

## **Forging brighter futures: innovative approaches to improving prospects for at risk young people**

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When young people successfully complete year 12 or equivalent, their future prospects of health, social status and employment are greatly increased. Re-engaging them benefits not only individuals, but also communities, both economically and socially. However, some young people require additional support to remain in learning and earning pathways and a few need intensive support. This is the core business of the Innovative Community Action Network's (ICAN) initiative.

In 2003 the South Australian Government asked the newly established Social Inclusion Board to come up with a School Retention Action Plan (SRAP) which would trial projects to find ways to retain young people in learning and earning pathways. ICAN is the largest of these initiatives. ICANs work in strong and valued partnerships at the local level with all stakeholders, including government, non-government agencies, business and industry, to re-engage young people by identifying local barriers and responding with local solutions in holistic ways. Since 2004, by adopting innovative approaches through a whole of community shared sense of responsibility, 82% of the 6000 ICAN program participants have successfully re-engaged with learning or earning.

Individual case management recognises the complexity each young person, and addresses their identified barriers to success in joined-up ways. Flexible learning plans, tailored to each individual's learning needs and interests, ensure that learning pathways are meaningful and relevant. Clearly significant learning can occur in wider places and spaces than conventional classrooms and this learning is aligned and recognised with formal accreditation which is directed towards successful pathways to future employment. Innovative approaches to school student enrolment funding, through a Flexible Learning Option strategy, provide ICAN secondary schools with flexible learning resources. This per capita resource enables schools to provide identified students with individual case management and a flexible personalised learning program which might occur beyond the school walls. By building community capacity to share in responsibility for supporting young people who are traditionally excluded, we all have greater prospects for successful futures.