



Media release

Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister
for Fire and Emergency Services

The Honourable Mark Ryan

Study finds success in Far North youth program

A State Government funded youth program involving a partnership between Queensland Police and the Johnathan Thurston Academy has been proven to significantly reduce juvenile offending among its participants.

The University of the Sunshine Coast (UniSC) conducted an independent review into the JT Academy initiative, *You Got This*, developed in 2021 and sponsored by the QPS.

The program is designed to boost the courage and self-belief of disadvantaged young people aged between nine and 16 years.

The study found significant reductions in criminal offending by at-risk teenagers taking part in the *You Got This* program in Cairns.

As part of the program, participants attend sessions designed to give them relevant and practical advice on leadership, resume writing, interview skills, and career coaching.

Undertaken by Dr Susan Rayment-McHugh and Dr Emily Moir, the UniSC study looked at data from 39 participants and conducted interviews with staff members and stakeholders.

Seventeen *You Got This* programs have been delivered across Queensland, including Cairns, Mareeba, Mount Isa, Townsville, Logan, Zillmere and Brisbane City.

Quotes attributable to Police Minister Mark Ryan:

“I’m very pleased to see an independent evaluation highlighting the success of the *You Got This* program which has received funding under the CBCAC initiative.

“We are seeing terrific outcomes as a result of the hundreds of CBCAC programs being rolled out across the state.

“Intervening early to support disengaged and at-risk youth through effective programs such as *You Got This* is vital in diverting youth away from criminal behaviour.

Quotes attributable to Jonathan Thurston:

“I’m so proud of the young people who are showing up to this program and keep showing up for themselves,” Mr Thurston said.

“This is an amazing group of young adults with so much potential.

“To see the changes they’re making in themselves and their commitment to take a different direction in life just blows my mind.”

Quotes attributable to Cairns MP Michael Healy:

“This is further evidence that not just strong laws but also early intervention is a key factor in ensuring young people lead productive lives.

“Every individual who is turned away from offending behaviours is a positive result for both the individual and the broader community.”

Quotes attributable to Mulgrave MP Curtis Pitt:

“JT was a legend on the footy field, and now once again he’s making a real difference off the field.

“I welcome the results of the study and I welcome the positive influence the Jonathan Thurston Academy is having in the community.”

Quotes attributable to Acting Assistant Commissioner George Marchesini, Commander of the Youth Crime Taskforce:

“The QPS continue to work with multiple service providers to support young people, provide opportunities for a brighter future and to prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system.”

“Through these invention programs, we have the opportunity to make change and turn lives around, with prevention and disruption of youth offending being integral to us combating youth crime issues.”

Fast facts:

- The UniSC report found the greatest reduction in offences was among at-risk youth in Far North Queensland, noting “young people who completed the program in Cairns were less likely to perpetrate a violent offence”.
- Of 10 participants who had offended in the 12 months prior to the Cairns program, only one participant committed a criminal offence within the 9 months after the program.
- Participants are often re-engaging with school, obtaining driver’s licences and some even return as mentors on future programs.
- A total of \$6.8 million has been invested through the State Government’s Community Based Crime Action Committees (CBCAC) initiative with funding approved for 345 crime prevention programs such as “You Got This”.