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| **‘Shekinah’ Program** |
| Reconnecting middle school students into life, learning and the local community since 2010 |
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| The ‘Shekinah’ program is an effective, efficient and repeatable community model in the successful reengagement of self and behaviourly marginalized middle school students. |
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| **Bill Fowles** |
| **3/11/2011** |
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Why ‘Shekinah’ exists:

'Shekinah' exists to reconnect students in life, learning and the local community.

A number of Middle School Students (Years 7 to 10) are not attending school (Some for significantly longer than the 3 months) for a variety of reasons including:

Anxiety, Traumatic Incidence (or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, ADHD, ODD, CD, ASD, Home life trouble, Repeated suspensions, other reasons etc

Students who are non main-stream compliant tend to respond by passively or aggressively disengaging themselves and often others. School systems understandably legitimately systemically marginalised the aggressive students for violence, non-compliance, inappropriate communication with staff... etc and the passive students, who suffer great anxiety for reasons such as over-crowding, bullying etc. are equally marginalised and are just absence monitored. Where do these Students go? What is their future? How much will they cost society now and in the future? There are so many documented suspended/excluded ones and options are currently very limited. For the passive ones very little data exists and the options are very slim.

It currently supports girls but hopes, with increased support, to become co-educational.

Engaging in ‘Shekinah’:

 Students are identified and referred to 'Shekinah' by their school administration, Deputies, Chaplains and Guidance officers. Students are then interviewed to assess if the program is mutually suitable and beneficial for all concerned. Parents/guardians then obtain either a certificate of exemption or a flexible arrangement for their student to attend the 'Shekinah' program, preferably for a Semester. Students remain enrolled at their feeder school. We hold numbers typically around 15 to 20. We could extend dependant on clientele and staffing. We have had students attend from 15 different feeder schools.

The girls are re engaged in a Therapeutical, Experiential, Vocational, Christian, Natural interest based education program. Student’s interests and future aspirations are actively identified and supported. Literacy and numeracy needs are based on supporting those interests and from this interests, confidence and ability to learn/process information widens significantly. Parents and feeder schools are closely involved. We have a strong relationship with Teiki Park (Horses) and are developing and implementing a pioneering therapeutical/engagement horse program.

We also run a voluntary “drop in” service for parents/carers and have supplied materials, clothing and food in emergency situations.

Staff, Support and Infrastructure:

The Burpengary Baptist Community Church, local government and educational authorities, volunteers and Service Clubs are strongly supportive and have supplied the Administrative oversight, buildings, resources, materials. 2 of the staff are currently self supporting. The program is actively seeking additional funding to expand offerings.

Volunteers must have a blue card and are put through a thorough induction program. The induction program is rigorous and is effective ensuring that we have quality staffing for the program.

Budget:

Our Basic Budget appears to be $250000. Our costs are less than other programs due to the use of existing facilities and our attracting high numbers of quality volunteers.

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| Expenses |  |
| Staff:   * Teacher * Youth Worker * Councillor * Administration | $80000  $40000  $40000  $40000 |
| Rent | $12000 |
| Bus | $5000 |
| Equipment Purchase/Cost | $10000 |
| Horse Program | $5000 |
| Consumables and other program costs | $13000 |
| Total | $250000 |

**2010:** the program was funded directly as a voluntary ministry of the church.

**Jan 2011 to Oct 2011:** the program was funded by $40000 Youth Attainment funding and Funded through a flexible arrangement with another school.

**Oct 2011-???:** Other school developed its own site and withdrew funding and the program is now partly funded by the remanent of the YAT funding and by staff returning to voluntary status.

Current Governmental funding models do not support these students. The finance doesn’t follow the student and remains in the feeder school and Communities/Mental Health/Justice programs generally see it as an educational issue till the student reaches the age of 15.

Student Exiting Options:

The three exit points or transition points from the program are:

1    Return to mainstream for the beginning of a new term/semester. (This option is only available if ‘Shekinah’ operates in our preferred method as a program, not as an independent school).

2    Remain in the program and collect points for QCE/QCIA till they obtain a job

3    Remain in the program and collect points for QCE/QCIA and transition to further education (TAFE, certificate courses, other)

We are in our second year of operation and are building on our ability to deliver these options. The students and parents respond well to the program and data indicates significant levels of improvement for both the student academic and emotional security and parent satisfaction with significant increase in quality of home life. 62 students (and their families) have successfully participated in the program to date.

The Future:

‘Shekinah’ is a repeatable model for an effective and efficient community answer for reengagement, compliancy and educational refocusing of self and systemically marginalised students.

The ‘Ideal’ would be for two of these programs (one for the males and one for the females) to operate in support of 5 large (800+ students) high schools. Funding should “follow” the marginalised student. Even if 75% of funding followed the student, topped up with some YAT finance, then that would be enough to finance this successful operation and continue it’s support from the feeder school.

Immediate Needs:

Dr Flegg,

Could you please consider the following for our students and the program?

Advocate:

* represent the program and the current situation to the government and to the minister at your earliest convenience;
* search for possible emergency funding (up to $25000) to help support the unpaid staff for the remainder of this financial year.
* present our model, outcomes and needs for operation for 2012

Plan and Consider:

* using the effective, efficient and successful ‘Shekinah’ model in creating and facilitating strong positive outcomes for the self and behaviourally marginalised students.

Give:

* on a personal level, join Trevor, Wyatt, and Darren in becoming closely involved with these remarkable emerging leaders, their developing stories and positively supporting their futures.

Bill Fowles

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