral Degree

Other (please specify)

**9. In which city or town are you located?**

Metropolitan Melbourne

- Mildura
- Swan Hill
- Bendigo
- Adelaide
- Other North West Victoria
- Other South West NSW

Other (please specify)

**10. Did you have any previous mentoring experience?**

- Yes
- No

**11. How confident are you in your ability as a mentor?**

- Not confident at all
- Slightly confident
- Somewhat confident
- Quite confident
- Extremely confident

**12. What are your main reasons for being involved in the mentor program?**

- I am a past recipient of the program and it allows me to show my gratitude
- I am a parent of a past recipient of the program and it allows me to show my gratitude
- I come from rural Victoria and know how important mentoring is for young people from rural areas
- I came from the country to study at University and really struggled to adjust in my first year
- Volunteering is good for my professional career
- Got involved through a friend and liked it
- Other

Other (please specify)

**13. Which is the closest to the sort of relationship you have formed with your mentee? Please select one option**

- A formal association involving discussions specifically related to mentee's tertiary study
- A semi-formal relationship which primarily involves addressing issues relating to study, but sometimes relates to more personal issues
- A close friendship in which all issues, both study and personal are discussed

**14. Throughout last year, how many times per month did you meet with your mentee?**

- Less than once a month
- Once a month
- Two or three times per month
- Four or more times per month

**15. How would you rate the impact your mentorship had on your mentee?**

- Significant impact
- Some impact
- No impact
- Hard to say

Other (please specify)

**16. In general, how would you rate your satisfaction level with the Chances mentor program?**

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Not sure
- Not very satisfied
- Not satisfied at all

**17. Do you plan to continue to participate in the mentor program this year?**

- Yes
- No

**18. If you do not plan to continue volunteering for Chances - what is your main**

**reason?**

- Work commitments
- Family commitments
- Study commitments
- No longer interested
- Not applicable

Other (please specify)

**19. How would you rate the ongoing support in your mentoring role from Chances?**

- Very strong support
- Strong support
- Adequate support
- Weak support
- Lack of support

**20. Would you recommend becoming a mentor to your friends?**

- Yes
- No

**21. Do you think that the aims, vision and purpose of the mentor program were clearly explained to you by the Chances for Children staff?**

- Yes
- No

**22. Would you be willing to participate in promotional activities for Chances?**

- Yes
- No

**23. If you would like to be contacted for further research following up on this survey, please provide your contact details below.**

**APPENDIX D: REFERRING PROFESSIONALS FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**Focus Group Questions to Chances personnel  
Evaluation of the Chances program  
4 May 2015**

Background	<p>Please introduce yourself/your company</p> <p>How did you find out about Chances?</p> <p>Can you describe your role as referring professional?</p> <p>Can you provide an example of a referral you made recently?</p>
Why?	<p>Tell me about the needs of community/kids in the region</p> <p>Have you noticed any changes in the community since the program started?</p>
Impact	<p>Do you know the purpose of the Chances programme?</p> <p>Are you aware of the impact Chances has on life of local kids?</p> <p>Do you think the Program targets the right groups? Could it be expanded to include more recipients?</p>
Processes	<p>To what extent are you satisfied with the Chances communication of the impact or the management of the program?</p>
Limitations/ Improvements	<p>What are the limitations to increase the impact of this program?</p> <p>Have you got any suggestions on how to improve the program?</p>

**APPENDIX E: CHANCES PERSONNEL AND CASE MANAGERS: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**Focus Group Questions to Chances personnel  
Evaluation of the Chances program  
4 May 2015**

Background	Please explain your role in Chances
Why?	Tell me about the needs of community/kids in the region? Have you noticed any changes in the community since the program started?
Impact	Are you aware of the impact Chances has on life of local kids? Do you think the Program targets the right groups? Could it be expanded to include more recipients?
Processes	Do you think the application process is effective? Do you think your mentor program is effective? How do you keep community/industry stakeholders interested in contributing?
Limitations/ Improvements	What are the limitations to increase the impact of this program? What are the challenges for the future? Have you got any suggestions on how to improve the program?

**APPENDIX F: CORPORATE PARTNERS AND SPONSORS: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**Focus Group Questions to program sponsors  
Evaluation of the Chances program  
4 May 2015**

Background	<p>Please introduce yourself/your company?</p> <p>How long have you supported the Chances?</p> <p>In what way do you support this program?</p>
Why?	<p>What is your motivation to provide support? (What are the needs in the community?)</p> <p>Have you noticed any changes in the community since the program started?</p>
Impact	<p>Do you know the purpose of the Chances programme?</p> <p>Are you aware of the impact your support has on life of local kids?</p> <p>Do you think the Program targets the right groups? Could it be expanded to include more recipients?</p>
Processes	<p>Are you aware of how the program is managed? How the funds are distributed?</p> <p>To what extent are you satisfied with the Chances communication of the impact or the management of the program?</p>
Limitations/ Improvements	<p>What are the limitations to increase the impact of this program?</p> <p>Have you got any suggestions on how to improve the program?</p>

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[www.chancesforchildren.com.au](http://www.chancesforchildren.com.au)



*15th birthday*  
**chances** dare to dream