

# Girls With A Purpose

Evaluation Report

July 2006

"Developing self worth, friendship and purpose in young women"



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Lifehouse Project Inc, a community organisation based on the Gold Coast, has found that young women between the ages of 13-17 years old are vulnerable to, and often experience, low self worth and a lack of purpose. Low self worth in adolescents can contribute to teenage pregnancy, disengagement from school, drug and alcohol abuse, self-harming behaviours, homelessness and unhealthy relationships.

To prevent the issues attributed to low self worth, Lifehouse Project has developed *Girls With A Purpose*, a ten week program working with young women between the ages of 14-17 years. *Girls With A Purpose* is based on the 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents identified by the Search Institute (Starkman, 2002). The Search Institute outlines the developmental assets that help young people to be healthy, caring and responsible. The Institute suggests that the more assets a young person gains, the more likely they are to have success at school, and the less likely they are to engage in high-risk behaviours. Using strength-based games, activities and discussions, the *Girls With A Purpose* program develops the participants' assets to help them gain a positive identity and a sense of purpose.

Funding, received from the Youth Support Coordinator Initiative in February 2006, supported the facilitation and implementation of *Girls With A Purpose* to seven students from five schools:

1. Southport State High School
2. Pacific Pines State High School
3. Benowa State High School
4. Elanora State High School
5. Palm Beach-Currumbin State High School

The evaluation indicates that the program achieved its aims. Six girls graduated, and all (100%) stated that they had gained confidence during the program. Eighty percent (80%) stated that they had gained self-esteem and improved their communication skills. Sixty percent (60%) stated that they had better relationships, a better attitude and felt more confident about their future. Each participant could identify how the program had contributed to their personal development, and how the skills learnt would help them in their future. All participants stated that they would recommend the program to their friends, and all were interested in a second phase of the program which might involve participating in some community action.

*“My confidence has changed. I feel better about myself. Mum has noticed a positive change in my life.”*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. The recruitment and selection process utilised an interview technique which ensured that the girls felt special and privileged to be chosen for the program. It is recommended that future programs use this method to select students.
2. It is recommended that each *Girls With A Purpose* program have a maximum of six participants. This group size enabled the girls to fully participate in all activities and discussions, and have adequate one-to-one adult attention.
3. The program ran for ten weeks, with an extra session for the Princess Party. This method was found to be successful, and it is recommended that future programs run for a minimum of ten weeks with the eleventh week dedicated to the Princess Party.
4. *Girls With A Purpose* was developed using a strengths based approach. This approach worked with the participant's strengths, encouraging them to develop self worth. It is recommended that future programs working with young women with low self esteem operate in a strengths-based approach.
5. The team building exercises were found to be important when developing group relationships. The group benefited from problem solving activities and challenges, which each member accomplished from working together. It is therefore recommended that a *Girls With A Purpose* program engages in activities that encourage group ownership and team work.
6. Providing healthy refreshments each week made the participants feel valued. It is recommended that food or refreshments be provided each week in future programs.
7. Two female facilitators ran the program, and the girls commented that they felt included and connected to the facilitators. It is recommended that a minimum of two facilitators run the program. This enables one person to facilitate the sessions and one to observe and monitor group interactions.
8. In the post-interviews, the girls stated that they would like to participate in a second phase of the program. The girls suggested going into a nursing home and reading to the elderly, or setting up a buddy system with children from a hospital or child care centre. It is recommended that *Girls With A Purpose* develop a second phase to the program which would involve the girls helping the community.
9. Due to the program being held in a community venue (away from school), it is recommended that a reliable and consistent transport system be established for the benefit and safety of the participants. Other programs might work better being held on the school site.
10. It is recommended for future partnerships that a communication and reporting protocol be established during the initial stages of setting up the program.

## **GIRLS WITH A PURPOSE**

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The program was delivered to a small group of girls who volunteered to be on the program after an initial interview. The program was delivered for three hours every week for 10 weeks in a community setting. The program was facilitated by two facilitators from Lifehouse Project. The participants were also asked to find another mentor (external to the program) to support them in practicing what they had learnt between sessions. The program used experiential learning, team work and discussion to develop the internal assets of the participants.

The program sessions included:

1. I am a person of worth
2. I deserve honest and respectful relationships
3. I was created a masterpiece
4. I talk with love and forgiveness
5. I was created to be beautiful
6. I have a purpose and a destiny
7. I belong here
8. I focus on skills and solutions
9. I live to give
10. I am a learner and teacher

The program finished with a Princess Party. This event was an evening meal, where the girls were treated to a special night of fun and games. The party was an opportunity to provide affirmations to each other and end the program on a happy and reflective note.

### ***Goals of the Program***

1. The participant has a positive identity and acknowledges her personal worth, strengths and skills.
2. The participant has improved communication and interpersonal skills
3. The participant has increased her social competencies and has established healthy coping skills, conflict resolution skills, good decision making abilities, and healthy responses to peer pressure.
4. The participant feels a sense of purpose in life and maintains a confidence about her future.

## **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

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### ***Program Outcomes***

1. Four Youth Support Coordinators selected students who would benefit from being on the program.
2. Seven young women were interviewed and were invited to join the program.
3. Participants were encouraged to find an older mentor outside of the program.
4. Permission forms were sent to parents, signed and returned.
5. Participants were given handouts during every session to help them remember and reflect on the weekly sessions and what they had learnt.
6. Using a strengths-based approach to learning, discussions, resources, guest speakers, and team building exercises were employed to develop life skills and identify personal needs.
7. The girls were taught to evaluate each session, what they had learnt and how this would help them personally.
8. An update was sent to the Youth Support Coordinators in week six to report on the participant's progress.
9. There was an 84.2% attendance rate during the 10 weeks.
10. Six girls graduated, with only one not completing the program.
11. Evaluation interviews were conducted with each student.

### ***Outcomes related to goals***

1. Throughout the program the participants gained a positive identity and sense of self worth. One hundred percent (100%) said that the program gave them confidence about themselves. They provided comments such as, "I will remember to love myself", "to accept myself" and "I need to look after myself". At the Princess Party the girls were proud of themselves for completing the program and carried themselves with a sense of dignity and purpose.
2. The girls' communication and interpersonal skills developed and improved from the initial session to the last session; eighty percent (80%) of the girls stated that they had gained communication skills. The girls said that they learnt, "communication and friendship", "to listen", "to forgive and forget", "eye contact" and "talking about life experiences". The conversation topics at the Princess Party were more appropriate than that of the previous weeks. It was obvious that the girls had put into practice the skills they had learned. This is reflected in the results, with the discussions being the highest rated component of the program.

3. The girls increased their social competencies, with sixty percent (60%) having improved relationships and better attitudes. The improved relationships and sense of belonging can be seen through some of the students' comments, such as, "I fitted in and connected to the group" and "I liked meeting new people, even though we were all different." The preceding comment indicates tolerance of others and their opinions. The girls were able to identify talking to a caring adult or supportive friend as a healthy coping skill. "I liked that today we all opened up a bit, and I feel that I can trust everybody", "I feel better (after talking)" and "I have learnt to trust in others." One participant identified the negative pressure from her peer group and decided to connect to friends that she says, "treat me better."
4. The girls acknowledged their individualised purpose in life, and sixty percent (60%) have confidence in their future. The girls said that they have learnt "that there is purpose in life." "I know how to set goals" and "life is so worth it".

A school Guidance Officer said of one student,

*"She is a completely different person now. She doesn't stop smiling and is so confident. She has set goals for now and the future and is more determined about her studies. She is teaching other students about what she has learned."*

## **EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

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Six of the seven participants completed the ten week program and attended the Princess Party. The program facilitator met individually with each of the participants to complete a survey and a post-interview. The purpose of the survey was explained to each participant, and the facilitator allowed an opportunity to clarify questions. The young people willingly provided their feedback about the program.

The data provided in the surveys has been analysed by the program facilitator and has been put into graphs. The participant responses to the open survey questions have been summarised and included in this report.

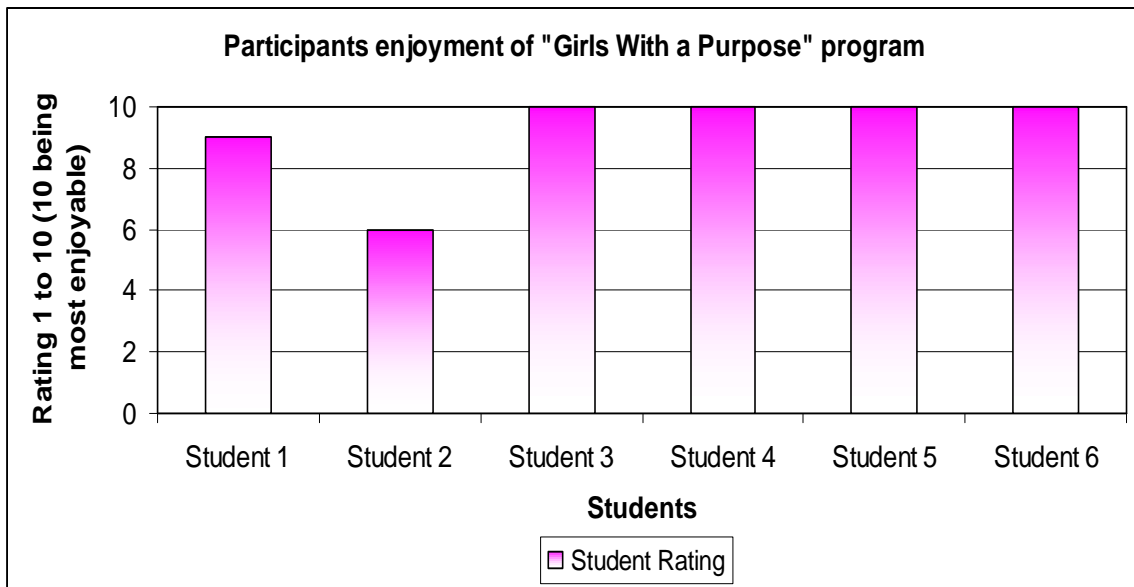
## RESULTS

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### Did you enjoy coming to Girls with a Purpose?

Students were asked to indicate on a scale how much they enjoyed the program, 1 being “no” and 10 being “yes.”

The six responses were:



### What components did you enjoy?

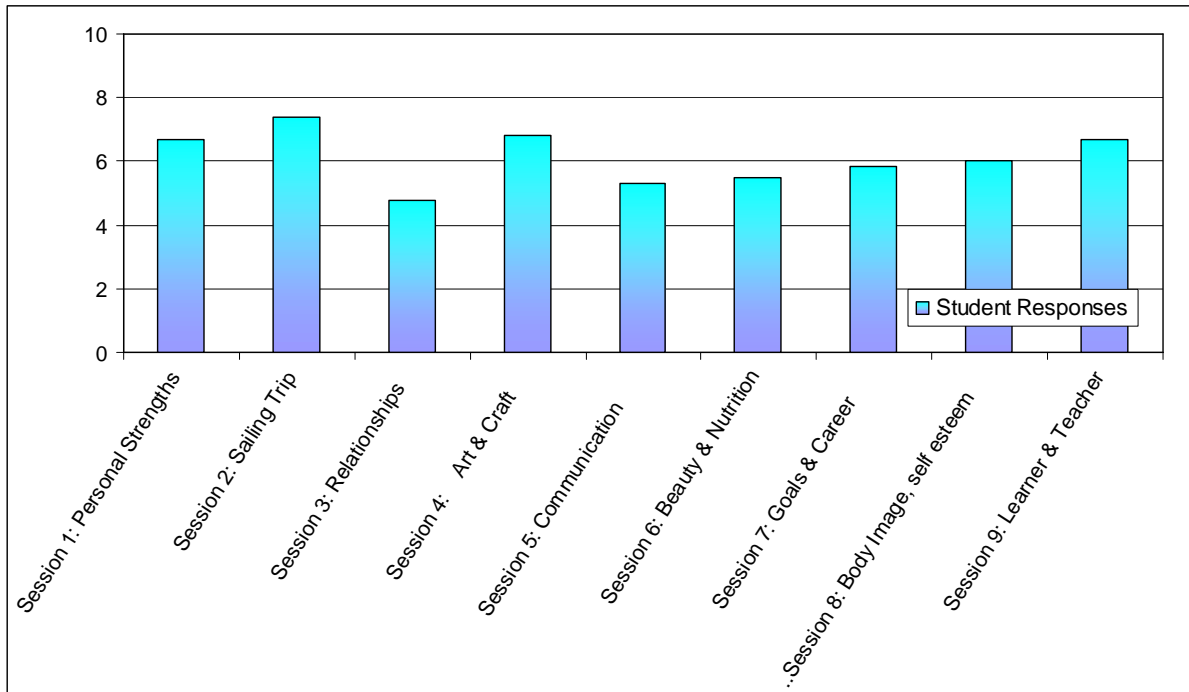
Components of the program	Number of girls who enjoyed it
Going off school site	3
Games	4
Food	1
Guest Speakers	2
Discussions	6
Grateful Diary	2
Handouts	3
Folders	3
Lady of the Week	4
Snaps	5

The discussions were considered the most enjoyable and valuable component by the participants.

**Rate each of the sessions in Girls with a Purpose.**

Nine of the sessions were rated on a scale of 1 to 10.

The six responses were:



The graph shows that the participants enjoyed the team building excursion (sailing trip) the most, followed by the Art and Craft and Personal Strengths workshops.

**What was it that you enjoyed about the session you liked the most?**

The participants gave the following responses:

*“Meeting new people”*

*“The worksheets were really helpful”*

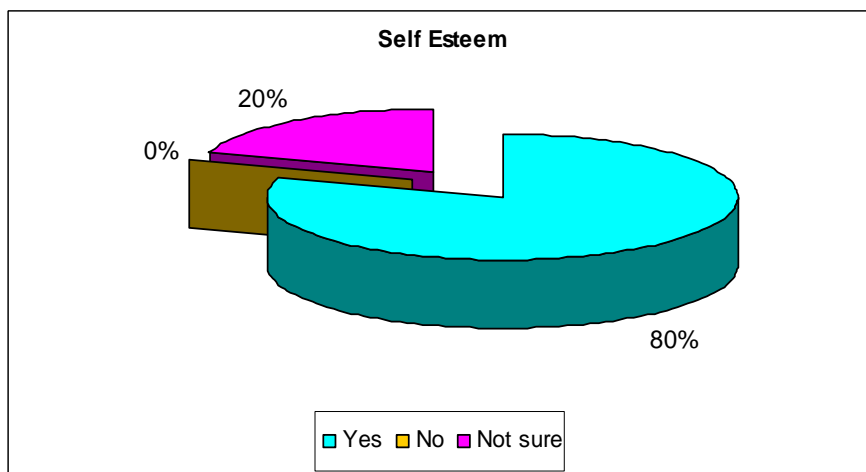
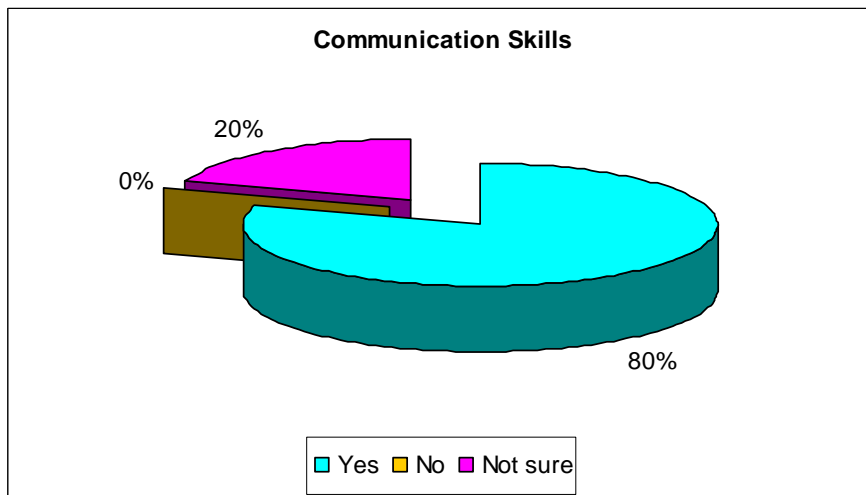
*“I liked the sailing trip also the self esteem session”*

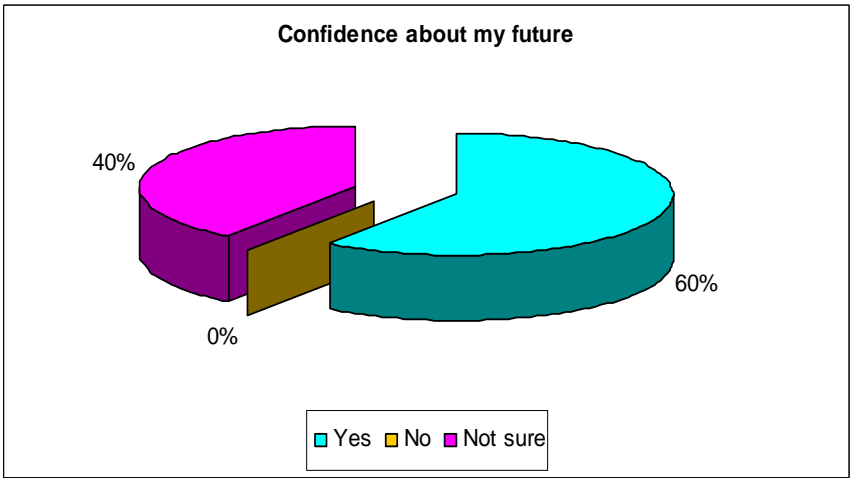
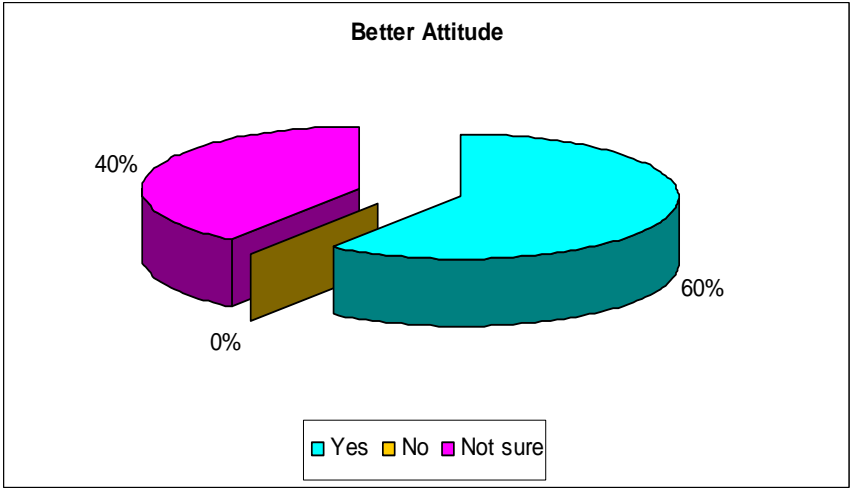
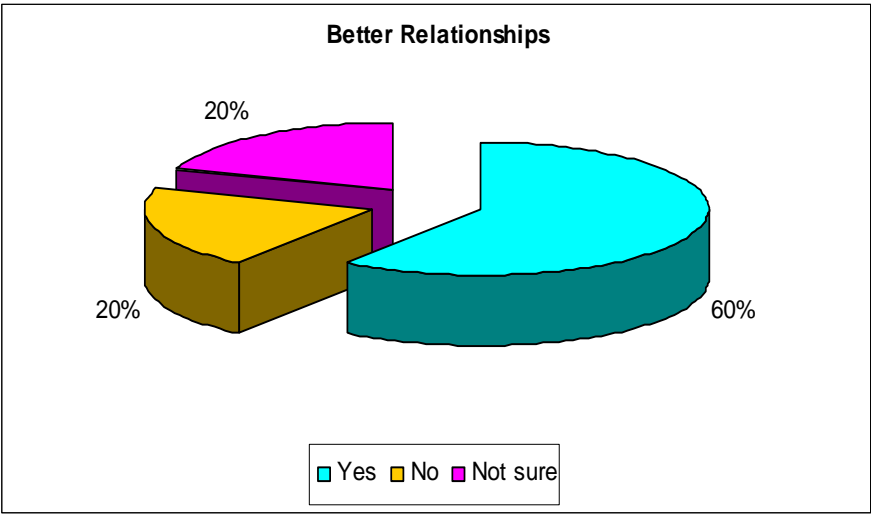
*“Talking and relaxing”*

*“Hanging out with everybody and getting to know each other better”*

## What did this program give you?

The participants were asked to tick the box that best represented their response:





**The participants were also asked if there was anything else not mentioned above that they got out of the program.**

Two participants responded,

*“Trusting other people”*

*“Future skills”*

Six of the respondents said that they would recommend this program to their friends, and six said that they would be interested in participating in a similar program in the future.

**Can you sum up this program and what it meant for you?**

Six written comments were made, including,

*“It meant I could learn more and meet new people”*

*“This program was about meeting new people and learning skills for life”*

*“It was good because I got to learn about stuff a lot”*

*“It showed me that I am not the only insecure person alive”*

*“It’s been fun because I found out stuff about myself that I didn’t really know and made great friends”*

*“It made me look forward to it and made me happier and more trustworthy”*

The following responses were taken from survey two (Appendix 2).

**The participants were asked to tick the box that indicated their truest response:**

The scores below have been calculated to show the results:

Questions	I strongly felt like this.	Often I felt like this.	Sometimes I felt like this.	I never felt like this.
I felt like I was part of the group	5		1	
I connected with someone in the group	5	1		
I felt valued and important in the group	3	2	1	
Kelly and Naomi made me feel included	6			
I felt comfortable sharing my experiences and feelings in the group	3	2		1

Questions	I strongly agree with this.	I agree with this.	I'm not sure If I agree with this.	I do not agree with this.
I now have a better idea about who I am, and I am happy with whom I am.	3	2	1	
I have had fun learning about my strengths, relationships, art, communicating, and body care.	6			
I have learnt some valuable life skills which will help me in the future.	5	1		

The following responses were taken from the open ended post interview, regarding the program:

<b>Comments: Some key questions...</b>	<b>Has GWAP had an influence on you? What has changed? What have you learnt about? What would you like to do more of?</b>
<b>Participant 1</b>	“GWAP has made a difference. I can be more open. I have confidence. I can trust other people. I don’t have any regrets, it was great. I would like to do more about self-esteem and self-control. We should go to Kirra Haven.”
<b>Participant 2</b>	“I wanna come back! GWAP has shown me that I don’t have to be stubborn and have a bad attitude, I can achieve my goals. I got on well with the girls in the group ‘cause we all had similar problems so we could achieve more. I have more confidence to try new things, not scared to fail. I would like to do a buddy program with children.”
<b>Participant 3</b>	“I really liked it! I have better leadership skills and I’m more caring now. I have realised that I am me and no one else is. I should believe in myself. I felt accepted by the group after the sailing trip. I have learnt not to judge people. The mediation helped me. It would be better if we did two sessions a week. I would like to do a community service.”
<b>Participant 4</b>	“I am more accepting of myself, I can open up to others who care about me. I can trust people better. I feel stronger now, I don’t fall to pieces as easy. I don’t need to put on an act to be tough. The conflict that I had with [...] was well sorted by the mediation; I need to watch what I do. I would like to learn about fashion more. I would like to help the community by feeding the homeless.”
<b>Participant 5</b>	“My confidence has changed. I feel better about myself. Other people have issues too- a good way to deal with it is to talk to someone. Mum has noticed a positive change in my life. I fitted in [to the group] and connected. I would like to help other people with the stuff I learnt. I’ve learnt a lot; everything makes you stronger. The outside doesn’t matter, the inside does. ”
<b>Participant 6</b>	“I am happier now. People can trust me now; like mum. I’m a nicer person now and I have new friends that treat me better. I would like to learn how to knit. It would be cool to help kids read.”

## CONCLUSION

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*Girls With A Purpose* is successful in achieving program outcomes and engaging young women with low self worth. The program has facilitated the adolescent's positive personal development, with a focus on relationships, communication, healthy environments, values, and life skills. The program outcomes were achieved through a strengths-based approach which utilised positive reinforcement, supportive adult relationships, and discussions and activities which centred on social competencies.

The student's participation in the program was voluntary; however the recruitment and selection of the girls enabled them to feel privileged about their involvement. The recommendations made in this report have been obtained from feedback acquired throughout the program and through the evaluation process.

Girls with high self-worth are more likely to value themselves, succeed in education, have healthy relationships, abstain from risk taking behaviours, and refrain from self-harming behaviours. These positive affects of self worth are evident in *Girls With A Purpose*, with one hundred percent (100%) of the girls saying that they had more confidence about themselves after participating in the program.

The benefits of *Girls With A Purpose* have been identified through the results, which indicate positive personal growth for adolescent women. *Girls With A Purpose* is a unique and successful program, which should be regularly delivered in schools and community organisations to support young women transition successfully into adulthood.

## APPENDIX 1

### Girls with a Purpose Evaluation

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

**Did you enjoy coming to Girls with a Purpose?** (Using a scale, 1 being "no" and 10 being "yes")

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

**What did you enjoy?** (Tick all that apply)

Going off the school site       Games       Food       Guest speakers

Discussions       Grateful Diary       Handouts       Folders

Lady of the week       Snaps

**Use a number to rate the sessions:**

Session 1	Personal strengths	_____
Session 2	Sailing trip	_____
Session 3	Relationships	_____
Session 4	Art and craft	_____
Session 5	Communication	_____
Session 6	Beauty and nutrition	_____
Session 7	Goals and career	_____
Session 8	Body image, self esteem and masks	_____
Session 9	Learner and teacher	_____

**What was it that you enjoyed about the session you liked the most?**

**What did this program give you?**

Confidence about myself      Yes       No       Not sure

Communication skills      Yes       No       Not sure

Self esteem      Yes       No       Not sure

Better relationships      Yes       No       Not sure

Better attitude      Yes       No       Not sure

Confidence about my future      Yes       No       Not sure

Anything else? \_\_\_\_\_

I would recommend this program to my friends      Yes       No       Not sure

I would be interested in doing another program like this in the future.

Yes       No       Not sure

**Can you sum this program up and what it meant for you?**

## APPENDIX 2

Please tick which box is the truest of how you felt.

Questions	I strongly felt like this.	Often I felt like this.	Sometimes I felt like this.	I never felt like this.
I felt like I was part of the group.				
I connected with someone in the group.				
I felt valued and important in the group.				
Kelly and Naomi made me feel included.				
I felt comfortable sharing my experiences and feelings in the group.				
	I strongly agree with this.	I agree with this.	I am not sure if I agree with this.	I do not agree with this.
I now have a better idea about who I am, and I am happy with whom I am.				
I have had fun learning about my strengths, relationships, art, communicating and beauty care.				
I have learnt some valuable life skills which will help me in the future.				

## **Reference**

Starkman, N. (2002) *Walking Your Talk; Building Assets in Organisations That Serve Youth*, Search Institute, Minneapolis.

## **Acknowledgments**

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4. The Department of Communities (Youth Justice)
5. Southport State High School
6. Pacific Pines State High School
7. Benowa State High School
8. Elanora State High School
9. Palm Beach-Currumbin State High School
10. The Princesses

## **Contact Details**

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