



Government of South Australia
Attorney General's Department



office of crime statistics and research

*A model for youth alcohol diversion? Findings from
the evaluation of the Youth Alcohol Referral
Network (YARN) Pilot*

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Description of YARN

- Pilot program - education on health and social consequences of alcohol use.
- Two components:
 - Diversion - address and/or reduce risky patterns of alcohol use;
 - timely and appropriate health 'intervention' (assessment and education).
 - Community Education Component – harm minimisation and resilience.
- Funded by the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation (AERF).
- Intended outcomes:
 - improved knowledge;
 - reduced alcohol use and alcohol related offending;
 - provide evidence of a model of youth alcohol diversion.



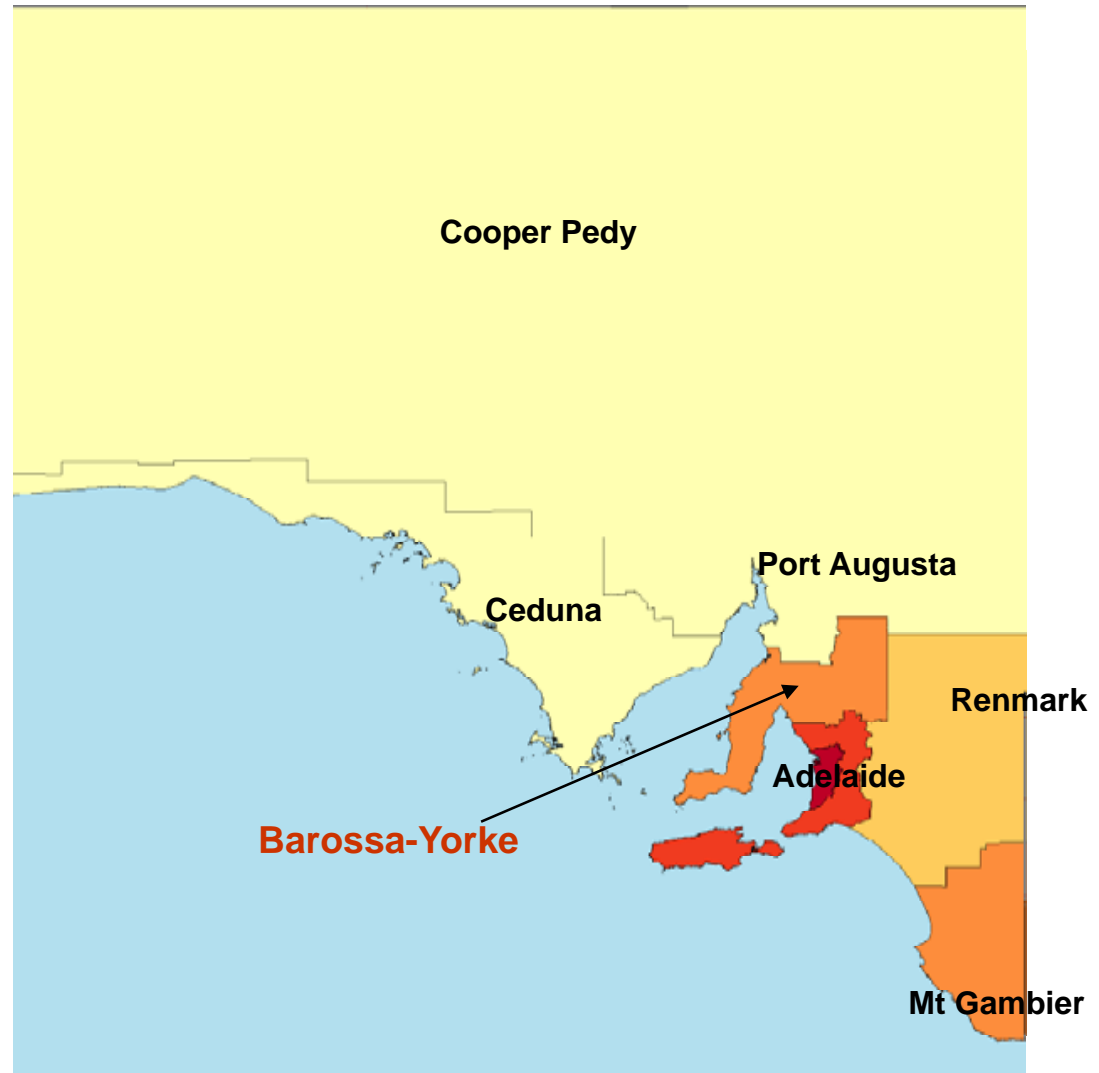
YARN Pilot Site

Pilot period:

- Feb 2006 - Jan 2008.

Pilot site (diversions):

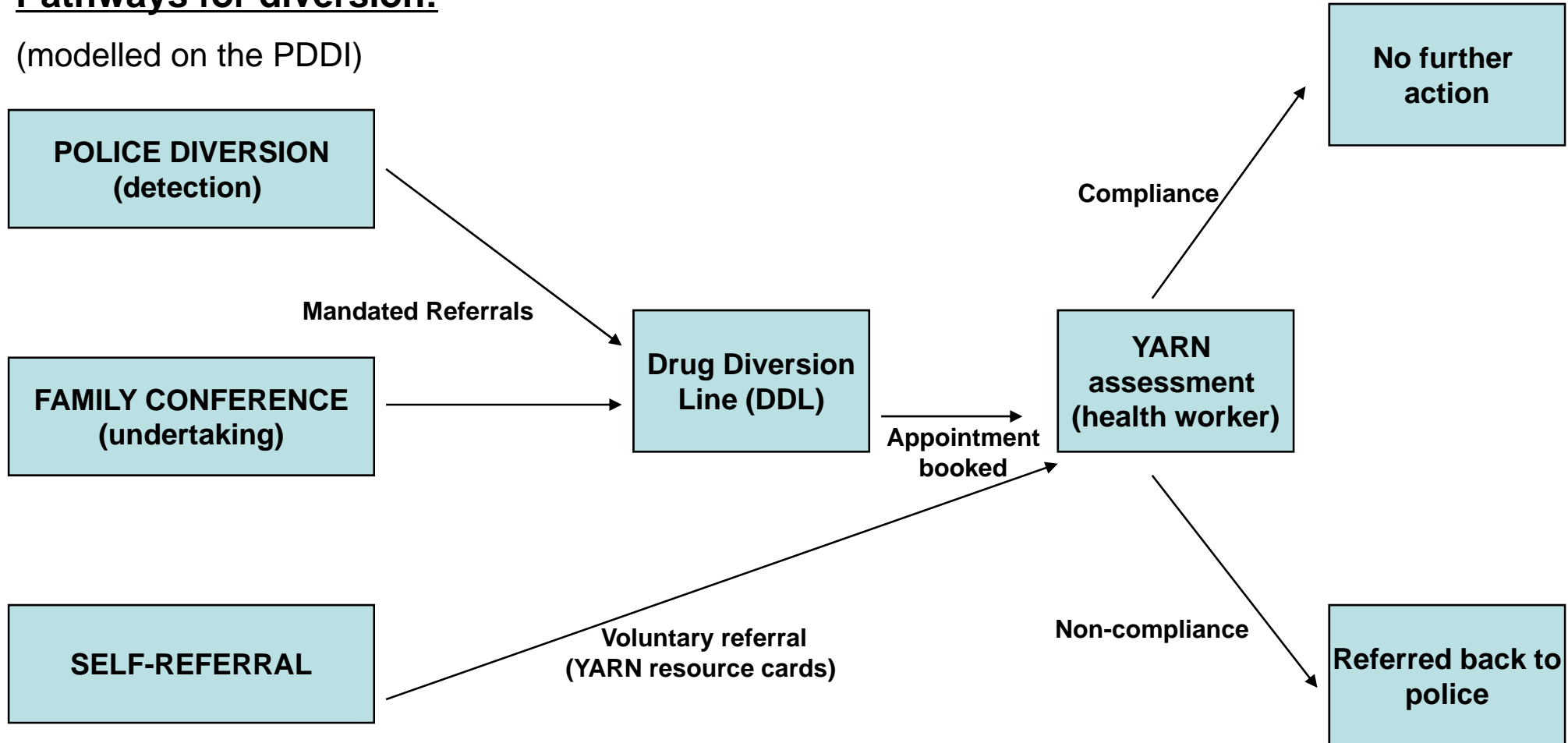
- Barossa Yorke Police Local Service Area (Riverland, Barossa, Lower North and Yorke Peninsula)



YARN Diversion Model

Pathways for diversion:

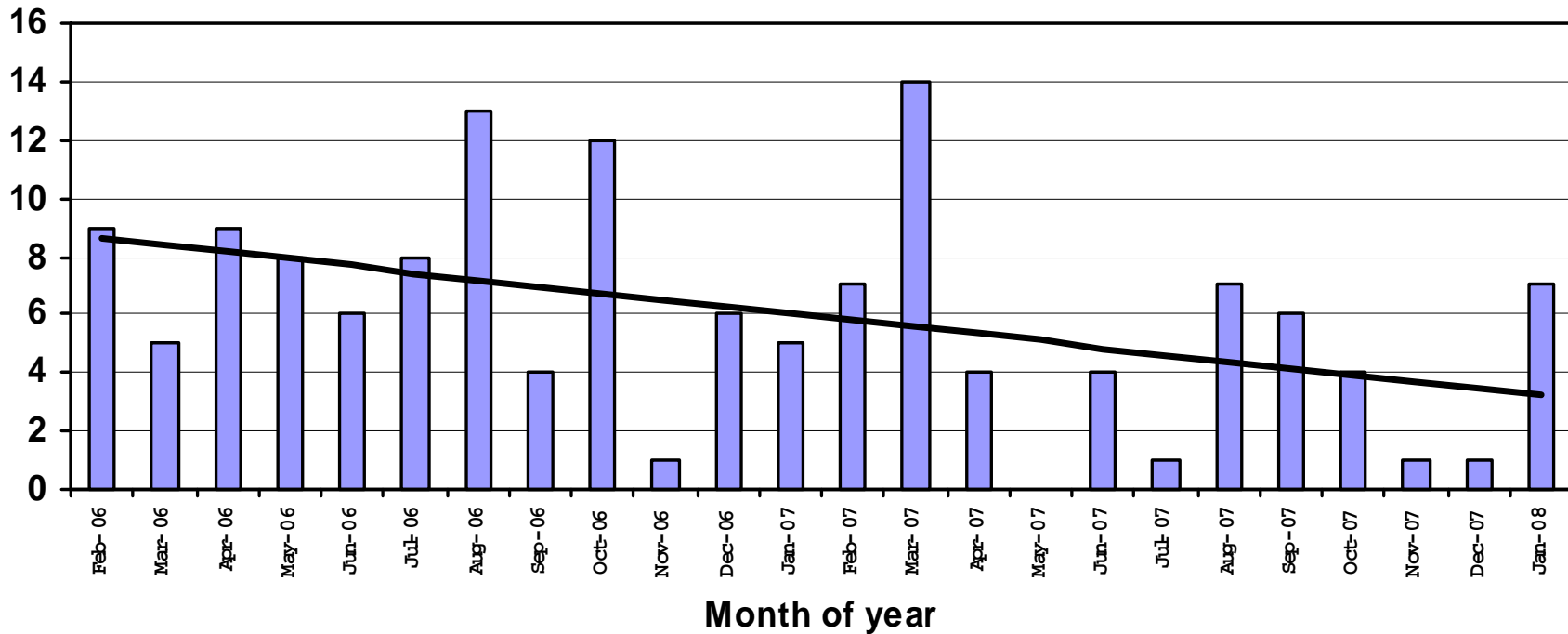
(modelled on the PDDI)





Throughput of Individuals Diverted

- 132 individuals diverted (141 diversion occasions, average of 5.9 diversions/month).
- Vast majority (95.0%) were detections for alcohol related offending (7 FC referrals).
- Low repeat diversion (7 of 132, 5.3%).





Time and Location of Diversions

- Time of day and week:
 - Saturday (n=62) and Friday (n=35) in early to late evenings; and
 - Sunday (n=15) in early hours of morning.
- Offence location:
 - Yorke Peninsula (56.0%, n=79)
 - Barossa (26.2%, n=37)
 - Lower North (17.0%, n=24)
- Suitability of appointment location – distances in Yorke Peninsula.



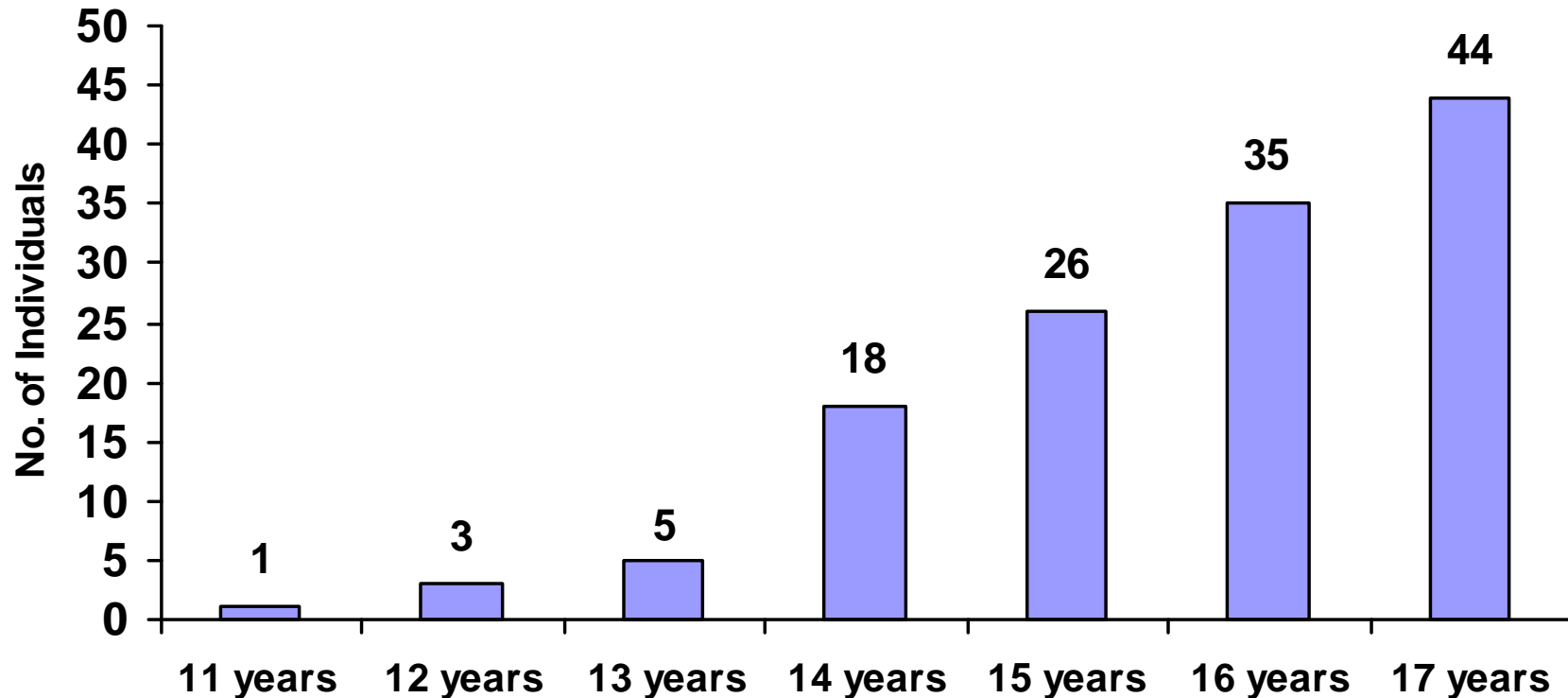
Profile of Individuals Diverted

- Sex:
 - Overall - Males (75.0%, n=99), Females (25.0%, n=33).
 - Individuals 2+ times - 6 males and 2 females.
- Indigenous status:
 - Five male individuals identified as Aboriginal (3.8%);
 - All diverted once only;
- Minimal other drug use – 66.7% reported no use of drugs



Profile of Individuals Diverted

- Majority of individuals (93.2%) aged 14-17 years at time of first diversion.
- Age at first diversion - 17 years (33.3%), 16 years (26.5%) and 15 years (19.7%).





Compliance

- High compliance rate - 95.0% of diversions;
- 96.8% of individuals diverted on one occasion complied;
- 3 of 8 individuals diverted on 2+ times did not comply (84.2% rate);
- Geographical patterns:
 - 6 in 7 non-compliant individuals resided in Yorke Peninsula.



Key Findings – Process

- Well supported by stakeholders - positive/minimal impact reported;
- Diversion component largely implemented as intended;
- Eligible young people successfully diverted to timely and appropriate health treatment;
 - Effective police referral, appointment booking and assessment processes (DDL);
 - Two-thirds of referrals made on day of detection (9/10 within 2 days);
 - 6 in 10 diversions achieved 'outcome' within 28 days of diversion (YARN model).
- Low rate of re-diversion – 7 individuals of 132 (5.3%);
- Overall high compliance rates.



Key Findings – Intervention

- Appropriateness of health intervention;
 - Majority diverted highly functioning (minimal drugs and crime) but risky alcohol use;
 - ‘High risk’ young people – Yorke Peninsula;
 - Further intervention required beyond YARN intervention.
- Generally positive views of police by participants;
- Vast majority participants reported positively on YARN assessment:
 - harm minimisation approach through provision of information rather than a “lecture”;
 - meaningful rather than punitive process.



Key Findings – Alcohol

- Addressing and/or reduced risky patterns of alcohol consumption:
 - *Knowledge* of alcohol and health and social consequences – 75.0% reported increases;
 - *Attitudes* towards alcohol – 7 in 10 individuals reported positive changes;
 - *Use of alcohol* – 50.0% positive changes at 1st interview and 2nd interview;
 - *Quantity/frequency* of alcohol consumption (3 months) - 32.0% reduced measures;
 - 2 in 10 reduced from ‘heavy’ to ‘light’ drinkers or ‘light’ to ‘non-drinkers’.



Key Findings - Offending

- Overall low offending history:
 - Two-thirds had no contact with formal criminal justice system;
 - 1 in 10 had a finding of guilt and 1 in 10 attended a Family Conference;
 - 2 in 10 had ever received a formal caution (driving, good order and larceny).
- Changes in offending 6 months before and after diversion to YARN:
 - 13 individuals had 1+ criminal events pre-YARN;
 - 20 individuals had 1+ criminal events post-YARN;
 - Increases attributable to 14-16 year old males.
- Limitations and context of findings.
- Impact on offending not clear.



Achievement of Intended Outcomes

Decreasing alcohol use:

- achieved for an encouraging number of young people.

Improved knowledge of health and social consequences of alcohol use:

- 75.0% of interview participants reported increases in knowledge.

Reduction in alcohol related crime:

- difficult to measure and limited conclusions;
- changes in type of offending *may* suggest reductions in 'alcohol-related' offending;
- low rate of re-diversion;
- given low offending rates overall, refinement recommended.



Achievement of Intended Outcomes

Evidence of a model of youth alcohol diversion – ‘particular conditions’:

- AERF funding;
- Receptiveness of stakeholders;
- Dedication and commitment of individuals;
- Already in place in SA to assist further expansion:
 - Existing links between health, police and education;
 - Existing PDDI diversion practices and procedures in operation across the state.



Conclusions

- Alcohol model of diversion is required and can work.
- Issues requiring improvement identified.
- Recommendations – training, assessment and community education.
- Issues for further roll out:
 - Suitability of model for other regions and impact on stakeholders?
 - Expansion to adults?