“Clearing Them for Learning”:
Exploring the Critical Factors for Success in School-Based Young Mothers’ Education Programs

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Submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Canberra
Faculty of Education
7 September 2012
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Acknowledgements

Dedicated to my grandmother

Helen Elms Bryson Stewart

(9 December 1910–15 August 1959),

She did not know where she was from ... but she knew where she was going!

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to many individuals who have supported me over many years to complete this thesis.

I am truly indebted to the young mothers, teachers, support staff and school leaders at Plumpton High School Young Mothers in Education program and the CCCares program at Canberra College for sharing their lives and stories with me. I thank you all for your wisdom, bravery and insight; without you, none of this would have been possible. Thank you for putting your trust in me!

My supervisor, Professor Barbara Pamphilon, for providing me with the encouragement, support guidance and patience required to travel this research journey. Thank you for getting me to the finish line! I am also indebted to my secondary supervisor, Professor Louise Watson, for her insightful and detailed eye, her knowledge and wisdom. Thank you for directing me towards the finish line!

I was also fortunate to have a panel supporting me along the way, Associate Professor Janet Smith and Associate Professor Leah Moore, who never wavered in their commitment or encouragement throughout the research. I thank you for your time, feedback and ongoing support!
I would also like to express my thanks to Dr Beverley Axford for being there for me, understanding my journey and being a true friend. Your tireless efforts and support is much appreciated. Thanks for all the cups of coffee! To my critical friends, Professor Deirdre Kelly at UBC (Vancouver) and Professor Andrea O’Rielly York University (Toronto), I am very grateful for your support, insights and advice over the years. Thank you for being my colleagues!

Thanks to my fantastic family and friends for their love, humour and support. To my parents Libby and Alex Hay (Snr), you are truly my best teachers; this one is for you! To my partner Peter, my rock, thank you for being there in the highs and lows and I know I can always depend on you to be my side; this is our PhD!

I would also like to make special mention of a great teacher from my past that has played an important role in my own development, from childhood to becoming an adult. I thank Mr Michael (Mick) Tait, who always believed in me as his student and now as a colleague and friend.

To my friends and colleagues at the University of Canberra, thank you all for your interest and encouragement over the years, there are too many of you to mention here, but you know who you are and what you have said and done throughout this journey. Thank you for being there!

Finally, thanks to my employer, the University of Canberra and the various Faculty of Education Deans over the years for their support in enabling me to complete this thesis. I thank you all!
Abstract

The importance of (re)engaging young pregnant and parenting students with education has been well documented over the past 20 years (Arai, 2009a; Boulden, 2001; Daguerre & Native, 2006; Kelly, 2000; Luker, 1996; Luttrell, 2003; Musick, 1993; Phoenix & Wollett, 1991; Pillow, 2004). This study explores the complexities, challenges and policy tensions of supporting young mothers in their (re)engagement with education and/or training. There is limited research available in Australia on the quality of school-based education programs for young mothers. While teenage/young mothering is a frequently, albeit often narrowly, studied topic, most of the research that is performed in this area is based within the psycho-medical and social welfare disciplines. This thesis sets out to inform education policy frameworks that aim to improve educational outcomes for young mothers through school-based programs.

Two case studies were conducted: the Young Mothers in Education program established at Plumpton High School, a Year 7–12 public school in New South Wales (NSW) in 2004; and the CCCares program, established at the Canberra College, a Year 11 and 12 public senior secondary school located in the Australian Capital Territory in 2009. Through its analysis of these two programs, the thesis identifies the critical factors for success in delivering education programs for young mothers. However, the research also highlights several macro and micro tensions that appear inherent in school-based young mothers’ education programs that need to be understood by policy actors and policy subjects involved in the delivery of young mothers’ education programs (Ball, Maguire, Braun & Hoskins, 2011). These tensions pose ongoing threats to the success of young mothers’ education programs and need to be recognised, understood and continually negotiated by policy actors involved in the delivery of these programs in school settings.
# List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT DET</td>
<td>Australian Capital Territory Department of Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEU</td>
<td>Australian Education Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWE</td>
<td>Association of Women Educators’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AYPPN</td>
<td>Australian Young Pregnant and Parenting Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCCares</td>
<td>Canberra College Cares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIT</td>
<td>Canberra Institute of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cLC</td>
<td>Connected Learning Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COAG</td>
<td>The Council of Australian Governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (Australian Government)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HILDA</td>
<td>Household, Income and Labour Dynamics Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBOTE</td>
<td>Language Background Other Than English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCEETYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAB</td>
<td>National Australia Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW DET</td>
<td>New South Wales Department of Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTO</td>
<td>Registered Training Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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Chapter 1: Introduction

If they [society] want a whole heap of girls that have no education and stuck in the slums, that’s their issue. Keeping us in school and giving us an education and giving us a chance to get a decent job to be able to raise our children properly. (Kia, young mother)

This quotation from Kia, a young mother, provides an example of the boldness that many young mothers in this study demonstrated in regards to their education, life and children. She is well aware of how ‘they’ (society) see her and other young mothers in the community. Kia shows us here the level of understanding she has about the consequences of not obtaining ‘education’ for herself and her child. In some ways, Kia’s defiant call is a reminder to us all of the importance many young people place on obtaining an education, which is often seen as a vehicle out of desperate and disadvantaged contexts, circumstances and/or communities.

The thesis explores the critical factors for success of two education programs for young mothers. Surrounding these factors is a number of macro and micro tensions that need to be considered by policy actors. The four major ‘tension fields’ are: 1) the societal level; 2) policy and leadership; 3) students’ personal experiences; and 4) education and program delivery.

This introductory chapter presents the background to the study. It details the purpose, aims and approaches employed in this research. It discusses the significance of the study and situates the researcher. An overview of the thesis is provided to complete this chapter.

1 Note: pseudonyms are used throughout this thesis in place of actual names, if requested by participants. All participants were given the opportunity to select a pseudonym that they could recognise as themselves for later reference.
1.1 Rationale for the Study

This research has allowed for greater analysis and comprehension of the complexities surrounding teenage motherhood, particular to the Australian school context. I believe that through a critical discourse analysis of these issues, educators and policy developers can become more aware of the impacting factors for these young women who they hope to help (re)engage with education. There was little evidence in the literature of critical investigation into the complexities of teenage motherhood in Australia over the past 20 years. However, what studies there are have only looked into discrete parts of this complex issue, for example: Siedlecky (1984) (teenage fertility rates); Siedlecky (1996) (adolescent sexual health); Ades, Akkireddi and Yole (2000) (parenting education program for rural secondary schools); Evans (2001a) (pregnancy resolution decisions of Australian teenagers); Flannery (2003) (linking young mothers to education).

The objective of this study was to identify and examine the policy challenges and tensions that emerged from the information collected from two case studies of young mothers’ education programs and consider these in their policy context. In order to reveal the policy issues, complexities and approaches taken to support teenage mothers in an alternative program in a mainstream school setting the use of case studies was deemed appropriate. It was timely to investigate these complexities and perceptions by determining the ‘voices’ and ‘narratives’ of the different groups. These included teenage mothers, key staff in schools (e.g. principal, program support staff and volunteers), and education policy and to a lesser extent the media/popular culture and schools/systems.

This project used a collaborative approach in identifying what works in supporting young mothers in school-based programs and aims to inform educators (principals, school
counsellors, head teachers, student welfare and classroom teachers, and policy developers) of the complexities that surround supporting young mothers in Australian schooling at present. Through this approach, the critical factors for success in two school-based young mothers in education programs became apparent. The identification of key factors and the tensions that surround such work was achieved by using the two young mothers’ in education programs—the Plumpton High School *Young Mothers in Education* program, and the Canberra Senior Secondary College *CCCares* program—as the primary focus. This work investigated how the perceptions of teenage motherhood are viewed from different ‘standpoints’. Hence, the subjectivities or the way the self is structured by specific social situations can be revealed (Robbins, 2005; Tolman & Brydon-Miller; Ward, 2003). “In this sense, subjectivity clearly overlaps with identity” (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 2000, p350). This was achieved by listening, hearing and sharing social experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) of the various individuals from within particular groups, such as the young women themselves, key staff and the education system (i.e. policy and procedure including the NSW DET Student Welfare Policy, 1996, ACT DET, *Pregnant Students Policy and Implementation Guidelines*, 1988).

In order to increase the retention rates of teenage mothers in education, it is essential that we understand the range of discourses taken up by the young mothers themselves and by those supporting their formal education. The study identified, explored and examined the complexities surrounding these young women as parents and as students. The study also highlighted the complexities and tensions surrounding school-based young mothers in education programs. These are personal tensions, educational and program tensions, societal tensions, and policy and leadership tensions.
1.2 Background to the Study

This research began with a case study of a Young Mothers in Education program at Plumpton High School, Western Sydney, 2004–2006. The research for this study was conducted as part of the Master of Student Welfare degree (incomplete) at the University of Melbourne and provided the impetus for a deeper analysis of the complex issues surrounding the education of young mothers. Through my links with Australian Capital Territory Department of Education and Training (ACT DET), I became aware of the Canberra College Cares (CCCares) program and saw the potential of deeply examining both innovative programs. The findings from the first case study of the Plumpton High School, Young Mothers in Education program lay the foundations and thinking for the second study and broadened the scope of the second case study at Canberra College CCCares program.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

There is a growing body of evidence that illustrates the importance of schooling that supports and encourages young pregnant and parenting students to (re)engage and/or continue with their education and/or training. Being connected to schooling makes positive and lasting contributions to improving the life outcomes of young mothers and their children (Boulden, 2001; Di Battista, 2004; Flannery, 2003; Kelly, 2000; Luker, 1996; Pillow, 2004).

The purpose of this study is to identify the contextual and critical factors required for the success in supporting young pregnant and parenting students in school-based programs. This study aims to inform policy subjects and policy actors in schools and education authorities (Ball, Maguire, Braun & Hoskins, 2011), that is, educators, school jurisdictions and policy developers, of the factors and the challenges that need to be considered when supporting school-based young mothers in education programs. Across Australia, the
sustainability of many school-based young mothers’ programs appears to be compromised and they face an uncertain future due to inadequate funding, lack of leadership, poor service delivery, appropriate staffing and limited resourcing (Australian Young Pregnant and Parenting Network, 2009).

This research presents two school-based education programs that illustrate the complex challenges of supporting young mothers choosing to continue with their schooling. The qualitative focus groups and one-on-one interviews I conducted for this study provide an insight into the experiences of the participants in the programs, young mothers and key staff in schools (principal, program teachers, support staff and volunteers). From this data, factors for success are identified and examined.

Flannery (2003) indicated that the needs of pregnant and parenting students at school often remain hidden and that if their needs do come to light the response they receive from school can be a ‘hit and miss’ affair (p. 41). The majority of government school systems in Australia have developed frameworks related to student pregnancy (Boulden, 2009). Schools are largely motivated to develop their own procedures and programs if a systemic policy framework is present. Nonetheless, there exists some diversity in the comprehensiveness of these policy frameworks and the level of universal support and resource provision allocated to the implementation of such programs across the country, and many are out of date.

Fahey and Vale (2002) highlight that those schools that develop ‘proactive’ and explicit policy and procedures in supporting young mothers, have more positive educational outcomes for those involved in these programs. The opposite is generally true for those schools that do not. Hence, the purpose of this study is to illuminate and examine the factors that must be considered when developing policy and programs to support this group of students.
1.4 Significance of the Study

There is little evidence, to date, of critical investigation into the complexities of providing education programs for young mothers in Australia over the past 20 years. What studies there are have only looked into discrete parts of this multifaceted issue. There is no work that Australian policy makers can draw on that shows the critical factors and challenges faced in ensuring the successful completion of schooling by young mothers. This study addresses this gap in the knowledge by examining how successful, and sustainable school-based young mothers’ in education programs address these critical factors and challenges.

The majority of research about teenage motherhood has been conducted in North America (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1976; Coles, 1997; Davies, 2004; Domenico & Jones, 2007; Edin & Kefalas, 2005; Kelly, 2000; Luker, 1996; Luttrell, 2003; Musick, 1993; Pillow, 2004; Sadler, Swartz, Ryan-Krause, Setz, Meadows-Oliver, Grey & Clemmens, 2007; SmithBattle, 2000b, 2003a,b & 2005) and the UK (Arai, 2009a,b; Daguerre & Nativel, 2006; Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn & Morgan, 1987; Harden, Brunton, Fletcher & Oakley, 2009). As in much of the Australian work, the research produced in these countries has often been presented from a psycho-medical discourse alongside the emergence of a technical understanding of teenage mothering since the 1970s (SmithBattle, 2000a). Much of this research was produced with little direct contact with those being studied—the teenage mothers themselves. The focus for much of this research was on the overall health outcomes rather than on the individuals’ lived experiences (Pillow, 2004).

Over the past ten years in Australia, there has been greater interest in researching teenage mothering. The studies conducted in Australia also reflect the scope of those studies carried out in other countries. There has been a focus around the psycho-medical (Larkins,
2007; Quinlivan, 2008; Quinlivan & Condon, 2005; Quinlivan & Evans, 2004; Young, 2005), as well as some research performed within social policy, economics and demographics (Anderson, 2011; Bradbury, 2011; Evans, 2001a; Jeon, Kalb & Vu, 2008; Loxton, Stewart-Williams, Adamson, 2007). However, the greatest interest has been shown in the arena of education (Angwin, Harrison, Shacklock & Kamp, 2004; Arwin, 2007; Boone, 2003; Boulden, 2001a, 2001b & 2010; Di Battista, 2004; Fahey & Vale, 2002; Flannery, 2003; Flannery, Healy & Irwin, 2004; Harman, 2010; Hay, 2010). Though, to date, no studies in Australia have considered the complexity of attempting to support young mothers in education; therefore, effective policy and program development is difficult.

The absent voices from previous research have not only been young mothers, but schools, support staff, teachers and principals. My study specifically examines these groups as a means to develop greater understanding and insight into what works in supporting young mothers in school-based education programs in Australia.

1.5 The Situated Researcher

My interest in the area of teenage pregnancy and motherhood originated from a professional context as the Senior Education Officer for Student Welfare and Student Support within the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (NSW DET). Young mothers in education and those wishing to reconnect to schooling was a portfolio responsibility. In this role, I became aware of the absence of research that illustrated the life outcomes for young women who had participated in education programs. I believed that as a policy maker, I needed to understand why and how these programs functioned. Working with both Pumpton High and later Canberra College created the opportunity to explore their programs and how the participants perceived their experiences.
My professional background in education has been situated across two states, as a Senior Project Officer in Gender Equity within the Queensland DET (1999–2001) and then a Senior Education Officer in Student Welfare and Support within the NSW DET (2001–2005), I was responsible for policy development advice and program management. In these roles, I became familiar with the issues surrounding disadvantaged and disconnected students in both education systems. In my later role, I was responsible for policy and program development for teenage mothers in the school education system and I became interested in this group of students because I could see the inequalities in service provision and lack of policy development for schools in supporting these students. This work allowed me to develop a greater understanding of the importance and impact of policy on the delivery of services to these students. Thus, the majority of my professional career has been in areas that require a comprehension of social justice and social inclusion for diverse groups of students.

As a researcher, I had a professional connection and knowledge of both programs intimately. Both have the same purpose, that of (re)engaging young mothers with education. The programs were both conducted in government schools, one located in NSW and the other in the ACT.

1.5.1 The situated researcher at Plumpton High School.

The first case study (2001–2004) at Plumpton High School was completed when I was an employee of the NSW DET. I had permission to conduct the research with women over 18 years of age that had already participated in the Young Mothers in Education program. As a researcher, I was distant from the day-to-day operations of the program, although I was able to access the principal for in-depth interviews and he assisted with the recruiting of participants. My visits to the school were sporadic over a school term to collect data and conduct interviews with past participants of the program. The school was used as the meeting point and as the
place to conduct the interviews. I was not granted permission from the NSW DET Research in Schools group to access the current students in the program. Nevertheless, I was privileged to access the graduates by survey and conduct face-to-face interviews. At that time, the Plumpton High School program was nationally recognised as an innovative program and my research enabled me to capture one snapshot of its work.

1.5.2 The situated researcher at the Canberra College.

The second case study (2006–2010) occurred when I was working as an academic at the University of Canberra. I was granted permission through the University of Canberra’s ethics committee and the ACT DET Research in Schools authority. In this research, I was able to access all aspects of the CCCares program. I gained permission to work closely with the school leaders at Canberra College to develop a project that would involve all key stakeholders in the program. These included the young mothers, school leaders, program teachers, program support staff, and program volunteers. I had ‘access to all areas’ of the program, I became a regular visitor to the program and I continue to retain strong connections to the program and its stakeholders.

1.5.3 The situated self: ‘Don’t mock, you never know what you might throw’.

The following narratives have had a great effect on me and I feel I can also trace my interest in the outcomes for young mothers back to my family experiences. ‘Don’t mock, you never know what you might throw’. This phrase has been repeatedly expressed to me by my mother over many years. To put things into context, my mother comes from Scotland and has lived in Australia for the past 49 years. The translation of the phrase roughly means that you should never tease or put down other people’s differences or context because you never know what your own children might turn out to be. This saying originally came from my grandmother and then in turn was passed on to me by my mother. This has been a much
repeated catchphrase for most of my life and I always found it interesting and somewhat moralistic on my mother’s behalf. It was not until mid-way through my research into young motherhood that this phrase took on greater meaning for me. One day when discussing with my mother the progress of my research she became quite upset and started to cry. This was the moment when she disclosed to me that her mother (my grandmother) was adopted and that all we knew of her mother is that she was a teenage house servant in a large household in Scotland in the late nineteenth century. This disclosure from my mother put everything into perspective. She kept saying ‘we don’t know where we are from’, meaning that we do not know who or what our family origins are. I was saddened to witness my mother’s distress, the shame and guilt she had carried all these years. We have had many discussions since that day and now my mother’s resolve in talking about teenage motherhood has strengthened and she has become a firm supporter of these young women.

Growing up in a small town in Far North Queensland in the 1970s and 1980s, I had witnessed first hand how young mothers were treated by the community. Two close friends of mine became teenage mothers while at school. It soon became apparent that the whole town knew of my friends’ ‘plight’. I think it is important to share their stories at this point because it has influenced me as a researcher. I have not used their real names here, but I will refer to them as Julie and Liz. Both young women had a similar background; that being strict Roman Catholic Italian. Hence, when they became pregnant, the level of their shame was magnified due to their cultural and religious upbringing. Our town was an unforgiving and socially rigid place. Stepping outside the norm in our town was a sure fire way to become an outcast and this was exactly the case for both Julie and Liz. These are their stories.
1.5.3.1 Julie’s story: ‘You slut get out of my house’.

Julie was my next door neighbour. We had grown up together, we went to the same primary and secondary schools, and still remain good friends to this day. Her first child is now a 29-year-old man with a family of his own. I remember clearly the day when Julie told us about her pregnancy. I entered our kitchen and there crying in the arms of my mother was Julie; she had just been kicked out of her home by her father. Julie stayed with us that night and I can still recall her absolute isolation and shame. What made things worse was the fact that her father knew she had come to my mother for support and he stood at our gate calling out ‘where is that slut, she is no daughter of mine’. After things had settled down, my mother went and spoke with Julie’s parents and it was agreed that Julie would spend time with us. I think my mother thought this was the safest place for Julie at that time. After about a week or so, Julie was allowed to return to her home. At that point, there was discussion that Julie would be sent to Brisbane to stay with relatives. She was here one day and gone the next, until the birth of her son when she returned to the town.

I remember Julie telling me that the Head Mistress for Girls at our school was not supportive of her staying at school. Julie reported to my mother that the Head Mistress had told her to leave the school because this was the appropriate thing to do in her circumstance. Julie did end up leaving school in Year 10; she became socially isolated from her friends and family. She kept her child, stayed in our small town and worked odd, menial jobs, here and there. My mother would babysit the child when Julie was at work, or if she needed time to get away from it all. Julie is now in her late 40s and she had three other children. She has provided a safe, loving and caring upbringing for her children in the time that I have known her. She has worked hard to succeed as a parent (mostly a single parent) working up to three jobs at once. I
asked her recently what was the biggest sacrifice she had made, and her response was not finishing her education, to obtain a stable job or a career.

1.5.3.2 Liz’s story: ‘Here one day gone the next’.

Liz was 16 years old when she left our town; she was here one day, gone the next. Liz came from a very wealthy and well-known family in our town. She attended the local Catholic College until Year 10 then came to the local state high school to finish her senior years. That is the time when I first met her. An intelligent, happy and friendly person with, as many thought, a very bright future in what ever she wished to do. Yet, things started to change. Liz started to cut class, smoke, and go out partying and drinking. There was a noticeable change in her character and relationships with those around her. She became more aggressive, non-compliant with school rules and she was hanging out with a different crowd. By the end of first term of Year 11, Liz’s body was noticeably going through a change. The whispers and rumors started, ‘she’s pregnant, it was only a matter of time’. With this obvious scandal hitting the town, Liz disappeared. Her brother’s well rehearsed script was, ‘Oh, Liz has gone to live with our grandparents as they are ill and need someone with them’. Liz was never to return until ten years later with her ten-year-old son by her side. I can still remember the comment from a friend: ‘it can happen to the best of families’.

From these experiences, I became aware of the social implications of teenage motherhood and they were all negative. I have always wanted to know why being a teenage mother is seen as the end of the world, something seen more as a sin or as a disease, illness or ailment rather than what is an obviously a natural, biological process. As Pillow (2004) argued, education provision models for young mothers generally have two discursive themes: pregnancy is like having a cold, where everyone is treated the same in a school, ‘she will get
over it’, or pregnancy is a disability or disease, where young mothers are removed from the regular school setting.

I can say that these personal and professional experiences inform me in a way that allows for great awareness and social empathy (Murchison, 2010) for young women like my great grandmother, and my friends Julie and Liz. As I moved into my career in education, I came to see that denying education to a young mother was an issue of inequality and was not socially just. Pillow (2004) argues the point that:

*While it is vital to hold schools accountable for policies and practices toward pregnant and mothering students, it is equally important to understand the experiences of teen mothers as gender and race educational equity issues.* (p. 222)

### 1.6 Theoretical Underpinnings

The theoretical underpinning of this thesis is primarily an interpretative approach and draws strongly on insights from feminism, especially in its respect for the subjective experiences communicated by the participants in the two case studies and valuing the their standpoints in creating understanding and coherence for themselves within those contexts (Larkins, 2007; Robbins, 2005). This approach is a natural congruent progression for me as an educator (classroom teacher) because through an educational lens I can appreciate the importance of viewing young mothers as students with particular needs which necessitates an understanding of how school systems can better provide appropriate support. The exploration of two case studies demonstrates how school-based education programs for young mothers come into being, operate and sometimes fail. Hence multifaceted theoretical underpinnings are used to create a ‘touch stone’ for this study in order to comprehend the complexity that surrounds young mothers, schools and systems.
Figure 1.0 shows the interrelatedness of the theoretical underpinnings of this study. The relationships between the various lenses to one another are co-dependent in many ways, in that they rely on each other to strengthen the research conducted in the two case studies. From this it is necessary to understand how these lenses provide exposure and the understanding of the complexities that surround young mothers in education, not only for the young mothers themselves but also their teachers and schools, particularly in Australia. The interrelatedness allows the theoretical underpinnings of this research to have depth and breadth in creating the new knowledge in this field.

Understanding this interrelatedness provides a more focused and clearer basis for the discussion of the various theoretical constructs that underpin the research and I believe this ensures a greater sense of cohesion throughout the study. Therefore, this study demands consideration of a range of theoretical constructs seen through a number of lenses. These include the educational research lens, the postmodernist feminist lens, and the pro-feminist lens. For the purpose of this study these lenses are situated in social constructionism and social

Figure 1.0. A diagrammatic representation of the thesis theoretical touchstones
constructivism which are allied with feminist standpoint theory. It highlights the way that the participants in the following two case studies create their own understandings from the reality they construct and the experiences they have, be they a young mother, support staff, teacher or school leader.

1.6.1 The educational research lens.

This study draws on the principles of educational research theory. Research in education is a disciplined attempt to address questions or solve education problems through the collection and analysis of primary data for the purpose of description, explanation, generalisation and prediction (Anderson, 2004, p. 6). During the twentieth century, the field of education has drawn upon the related disciplines of sociology, psychology and the natural sciences (Sitotnik, 1998). This has been viewed for some time as a progression towards establishing ‘education’ as a legitimate discipline, grounded upon a scientific base (Giroux, 1981).

While the discipline of education has diverse research areas, one emerging area is student health and welfare. Wyn (2009) argues that:

*Despite the importance of wellbeing to young people, education systems in the 2000s have tended to place an emphasis on the relatively narrow goal of matching young people’s skills to the needs of economic development. Young people’s wellbeing is not assessed as one of the outcomes of schooling, although there is now ample evidence that school cultures and curricula can have a negative as well as positive effect on young people’s wellbeing and that both health and wellbeing are integral to the creation of an effective learning environment (xi).*

Even though Wyn quite rightly points out here the importance of student wellbeing and how it is integral to the development of an effective learning environment, there is still little
evidence of rigorous investigation into student welfare issues and how these impact on the learning and engagement of many young Australians in schools. Burdell (1995) argues “that educators have not been at the center of research and policy construction regarding the school-aged parent” (p.164). My study locates teenage pregnancy and motherhood within these broader contexts of the role education can play in student health and wellbeing. Since this research crosses education/schooling and health and wellbeing domains, a case study approach was seen as the most holistic way to produce findings of use to policy makers, education authorities, community services, health authorities and school communities in Australia. To achieve this I needed to be aware of how the realities of young mothers, teachers and school leaders are constructed from their own experiences in these education programs featured in the two case studies that follow.

*Implication of the notion of ‘educational research’ for this study:* This research clearly contributes new knowledge about young mothers and their education support needs to the field of educational research.

1.6.2 The postmodernist feminist lens.

This study was influenced by postmodernist theories that turn the focus to how various discourses surround young mothers in education. To develop this understanding it was necessary to review the work of some key scholars including the theoretical work of Foucault (1990), Butler (1990), and Flax (1990) and, to some extent, the research on young mothers of Arai (2009a), Pillow (2004), Daguerre and Nativel (2006); Harding (2004), and Kelly (2000). Their writings, research and publications have informed the development of the theoretical ‘touch-stone’ for this study. Each lends an exacting point of view that brings currency to this research and in particular allows for the development of a conceptual framework that supports the investigation and analysis of the discursive complexities of young mothers and their
education in Australian society. Foucault’s work for example provides the understanding that woman’s bodies are political sites that challenge the male status quo in society. Even though Butler prefers to define her work as post-structuralist rather than postmodernist (Butler & Scott, 1992 p. 6), her influence in this study should be noted, in that it provides an understanding of the discursive body and the *performativity* of women as mothers. Her work gives basis in this thesis to the idea of ‘self’ in relation to young mothers being students, being young, being a women, and being a good and/or bad mother. Flax provides this thesis with the concept the *fragments of gender* in western society, that there is not a clear understanding or construction of gender in our society and that there is often slippage around gender. The likes of Arai, Pillow, Daguerre, Nativel and Kelly provide a solid basis for this thesis as they provide feminist and/or post modern research scholarship in the area of young mothers and education. This thesis has been able to tap in to their collective wealth of knowledge in this field.

The study of ‘body’ and, in particular, women’s bodies as a convergence of postmodernist and feminist discourses in the context of adolescent sexuality is important to this study. A postmodern feminist lens makes explicit the claim that the body, as much as the psyche or the subject, can be regarded as a cultural and historical product (Grosz, 1994, p. 187). In other words, the thesis is cognisant of Foucault’s claim, that discourses are ‘written on the body’ and become embodied performances (cited in Butler, 1990, 1993). For example as noted from the research participants discourse such as: teenage mother, young mother, bad student, single mother, drop-out, welfare cheat, bad mother, too young etc are often enacted. The study also considers the argument that the embodiment of prevailing discourses provides the means by which these young women can be regulated, controlled and monitored by others, such as institutions, government, society and schools.
The study of young mothers as ‘social kinds’ is another theme that is developed in this thesis. Hacking (1995), and the subsequent work of Wong (2000), explain that categories used in the social sciences to obtain knowledge about people and their behaviour can be seen as social kinds. These ‘social kinds’ are often highlighted in the public conscience via the media. As Wong (2000) notes, the impact of the media on social change can be seen in a new light by investigating the effect of the circulation of information on various groups of people in which society has a keen interest. This is evident in the number of media stories and documentaries made about the two programs in this thesis. Paralleling what Foucault (1979) called ‘history of the present’ (p. 31), the point of presenting a history of how the category ‘teenage mother’ came to have the constellation of extra-logical associations it has is to reveal how certain taken-for-granted ideas were formed at a particular juncture and are contingent upon certain conditions to give them significance. Such ‘unmasking’ of connections and associations of current concepts, attitudes and practices reveal relations that empower as well as those that dis-empower. Understanding the contingency of such relations enables us to think further about these matters and to suggest alternatives (Wong, 2000). It is obvious in the two case studies presented in this thesis that the school leaders were faced with this challenge not only in their local communities but also their school communities. Further, this insight has led to the deliberate choice of ‘young mothers’ to describe the student participants, rather than adding further to the derogatory social kind of ‘teenage mother’.

Foucault’s notion of descending individualism has been another major concept that has informed my observations. From the beginning of this study, it was clear that young mothers were typically viewed as ‘the problem’ and seen as a group without any differentiation. Foucault’s (1990) concept of descending individualism relates to those individuals that are regarded by society as being lower in the social scale. These individuals become more closely
monitored and ‘individualised’ the lower in the social scale they are (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000). This is apparent for young mothers, who as a group become subject to particular social policies and media representations. This was apparent in one of the case study programs where a ‘fly-on-the-wall’ documentary was produced which followed the ‘goings on’ of the young mothers and their schooling.

As postmodern feminist theories imply, there is not a universal research agenda. The distinction between liberal feminism and postmodernism is that the latter dissolves the universal subject and the possibility that women speak in a united voice or that they can be universally addressed. Various women will have different reactions dependent on their ethnicity, age, class, sexuality and cultural background. There are as many different women’s experiences as there are types of women (Harding, 1987; Reinharz, 1992). This can be observed in the two case studies as participants shared how they viewed their world from very different and complex standpoints. The participants came from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds as well as from different socioeconomic backgrounds. For some they come from geographically different places.

Implication of the notion of ‘feminist postmodernism’ for this study. It brings to the fore the idea of young mothers as social kinds. The findings of this study challenge the concept of descending individualism placed on young mothers in general. The study highlights these young women as distinctively individual with varying support needs in the educational setting.

1.6.3 The pro-feminist lens.

I identify and situate myself as a pro-feminist researcher and see this research investigation as based on a pro-feminist approach. Klocke (2008) defines being pro-feminist as supporting the cause of feminism without implying that the supporter is a member of the
feminist movement. The term is most often used in reference to those who are actively supportive of feminism and of efforts to bring about gender equity. Hence, men can be pro-feminist and anti-sexist but cannot be feminist in the strictest sense of the word. As Klocke (2008) argued:

*Men in this patriarchal system, cannot remove themselves from their power and privilege in relation to women. To be a feminist one must be a member of the targeted group (i.e. women) not only as a matter of classification but as having one’s directly-lived experience inform one’s theory and praxis.*

(http://www.nomas.org/node/122)

The Australian pro-feminist scholar Flood (1998, 2008) contends that pro-feminist men are sympathetic to feminist understandings of society but also notes that men as a group are bestowed various forms of power and institutional privilege. Flood (2008) believes that ‘pro-feminist men typically also recognise the importance of other forms of injustice, such as those to do with class, race, sexuality, age and disability’ (p. 66). This study aligns with Flood’s interest in the range of forms of injustice, in this case, schooling policies and practices that do not support the needs of young mothers. It is clear that the school leaders in the two case studies recognise the social exclusion and inequality encountered by the students in their programs. The school leaders were able to articulate how they managed to understood and deal with the injustices faced by these young women.

Feminist social research can be seen to have an emancipatory role in the sense that women’s voices are heard; that exploitation is reduced by giving as well as receiving knowledge; and where women are not treated as objects or controlled by the researcher (Bryman, 2002, 2008). As an educator, and researcher, this resonates with me because, for me, education is first and foremost an emancipatory project. As Skeggs (2001) has observed, one of the earliest principles on which feminism research was based was that it should ‘alleviate
the conditions of oppression’ (p. 396). The idea of social change through a pro-feminist approach to research is not new—in fact, it is well regarded as practical in outcomes and a worthy field of study (Reinharz, 1993; Sikes & Potts, 2008. As Reinharz (1993) puts it: ‘I worked within a pro-feminist methodological framework that is acknowledged to be practical as well as scholarly and which prides itself on contributing to social change’ (p. 80). I see this study also linking the practice of school-based young mothers’ education programs to theory as means to inform the development of evidence-based policy, at the same time encouraging a change in how young mothers are viewed within education contexts.

Implication of the notion of ‘pro-feminism’ for this study. In this study clarifying my own positioning has been very important in understanding and supporting education as an emancipatory project and that is not only the domain of women’s work. I argue that men play a necessary role in challenging the hegemony surrounding young mothers in education programs.

1.6.4 Social constructionism and social constructivism.

This thesis draws on social constructionist concepts, again building on the feminist theory perspective that argues for the constructed rather than essential nature of gender categories (Tarrant, 2009). Social constructionism also informs educational research in which it is seen that the individual constructs knowledge from their experiences; as well as from sociological understanding of the way people experience reality through different constructions (Jupp, 2006). Social constructionism and social constructivism are sociological theories of knowledge that consider how social phenomena or objects of consciousness develop in social context (Burr, 2003; Hacking, 1999; Searle, 1995). Burr (2003) and Gergen (2009) argue that, while the central premise in social construction is simple and
straightforward, once you empty out the implications and the effects, this simplicity rapidly dissolves. For example, Gergen (2009) suggests:

The basic idea of social construction may seem simple enough. But consider the consequences if everything we consider real is socially constructed, then nothing is real unless people agree that it is ... In a broader sense, we may say that as we communicate with each other we construct the world in which we live. (p. 4)

Burr (2003) promoted the concept of social constructionism, cautioning us to be suspicious of our assumptions about how the world appears to be. She argued that we should take a critical stance towards what she regards as ‘taken-for-granted’ ways of understanding the world and ourselves. Feminism is one example that continues to challenge stereotypes and critique the ‘taken-for-granted’ collective-held beliefs of the dominant hegemonic culture. The thesis highlights this approach and provides a space for challenging stereotypes about young mothers in education. Gergen (2009) contends that there is:

An enormous body of feminist critique—sophisticated and sharply pointed scholarship that spans the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. Nor are Marxists and feminists are the only groups to make use of ideological critique. Currently such critique is in use by virtually all groups that find themselves marginalised, oppressed, misrepresented or ‘unheard’ by society at large... In all cases, the critique calls into question the [assumed] logics or realities of the dominant culture, and shows how the logics both support the self-interest of the dominant groups and perpetuate injustice. (p. 16)

Implication of the notion of ‘Social constructionism and social constructivism.’ This study demands that gender is viewed as constructed from social realities. It also addresses how gender is constructed and enacted from lived experiences.
**1.6.5 Feminist standpoint theory.**

This thesis draws on feminist standpoint theory because it gives all participants in the case studies the space to articulate their views and experiences, which has been previously absent in the research literature. Bowell (2011, [http://www.iep.utm.edu/fem-stan/](http://www.iep.utm.edu/fem-stan/)) defines feminist standpoint theories as:

*The process of achieving knowledge begins when standpoints begin to emerge. They emerge when those who are marginalised and relatively invisible from the vantage point of the epistemically privileged become conscious of their social situation with respect to socio-political power and oppression, and begin to find a voice.*

A mapping of what Harding (2004) and Hartsock (1997, 2004) name as the central themes located in feminist standpoint theories show how well aligned these are to the experiences expressed by participants in both case studies.

1. *that knowledge is socially situated* – the young mothers in both case studies presented an in depth understanding of what it meant to be a young mother and a student. They were able to articulate the drivers and barriers to their (re)engagement with education/training. The teachers in these programs also presented great insight into how they had to modify their own pedagogy to meet the educational needs of these students. School leaders also provided the situated knowledge of how these programs are developed, administered and sustained.

2. *marginalised groups are socially situated in ways that make it more possible for them to be aware of things and ask questions than it is for the non-marginalised* – for a number of young mothers in the two case studies, it was the first time they had been asked to share their stories of motherhood. They also expressed how they had not been given the opportunity before to think about the complex issues surrounding them as
students. Once asked they were able to explicitly name and position themselves within the discussions and debates of mothering young and being at school.

iii. *research, particularly that focused on power relations, should begin with the lives of the marginalised* – the young mothers in the two cases are firmly at the centre of this study, from there the teachers, support staff and school leaders become part of the analysis as in their own way the voices of classroom teachers have been silenced in explorations of young mothers in education.

Hence, in the case studies described in this thesis, it was important that the young mothers in the school-based programs, and those who developed and delivered these programs, had the opportunity to speak for themselves, and construct meaning from their own situations. Especially when researching the CCCares program (see Chapter 5), being able to move in and out of the space which these research participants inhabited (the program), and were socially situated, allowed to me to be the ‘outsider within’ (bellhooks, 1984). Harding (2004) suggests that there is an epistemic advantage of the ‘double vision’ afforded to those in the position of being outsiders within and that this is a recurring theme of feminist standpoint theories. She also contends that the self-reflexivity inherent in the identification of this insider/outsider position is a potentially advantaged epistemic location that connects with the broader feminist theme of the (often-vexed) relationship between feminist practice and feminist theory.

Obviously, as a pro-feminist male, I can only contextualise my understanding and construct reality from the perspective of a researcher straddling both sides of a dichotomous social divide. Murchison (2010, p. 228) defines this as social and/or cultural empathy—the degree of understanding that can be achieved in the course of ethnographic research. As a pro-feminist researcher, I needed to ensure that I was cognisant of my own standpoint as a gay,
white, educated, middle-class man. In addition, at some level, I can relate to the concept of young motherhood as being a socially constructed group in our society. I gained this understanding, albeit limited, from my time spent with the young mothers in the program as well as my own experiences belonging to a marginalised group. As for being gay and a pro-feminist, Flood (2002) points out that pro-feminist men include men across the sexual spectrum. Gay men have sometimes been drawn to pro-feminism because their sense of distance from traditional masculinity or their realisation of the links between homophobia and sexism. I concur with Flood’s observations here. Growing up in North Queensland my own experiences with friends that were young mothers allowed me to view the difficulties, rejection and stereotyping they faced. These experiences have provided me with the opportunity to achieve a degree of empathy when standpoints different to my own began to emerge (Hartsock, 2004). One important area of transformation for me early on in this research was to move beyond the constructs and terminology of ‘teenage’ mothers to that of ‘young’ mothers and in doing so politically positioning these women as mothers first.

Implication of the notion of ‘feminist standpoint theory’ for this study. This study employs an approach that seeks out and values the contribution to knowledge made by a variety of participants in the research. The realities for participants in this study are developed and shared from their own standpoint. As the researcher in this study I need to be cognisant of the various standpoints participants hold.

1.7 Moving from the Term ‘Teenage Mothers’ to ‘Young Mothers’: What’s in a Name?

For the purposes of continuity and clarity, this thesis shifts the foci from the dominant terminology of ‘teenage mothers’ found in much of literature to that of ‘young mothers’,
which is a more inclusive expression. The term ‘teenage mother’ is viewed by many (Arai, 2009a, b; Boulden, 2001; Daguerre & Nativel, 2006; Luttrell, 2003; Pillow, 2004) as negative, problematic and symbolic, and for some, it implies being deviant. The other reason for my shift to ‘young mother’ is that a number of young women in the case studies presented in this thesis are in fact in their early 20s; however, they did give birth to their child or children in their teen years. This is indicative of the many women now re-engaging with education and/or training after having a child or children. It is important to note that the term ‘teenage mother’ is used when citing literature and statistics that have used the teenage years as a category.

Two terms that are used inclusively in this thesis are those of ‘pregnancy’ and ‘motherhood’, as these terms are mutually related. Once again, a number of young women featured in the case studies that follow were pregnant at the time they participated in the school-based program.

1.8 Overview of the Thesis

This thesis presents nine chapters. It moves through an introduction to the thesis (Chapter 1) then presents the relevant literature in Chapter 2. The methodology chapter, Chapter 3, is followed by two case studies of school-based programs in Chapter 4 on the Plumpton High School Young Mothers in Education program and Chapter 5 on the Canberra Senior Secondary College CCCares program. Then, a study of leadership and program support at the second case study program is reviewed in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 shows the development of a model of good practice in school-based young mothers’ programs based on current literature and the findings from the case studies. Chapter 8 identifies the tensions surrounding school-based young mothers in education programs. Chapter 9 discusses the implications from the findings and future directions.
1.8.1 Chapter 1: Introduction.

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the structure, position the study and highlight the theoretical frameworks that shape the case studies that are presented later in the thesis. The theoretical underpinnings that serve as the touch-stone for this study are situated within postmodern feminist theories, such as social feminist theory and feminist standpoint theory.

1.8.2 Chapter 2: Young motherhood and education in Australia.

This chapter maps the size and nature of teenage pregnancy and mothering by drawing upon data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). It highlights the consequences of teenage mothering, as identified in the literature. Public policy responses to teenage pregnancy and motherhood through national policies in the United States (US), in the United Kingdom (UK), and in Australia are examined to demonstrate the various ways the ‘problem’ of teenage pregnancy and motherhood has been articulated in national policy agendas. It also reviews the main research reports produced in Australia over the past decade as a way of demonstrating the way the policy agenda in this area has evolved. Then, it narrows the focus to education policy responses. As school education is a state responsibility, a state-by-state review of policies relating to meeting the needs of students who are pregnant or parenting is provided. The final section in this chapter looks at the four types of program-delivery models identified through a review of programs that have operated during the course of this study. Some of these programs are no longer in operation—an indication of their nature as ‘trials’ and/or the problem of sustainability of programs that are not tied to recurrent funding.

1.8.3 Chapter 3: Methodology.

This chapter explains the methodological approach chosen for this research and the research methods that have been selected to gather data about the experiences of young mothers, school leaders, and program staff. The research methodology in this study is founded
on the principles of the qualitative approach and is augmented by postmodern feminist understandings. The research framework I have employed includes case study, policy analysis, focus group and individual interviews thematic analysis, and statistical analysis. Utilising this blending of research methodology and methods consolidates the examination of the experiences of teenage mothers, school leaders and program staff.

### 1.8.4 Chapter 4: Plumpton High School: Young Mothers in Education program.

This chapter examines the development and outcomes of the Plumpton High School Young Mothers in Education program. A background to this study is provided with an explanation of the school and its community context. A brief overview of the program’s origins is also provided as well as a description of the key characteristics of the Young Mothers in Education program.

### 1.8.5 Chapter 5: Canberra Senior Secondary College CCCares program.

This chapter provides an overview of the CCCares program and identifies key features. The study also includes focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews with students in the program and staff, including the College executive team. In this chapter, the student interview material is discussed. A thematic analysis of the focus group discussion and interviews is presented and the main themes identified.

### 1.8.6 Chapter 6: Studying leadership and program delivery at CCCares.

This chapter examines the Canberra College CCCares program from the perspective of the school leaders, program teachers, and program support staff. This chapter provides an opportunity for the school leaders and program teachers to broaden our understanding of the factors that are required to build successful and sustainable programs for this group of students. The chapter shows that while a number of similar programs have been developed in Australia and in other countries the Canberra College CCCares program is now an established program.
that can make a valuable contribution to our understanding of factors such as leadership, required for the development of successful and sustainable programs.

1.8.7 Chapter 7: Towards Good practice in school-based young mothers’ in education programs.

This chapter presents a model of best practice in school-based young mothers in education programs. Both Plumpton High School and Canberra Secondary College provide good examples of how focused program delivery can work in either a mainstream setting or an alternative program within a mainstream setting. This chapter begins by reviewing the main features of the two programs as a way of highlighting the strengths and weaknesses inherent in each program and, by extension, in many of the programs trialled in a further 80 sites across Australia. The chapter then draws on the research described in the previous three chapters to identify the significant factors that underpin the implementation of successful and sustainable programs. At the core of this chapter and the overall thesis is the understanding that school-based programs for young mothers are much more than just an education program for students with particular needs.

1.8.8 Chapter 8: Tensions surrounding school-based young mothers in education programs.

This chapter explores the challenging environment and reveals a number of significant tensions surrounding school-based young mothers in education programs. Each of these tensions is of a different nature; they can interact and affect the program domains in a way that creates different challenges depending on the strength of those tensions.

1.8.9 Chapter 9: Conclusion.

This chapter discusses the key findings of this study and highlights future directions. It also provides an update of developments from the research. This section brings together the
literature and data that stems from the review of literature, data analysis and interviews. The research findings illustrated in this chapter show a model of the critical factors for success in supporting young mothers with their (re)engagement with education.

1.9 Summary

This chapter has provided a background to the motivations and experiences that have guided and focused me in this area of research. It has placed this work in the context of other literature in the field of study and has detailed the purpose, aims and approaches used in the research. The significance of the study is highlighted as well as how I, as the researcher, am situated within this study. This chapter has provided an overview of the thesis, showing a breakdown of the study’s nine chapters including the two case study chapters.

The next chapter maps out the size and nature of teenage pregnancy and mothering in Australia and highlights the situation in other Western industrialised nations. A review of the literature showing the consequences of teenage motherhood is provided in the next chapter. Various public policy responses are discussed, as well as a review of the main research reports produced in Australia over the past decade. An in-depth, state-by-state review of education policies relating to meeting the needs of young mothers who are students and the types of educational program-delivery models are also presented.
Chapter 2: Young Motherhood and Education in Australia

In Western societies, the vast majority of policy actors (policy makers, non-government organisations, faith-based organisations and conservative family lobbies) identify teenage pregnancy as a social problem that can be solved by state intervention (Daguerre & Nativel, 2006, p. 6).

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the Australian context and the literature that informs this study. The first section of this chapter maps the size and nature of teenage pregnancy and mothering in Australia by drawing upon data from the ABS and other secondary sources. In the second section, the consequences of teenage mothering, as identified in the literature, are examined. The third section changes focus to the public policy responses to teenage pregnancy and motherhood. Government policies in the US, the UK and Australia are examined to demonstrate the various ways the ‘problem’ of teenage pregnancy and motherhood has been articulated in national policy agendas. This section also reviews the main research reports produced in Australia over the past decade as a way of demonstrating the way the policy agenda in this area has evolved. The fourth section focuses specifically on education policy responses. As school education is a state responsibility, a state-by-state review of policies relating to meeting the needs of students who are pregnant or parenting is provided. The policy statements of several non-government organisations are also reviewed. The implications of new Commonwealth moves to tie the payment of social welfare benefits for this group of mothers to a return to school or work has given a new impetus to policy development in this area and it is anticipated that new policy directions will be put in place in a number of Australian states in the near future. The final section in this chapter discusses the
four main program-delivery models to date. Some of these programs are no longer in operation—an indication of their nature as ‘trials’ as well as the problems of sustainability of young mothers’ education programs.

2.2 A Statistical Profile of Motherhood and Young Motherhood in Australia

Among developed countries, Australia has the fourth highest rate of adolescent birth rates in the 15 to 19 years age group after the US, New Zealand and the UK, followed by Canada. Data from the ABS (2008) suggest that approximately 12,000 women under the age of 19 give birth each year. The data do not provide information about whether these young women were still at school when they became pregnant. By Year 12, approximately 50 per cent of adolescents are engaging in sexual activity (Lindsay, Smith & Rosenthal, 1998). There are thousands of young women in Australia each year that become pregnant while still at school. It is difficult to determine the exact number because schools and education authorities do not keep data on the number of pregnancies within student populations. The adolescent birth rate peaked in Australia in the early 1970s, and between 1971 and 1983, the birth rate for adolescents dropped by over 50 per cent (Modern Medicine of Australia, May 1990, Vol. 33). These fertility statistics may underestimate the actual incidences of pregnancy as they represent only live births, excluding terminations, induced, spontaneous and stillbirths (Di Battista, 2004 p. 9). Recent research conducted estimates that approximately 50 per cent of adolescent pregnancies are terminated, whereas the other 50 per cent are carried to term (Corkindale & Condon, 2002).

---

Figure 2.0. Trends in Australian adolescent birth rates.

Source: ABS, 2010a.

Figure 2.0 shows the trends in Australian adolescent birth rates between 1981 and 2009 in comparison to the 20 to 24-year-old women cohort. It is interesting to note that both groups have experienced a downward trend in fertility rates since 1981. It also illustrates the possible effect of the Federal Government funded Baby Bonus with the 20- to 24-year-old women cohort showing an increase in the fertility rate since about 2007. A slight increase in the fertility rate for the 15- to 19-year-old women cohort can also be noted.

Over the past two to three decades, fertility rates among younger women have been declining (ABS, 2009). Births to women aged 15–19 years in 2009 represent only four per cent of total births and represented a continuing decline from a peak in the early 1970s (ABS, 2009). The median age of all mothers for births registered in 2009 was 30.6 years, while the
median age of fathers was 33.0 years, both slightly younger than in recent years. Women aged 25–29 years have had the highest fertility rates over the past 80 years, followed by women aged 20–24 years (ABS, 2009). There has been a tendency over the past few decades for women to delay childbearing. Just under one-third of women who had their first birth in 1998 were aged 30 years or older. This proportion increased to 42 per cent by 2008, and included 15 per cent who were aged 35 years or over having their first child.

There are broad social and economic changes that underlie the trend in delayed childbearing, primarily increasing levels of educational attainment and labour force participation by women. Australian fertility rates, as measured by the total fertility rate, have reflected changing social and economic conditions over the course of the twentieth century. For example, the Great Depression of the 1930s resulted in low fertility rates, reaching 2.1 babies per woman in 1934. By 1961, rates peaked at 3.5 babies per woman during the height of the ‘Baby Boom’. As in other developing countries, the mid-1960s brought changes to birth control, with the introduction of the oral contraceptive pill and a lowering of fertility.

The reinterpretation of abortion law in NSW in 1971 was associated with a substantial fall in births to young women and an increase in the median age of mothers. This saw the total fertility rate fall sharply to 2.9 babies per woman in the years 1966–71. Accompanied by changing laws and attitudes surrounding the role of women in society, these changes allowed women greater reproductive choice and greater freedom to pursue education and employment. Female participation in the workforce increased dramatically in the late 1960s and early 1970s. By 1976, the fertility rate had fallen to Replacement Level 3 of 2.1 babies per woman. Fertility rates stabilised during the 1980s but began another gradual decline through the 1990s reaching a low of 1.7 babies per woman in 2000, the lowest recorded. The fertility rates of

3 The level that needs to be sustained in the long term to ensure that a population replaces itself.
teenagers reached an all-time low in 1998 (18.5 births per 1,000 female teenagers in 1998 compared to 22.1 in 1990).

The continuing low fertility rates in Australia and other industrial countries is a direct result of an increasing proportion of women remaining childless or delaying childbirth while pursuing careers or paid work. Fertility rates remained relatively stable in the 2000s before peaking at a ten-year high in 2005, after the introduction of the Baby Bonus on 1 July 2004, with women aged 35 to 39 recording the highest increase. ‘Family-friendly’ policies such as paid parental leave and subsidised childcare, which enable women to combine their work and family goals, are advocated as the key to increasing fertility levels.

By 2009, the fertility rate had fallen to 1.9 babies per woman and the median age of Australian mothers at first pregnancy has risen from 24 years in 1975 to 30.6 years. In 2009, fertility levels were highest among women aged 30–34 years and lowest among teenagers (see Table 1.0). In contrast, the fertility rates of women under 30 years were only marginally less in 2009 than 1999, while for women under 20 years, the rate in 2009 was down from 1999, at a national level, teenage fertility rates continued to decline. At a national level, the teenage fertility rate in 2010 was 15.5 babies per 1,000 women aged 15–19 years (total: 11,294). But, the rate differs between the states and territories, with Victoria recording the lowest teenage fertility rates in Australia at 8.5 babies per 1,000 women, in 2010, while the Northern Territory recorded the highest rate at 48.1 babies per 1,000 women.

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4 Australia’s first Paid Parental Leave Scheme was introduced on 1 January 2011. The government funded scheme pays up to 18 weeks leave at the National Minimum wage to eligible working parents anytime within the first year after birth or adoption of a child. The government believes this scheme will have a positive effect on falling fertility rates.
The majority of births to teenage mothers in Australia in 2010 were to women aged 18 and 19 years (28 per cent and 44 per cent respectively). In 2010, the fertility rates for women aged 18 and 19 years were 21 babies per 1,000 women and 33 babies per 1,000 women respectively. In comparison, only four per cent of births to teenage mothers were to women aged 15 years or younger, resulting in a fertility rate of three babies per 1,000 women aged 15 years (ABS, 2010a). Nonetheless, some Australian research indicates that particular groups in the community, for example, Indigenous young women in remote areas, are actually experiencing an increase in birth rates. This situation counters the discussions about births to teenagers declining overall. Moore and Rosenthal (2006) warn us that:

*To talk about a plateau or decline in the teenage birth rate may mask important social features of the phenomenon ... A further consideration is the need to take demographic factors into account. For example, it is quite possible that there are two opposing*

### Table 1.0

**Births to Teenage Mothers: 2009 and 2010**

(Source: Births, Australia, 2010 Australian Bureau of Statistics)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Births 2009</th>
<th>Births 2010</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Teenage Fertility Rate 2009</th>
<th>Teenage Fertility Rate 2010</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>rate</td>
<td>rate</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>3037</td>
<td>3014</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>1762</td>
<td>1512</td>
<td>-14.2</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>-14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>4022</td>
<td>3660</td>
<td>-9.0</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>-10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>806</td>
<td>-3.6</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>1514</td>
<td>1449</td>
<td>-4.3</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>-5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>-19.4</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>-20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia (b)</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12120</td>
<td>11294</td>
<td>-6.8</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>-7.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(a) Births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 years. Includes births to women aged less than 15 years.*

*(b) Includes other territories.*

Source: ABS, 2010a.
clearing them for learning

Trends among teenagers. In some groups—the well educated or affluent—there may still be declining birth rate; in others—the unemployed or socially disadvantaged—rates of teenage pregnancy and birth may actually be increasing. (p. 197)

Given the preceding statistical norms, it is apparent that those that sit outside this range are viewed by many as abnormal. This is particularly noticeable for women having children in their teens and for those women who have children post-40 years of age (Boulden, 2009; Luttrell, 2003; SmithBattle, 2000a). Teenage mothers are often viewed as challenging the norms of when to have children, as the majority of women are delaying the establishment of a family until their early 30s because of career commitments, ensuring financial security and deciding when it is the ‘right’ time to have a child.

Some argue (Boulden, 2000; Flannery, 2003; Sarantakos, 1996) that access to affordable contraception and sex education at primary school reduces teenage fertility rates because countries that have family planning services and include sex education in primary school curriculum have lower rates of teenage pregnancy (Daguerre & Nativel, 2006; Luttrell, 2003). These countries include France, Denmark, Sweden, Netherlands and Switzerland. Yet, for many young women, poverty and disadvantage still increase their chances of parenting young (Arai, 2009a; Daguerre & Nativel, 2006; Kelly, 2000; Luttrell, 2003).

2.3 Statistics on Motherhood outside Marriage

In A Statistical Account of the Seven Colonies of Australasia (ABS Cat. No. 1398.0) compiled between 1890 and 1904, children born outside of a marriage were referred to as ‘Illegitimates’, and like divorce, they were seen as harmful to public morals. Year Book Australia, 1908 (ABS Cat. No. 1301.0) identifies the average age of mothers of legitimate children as 29.90 years and the average age of mothers of illegitimate children as 23.98 years.
At the time, there were only 1.65 illegitimate births per 1,000 of mean population compared to 24.76 legitimate births per 1,000.

Year Book Australia, 1910 (ABS Cat. No. 1301.0) in referring to Illegitimates reinforces the morality of the day by stating:

_It is, of course, possible that the number of illegitimate births is somewhat understated, owing to diffidence in proclaiming the fact of illegitimacy, and it is not unlikely that the majority of unregistered births are illegitimate._

By the time the first Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1911 (ABS Cat. No. 2112.0) was released; the reference to Illegitimates had been removed and replaced by the less controversial term _Ex-Nuptial_, a term that continues to this day. Year Book Australia, 1910 (ABS Cat. No. 1301.0) attributes the lower ex-nuptial rates in Australia compared to other countries primarily due to ‘the general circumstances in Australia with regard to opportunity for marriage are probably relatively easy as compared with those in older established countries’. Statistical records had improved by the time of the second Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1921 (ABS Cat. No. 2111.0) allowing for better data relating to mothers aged 15–19 to be collected.

Birth rates outside of marriage have always been much lower than births to married couples. As shown in Figure 3.0, marriage birth rates are consistently higher than those outside of marriage are. Based on Australian data from 1871 to 2008 on the number of births to married and unwed individuals, married birth rates increased during the ‘Baby Boom’ around 1945 (post-WWII) and then declined between the early 1960s to early 1980s with the advent of women having more control over family planning. This also coincided with women entering the workforce, less rigid social expectations around marriage and the commencement
of welfare support for single parents. Then, with the introduction of the Baby Bonus in 2004, the birth rate continued to climb for both married and unwed groups.

![Graph of Births by Nuptiality](image)

**Figure 3.0.** Births by nuptiality.

*Source: Births, Australia (Cat. No. 3301.0) ABS.*

**2.4 Myths, Misconceptions and Misunderstandings about Young Mothers**

The construction of teenage pregnancy/motherhood as a social concern can be traced back to the late 1960s in Western industrialised countries. Some suggest that it is strongly linked to demographic transitions, which means the movement from ‘traditional’ family patterns to more ‘individualistic’ family patterns. Daguerre and Nativel (2006) point out that:

*As delayed childbearing is becoming the norm in Western societies, teenage pregnancy is being portrayed as a socially deviant phenomenon called ‘early motherhood’. Young people who have children while they are still financially dependent can thus be referred to as ‘children having children’, an expression that reflects moral judgement*
made on their behaviour. They are stigmatised because they are seen as socially deviant. (p. 1).

It is interesting to note that while there have always been ‘teenage mothers’ in our society, we have not always had focused research, policy and media attention on young mothers. Prior to the mid-1970s, the attention was mainly placed on unwed women of all ages (Pillow, 2004, p. 17). However, the theorising of teenage pregnancy as a ‘problem’ has gained greater attention since the mid-1990s (Arai, 2009a; Hacking, 1999; Kelly, 2000; Luker, 1996; Pillow, 2004; Selman, 1998). Arai (2009a, p. 109) argues that teenage mothers are the scapegoats for wider, sometimes unsettling, social changes, and are thus not the ‘real’ problem. Rather, teenage motherhood is now a site of moral panic and teenage pregnancy has thus been socially constructed as a problem. Daguerre and Nativel (2006, p. 2) take this point further, suggesting that contemporary policy discourses on ‘teen pregnancy’ are constructed historically and culturally. They argue that it is the social context in which teenage motherhood takes place that makes the phenomenon problematic.

The generalised perception within Australian society that there is a large number of young mothers that are single, and thus a large number of children being raised in sole parent households, is associated with the perceived social ills of the declining participation in marriages over the past 30 years. Sole parenting is also linked to crime, welfare dependence and violence in public perceptions (Ades et al., 2000). However, most teenage mothers are not sole parents. Evans (2001) found in her analysis of more than 1,247 participants in Australia that 71 per cent of teenage mothers were married when they gave birth and 14 per cent were in de-facto relationships. Only 15 per cent were single. There is also an assumption that young mothers continue to have babies ‘one-after-the-other’ in an attempt to gain financial benefits. Evans (2001) presents results that suggest that, while teenage mothers eventually had more
children, they tended to put off having their second child for approximately five years—as opposed to older women, who have their second child at about two years after the birth of their first child. Figure 4.0 shows the construction(s) of teenage pregnancy and motherhood as a ‘problem’ via myths, misconceptions and misunderstandings that feed off each other. It shows the interplay between the myths or beliefs people have, and how these develop to become ingrained misconceptions that in turn feed into misunderstandings of teenage pregnancy and motherhood. The process is cyclical in the sense that the stereotyping of the group continues until new knowledge is introduced to alter or transform understanding.
Figure 4.0. The construction(s) of teenage pregnancy and motherhood as a ‘problem’ via myths, misconceptions and misunderstandings of the issues.

A common myth is that births to young mothers are a ‘mistake’ that should not occur in a modern society particularly with increased access to birth control. Conversely, for some young mothers, having their child is planned, considered and wanted. The 1974 World Population Plan of Action, to which Australia was a signatory, recognised the principle that all
couples and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education and means to do so. This principle was maintained in the Programme of Action adopted at the UN International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994.

Young motherhood persists in spite of the fact that most women in Australia have capacity to control their own fertility. The 1903–1904 NSW Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth Rate in NSW detailed a wide variety of birth control methods that were in use including withdrawal and condoms. The diaphragm, an important female-controlled method, was introduced into Australia in the 1920s; though, the Papal Encyclical of 1930, Casti Connubi, which identified periodic abstinence as the only appropriate form of contraception, became and remained an important influence primarily on Roman Catholics. The oral contraceptive pill and the improved version of the intra-uterine device (IUD) available from the mid-1960s brought major changes in contraceptive practice and the use of many older methods declined significantly. The oral contraceptive brought with it more control over contraception decisions to women. However, access was often dependent upon the attitudes of the prescribing medical practitioner, particularly when prescribing for unmarried women and especially for young women.

In 1972, the Federal Government removed the sales tax on all contraceptives, reducing the cost and making them available to a wider segment of the population. Restrictions on advertising contraceptives were removed and federal funds were provided for family planning and education programs. Changing attitudes in Australia in relation to sex outside of marriage helped to increase the willingness of doctors to prescribe oral contraceptives to unmarried women. This led to significant increase in their use among 18- to 19 year-old-women between 1977 and 1989. Condoms were also a significant contraceptive choice for younger women.
predominately during the 1980s as the protection against sexually transmitted diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS.

By 1998, at least two-thirds of all Australian women aged 18 to 49 were using some method of temporary contraception, or had permanent contraceptive protection. Yet, at that time, a large proportion of those younger than 25 years reported not being sexually active and not using any contraceptive method. Termination of pregnancies, while not seen as a contraceptive method, has become more socially accepted for some, as a response to unintended pregnancy resulting from contraceptive failure or unplanned sexual activity (Ekstrand, Larsson, Von Essen & Tydén, 2005). But, its acceptance and availability is often still dependent upon social and religious attitudes, access to specialised medical facilities and socioeconomic status.

The construction of teenage motherhood as a ‘problem’ has developed from a lack of understanding or knowledge about the issues surrounding teenage mothering (Arai, 2009a; Pillow, 2004). This construction of young mothers as a ‘social problem’ has a profound effect on young women who become pregnant, particularly if they are in school.

### 2.5 Teenage Pregnancy and Its Consequences for Young Women

Since teenage pregnancy and motherhood is an emotive subject and seen as a ‘social problem’, it can be difficult for policy makers to focus objectively on the consequences of early parenting on young women (Daguerre & Nativel, 2006; Kelly, 2000; Pillow, 2004). At the Commonwealth level, commissioned research has included the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2008 study of teenage mothers’ income support, education and paid work (Jeon, Kalb & Vu, 2008). The study indicated that teenage mothers are relatively disadvantaged when compared to the group of older mothers. They tend
to be Indigenous, and more likely to have lived in a single-parent household in their childhood. They were less likely to be partnered (and were less likely to be married at the time their first child was born), than older mothers and on average had more children. They were more likely to be unemployed or out of the labour force and this was the same for the partners of teenage mothers (if they were partnered). Still, if the teenage mother was employed, she was more than likely to work longer hours than her partner. Due to the low labour force participation for the teenage mother (and partner), incomes are lower than older mothers (Jeon, Kalb & Vu, 2008).

The relationship between early pregnancy and motherhood referred to most frequently in the research literature from the developed world is low socioeconomic status (Arai, 2009a, p. 21). An Australian report on teenage mothers and the dynamics of welfare participation (Jeon, Kalb & Vu, 2008, p. 9) consistently indicated a correlation between having a first child at an early age and poor socioeconomic outcomes; although it is a subject of debate whether teenage parenthood is a cause or effect of poor socioeconomic outcomes. Regardless, for many young mothers their choices and options for positive life outcomes are compromised even further by their parenthood. This has not changed since the 1960s:

*The girl who has an illegitimate child at the age of 16 suddenly has 90% of her life script written for her. She will probably drop out of school ... not be able to find a steady job ... she may feel impelled to marry someone she might not have otherwise chosen. Her life choices are few, most of them bad* (Campbell, 1968, p. 238)

Recent research indicates that this remains true for many teenage mothers today. Women who become parents in the early teenage years are less likely to complete secondary school education (Arai, 2009a; Boulden, 2001a; Pillow, 2004). They have reduced opportunities to access further education and training, and they and their children are more
likely to experience social and economic disadvantage and poorer job prospects (Boulden, 2001a; Renwick, Gingell, MacRae, Watts & Croce, 2002). Arai (2004) found for English teenage mothers, that most of the young women interviewed had low educational attainment. Many of them indicated that they had already ‘dropped out’ of school prior to their pregnancy and some said that they had been truants or expelled from school. Many young mothers fall into a cycle of welfare dependency and become more ‘at risk’ of engaging in self-harming behaviours (SmithBattle, 2000b, 2005).

Young mothers are also at greater risk of increased psychological ill health, depression, increased illicit drug taking, smoking and alcohol use (Ades et al., 2000). Children of young mothers also appear to be at greater risk of poor developmental outcomes. Longitudinal studies show that compared with children of older mothers, children of mothers aged 18 years and under were more likely to have a disturbed psychological behaviour, poorer school performance, lower reading ability and were more likely to smoke regularly (Shaw, Lawlor & Najman, 2006). Another Commonwealth report (Bradbury, 2011), commissioned by Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) drew on data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children and a comparison with siblings was conducted through the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics Survey (HILDA) to show, among other things, that children aged four to five years whose mothers were under 25 when they were born had distinctly lower levels of functioning than those with older mothers and that data on 16–18 olds who were still living with their mother show that this disadvantage carries through to education and employment outcomes. The data also showed that those born when their mother was in her teens were much less likely to be still in school (Bradbury, 2011).
Research suggests that particular attributes may contribute to some young women being more ‘at risk’ of adolescent pregnancy. These include i) inadequate or abusive family structures/non-supportive environments; ii) behaviour problems at school/educational engagement; iii) low academic attainment and/or failure; iv) low socioeconomic status/poverty; v) poor self-esteem/self-image; vi) early onset of sexual activity; vii) lack of psycho-social/personal skills; viii) poor labour market outcomes/unemployment; ix) cultural background/ethnicity; x) geographic location (regional, rural and remote) (Ades et al., 2000; Arai, 2009a; Daguerre & Nativel, 2006; Diehl, 1997; Kelly, 2000; Sarantakos, 1996; Littlejohn, 1998; Musick, 1993).

Arai (2009a,b) and Hoffman (1998) argue that determining the effect of teenage pregnancy is confounded by the multitude of disadvantages many of these young women experience, prior to becoming mothers in their teenage years. As already noted, research by Arai (2009a), Bradbury (2006b), Jeon, Kalb and Vu (2008), and SmithBattle (2005) shows that there are strong associations between being born to a young mother and having poor outcomes as both a young child and a young adult. Though this pattern might be important for some purposes (such as targeting assistance), it does not necessarily imply that the mother’s age at birth causes these outcomes. That is, the outcomes for the child might have been the same even if their mother had delayed his or her birth. The poorer outcomes may be due to family background characteristics that influence both fertility patterns and the outcomes of children.

Boulden (2001, 2010), Seidlecky (1996), and Flannery (2003) suggest that the main reason teenage birth rates are so much higher for young women from lower socioeconomic or disadvantaged backgrounds is either a lack of access to or a reluctance to seek termination of pregnancy. Compared with the better off non-parenting cohort, young women from deprived,
or relatively deprived, backgrounds are not only those likely to become pregnant but they also more likely to carry the pregnancy to term (Arai, 2009a, p. 21). This is particularly noticeable for Indigenous women aged 19 years and under. In 2006, there were 76 births per 1,000 Indigenous women, which is more than four times the rate for all teenage women—18 births per 1,000 women (ABS, 2006, p. 20)—and there is a disproportionate rate for those in remote areas (Larkins, 2007).

Young mothers are less likely to marry or live in a de-facto relationship with the father of their children for a long period time. Even though Evans (2001a) found in her research sample (1,247) that over 70 per cent of the teenage mothers were married/partnered at the time they gave birth, there is a strong chance that a high proportion of these relationships will end in divorce or separation (Arai, 2009a). The divorce rate for those under 18 is three times that of those who have their first child in their twenties (Ades et al., 2000). Even though teenage mothers in Australia only make up one per cent of all single mothers, they are three per cent of the recipients of the main income support payments for single mothers (Morehead & Soriano, 2005). Bradbury (2006a) argues that the association between low socioeconomic statistics and young motherhood (particularly teenage motherhood) has increased over the past 20 years—as a result of the greater involvement of women in the labour market compared to older mothers who now have access to the labour market and can plan to have children when they are financially stable, unwed teenage mothers are now a much more marginalised group than they were 20 years ago. Nevertheless, young mothers are more reliant on set government supported income and often do not have appropriate personal support (Bradbury 2011, p. 170). As a result, teenage mothers are over represented in terms of receiving income support.

The educational response to school-aged young women becoming pregnant has traditionally been one of exclusion, social isolation and forced adoption. In this context, the
principal or Head Mistress for Girls would direct pregnant students to leave the school or they would ignore them, in the hope that the problem would go away and in most cases, it did. For many young women who found themselves in this situation, they were forced to leave school by their family as well. If they did go through to full term, they often had no option but to give up their babies for adoption (Stephens, Wolf & Batten, 1999). This was consistent with social attitudes towards unmarried mothers in general from the 1950s to the 1970s, when Australian authorities (government agencies and religious organisations) pressured many unmarried young mothers to give up their babies for adoption into what they considered ‘better’ homes—those of married couples. At a time when Australian mainstream society did not have a place for single mothers and their illegitimate children, these women were coerced, even drugged, and their babies literally stolen and despite arguments that the practice was well-intentioned, for the individuals involved, the ongoing impact has been devastating (Australian Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs: ‘Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practice’, 2012).

In the twenty-first century, negative attitudes to young mothers continue to prevail; particularly as contraception is seen as widely available. In other words, becoming a ‘social problem’ (pregnant teenager) is seen to be self-inflicted, assuming consensual behaviour, becoming pregnant is ‘self-inflicted. A report published by the Women’s and Children’s Health Service of Western Sydney suggested that without exception, all participants in the study were aware of negative attitudes about teenage pregnancy. For participants, regardless of the decision they had made, being young and pregnant involved feelings of stigma and judgement from others in the community (Di Battista, 2004, p. 40). Harman’s (2010) research with over 50 Western Australian young mothers reinforces this view:
Almost all the teen mothers reported negative reactions from other people when out in public. This was particularly true of ‘older’ people, especially women, and teenage girls who were younger than the teen mothers. The negative reaction ranged from ‘dirty looks’ to name calling, and direct and indirect comments. Sadly, the teen mothers also reported a negative reaction from those in the medical profession, including doctors, midwives and child health nurses. (p 2)

The persistence of such negative social attitudes affects the capacity or willingness of schools to support young mothers. Flannery (2003) found that a number of young women left school when they became pregnant due to feeling embarrassed; feeling concerned about being judged and not accepted; and a lack of awareness of their rights and options to continue. Young women who become pregnant while still at school often experience social stigma (Arai, 2009b; Kelly, 2001). Whitehead (2001) highlights the stigma attached to early pregnancy; in her work with pregnant and non-pregnant English teenagers, she found that there was a strong belief by participants that early pregnancy could lead to a ‘social death’. Later research by Whitley and Kirmayer (2008) with young Canadian mothers found that experiences and feelings of stigma were also familiar to this group. It is not surprising that reconnecting with education and/or training can often be a difficult prospect for young women who become mothers in their teens (Boulden, 2001a; Kelly, 2000; Luker, 1997; Pillow, 2004).

Programs for young pregnant or parenting students to address educational disadvantage are a relatively recent phenomenon. Some argue (Berthoud & Robson, 2001; Hobcraft & Kiernan, 1999; Staggenborg, 1998) that this coincides with the feminist movement and the development of gender equity policies and programs, including changes to social security schemes, since the early 1970s. It has also been suggested (Flannery, 2003) that young women who are pregnant or parents are becoming more vocal and playing a greater role in the
decision-making processes that affect them and their children. In the past, being a teenage mother would have been hidden from others. Now, young women are taking a more proactive stance in relation to their options and rights to education and training. Over the past ten years, there have been an increased number of young mothers accessing school-based education programs, as evident with the increase from ten programs in 2001 to over 80 programs in 2009 (Australian Young Pregnant and Parenting Network, 2009). One of the original school-based education programs was the focus of an Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) television documentary—Plumpton High Babies (ABC TV, 2003).

The impact of participating in education programs appears to be positive for young mothers. Flannery (2003) found that many young pregnant and parenting women expressed a positive outlook and felt positive about the future. Many of the young women in her study were very aware of the realities of parenthood and recognised that there would be struggles ahead; but saw having a child as a positive turning point in their lives. The longitudinal research conducted by SmithBattle (2000, 2005) since the early 1990s supports this view. This interpretive study explores how teen mothers experienced the self and future during a 12-year period:

*Mothering placed them on a new path and gave new meaning and depth to their lives.*  
*In spite of adverse childhood experiences, mothering for some teens provides a corrective or turning-point experience. Some mothers face many challenges but it’s not strictly because they had a baby when they were teenagers* (SmithBattle, p. 848)

As other studies have shown positive outcomes for some young mothers (Fressler, 2003; Leadbeater, 2001; Swan et al., 2003), teenage pregnancy and motherhood are not in and of themselves incapacitating (Moore & Rosenthal, 2006). Some evidence suggests that for some young women, their pregnancy was not accidental or unwanted, rather, having a baby
was a planned and deliberate choice (Moore & Rosenthal, 2006). While it is important not to over-generalise, the research suggests that the single most significant predictor of adolescent pregnancy is the lack of clear educational expectations (Ades et al., 2000), and that those without such aspirations are approximately three times more likely to become pregnant (Strachan & Gorey, 1997).

As pregnant and parenting young women become more visible and outspoken in Australian society, they continue to challenge the stereotypes and constructions of being young and a mother as a ‘social problem’. They highlight the difficulties of being a mother and at the same time, they illustrate the broader social and economic issues that affect them as a group (Jeon, Kalb & Vu, 2008). In the past, being a teenage mother would have been hidden from others. Now, young women are making a more proactive stance in relation to their options and rights to education and training. Yet, at the same time, teenage pregnancy and mothering have become major public policy issues.

2.6 The Discourses Surrounding Young Mothers

To understand the complexities faced by school-based education programs in supporting young mothers, it is important to be aware of the discourses surrounding teenage motherhood in Australia. For example, the psycho-medical discourse casts ‘the problem’ as a medical one, and the ‘solution’ in terms of medical/mental health, while media discourses often construct teenage mothering as signalling a decline in moral values among young people or among particular social groups. Inspired by Foucault (1980), Kress (1985) suggests ‘a discourse provides a set of possible statements about a given area, and organises and gives structure to the manner in which a particular topic, object, process is to be talked about’ (pp. 6–7). Fairclough (1995a) applies the concept of order of discourse, where ‘the order of
discourse of some social domain is the totality of its discursive practices, and the relationships ... between them’ (p. 132).

In this study, the ‘order of discourse’ is made up of the young mothers, educators, schools, and society. As suggested by Kelly (2000), the use of a pragmatic model of discourse theory is effective in the analysis of media reporting on the subject of teenage pregnancy and motherhood. A more specific definition of discourse provided by Griffith and Smith (1991, p. 90) and taken up by Kelly (2000), argues that discourse is:

An organisation of relations among people participating in a conversation mediated by written and printed materials. A discourse has a social organisation of authorities, sites, production processes, etc .... The term does not just refer to the ‘texts’ of this conversation and their production alone, but also to the ways in which people organise their activities in relation to them. (Kelly, 2000 p. 68)

In contrast to these macro notions of discourse, ‘discourse’ at the micro level refers to actual language use or usages situated in time and place. Discourse in this sense can consist in different registers. Following Halliday and Hasan (1985), registers are varieties of language ‘typically associated with a particular situational configuration of field, tenor and mode’( pp. 38–39), for example, parliamentary debates, election manifestos or hard news articles. For this study, it will include a review of a number of newspaper reports and articles in Australia over the past ten years. For my purposes, talk and text can be considered verbal and written forms of discourse in this concrete sense.

2.6.1 Psycho-medical discourses and young mothers.

Within psychology and health psychology research, teenage pregnancy has been a focus of international enquiry, each with specific psycho-medical attention. For example Cherrington and Breheny (2005), focus attention on the dominant discursive constructions
about teenage pregnancy. While Dunn (1998) investigated the fertility decision-making styles among young mothers, the research conducted by Gerrard and Luus (1995), highlighted the judgements made by young women who display vulnerability to pregnancy and related risk factors. Gillmore, Lewis, Lohr, Spencer and White (1997), have performed extensive research on repeat pregnancies among adolescent mothers. While Graham, Green and Glassier (1996), studied teenagers’ knowledge of emergency contraception. The work of Kosunen, Vikat, Primpela, Rimpela and Huhtala (1999), looked more closely at the use of emergency contraception among teenagers. Levinson (1995), performed early research on the reproductive behaviour and contraceptive knowledge among teenage women. This was also a research interest for Maynard and Rangarajan (1994), who studied contraceptive use and repeat pregnancies among welfare-dependent teenage mothers. Nelson (1990), identified the risk factors for repeat pregnancy among adolescent mothers. A study by Schofield (1994), illustrated the experiences of pregnancy and motherhood among young women of school age from the psychological perspective. The very early work of Smith, Weinman and Nenny (1984), investigated how some young women desired pregnancy during adolescence.

Weisman, Plichta, Nathanson, Chase, Ensminger and Robinson (1991), looked at social influences (particularly from sexual partners) on adolescent women’s contraceptive decision-making processes. Zabin, Astone and Emerson (1993), conducted a two year study investigating whether adolescents do want babies and the relationship between attitudes and behaviour. They looked at the impact of the sexual partner’s wishes, perceptions of contraceptive efficacy, and attitudes toward contraception and abortion. Despite declining teenage birth rates in the US and Australia, teenage mothering has emerged as a significant medical issue with a focus on African-American (and Aboriginal) and later poor white teens (Luker, 1996).
The outcomes of this body of research are often utilised to develop policies, information, service provision and practices. The psycho-medical discourse provides authoritative social voices, in shaping dominant social attitudes towards teenage pregnancy and motherhood. What is apparent in the majority of psycho-medical research is the taken-for-granted assumption that pregnancy in adolescence is undesirable and that research knowledge can and should be applied to reduce rates of teenage pregnancy (Cherrington & Breheny, 2005). The dominant theme is of teenage pregnancy as a health problem in need of a psychological solution.

Foucault (1980) has highlighted the political nature of knowledge by examining the relationship between knowledge, power and language. As demonstrated in his studies of the clinic (1994) and the prison (1995), there is an intimate link between most powerful institutions in society and the production of knowledge and ‘truth’ (Wilson & Huntington, 2005, p. 63). In the case of young mothers, psycho-medical discourses have served to reduce teenage pregnancy and motherhood to being a medical condition that requires intervention.

**2.6.2 Sexuality discourses and young mothers.**

The social construction of adolescent sexuality is by its very nature time- and culture-dependent, emphasising notions of relative truth. These models of time and culture postulate that language or discourse provides us with the categories that we use to classify events and persons and the means by which we interpret new experiences (Moore & Rosenthal, 2006). In the past, young women who were sexually active outside of marriage were viewed by society as inappropriate, immoral and socially deviant (Fusto-Sterling, 2000). In contrast, over the past 40 years, since the ‘sexual revolution’ of the 1960s, sexuality has become viewed more as a collection of socially and individually patterned sexual desires, feelings, practices and identifications.
Discourses available to teenagers (in Western industrialised society) seem to have them inheriting the worst of all possible worlds regarding their exposure to messages about sex: movies, music, radio, internet and TV present discourses that tell them sex is romantic, exciting, titillating. Premarital sex and cohabitation are visible ways of life among adults they see and hear about. Yet, at the same time, young people receive the message that ‘good girls’ should say no. Almost nothing they see or hear about sex informs them about the place of contraception or the importance of avoiding pregnancy (Jones et al., 1985, cited in Strasburger & Wilson, 2002, p. 145). Young women are often bombarded with messages of the consequences of growing up female with a bad reputation; of being a ‘slut’. The feminist writer Tanenbaum highlights the destructive power of sexual stereotyping. She argued that this is not a new phenomenon and suggests that it is a continuation of an old tradition. Tanenbaum (2000) points out that:

For girls who came of age in the 1950s, the fear of being called a slut ruled their lives.

In that decade, ‘good’ girls strained to give the appearance that they were dodging sex until marriage. ‘Bad’ girls—who failed to be discreet, whose dates bragged, who couldn’t get their dates to stop—were dismissed as trashy ‘sluts’. Even after she had graduated from high school, a young woman knew that submitting to sexual passion meant facing the risk of unwed pregnancy, which would bar her entree to the social respectability of college-educated middle class. (p. 2)

This discourse still appears to linger today; many young mothers are confronted by sexual stereotyping and labelling. The purity myth (Valenti, 2010) and the obsession with virginity remain particularly damaging to the sexual identity of young women. This is manifested in North America, and to some extent in Australia, with the promotion of abstinence-only sex education for teenagers. Valenti (2010) contends that:
A combination of forces—our media—and society-driven virginity fetish, an increase in abstinence-only education, and the strategic political rollback of women’s rights among the primary culprits—has created a juggernaut of unrealistic sexual expectations for young women. Unable to live up to the ideal of purity that’s forced upon them in one aspect of their lives, many young women are choosing the hypersexualized alternative that’s offered to them everywhere else as the easier—and more attractive—option. (p. 10)

The hyper-sexualised alternative Valenti discusses is ever-present in Western media and popular culture. The sexual objectification of women continues to position them within the modernised virgin/whore dichotomy. Many young mothers express concerns about their reputation and how it impacts on them and their children (Arai, 2009; Kelly, 2000).

2.6.3 Media constructions of young mothers.

While the literature reveals some of the discourses that surround young mothers, an analysis of the media and how it constructs young mothers as a social problem is also telling. Negative media coverage of teenage pregnancy and motherhood continues to be the norm for many Australian media organisations. The depiction of young mothers varies from the populist perspective that presents young mothers as ‘welfare manipulators and cheats draining tax payer money’ to portrayals of ‘kids having kids’ and victims or ‘problem teens’ to that of a social and medical problem that requires the attention of governments to ‘fix it’.

Although the social stigma about teen pregnancy is popularly perceived to have lessened in recent times, it is still quite prevalent, and its manifestations are evolving. However, over the last 25 years, stigmatisation has been far more openly contested by various social and political groups (Kelly, 2000, p. 67).
Nevertheless, the media rhetoric surrounding teenage mothers as a group remains predominately negative. Populist/sensationalist/tabloid television programs and newspapers often report that this group is ‘bankrupt’ of social morality. Their plight is well documented socially and historically (Campbell, 1968; Boulden, 2000; Kelly, 2000; Flannery, 2003). In Australia, as in most other countries, these representations, show teenage mothers as being deceitful and ‘playing’ the welfare system. Media constructions reflect this discourse, ‘a cash grab and hungry for the Baby Bonus’ (Naomi Robson presenter, 23/06/06 Channel Seven: Today Tonight); and ‘Teen mums are often the target of criticism, and even contempt. They say they’re ridiculed and abused in public—with most of the attacks coming from older mothers. They’re accused of only having children for taxpayer handouts’ (Tracy Grimshaw, presenter of A Current Affair, Nine Network Australia). Although ideas about adolescent sexuality and ‘alternative’ family structures may have become less rigid over the last 25 years, the mainstream media’s representations of teenage mothers remain for the most part stigmatised, albeit within updated constructs (Kelly, 2000, p. 67).

Paradoxically, the focus on teenage motherhood as an object of media concern in Western society has coincided with declining rates of teen births (Wilson & Huntington, 2005). Teenage birthrates in the US peaked in the early 1960s and in Australia peaked in the early 1970s. Some argue that the teen birth rates were actually much higher but most of these pregnancies were ‘legitimised’ by quick marriages or ‘hidden’ by adoptions (Luker, 1996; Luttrell, 2003; Pillow, 2004). Those young women that were unwed mothers were shunned and excluded (Harari & Vinovskis, 1993; Luker, 1996).

An influential 1976 publication entitled Eleven Million Teenagers (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1976) fanned public concern through the media by describing teenage pregnancy as in ‘epidemic proportions’ (SmithBattle, 2003). Teenage pregnancy is a ‘mediagenic’ subject;
one that generates much interest and strong feelings (Kelly, 2000). There is a challenge to communicate the complexity of teenage pregnancy and motherhood to press audiences in ways that avoid the stigmatisation of teenage parents or of particular ethnic groups (Mohiddin, Cawley, Chow & Wallis, 2006). With so much interest in this group, it has been reported that some television production companies have approached pregnant teenagers in the UK to take part in a ‘Big Brother’ style house for television. Foucault would argue this supports the idea of ‘descending individualism’ of a particular group that is regarded as lower in the social scale. It also suggests that media consumers engage in the ‘gaze’ on groups or minorities—such as young mothers—that juxtapose the dominant social norms as a form of entertainment.

2.7 Public Policy Responses to Young Motherhood

The public policy response to young motherhood cannot be separated from the dominant discourses surrounding young mothers identified in the previous section. Thus, public policy discourse also constructed teenage pregnancy and motherhood as a problem that needs to be solved (Arai, 2009; Di Battista, 2004, p. 12). As teenage mothers are usually portrayed in the Australian media as deviant and irresponsible along with the implication that they manipulate the welfare system in order to obtain social security benefits (Milne-Home, Power & Dennis, 1996), public policy responses are both reflective and reinforcing of this view. Conversely, research indicates that one of the most effective ways to minimise the risk of poor outcomes for this group is to support young pregnant women and young mothers to stay connected to schooling5 (Boulden, 2001, p. 7). Public policies that respond to this are inevitably constrained by the dominant discourses surrounding young mothers (Ades et al., 2000; Boulden, 2001b; Strachan & Gorey, 1997).

5 In most cases, for example, a repeat pregnancy during adolescence is considerably reduced for young mothers who remain with education and training.
Selman (2003) points out that in the UK, US and Australia, teenage parenthood is generally viewed by policy makers as an indication of social malaise and those young single mothers are the consequence of a welfare system that encourages irresponsible behaviour. He goes on to argue that the focus on teenage motherhood as a major social problem is counter-productive in that it distracts both from the need to come to terms with long-term changes in the family and from the immediate problem of unwanted teenage births (Selman, 2003, pp. 179–181).

Since the late 1990s, a variety of policy approaches have been promulgated in the UK, the US and Australia in an attempt to address the issues surrounding teenage pregnancy and subsequent motherhood. These approaches range from innovative whole-of-government agency and community-based support to penalising the individual by reducing welfare support. For example, in the US in 1996, President Bill Clinton presented a raft of policies that aimed to support the individual to take responsibility for their situation with support of government agencies. On the other hand, the administration of George W. Bush viewed teenage pregnancy and motherhood as a problem that was reflective of the breakdown of social norms. In 2004, the policies put forward by Bush were based on abstinence from sex as the key to fighting teenage pregnancy. Restrictions on accessing affordable contraception, terminations and the teaching of sex education in schools were put in place during his eight-year administration. In 2010, President Barack Obama announced the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative in the budget for 2010. This initiative proposed a total of $178 million for a new teen pregnancy prevention initiative, including competitive grants for evidence-based programs, research and evaluation, and an authorisation for $50 million in new mandatory teen pregnancy prevention grants to states, tribes, and territories (Smith & Wagoner, 2009).
In the UK, Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair, in 1999, presented an ambitious ten-year plan to combat teen pregnancy through a range of community-based programs funded by local government authorities. Blair described teen pregnancy and motherhood as ‘the wreckage of our problem society’ (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999) and the policy approach he adopted has been criticised as helping to construct teenage pregnancy and motherhood as a social ‘problem’ to be cured through the welfare state. As Arai (2009) points out:

*New Labour has consciously not attacked young or single mothers, but it had done something possibly more insidious: it has contributed to the growing pathologisation of teenage motherhood. Attacks on teenage mothers under the Tories were more aggressive, but they were also more honest.* (pp. 142–143)

In Australia, the response to teenage pregnancy and motherhood by successive Commonwealth governments over the past ten years has been similar to that of the Blair government, albeit a little more restrained. Dever (2005) identifies in policy debates in Australia ‘a marked tension over who constitutes “proper families”, “correct” mothers, and the right (white) babies’ (p. 56). Denver argues that under Prime Minister John Howard this tension was resolved in practice by the work of ‘reconsitut[ing] familiar hierarchies of meaning and merit in the realms of motherhood and the family’ (p. 57). These familiar hierarchies are those of class and race where white middle-class mothers and families are always ‘right’, and anything else is deviant.

Dominant discourses about young mothers in Australia are revealed in the Howard government’s policy introduced to promote population growth through reproduction. The Baby Bonus scheme, introduced by the Howard Federal Government in the 2002/2003 Budget, was aimed at offsetting the expenses associated with bearing a child. The scheme was introduced as a means of increasing Australia’s fertility rate and to mitigate the effects of
Australia’s ageing population. Anderson (2011) suggests that this creation of a non-discriminatory, generous lump-sum Baby Bonus paid to the birth (or adoptive) mother became a congruent financial endorsement of the tandem message to ‘procreate and cherish’, a coinage that resonated with the older warning, ‘populate or perish’. As the bonus was not means tested, it was also criticised as a form of ‘middle-class’ welfare.

In 2004, the then Labor opposition portrayed the Baby Bonus payment as a ‘temptation’ playing on the popular misconception of teenage mothers as welfare opportunists: ‘why should we have a Government policy on the Coalition side sending a market signal to teenage women that, if you get pregnant, you get a lump sum of $3000?’ (Roger Price, Labor Backbencher, 2004). This sentiment was echoed by the then Labor Party parliamentary leader Mark Latham and was taken up by mainstream Australian newspapers:

- ‘Baby Bonus Changes to Stop Misuse by Teen Mums’ (*Sydney Telegraph*, 12 November 2006)

As part of the Labor Party re-election strategy in 2010, parents were able to receive a $500 early payment of their Baby Bonus as well as a larger and more flexible advance on their Family Tax Benefit entitlement\(^6\) from July 2011. Unlike the previous Howard government’s original Baby Bonus scheme, under which parents were provided with a lump-sum payment of $5000, the Rudd government at the time changed the method of payment to fortnightly instalments. This approach was continued by the Gillard Government but this time with more

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\(^6\) For eligible parents only.
of a focus on providing lump-sum payments to young mothers (parents), as was reported in the media at the time:

_Ms Gillard said Labor had done the right thing by changing the Baby Bonus from one-off to staggered payments. ‘We were concerned, as many social welfare agencies and charities around the country became concerned, about the impact of the one-off payment on young people’, she said. The changes struck the right balance between providing families an immediate cash injection to help with the costs of a new baby, and ensuring the money wasn’t spent at once._ (‘Labor speeds up Baby Bonus payment’, _The Sydney Morning Herald_, 4 August 2010)

In 2011, the Labor Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced plans that young parents would be required to design a study and/or work plan once their baby turned six months and return to school and/or job training a year after the birth, a strategy also similar to that of the Blair government in 1997 (Selman, 2003b). The Australian Labor Government has allocated $47.1 million over four years in the 2011/2012 Budget to trial the program. About 4,000 of the 11,000 teenage parents in Australia will participate in the trial (from 1 January 2012) in ten disadvantaged areas (Building Australia’s Future Workforce: Investing in Our Young People DEEWR). This policy is consistent with long-standing national policies that were developed in response to rising teenage unemployment and the decline in unskilled jobs in the 1980s.

For three decades, Australian federal governments have progressively removed access to welfare (i.e. unemployment benefits) for teenagers and have used policy levers such as raising the school-leaving age to encourage young people to remain engaged in education and training and to obtain formal qualifications prior to entering the full-time labour market. As Smith (2009) points out:
Increasingly in many countries, including Australia, there has been an emphasis on ‘readying’ students for the workplace through a focus on the development of employability skills and also through the provision of explicit vocational training as part of the curriculum; as well as initiatives in several states to raise the school-leaving age unless evidence is provided of engagement in jobs that have associated training. (p. 430)

In contrast, the Federal Government’s policy initiative to encourage young mothers to engage with education, training or work has been presented in a way that reflects and reinforces dominant negative discourse about young mothers. Prime Minister Gillard was reported by the media as stating that the ‘tough love’ approach was needed to help stop a cycle of welfare dependency among teen parents (Steven Scott, The Courier Mail, 6 May 2011).

The policy plan was reported extensively in the Australian print media with headlines such as:

- ‘This not tough love but rampant populism’ (Eva Cox, Sydney Morning Herald 5 May 2011)
- ‘Prime Minister Julia Gillard orders teen mums back to work with budget crackdown’ (Phillip Hudson, Herald Sun, 5 May 2011)
- ‘Toughen rules on teenage mums’ (Patricia Karvelas, The Australian, 6 May 2011)
- ‘Julia Gillard defiant on welfare plan to force teenage mums back to work or training’ (Steven Scott, The Courier Mail, 6 May 2011)
- ‘Good news lost as same old stereotypes are trotted out’ (Mandy Perrin, Macarthur Chronicle, 17 May 2011).
In the face of the research evidence that completing high school is likely to result in better economic, social and health outcomes for both the young mothers and their children (Kelly, 2000; Luttrell, 2003; Pillow, 2004), the use of the social welfare system to encourage young mothers to engage with education or training can be seen as a worthwhile policy goal. However, the capacity of state education systems to respond to such policies and meet the particular needs of young mothers in school settings has received little attention in other policy or research.

One researcher suggests that public policy debates about young mothers drew heavily on ‘responsibility’ discourse (Pillow, 2004). This discourse implies that obtaining an education is no longer a right of teen mothers but something young women owe the society if they are not to be welfare dependent and burden to the taxpayers. Still, any government policies aiming to reconnect young mothers to education can be thwarted by what Pillow (2004) identifies as a ‘discourse of contamination’. This discourse generates subtle opposition to any policies and programs aimed at supporting pregnant teenagers and young mothers to complete their education in schools, from the perception that the immorality of teen mother would set a bad example to the student body at school and, hence, contaminate fellow innocent young women.

Nevertheless, the recent policy initiatives to reconnect young mothers to education could also be seen as reflecting a countervailing discourse evident in policy debates around social welfare and education—the discourse of social justice and equity. In the domain of school education, this equity discourse posits public schools as sites where ‘social justice’ can (and should) be observed in the schools’ day-to-day functioning. The concept of social justice is that of a movement towards a socially just world that is based on human rights and equality. Social justice has been of interest and idealised by democratic governments for decades, in
fact, it can trace its pedigree back to the late 1800s as a movement; and some would argue that
the likes of the philosopher Aristotle laid the early foundations for such a movement (Miller,
1999). The principles of social justice must be understood contextually, each principle finding
its natural home in a different form of human association:

*Social justice requires the notion of a society made up of interdependent parts, with an
institutional structure that affects the prospects of each individual member, and that is
capable of deliberate reform by an agency such as the state in the name of fairness*
(Miller, 1999 p. 4).

In the goals identified by MCEETYA in the *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals
for Schooling in the 21st Century*, a claim is made on the same basis. Goal 3 states that
schooling should be socially just so that:

*All students have access to the high-quality education necessary to enable the
completion of school education to Year 12 or its vocational equivalent and that
provides clear and recognised pathways to employment and further education and
training.*

2.7.1 **Policy reports on young mothers.**

There have been at least 20 research projects and reports conducted on the topic of
young women who are pregnant and/or parents in Australia in the period 2001 to 2011. An
annotated bibliography of these studies is provided in Appendix 1. Interestingly, most research
relating to young mothers in education programs has been commissioned by Departments of
Health and Community Services as well as local government authorities. While education

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departments have not conducted research directly, they have usually been represented on working groups involved in the much of the research conducted in school systems.

Recent studies have focused more directly on operational issues in young mothers’ education programs, particularly the barriers faced by participants; for example, the Commonwealth and State Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) conducted a 2007 research project ‘Barriers to Service Delivery for Young Pregnant Women and Mothers’ (Loxton, Stewart-Williams & Adamson, 2007). The project identified the barriers to and facilitators of service delivery to young pregnant women and mothers. The barriers to service delivery were classified into three main groups: common barriers that are common across service types for all young pregnant women and mothers; barriers specific to particular services—government and housing services were criticised for overly complex systems and forms; and vulnerable subgroups—women from Indigenous, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds experienced barriers to service delivery.

The study highlighted that these barriers occurred in complex relationships with each other that could become self-perpetuating for both the young mother and the service provider. The more barriers a young woman faced, or the more vulnerabilities that she experienced, the more difficult it was for her to access services, and the more difficult it would be for service providers to accommodate her needs.

This study also showed that best practice in service delivery contained core elements that lead to positive relationship between the young mothers and the service provider. It was found that by far the most striking aspect of successful service delivery was the relationship between the young woman and her service providers. A trusting relationship overcame various barriers that were inherent to many young women, including fear born of low self-confidence. In addition, young women did not feel stigmatised when attending targeted interventions as
long as they felt respected and consulted. Best practice, then, must include the elements that will lead to a strong positive relationship with a service provider. These include:

- Non-judgemental attitudes
- Active listening
- Knowledge of the young woman and her circumstances
- Warmth and friendliness
- Appreciation (praise) for young women’s parenting ability
- Respect
- Providing accurate information
- Explaining procedures
- Continuity of care wherever possible
- Confidentiality
- Smiling.

The study was able to illustrate the models of best practice, that included a ‘one-stop-shop’ that included group support, classes, referral and drop-in services for young women and a focal point for local service networking; peer support programs that decreased social isolation and increased confidence among young women; healthcare services; an integrated home visiting service for multiple types of service; and education programs.

At the state level, the NSW Government commissioned the Families First initiative (Flannery, 2003). A set of recommendations from this project addressed the potentials and barriers to participants in young mothers’ education programs. The project also developed local collaborative partnerships for future service planning and delivery.
An evaluation of Education Queensland funded the *Lifting Educational Access for Pregnant and Parenting Students* (LEAPPS) project in 2003–5 (Boone, 2003) found that key factors that affect, either positively or negatively, the support of pregnant and parenting young people in Queensland include supportive school personnel, community links, system level support, supportive school environment, educational pathways, and personal circumstances.

In South Australia, the Department of Education and Children’s Services funded a 15-month project to improve the educational, social and physical health and wellbeing outcomes for teenage mothers and their infants by increasing school retention and social inclusion. They found that it was important to provide education that meets the social and intellectual needs of the student, while also acknowledging the student’s parenting responsibilities; allowing newborns (not toddlers) to be with the mother in class when and if necessary; good quality and site-specific childcare; accessible and regular public or school-based transport provision; non-judgemental, youth-focused, antenatal care; and the importance of a pregnant and parenting friendly culture within the school. The report noted that most participants reported feeling embarrassed or ‘judged’ when using mainstream antenatal services. In fact, 51.9 per cent of the participants reported a negative experience with services (Arwin, 2007). Other studies found that the outcomes of participation in a community-based program focusing on opportunities and choices for further education, training and employment reduced social isolation for young mothers (Local District Area Health Services and Local Area Councils in Western Sydney—WESROC Ltd, 2002; Battista, 2004; Fahey & Vale, 2002; Area Women’s Health & Community Partnerships, 2007; and the Benevolent Society, Flannery, Healy & Irwin, 2004).

In a similar vein, a cross-border project in Albury-Wodonga (Young, 2005) focused on vulnerable young parents in rural and regional areas and found that over the period of the
project, the collaboration has resulted in the establishment of a broad, deep multi-sectoral network; provided for the provision of co-ordinated service information; created active engagement in ongoing multiple partnerships; and increased the expansion of service capacity and choices.

Two other studies focused on the experiences of young mothers in accessing services, including education (Loxton, Stewart-Williams & Adamson, 2007). A study that focused on the mental health and wellbeing needs of young mothers and their infants (Arwin, 2007), reported that young mothers needs were not met in mixed age group agencies such as the Maternal and Child Health Service first-time parent groups. It was reported that the key reasons for non-attendance at the Maternal and Child Health Service mixed age groups were experience or anticipation of judgemental attitudes from older mothers and feeling like they ‘don’t fit in’ due to differences in age and life circumstances. The reports show that the young mothers preferred to attend groups with their peers. In turn, the young mothers reported that the young parents’ groups they did attend met their needs and that they felt that mothers and children benefited equally through group attendance. The report highlighted that the young mothers attending young parents’ groups who participated in this research reported experiencing significant mental health issues, with anxiety and stress as common as depression (Keys, 2008).

In Western Australia, a study funded by the Astarte Project and undertaken through Edith Cowan University surveyed teen mothers’ access to education and family support; stigma and negative reactions from other people; and their attitudes to their future. This report is significant in the emphasis it places on its finding that many of the teen mothers held positive views of their future and reported that they ‘loved being a mother’. The data analysis of survey responses showed that five main themes emerged including
• Changes: Generally, the young mothers reported that they had to change direction when it came to education and subsequent employment.

• Support: Approximately 90 per cent of respondents said that the father was still involved with the baby.

• Perceptions: Almost all the teen mothers reported negative reactions from other people when out in public. The teen mothers also reported a negative reaction from those in the medical profession, including doctors, midwives and child health nurses.

• ‘Good and bad’ mothers: They commented that the appearance of their child was especially important, because they felt that they were being judged on how their child was presented.

• Future: Almost all said that they loved being a mother, despite the challenges, and would not change anything. Many of the teen mothers foresaw a positive future, where they would be educated, employed, partnered and not reliant on welfare benefits (Harman, 2010).

2.8 The Current Policy Context

Reconnecting with education can often be a difficult prospect for young women who become mothers. One of the most effective ways to minimise the risk of negative educational, social and health outcomes is to support young pregnant women and young mothers to stay connected to schooling (Arai, 2009; Boulden, 2001; Pillow, 2004). Schools and education authorities (state, Catholic and independent) continue to find it difficult to deal with the issue of young mothers staying at, or returning to school. There are still some education systems in...
Australia that have made limited policy commitments to the retention of this group of students in education.

High-quality school-based parent support and childcare centres provide parenting knowledge, support and behavioural (parenting) modelling for teen parents and safe developmentally stimulating care for their children. Studies suggest that young mothers enrolled in a high-school-based parent support program demonstrate good rates of high school continuation and graduation, positive mother-child interactions, low rates of subsequent births, and the children show positive indicators of child health and development (Sadler et al., 2007). For at-risk young mothers, parent support programs and school-based childcare settings appear to offer promising opportunities and to stay engaged with school. These programs also enable the children of young mothers to be cared for in a safe environment, close to their mothers. Stephens, Wolf and Batten (2003) present what they regard as

*the five essential tasks of effective school-based programs...making teen parents and their children visible; helping the system work; providing critical services and supports; linking schools with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; and, providing services to all teen parents. (p. 7)*

The US Federal government provides funding assistance to teenage mothers under 18 years old through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. To obtain the income support, these young mothers have to be living with a responsible adult (generally their parents) and participate in school or training (Acs & Koball, 2003). This approach has similarities to the Gillard government’s ‘learn or earn’ agenda for Australian young mothers as they also face losing their Centrelink payments. With this push towards attending school, training and/or the workforce by government, it is necessary to highlight what effective school-based programs for young mothers do for this group of students. Perhaps an unintended
outcome of this policy is an effect on the capacity of mainstream schools to provide educational support for young mothers.

Some (Boulden, 2009; Kelly, 2000; Luttrell, 2003; Pillow, 2004) contend that young mothers are not often viewed as an education problem because they are not visible in the broader student populations due to the small numbers of young mothers attending school. Over the past five years, state and federal governments in Australia have emphasised the importance of re-engaging young mothers with education or training in an attempt to address generational welfare dependence and increase individuals’ employability. Somewhat paradoxically, specific operational education jurisdictions policies focusing on young mothers are limited in scope. The majority of these policies were developed over 20 years ago and few appear to have been the focus of any recent policy update or review.

Nevertheless, there is a growing body of evidence that illustrates that schools and education authorities that support and encourage pregnant students and young mothers to continue with their education, make a positive and lasting contribution to improving the life outcomes of these young mothers and their children (Arwin, 2007; Boulden, 2001a; Flannery, 2003; Di Battista, 2004).

In Australia, the Commonwealth and State Governments are aware of the importance of education and training for young mothers as a means to break down the poverty and welfare dependency cycle; yet, while the Commonwealth government has control over tertiary education and training, responsibility for the provision of school-level education remains with the states. It is the responsibility of state governments to ensure that policies, procedures and funding arrangements are made available to groups that are disadvantaged in attaining education and training due to their context or situation. For example, it is against the law
(Anti-Discrimination Act 1977) to discriminate against females who are pregnant or parents and they cannot be refused the right to attend school in all Australian states and territories.

In Australia, schools and education authorities (state, Catholic and independent) continue to find it difficult to deal with the issue of pregnant young women and young mothers staying or returning to school. A decade ago, there were still education systems in Australia that did not have policy commitments to the retention of this group of students in education (Boulden, 2001; Fahey & Vale, 2002). Nonetheless, education authorities have become more proactive in providing policies to support this group. Most school education authorities in Australia now have or are developing policy statements in relation to young pregnant or parenting students. Some of these policy approaches are found within a student welfare framework. Young mothers are regarded as one among a number of groups of students with particular needs that are, in most cases, to be dealt with at the school level. Some authorities have provided very clear and detailed policy directions while others have very little evidence of any policy directions at all. For example, the Northern Territory has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Australia but has no specific policies in place, and Western Australia has no clear policy on pregnant and parenting students, despite a teenage pregnancy rate of 5.5 per cent.

Flannery (2003, p. 41) argues that the needs of pregnant and parenting students at school often remain hidden and that if the issue does come to light, the response these students receive from school can be a ‘hit and miss’ affair. However, reflecting on the research of Fahey and Vale (2002), Arwin (2007) highlights that schools that are ‘proactive’ in developing explicit policy and procedure in supporting young mothers, have more positive educational outcomes for those involved in these programs. Schools are more likely to be motivated to develop their own procedures and programs if a systemic policy framework is present.
The majority of public school systems in Australia have developed frameworks related to student pregnancy even though there exists some discrepancy in the comprehensiveness of these policy frameworks and the level of universal support and resource provision allocated to the implementation of programs. The majority of policy and programs that have been developed extend from state governments’ anti-discrimination legislation. Some policies are explicit, while others seem to be more tenuous. This is illustrated in the following review of state and territory policies. It is interesting to note that only three education jurisdictions in Australia have explicit reference to young mothers in their policy frameworks. These are the ACT, Tasmania and Queensland. The years of publication of these policies range from 1988 to 2009. Table 2.0 shows the state and territory education jurisdiction policy frameworks and year of publication.
Table 2.0 *State and Territory Education Jurisdiction Policy Frameworks and Year of Publication*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>State and territory education jurisdiction</th>
<th>Policy frameworks and year of publication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT DET</td>
<td>• <em>Pregnant students’ policy and implementation guide</em>  • 1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW DET</td>
<td>• <em>Student Welfare Policy</em>  • 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qld DET</td>
<td>• <em>Pregnant and Parenting Students Policy</em>  • 1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vic DET</td>
<td>• <em>Schools of the Future Reference Guide</em>  • 1996</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tas DET</td>
<td>• <em>Retaining and Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Students</em>  • 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA DECS</td>
<td>• <em>Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools</em>  • 1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>WA DE</td>
<td>• <em>Policy and Guideline for Gender Equity in the Social Justice in Education Statements</em>  • 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT DET</td>
<td>• <em>Equal Opportunities: Employment and Educational Access Policy</em>  • 1998</td>
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As shown in Table 2.0, some state policies were first published over 20 years ago and the most recent published 12 years ago, well beyond the policy review cycle. These policies are seen as still ‘current’, which is problematic for school communities when developing programs for young mothers. The policy lag affects the quality of service delivery because many of the policies were developed some time ago and hold little connection or relevance to the support needs of this group today. This lag in policy often reflects what is happening with the issue at the time of publication. Conversely, the date of publication does not necessarily mean the policy has not been reviewed since then or that it is not still relevant. Yet, it is understandable that some schools could view the date of publication as an indication of the
policy’s currency. Some would suggest (see, for example, Birkland, 2011; Ball, 2006; Weimer, 2008), that there is a need to move towards more responsive policy development and that procedure frameworks need to be more flexible in meeting the needs of individuals and particular groups in society.

2.8.1 A state-by-state review of current policies.

New South Wales - The NSW DET bases it support for pregnant and parenting students within its Student Welfare Policy (1995). This states:

*It is important that schools develop proactive strategies to inform school communities about the ways schools can help pregnant women and young mothers to continue their education without discrimination.*

According to the Student Welfare Policy, ‘All students have a right to a safe, supportive and equitable learning environment’ (NSW DET, 1995). The policy affirms the principles of the UNESCO mission regarding education:

*The universal right to education proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26) is at the very heart of UNESCO’s mission and is an integral part of its constitutional mandate. Education is a fundamental human right and essential for the exercise of all other human rights. It promotes individual freedom and empowerment and yields important development benefits. Education is a powerful tool by which economically and socially marginalised adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and participate fully as citizens.*

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The policy emphasises that accessing education and training is a right for any member of society and in particular those individuals or groups that are disadvantaged compared to the wider community/society.

A Young Mothers in Education (1996), resource was developed and sent out to all NSW Government secondary schools in the state. Although this resource has since become dated, much of the information contained in it still has some relevance today.

Queensland - The Pregnant and Parenting Students Policy was released in 1999. It is a requirement of the policy that principals identify and deal with aspects of schooling, which may lead to differential outcomes for pregnant and parenting students. It also aims to ensure that students who attend Queensland Government schools are not disadvantaged on the basis of pregnancy or their parental status. The policy highlights the importance of flexibility in school policies and practices relating to: i) curriculum design, teaching and learning strategies and assessment; ii) classroom and school management; uniform dress codes; iii) and temporary alterations in attendance patterns.

The policy clearly states that principals are to ensure that issues of direct and indirect discrimination and harassment on the basis of pregnancy and parental status are addressed quickly. School staff are provided with information that assists them to support pregnant and parenting young women to complete secondary education. Schools have been provided access to a booklet that gives advice and strategy suggestions on the retention of pregnant and parenting young women in education.

Victoria - The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development bases its advice for schools in relation to pregnant and parenting students on the Schools of the Future Reference Guide. This document reinforces the right of pregnant students to continue
their education, though requires a medical certificate in relation to fitness to attend school after week 34 of pregnancy.

Government schools in Victoria are encouraged to adapt the curriculum program when necessary and provide ongoing support through internal processes or by means of the Distance Education Centre Victoria for students whose schooling is interrupted or delayed due to the student’s pregnancy. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development provide information for schools via catalogue of evidence-based interventions, an online tool\(^9\) to assist then to provide and plan for early intervention programs that improve the health and wellbeing of children in your community.

The catalogue is organised around key sections that contain indicators of improvement in outcomes for children and young people. Each indicator has up to four recommended strategies that can be implemented and adapted to local needs. The catalogue will be updated on a regular basis as new indicators and strategies are evaluated.

**Tasmania** - The *Retaining and Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Students* Policy (2009) addresses the inclusion of, and support for, pregnant and parenting students in education. This policy recognises that pregnant or parenting students are at risk of leaving education and are among the most vulnerable students in relation to retention.

This policy has its origins in the *Equity in Schooling Policy*, the document within which the Tasmanian Department of Education bases its support for pregnant teenage students in schools. The focus of this policy is on students who are at risk of leaving school early. The general view of the Department is that schools are responsible for monitoring attendance and there is no systemic collection of data on the number of pregnant or parenting students. The

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critical risk factors that relate to teenage pregnancy are discussed within the *Statement on Pregnant Girls and Teenage Mothers* report (1997). It highlights the possibility of early school leaving among young women who become pregnant while still at school and those that decide to keep their babies.

Young women who are pregnant or parenting in Tasmanian schools are supported to enrol in the Tasmanian Distance Education program if they wish. Schools are responsible for assisting in this process. The *Pregnant Young Women and Teenage Mothers* report, published in 1997, was distributed to all high schools and colleges in Tasmania. The report provided advice and practical measures schools could take to assist young pregnant women and mothers to continue their education. It recommends that schools should:

i. Make a clear statement of the right of pregnant young women to complete school and the responsibility of the school to support them doing so

ii. Provide funding through district services for occasional support to assist young women remain in education

iii. Providing options for continuing education through non-school avenues, like distance education should be decided collaboratively by all concerned

iv. Utilise the *Health Promoting Schools* concept to provide information, enhance the supportive school environment and improve coordination between health and education services

v. Record school leaving due to pregnancy and or parenting and encourage students to return

vi. Focus on developing skills to participate in the paid workforce.

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10 Note: These recommendations form the basis of the current *Retaining and Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Students* Policy (2009).
South Australia - The South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment is guided by the *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools* report and by administrative instructions and guidelines, which require school communities to support pregnant and parenting students to complete their schooling. Two papers have been produced to assist schools to support pregnant and parenting students. *Pregnant Girls and Teenage Mothers: The Educational Implications* (1991) and *Pregnant Girls and Teenage Mothers, the Social Justice Action Plan Discussion Paper No 10.* (1992). At the core of these papers was the understanding of the barriers to education faced by adolescent mothers:

*Pregnant teenagers and adolescent mothers face many barriers to achieving an effective education. Some have to do with values and constructs of the wider society, which ignore their needs and rights* (Education of Girls Unit, 1991, p. 14)

Schools in the South Australian Education system are encouraged and supported to develop responses that are community-based and meet the needs of individual young women. This often takes the form of interagency linkages with district and community service organisations. The Department employs an interagency referral process manager to assist schools to develop the linkages. Data on school-aged pregnancies are not collected and schools do not track life outcomes for pregnant students.

Western Australia - The Education Department of Western Australia does not possess a specific policy framework or guidelines on pregnant and parenting students. But, a draft set of guidelines has been developed and the final policy statement is due for release in 2012. Schools were generally guided by the *Policy and Guideline for Gender Equity in the Social Justice in Education Statements*. There is no formal collection or tracking of data for pregnant and parenting students across the system.
**Australian Capital Territory** - The ACT Education Directorate\(^\text{11}\) has a *Pregnant Students Policy and Implementation Guidelines (1988)*, that is built on the *Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act*. This guarantees the right of pregnant students to attend schools, and specifies that ‘terms and/or conditions’ of admission to school should not discriminate against a student’s participation and that a student should not be subjected to ‘any other detriment’.

Schools in the ACT are encouraged to establish procedures to support pregnant and parenting students. The policy also reinforces the idea that students are helped to stay at school as long as possible and that special circumstances of the student should be taken into account at all times.

**Northern Territory** - There is no specific Northern Territory Department of Education policy for pregnant and parenting students. The *Equal Opportunities—Employment and Educational Access Policy* states that head teachers are responsible for equal opportunity matters and the development of the mechanisms to prevent any possible ‘discriminatory practices’. The Department does not collect any data on pregnant and parenting students at school.

### 2.8.2 Non-government organisation policy statements on young mothers and education.

A number of key non-government organisations have official policy stances that relate to support and encouragement of young pregnant and parenting students. These organisations include the Association of Women Educators (AWE), the Australian Young Pregnant and Parenting Network (AYPPN), and the Australian Education Union (AEU).

**Association of Women Educators** - The AWE is a long-standing national association that works to further the participation of women and girls in education (Boulden, 2009, p. 5).

\(^{11}\) Note: at the time of publication it was known as the ACT Department of Education and Community Services
The AWE has developed a clear policy statement, the *Pregnancy and Parenting Students Policy*. This statement promotes the concept that it is imperative that education systems, schools and school staff ensure that all steps are taken to maximise the opportunity for pregnant students and young mothers to complete secondary education. The policy contains unambiguous objectives, roles and responsibilities for the education system, principal, teacher and welfare support staff. The policy is rooted in the idea of the whole school approach. It also highlights the importance of clear communication and understanding required by all members of the school community. The detailed work of the AWE has highlighted how school communities can provide support and encouragement for these young women in a way that is not a burden on the school operations.

**Australian Young Pregnant and Parenting Network** - The AYPPN, with over 80 members/service providers across Australia and New Zealand, was established to support pregnant and parenting young people to create the best possible start for themselves and their children. The AYPPN works to establish and develop connections between agencies in providing services and support to this group, as well as government departments, researchers and the business community. It has a commitment to fostering access to quality healthcare, education, training, employment and housing as the fundamental building blocks of physical, emotional, social and economic wellbeing for pregnant and parenting young people and their children. The AYPPN have a set of ten objectives that clearly present the goals of the Network in supporting pregnant and parenting young people (and their children).

**Australian Education Union** - The AEU has a membership of over 180,000 educators who work in public schools, colleges, early childhood and vocational settings in all states and territories of Australia. Members include teachers and allied educational staff, principals and
administrators mainly in government school and TAFE systems.\textsuperscript{12} The AEU provides a statement of support for pregnant and parenting students through its \textit{Policy on Gender Equity} (2008). Section 7.5: ‘Equity Issues Related to Pregnant and Parenting Students’ states:

The AEU supports the needs of pregnant and parenting students and believes they must be catered for during their education to ensure they are not disadvantaged in accessing the educational opportunities they pursue and deserve, as is their right (pp. 13–14).

This policy statement also sets out a number of specific strategies for supporting pregnant and parenting students. These include that programs and policy aimed at retaining pregnant and parenting students are essential, and should be explicit. There should be adequate government assistance to aid childcare costs and access care places must be maintained as a priority. That flexible approach to workload, assessment, attendance requirements, and costs related to schools and other welfare considerations needs to be met by the education community to ensure pregnant and parenting students have every chance to complete their education free of discrimination. There should be professional development, training and resources to educators to support the needs of pregnant and parenting students (pp. 13–14).

\textbf{2.9 School-Level Young Mothers’ Programs in Australian Schools}

When this research commenced in 2004, there were some 18 separate school-level programs for young mothers in Australia. By 2010, the number of school-level programs had grown to over 80 sites located across Australia. Moreover, many of these programs had formed a national network—the AYPPN established in 2010.

The delivery modes of school-level programs to support young mothers fall into four main categories:

\textsuperscript{12} \url{http://www.aeufederal.org.au/}
1) Delivered by distance education
2) Offered in an alternative setting to mainstream schools
3) Offered as part of the mainstream program
4) Offered in an alternative program, but within in a mainstream school setting.

Each of these models is discussed below, drawing on examples of school-level programs that are or have been in existence in Australia over the past decade (see Appendices 2, 3 & 4).

*Distance education* - allow the students to engage with learning via online modules or materials sent to their homes. This approach offers flexibility in learning for the individual to work at her own pace. This is of benefit for young mothers because they can study at different times of the day rather than within the rigid timetable in a mainstream school setting. Another positive aspect is the individual can continue with her studies from any location, and does not need to attend a program centre. This reduces the issues of transport, childcare and time constraints. However, this approach can be a lonely existence for the student because they do not have face-to-face contact with peers or teachers. Young mothers from disadvantaged social backgrounds or with low levels of formal schooling may find it difficult to complete the set modules without more direct contact with teachers and peers.

Where in some locations this is addressed by inviting the students to attend face-to-face sessions to work with teachers and tutors for a set period, such as attending one week per semester, this arrangement may not suit mothers of young children. Another identified barrier to participation in distance education is that many young mothers do not have the resources to access computers or the internet. Some examples of programs offered are in Appendix 2.

*Alternative settings to mainstream schools* - Participants can move in and out of the program on a needs basis. In some cases, these programs are offered by non-government
organisations and tend to have grown out of, or be run as part of, programs developed to meet the needs of students at risk. A positive aspect of this approach is that the participants have some control over their learning because these programs are less structured and not as rigid as the mainstream programs. For young people who have not succeeded in the mainstream setting of a school, this type of program allows for greater autonomy. These programs are often established for a set period and the funding is provided to service providers that target the educational need of young mothers. While education and training are in most cases the focus of such alternative programs, in many cases, when the project funding was exhausted, the programs had to close.

Mainstream - Programs offered as part of the mainstream school are programs based at a school site and in which the pregnant or mothering students are integrated into the mainstream school program.

In mainstream approaches, a designated staff member usually acts in the role of a program coordinator. In many cases, these are part-time roles and the staff member charged with this responsibility is already a teacher in the school. They are usually chosen because they have an interest in supporting these students or they have some student welfare experience. The program coordinator acts as a conduit between the school and home for these young women. Extra to their role as a teacher in the school, the program coordinator often assists the young mothers with a variety of issues such as childcare placements, doctor visits, and transport and support advice. This support may include being provided with a special room or space to meet and access to equipment such as a refrigerator for storing breast milk and food for their child. Nevertheless, students in programs of this type are seen as students first; students who happen to be a mother. They are expected to fit into the existing curriculum requirements and conform to existing dress codes—including wearing school uniforms in
schools where, as in NSW high schools, these are the norm. Some mainstream schools have established crèches within the school to help provide greater support to students who are parenting.

*Alternative programs in a mainstream setting* - are a recent development in Australia with a number of programs being developed by education authorities to meet the needs of young mothers in education.

The establishment and sustainability of alternative programs in mainstream settings are often reliant on the will and drive of the school executive. These programs are costly, resource heavy, challenging to staff and require high-level management. In many cases, these programs cease operation if the school executive changes or key individuals move on to other positions.

What is common to the various modes of program provision that have been developed in Australia over the past decade is the commitment of those involved to provide better opportunities for young parenting students and their children.

One review of these programs suggested that local school communities are being more proactive at encouraging pregnant and young mothers to continue with their education and are more willing to do this in ‘an understanding, safe, and supportive environment free of judgement and the stigmatisation of others’ (Boulden, 2001). The key characteristics evident of all young mothers’ programs irrespective of the mode of delivery that reflect this ethos:

i. Informing pregnant and young mothers that they are welcome at the school and making them aware of their rights and options in continuing their education and/or training

ii. Providing variation and flexibility to the school routine; attendance; school uniforms; homework and assessment requirements
iii. Flexibility in allowing their children to come to school in cases of emergency or as a regular structured part of the program

iv. Establishing links with local service providers

v. Providing information about benefits, housing, childcare and health

vi. Celebrating the birth of the baby, encouraging the young mother to feel positive about her decision (Boulden, 2001).

Nevertheless, the main issue that confronts many schools that wish to introduce such programs is what the media presents as ‘community backlash’ (Kelly, 2000). This often occurs due to the stereotyping of teenage mothers being immoral or promiscuous, which makes schools reluctant to engage in dealing with the issue of teenage pregnancy and parenthood. Luttrell (2003) and others like Kelly (2000) and Pillow (2004) argue that pregnant and parenting students are too highly visible in the schooling context or, as Luttrell (2003) puts it, ‘showing’ precipitates discomfort among some in the schools. The ‘showing’ of pregnancy was most problematic in the school-based context. The politics of ‘showing’—but especially the regulation of ‘proper conduct’ for ‘girls in their condition’ is a source of recurring conflict between some teachers and the young women. Pillow (2004) offers the concept of the ‘hyper-visible’ pregnant student:

Here an analysis of teen pregnancy is a story of the hyper-visible gendered, sexualised and racialized body, the body that does not fit, literally and figuratively, into social, legal and educational policy. The pregnant teen body challenges ideologies and morals surrounding female sexuality, heightens fears and desires of and for the reproductive body, yields racial distinctions on the status of femininity and role of the female body, engenders a nostalgic yearning for the days of an innocent adolescence, and raises debates about the purpose of public schools. (p. 10)
A common response in some school communities that are reluctant to challenge these negative perceptions is to place the issue of young mothers into the ‘too hard basket’, and simply ignore the consequences of teenage pregnancy and its effect on young people and in particular young women (Arai, 2009; Kelly, 2000; Luttrell, 2003; Pillow, 2004).

Additional barriers faced by school-based young mothers in education programs include the lack of appropriate levels of funding for specialist program support (Boulden, 2000; Loxton, Stewart-Williams & Adamson, 2007). For many school-based programs, access to facilities and resources, including childcare facilities, can be problematic due to the legal and policy issues as well as the cost of providing childcare on high school sites. Understanding how to access external support services and understanding how the mechanisms of other service providers, such as health and housing, operated at the local and systemic level can also be difficult for school personnel. Flannery (2003) found that the development of local collaborative partnerships for future service planning and delivery was important to the success of individual programs.

The skills and attitudes of school staff also need to be taken into account. Angwin, Harrison, Shacklock and Kamp (2004) concluded in their study that qualified, well-trained, experienced and skilled staff/personnel are crucial to the success of (re)engaging young mothers with education and training. Yet, in many public school systems, teaching staff are transferred to schools and school executives have minimal influence over staff selection.

For many school communities, particularly in disadvantaged areas, young mothers are not viewed as a priority issue when there are competing demands in the school. Arai (2009), Boulden (2001a), Hay (2010), and Kelly (2000) suggest that the drive or will of the school executive to establish programs is important for program longevity and sustainability.
2.10 Conclusion

This chapter presented a statistical profile of trends of teenage fertility in Australia and compared these to those of other Western industrialised nations. It discussed the consequences of teenage pregnancy and motherhood on young women and provided the parameters and definitions of ‘teenage pregnancy’ and ‘teenage mothers’. The chapter also highlighted how teenage pregnancy and motherhood have been constructed as a ‘social problem’ through psycho-medical, sexuality and media discourses. The public policy responses to teenage pregnancy and motherhood in the US, the UK and Australia were presented, particularly recent initiatives, to encourage young mothers to remain engaged with education and training. The chapter illustrated the lack of current operational policies and procedures for meeting the needs of young mothers in school settings through a review of relevant state policies. Four main models of the delivery of young mothers’ programs were identified and discussed.

While the number of school-based young mothers’ programs has increased in the past decade, they are not supported by strong central policy frameworks. The chapter illustrated the limitations of Australian education policies concerning young mothers in education in each Australian state and territory. The next chapter introduces the research methodology employed for this study of the school-based young mothers’ programs at Plumpton High School and Canberra Senior Secondary College.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the methodological approach that was chosen for this research and the methods that have been selected to gather data about school-based education programs for young mothers. This study utilised a qualitative approach from the beginning of the research in order to ‘hear the voices’ of the young women - who have participated in two school-based education programs for young mothers. The overall approach was iterative following Rubin and Rubin (2005) who argue that:

Research design and questioning must remain flexible to accommodate new information, to adapt to the actual experiences that people have had, and to adjust to unexpected situations. (p. 35)

It was also a part of the research approach to include the school leaders, program teachers and program support staff and to describe the system that surrounds the program. These groups have had limited exposure in research contexts that consider young mothers and this study provides the space and opportunity to ‘zoom-in/zoom-out’ on the parts that make a whole (Pamphilon, 1997). It is the first time in the Australian research context that the experiences of young mothers, school leaders, program teachers and support staff have been reviewed in one study.

3.2 Research Approach

Harding’s (1992) conceptualisation of ‘methodology’ and ‘method’ informed the research approach of this study. Harding (1992) views ‘methodology as a theory and analysis of how research should proceed and method as techniques for gathering evidence’ (p. 2). This study required an approach that was flexible, reflexive and open-ended to accommodate for
complexity and allow the unexpected to occur. I could not see one particular method that would be able to achieve this well; hence, I drew on a methodology that is called the ‘pastiche approach’. This approach allowed me to select, use and transform methods that generally resided in a number of disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, health and education. As suggested by Malpas (2005, p. 135), like parody, pastiche borrows ideas or stylistic devices from another work or works. Unlike parody, pastiche does not imply any mockery or criticism of works that it incorporates. Jameson (2002) regards the concept of the pastiche as a vital aspect of postmodernism. I felt the piecing-together to make something new and original gave me the opportunity to develop a method that allowed me to employ data-gathering approaches that suited the research context and its participants.

As my aim was to allow for the variety of ‘voices’ to come out of the study to hear the individual interpretations, understandings and conceptualisations, I purposely engaged in a pro-feminist approach that was based on valuing the personal experiences and subjectivities of the individuals in the study (Larkins, 2007; Olesen, 2005; Reinarz, 1992). I believe that the qualitative approach gave participants in the program the opportunity to develop a sense of self-empowerment, self-advocacy and an increased understanding of their own situations that they could articulate from their standpoint (Larkins, 2007). Thus, the methods used in this study were situated and somewhat ‘grounded within an interpretivist philosophical tradition, which focuses on the ways in which individuals interpret, experience and produce the social world, by drawing on flexible, open-ended methods that are sensitive to context, complexity and detail’ (Kidger, 2004, p. 188).

As noted in the literature review, the presences and voices of young women are largely absent in research on teenage pregnancy and motherhood and even more so for those that (re)engage with education. There have been many quantitative research studies on the factors
that contribute to teenage pregnancy (Larkins, 2007; Coley & Quinlevin, 2002; Chase-Lansdale, 1998; Corcoran, 1999). The limited ethnographic studies that have been conducted suggest that teenage pregnancy and motherhood are not always the result of ignorance and lack of education; and may be on some level a conscious decision (Larkins, 2007; Dash, 2003; Hanna, 2001; Williams, 1991), while some others recognise that the process is rather accidental, but not totally unwelcome (Phoenix, 1991; Schofield, 1994; SmithBattle, 1995). Teenage motherhood in Western Sydney has been studied previously from a service provision perspective and published in report formats for funding organisations (Flannery, 2003; WSROC, 2002). These studies were conducted by NGOs with funding provided by government departments. The reports touched on education provisions in general but did not consider real educational outcomes for young mothers or suggest how more effective and sustainable programs might be developed; hence, this study aimed to fill this gap.

3.3 Study Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this study is to inform educators and policy developers of the challenges, tensions and complexities surrounding the education of young mothers in Australian schools. To achieve this, a case study method was used to gain greater insight and to reveal contextual factors of school-based young mothers in education programs. This work investigated how the perceptions of young motherhood and education are viewed from different ‘standpoints’, thus subjectivities were revealed (Butler, 1990, 2004). This was achieved by listening, hearing and sharing social experiences (Bryman, 2008; Rubin & Rubin, 2005) of the various individuals from particular groups, such as the young mothers, key staff and the education system (i.e. policy and procedure).
As a starting point, the literature review enabled questions of the discursive context of young mothers in education to be examined. This helped to identify the dominant discourses around young motherhood and education policies. From the literature review, gaps in research as they relate to Australia became evident and hence the following research questions were developed.

3.3.1 The research question.

- What are the policy challenges, tensions and complexities that affect school-based young mothers in education programs?

3.3.2 The sub-questions.

- What are the approaches Australian schools use to support young pregnant and parenting students?
- What are the discourse/s surrounding teenage/young mothers?
- What are the key policies and procedures of each state and territory education system in Australia?
- What does good practice ‘look like’ in school-based young mothers in education programs?
- What are the policy and other implications for school-based young mothers in education programs?

These questions reflect the focus of the thesis as an education policy and program orientated study. As the literature review noted, since the early 1980s, federal, state and territory governments have demonstrated an awareness of the importance of education for young mothers as a means to break the poverty and welfare dependency cycle; if only from an economic rationalist point of view. Yet, while this is reflected in policy documents, there has
been little serious consideration of the practical implications of implementing such policies at the school level.

While there is now a clear policy interest in supporting young mothers via education, unless we understand the policy challenges, tensions and complexities in operational terms, school-based programs will continue to be at risk of failure (Kelly, 2001). Hence, the overarching philosophical foundation for this research is constructed from a social justice perspective that believes in inclusive schooling and in equity of access to services and support for young mothers to enable them to (re)engage with education and or training.

3.4 Research Framework

Based on the principles of qualitative research, this study takes an inductive and interpretive approach that aids a deeper understanding of supporting young mothers in school-based programs. This is consistent with a view that researchers should help social sciences to inform policy makers of the critical factors for the success of programs targeted to marginalised social groups. According to Stanfield (cited by Denzin, 2010):

The social sciences ... should be used to improve quality of life ... for the oppressed, marginalised, stigmatised and ignored ... and to bring about healing, reconciliation and restoration between the research and the researched. (p. 9)

This research has employed a case study method, utilising focus groups and in-depth interviews as the primary sources of data and information. It has also used existing quantitative materials as secondary sources of data, for example, statistical data from the ABS and demographic data supplied by the schools. However, the main approach has been qualitative as a means to elicit richer and deeper understandings of social contexts in order to
provide material to better inform improved policy and practice. Qualitative methodology sits well with pro-feminist constructs. Rubin and Rubin (2005) believe that:

_Profeminist researchers argue that a more open, loosely structured research methodology is necessary to learn about women, to capture their words, their concepts and the importance they place on the events in their world ... they have worked out a research methodology that is gentler and that humanizes both the researcher and interviewee._ (p. 26)

Merriam (2009) points out that qualitative researchers in fields focusing on culture are likely to gather and organise their findings into schemes derived from the data themselves. This is referred to as the emic perspective, that of the insider to the culture, versus the etic, that of the researcher or outsider. Thus, the focus of this study was to search out knowledge from the internal perspective.

The research framework for this study therefore drew primarily on the following principles and processes:

i. Valuing the range of perspectives and a recognition of various perspectives—recognising and understanding that different participants may have different perspectives on the same issue and may need to be given different opportunities to contribute, in order for the variety of individual standpoints to become more obvious.

ii. Holism—taking account of the whole setting rather than disaggregating the pieces. The complex situation in which the programs under study were situated demanded an holistic approach. For example, the CCCares program had complex funding and staffing structures that included the ACT Health and Education Directorates as well as Canberra community agencies.
iii. Context-specific process—following agreed data collection and analysis processes between participants and the researcher and being mindful of the specific contexts for the research. In the Plumpton High case study, for example, I had to adjust my research plans when it became clear that I would not be able to interview the young women in the program because of NSW restrictions on interviewing school students who are under 18 years of age. As a result the research shifted to interviewing former students who had participated in the program.

iv. Iterative processes—recognising that there is oscillation between the research plans and methods that may involve repetition and ongoing development of the research approaches as data are collected and analysed. Hence, the research cycle is not static. In the two case studies reported in this thesis the limitations of the first study (at Plumpton High) were used to build a more holistic and ‘researcher-embedded’ research method for the second study (at Canberra College).

v. External evaluation of methodology—firstly, this was via the university ethics committees providing feedback and suggestions. Also feedback provided by the ACT DET Research in Schools section was valuable. The school leaders, including the program manager, gave sound advice prior to the commencement of the data collection phase. While on a visiting scholar program to the University of British Columbia, I worked with Professor Deirdre Kelly, a leading figure in research surrounding teenage mothering and parenting and their education. She provided feedback, guidance and suggestions for the research methodology and methods selected for this study.

vi. The relationship between the theoretical, methodological and analytical elements of this study is illustrated in Figure 5.0.
3.5 Research Methodology

As stated, my aim was to allow for the variety of ‘voices’ to come out of the study. Pillow (2004) refers to this as multi-vocal, to hear the individual interpretations, understandings and conceptualisations. Pillow (2004) takes this point further and argues that education based studies of young mothers in schools should aim to challenge dominant discourses through bringing participants voices to the fore:

*Research that explicitly details the experiences of pregnant/mothering students in schools is necessary in order to begin to interrupt existing discursive structures defining the teen mother and her educational needs and to understand how teen mothers currently access and experience educational opportunity. Such research may, for example, include pregnant/mothering students’ educational histories and*
narratives, including their access to and engagement with education prior to, during, and after pregnancy; or may offer close analysis of what type of education pregnant/mothering students receive in separate school programs. (p. 221)

As shown in the previous chapter, the presences and voices of young women are primarily absent in existing research on teenage pregnancy and mothering, which has emphasised quantitative analyses of the social determinants that contribute to teenage pregnancy and motherhood (Larkins, 2007; Coley & Quinlevin, 2002; Chase-Lansdale, 1998; Corcoran, 1999). As psycho-medical, sexuality and media discourses continue to dominate the policy discourse around teenage pregnancy and motherhood, it is important for research to acknowledge and confront such discourses through presenting the voices of young mothers themselves. This is particularly important for studies of policy initiatives such as programs for young mothers in schools.

3.5.1 Collaborative methodology.

This study has been embedded in a collaborative framework from the beginning. The importance of establishing research relationships was seen as key to the success of the study. Collaborative research has traditionally been understood as originating from participatory, action, and feminist research approaches. Critical theory and knowledge underpin these traditions, combining self-reflection and historical analysis of inequitable systems (Kirby, Greaves & Reid, 2006, p. 31). I believe education systems are usually inequitable places for young mothers due to the low level of system support and out-dated policy and procedures. These policies are often problematic to put into practice or exist within other policy frameworks that make it difficult for schools to achieve the policy outcomes. The consequences of lack of policy leadership in this area have an effect on young mothers’ successful (re)engagement with education and/or schooling. Hence, I see it as core to an ethic
of inclusion and equity that those participating in the study have ownership and agency, and that thus is visible within the research. Kirby, Greaves and Reid (2006) inform us that collaborative approaches to research allow the participant to have a voice:

*Collaborative research puts primacy on the practical, grounding language in a shared experiential context. As well, emancipation, democracy and community empowerment are promoted through redressing power imbalances where by previously marginalised achieve a voice.* (p. 31)

Over the past 20 years, there has been an increase in reflection on and engagement with, young people’s active involvement in research projects, fuelled by the recognition that young people are social actors who have important things to tell us about their lives (Best, 2007, p. 39):

*The advancements in social science research together with the increasing recognition of children’s [young people’s] rights of expression (article 12, United Nations [UN] Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989) summarise the context within which children’s [young people’s] involvement in research has evolved from them being regarded simply as objects of study to sharing their own insights and undertaking research themselves.* (Jones, cited in Fraser, Lewis, Ding, Kellett & Robinson, 2005, p. 114)

Nevertheless, much of the research performed on young mothers over recent years excludes them from being valued as research participants (Arai, 2009; Kelly, 2000; Pillow, 2004). They as a group have been studied from afar, in many cases spoken about rather than being given the opportunity to voice their own lives and contexts.

One of the obstacles to giving young people the opportunity to be participant researchers is the barrier of time. Performing research of this kind requires a great deal of time
to complete and with ethical constraints and timelines, the researcher is often faced with the challenge to complete research studies within a set period. In the *CCCares* study, I allowed nearly two years for the data collection to occur. I worked with the school leaders and support staff before engaging formally with the young mothers in the program. I wanted them to feel at ease with me moving in and out of their space and to inform them of my intentions concerning the research questions. From this, I started a process of collaboration with the participants in re-developing and fine-tuning the questions (Gibson & Brown, 2009). This proved to be a watershed moment, as I needed to let go of the ‘power’ that I had as the researcher.

I also wanted to address noticeable absence in the literature of the voices of staff who provide support for young mothers in education. We see little evidence in the Australian research landscape of the school leaders and support staff being included in meaningful research regarding their involvement in supporting young mothers in education. Hence, this study draws on critical inquiry to explore the systems of social relationships and contradictions that underlie social tensions and conflicts in young mothers’ education programs. It is hoped that this approach will give the participants/collaborators the opportunity to see themselves and social situations in a fresh way in order to inform participation, collaboration, and further action for self-determined emancipation from oppressive social systems and relationships (Maguire, 1987, cited in Kirby, Greaves & Reid, 2006, p. 31).

While school leaders (i.e. principals and deputy principals) hold positions of ‘power’ within the context of schooling, they are often excluded from processes of policy debate and development that affect them. We see this within this study as although the school leadership endeavour to deliver inclusive support programs for teenage mothers, they lack agency to engage with policy development that in turn would benefit from their experience at the ‘coal-
face’. Yet, another reason for their participation in this study is that they can truly inform. By giving voice to these participants, this study aims to provide evidence for policy and procedure from a micro level, that is, building from the lived experiences of staff in young mothers’ education programs at the school level.

### 3.5.2 Participatory and ethnographic method.

Maguire’s (1987, p. 29) seminal work still holds significance in this study; it highlights that participatory research combines three activities: investigation, education and action. I have used these activities throughout this study in an attempt to develop knowledge in an area that is problematic and limited. Participatory research assumes that there is a political nature to all we do; all of our work has implications for the distribution of power in society (Maguire, 1987, p. 35). Following a pro-feminist approach, this study has required that ‘I’ as researcher learn to ‘let go’ of the status and power I possess and in some way sits with me as the ‘researcher’: ‘The research process is not a neutral act. The politics of research is now a contested area and the social dimensions of power relationships operating within research have become clearer’ (O’Toole & Beckett, 2010, p. 22).

This in itself has been a journey of discovery, one that has made me reconsider, re-evaluate and reconstruct my role in (and outside) the ‘research process’. If we are true to approaches used in participatory research, so it should be, as we are called to re-imagine the ways of doing, being involved in the research with participants as opposed to the dominion over the process and those involved: ‘Collective inquiry builds group ownership of information as people move from being mere objects to acting as subjects of their own research process’ (Maguire, 1987, p. 30).

This point can be taken further to the idea of the researcher being committed to co-developing research programs with people rather than for people (McIntyre, 2008). It is
necessary to be explicit about the idea of involvement and that of participation in the research process. The reasoning for this is the understanding that the researcher could view a participant’s involvement in focus groups or interviews as enough or appropriate. Though, there is a great deal more to authentic participation of subjects in participatory research methods. McTaggart (1997) highlights the difference between ‘involvement’ and ‘participation’ in that the participants have a share ‘in the way research is conceptualised, practiced, and brought to bear on the life-world’ (p. 28). This illustrates a progression since the early work of Maguire (1987) where the focus lay more on the idea of ‘ownership’ of research to now the notion of being active in the conceptualisation and realisation of research that impacts on the world contexts. But is there much of a difference in these ideas? It is important to look at the history and in some ways the origins of participatory research to locate this project on a continuum because it has moved between participatory research to participatory action research (PAR) to the location of participatory ethnography.

For the second case study, my research took on the ethnographic method in which I as a researcher used Gromm’s (2004) suggested approach, to use naturalistic observations of the social setting as the participant observer, but keeping in mind that:

_researchers cannot simply go and look at ‘naturally occurring’ events and write an account of these ‘telling it like it’s at’. Their report will be a report by them, based on what was observed by them, excluding what they did not observe, informed by the sense they made of their observations._ (p. 217)

Murchison (2010) points out that it is necessary for a researcher to establish whether it is place, or a particular group of people, or a set of events that are the focus of study:

_the traditional approach to ethnography assumed that the ethnographer travelled to a place and studied people residing in that place, but the easy assumption that place is..."
equivalent to people and culture is no longer tenable in most cases. Therefore, you should ask yourself whether your focus will be on a place or places, a particular group of people, or a particular set of events or rituals. (p. 23)

For this study, the emphasis has been on place and people. Murchison (2010) points out that to be an effective researcher you have to locate yourself in a position to learn from others. He believes the goal of ethnography is:

*To gain insight into the cultural and social behaviour as well as the cultural understandings and underlying thought processes that produce behaviour.* (Murchison, 2010, p. 15)

I see young mothers as *social actors* that challenge, and in some ways subvert, the cultural norms and social structures in the wider society of what it is to be a mother (Jupp, 2006; Butler, 2006). Hence, these social actors create tensions in the social and cultural structures of school/s. In the school-based programs for young mothers such as Plumpton High School and Canberra College Senior Secondary School, support for the young mothers in some ways subverts mainstream schooling from the hegemony of mostly compliant, asexual, non-parenting adolescent students (Jennings, Para-Medina, Hilfinger, Messias & McLoughlin, 2006; Luker, 1996; Macleod, 2002).

### 3.5.3 Case study process.

The case study approach is well regarded historically in education research because it offers the researcher strategies for capturing authentic data. Case studies can assume a variety of forms and involve specific and detailed investigation of people, places and things. Yin (1984) offers an early definition of the case study research method as ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries
between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used’ (p. 23).

Bryman (2003,) defines the case study approach as ‘the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case’ (pp. 52–53) with the idea of ‘case’ being a reference to place or location within the context of a group, community or organisation. Denscombe (2007) takes it further with reference to the concept that the ‘case’ is mainly studied in a ‘naturalistic setting’ that is already in existence and will continue post any investigation. It is ‘anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon’ (Merriam, 2009, p. 52).

The two case studies chosen for the research could be seen as ‘exemplifying’ cases (Descombe, 2007). Yin (2003) regards case study research that involves ‘exemplifying cases’ as requiring the researcher to capture and/or describe the circumstances and conditions of everyday or common place situation. Here, Bryman (2008) suggests that an exemplifying case:

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\text{may be chosen because it exemplifies a broader category of which it is a member. The notion of exemplification implies that the cases are often chosen not because they are extreme or unusual in some way, but because either they epitomize a broader category of cases or they will provide a suitable context for certain research questions to be answered. (p. 56)}
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The two case studies that follow in this thesis, Plumpton High School Young Mothers in Education program and Canberra College CCCares program both illustrate Bryman’s (2002) notion of exemplification and they illustrate what is required to support young pregnant and parenting students in school-based programs.
In recent years, there has been a greater appreciation of the validity of theory building from case study research. The central notion is to use cases as the basis from which to develop theory inductively (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007, p. 25). Murchison (2010, p. 225) argues that the inductive approach allows for a process of reasoning that builds models of understanding from the primary data that is collected.

3.6 Research Principles

The principles that guided this research were based on Anderson’s (2004) general principles for education research and principles that guided the ethical conduct of the research.

3.6.1 Principles for educational research.

Principles for this work followed that of Anderson (2004) who highlights the characteristics that can be utilised in developing a greater understanding of the discipline of educational research and what it includes. There is considerable overlap with those used to describe the requirements that underpin qualitative research more generally.

i. A study should attempt to solve a problem that has not been addressed. In the case of our study, this involves identifying practice and policy issues in school-based programs for young pregnant and parenting students.

ii. A study should involve gathering new data from primary or first-hand sources using existing data for a new purpose. In our study, this was achieved by interviewing and conducting focus groups with the school leaders, program teachers, program support staff and critically the young mothers participating in the program. There is little evidence this has been attempted to this extent in Australia before.

iii. The data collected should be based upon observable experience and/or empirical evidence. In our study, this was accomplished by becoming an inside observer and...
having access to quantitative data collected by the program administrators over the years, used as secondary data in this study. The process demands accurate observation and description of the ‘goings on’ within programs. This study occurred over a period of four years, with field observation notes, discussions and debriefs sessions with staff and school leaders.

iv. The use of carefully designed procedures and rigorous analysis developed over the period of the study. This was realised, from the commencement of our study, because there was a need to ensure that all participants in the project were treated with respect and that their voices were heard. A great deal of time was put into making sure that this occurred prior to the formal gathering of data via interviews, focus groups and observations.

v. The investigation should emphasise the development of generalisations, principles or theories that will help in understanding, prediction and/or control. In our study, this was achieved through the identification of, and linking of the critical factors required in school-based young mothers in education programs with policy implications based on student wellbeing programs.

vi. It should be obvious from the commencement of the study that it requires expertise, familiarity with the field, competence in methodology, technical skill in collecting, and analysing the data. Since I had performed earlier work in this area, I used an established methodology, and had experience collecting sensitive data, I was able to bring the necessary expertise to the research task.

vii. The approach to educational research attempts to find an objective, unbiased solution to the problem and takes great pains to validate the procedures employed. In this study, I accessed a number of ‘critical friends’ external to the research for validation. This
process was employed throughout the research cycle as well as validating it against other projects in the field that used similar approaches.

viii. The process is a deliberate and unhurried activity that is directional but often refines the problem or questions as the research progresses. This occurred through the experiences gained in the first case study at Plumpton High School. I realised after gathering the data that I needed to focus more on gaining the input from not only the young mothers, but also school leaders, program teachers and support staff. It also necessitated a revision of the research questions and direction. What really became apparent was that I needed to conduct the research as an insider, with access to the total program. Giving the data collection phase of the study more time to run was also a finding from the first case study. Still, the first case study was important in shaping the approach use in the second case study.

ix. The findings from educational research are carefully recorded and reported to others interested in the problem. Over the period of the research, findings were shared with a variety of audiences for different purposes. For example, feedback to the research participants was both formal and informal. As the findings from the case studies were identified these were shared at national and international conferences via conference proceedings.

3.6.2 Ethical principles and practice.

The early research was for a Master of Student Welfare degree at the University of Melbourne; hence, this research was given approval from the University of Melbourne Ethics committee in respect of the case study at Plumpton High School. Following an upgrade to PhD at the University of Canberra, approval to conduct research for the case study at the Canberra
Senior Secondary College was given by the University of Canberra Ethics committee as well as the ACT DET Research Schools section.\(^{13}\)

There was no apparent adverse reaction in the participants; however, every effort was made to ensure that participants were aware of the support systems available to them if they so required. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the focus groups and interviews at any time; they were also informed that they could refuse to answer any questions. Time for debrief was allocated at the end of each focus group session and individual interviews. Participants were also able to access the school counsellor if required.

It was accepted that it would be difficult in a small community to ensure that the identity of participants would be totally concealed. A disclaimer to this effect was put in the Participant Information sheet so as not to guarantee anonymity. After consultation with the principal at Plumpton High School and the program manager and deputy principal at Canberra College, it was suggested that the young women would be given the opportunity to identify themselves if they wanted to, as many of the young women expressed a wish to do so. Every step possible was taken to achieve anonymity and the procedures I adopted are best practice in accordance with national ethics guidelines and the requirements of the University of Canberra Ethics committee. No individual reports on the young women as cases or case studies were used, rather themes were the major reporting device, and women’s experiences, responses and data were integrated therefore de-identifying individuals.

At the conclusion of the project, participants were invited to discuss results and were provided with a summary of findings thus providing an opportunity for analytical and editorial responses. They were also provided with the opportunity to review their transcribed

\(^{13}\) The ethical approval details for each jurisdiction include University of Melbourne: Arts and Education Ethics Subcommittee approval: 040114 A&E 3.67; University of Canberra: Committee for Ethics in Human Research approval: 07–115.
interviews. This proved difficult to achieve as many of the participants, particularly the young mothers, had left the program or graduated. Nevertheless, the program personnel were provided this opportunity and given the opportunity to review interview transcripts.

3.7 Conduct of Case Studies

The first case study was the Plumpton High School Young Mothers in Education program in Western Sydney. The second case study was the Canberra College CCCares program in the Australian Capital Territory. Firstly, this is not a comparative study of the programs; they were unique and serviced very different communities, one in NSW and the other in the ACT. The Plumpton High School case study was more retrospective in approach because participants in the project had already gone through the program and were reflecting on their experiences. As a researcher, I took on more of an ‘outsider’ role. The data collection was achieved over a three-month period via a purpose designed survey instrument and one-on-one interviews. I had conversations with the school principal about the issues he faced in developing and delivering the program. Though, these were not recorded formally, as he was not officially part of the research project.

In the Canberra College case study, the approach was vastly different in that I spent nearly four years collecting data. I was able to be an observer within the program and to an extent became an insider to the workings of the program (Angrosino, 2007). The participants in the research were the young mothers, program teachers and support staff as well as the school leaders. I was given access to school documents and student data. The primary sources of data collection in this case study were observations, focus groups and one-on-one interviews.
I had limited access to the program in the Plumpton High School case study but at Canberra College I was able to develop a greater understanding of what the key aspects of the program were and I was also able to see the benefits of including the support staff and school leaders in the research program. As a retrospective approach was employed in the Plumpton High School study, it served to highlight its pioneering status with regard to the education and/or training of young mothers. The distance between two case studies provided a basis of exploring similarities and differences between two periods of time as well as the indirect relationship between the programs at Canberra College and at the Plumpton High School.

The level of access and ‘insider’ knowledge I was able to develop in the Canberra College case study gave me a depth and richness of understanding of the different standpoints the participants possessed (Fraser, Lewis, Ding, Kellet & Robinson, 2005). Both case studies have provided a wealth of data, insight and knowledge of what it takes to develop, deliver, and participate in school-based programs for young mothers. Moreover, it enables us to explore the links between the two and see how the program at Canberra College addressed many of shortcomings identified in the Plumpton High School experience.

3.8 Data Collection Methods

The primary data collection methods employed in this research was based on focus groups and one-to-one interviews.

- young mothers at Plumpton High School and Canberra College
- program coordinator/manager
- principal and deputy principals
- program teaching staff
- program support staff
• program volunteers.

Secondary sources included:

• ABS data, school data and program/s data
• international and national education policies/convention documents
• newspaper reports
• magazine articles
• TV programs
• documentaries.

3.8.1 The participants.

The principal, deputy principal, program coordinator and teaching staff from Canberra College were interviewed (individually) as a means to shed more light on their understandings of the discourses surrounding teenage motherhood. Support staff and volunteers were also included in this study and they took part in one-to-one interviews. Young mothers who had been involved in the program at Plumpton High School and the Canberra College were invited to participate in focus group sessions, one-on-one interviews and surveys. The age range of participants across both case studies was 17 years to 60+ and all program participants were invited to participate in the study; this is reflective of the participatory research method as all participants in the programs were provided the opportunity to contribute to the research.
3.8.2 Performing research with education professionals and program support workers—focus group and interviews.

At Plumpton High School, the interviews with the principal were naturalistic, and occurred generally after the interviews with the young mothers. This allowed the themes from the participant interviews to guide the discussions with the principal. Towards the end of the data collection phase at Plumpton High School, the conversations with the principal became more in-depth and took on more of a debrief session. This process allowed for the richness of the principal’s ideas, thoughts and aspirations about the education of young mothers in general, this come forward.

At the Canberra College, the school principal, deputy principal and program manager, program teaching staff, support staff and volunteers participated in this study. Participants were interviewed (individually) using a semi-structured approach and interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Briefing meetings were conducted with the executive staff, including the school counsellor, program coordinator, teaching staff and volunteers at Canberra College to discuss the details and procedures required for the research. The level of commitment and time required to participate in the data collection phase was discussed in detail. Participants

Figure 3.8. Age range of participants of in both case studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-19</td>
<td>20-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-27</td>
<td>28-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32-35</td>
<td>36+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age range of participants in both case studies
were provided with a copy of the transcript for sign off and formal authority was requested for use in the thesis. The expected timeframe took longer than anticipated due to the commitments of the staff. The data collection took just over 18 months to complete.

3.8.3 Performing research with young mothers—surveys, focus group and interviews.

3.8.3.1 Methods used in the Plumpton High School case study.

The research utilised a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods approach. This was deliberate in order to achieve two dimensions of the case study. The quantitative data contributed to the identification of the critical factors as perceived by participants in effective young mothers in education programs, like that at Plumpton High School. It was necessary to construct a data collection instrument to obtain the views and perspectives of the young women who have participated in the program. The qualitative data collected through the 30-question survey and interviews provided further understanding of both participant’s experiences and perceptions of the program.

The Plumpton High surveys.

The principal distributed a letter of invitation, interview consent form and survey to participants on behalf of the researcher; this ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of those participating in the case study. A stamped return envelope was included in the package for respondents to post surveys back to the researcher.

The letter of invitation included more detailed information about the storage of information, use of data collected and level of participant confidentiality. Participants were also reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that taking part was on a voluntary basis.
A two-week turn-around was allocated for the participants to return their completed survey. It was established that the short timeframe for the return of responses would encourage participants to engage with the survey. It was also felt that any longer period would reduce the chance of a greater number of participants returning surveys. Since this case study utilised a small-n participants, the amount of time for the research episode was restricted and contained to ensure that results were truly reflective of the participant’s experiences, perceptions and attitudes at a particular point in time.

Fifty packages containing a letter of invitation, consent form, the survey and a stamped return envelope were provided to the principal for distribution. A set of basic instructions was included as a means to counter the instructional literacy difficulties of participants. The items in the package were also printed on different coloured paper (*set of instructions*—*pink; letter of invitation*—*white; consent form*—*yellow; and survey*—*green*) to make it easier for participants to return the appropriate paperwork.

*The Plumpton High School interviews.*

Participants were given the opportunity to choose the most appropriate venue for the interviews. The interview sessions were conducted by the researcher, at the school. As interviews were audio tape-recorded, it was necessary that the venue was appropriate for this purpose. A small audio recorder was utilised in an attempt to cause little distress or intimidate the participant and ensure an acceptable level of comfort.

Individual one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted. At the beginning of each interview, the participant was thanked for volunteering and she was reminded her identity would remain confidential and that she could withdraw at any time. The participants were also instructed that the school counsellor was available for debriefing if they felt it was necessary.
Eleven questions were asked and participants were reassured that they could take their time in answering and that there were no time restrictions on responses.

3.8.3.2 Methods used in the Canberra College case study.

The timeframe for collecting data was extended to decrease the effect on students trying to complete their studies. The focus groups occurred in mid-March 2009, first round interviews August 2009, data analysis and transcribing October 2009, in-depth interviews late October/November 2009, analysis and transcribing in February 2010, participant signoff end of 2010.

Under the advice of the program manager, it was deemed appropriate that all participants in first round interviews were provided with a ‘pamper pack’ in recognition of their time and input. The participants in the in-depth interviews were given a $25 Myer voucher. The participants were not aware at the commencement of the data collection phase that they would receive any gifts. Childcare was also provided to those mothers that required it throughout the data-gathering phase.

All participants were able to access a school counsellor (if required) throughout the focus group and individual interviews for debriefing purposes. The program coordinator was available to provide support in this area if an individual became distressed by what is being disclosed or discussed.

Canberra College focus groups.

Approximately 40 young women involved in the program at Canberra College were invited (see Appendix 6) to participate in three focus groups conducted by Iain Hay (researcher) and Professor Barbara Pamphilon (as a means to ensure gender balance in dealing with sensitive issues, this was a requirement of the University of Canberra Ethics Committee
and the ACT Department of Education research office). From these groups, the key discourses were identified for further investigation in the individual first round interviews.

As an acknowledgement of participation, pizza and soft drinks were provided at the conclusion of the focus group sessions, which also allowed time for more discussion in a less formal environment.

*Canberra College interviews.*

All of the women involved in the focus groups were also invited to participate in the interviews (as a means to achieve inclusiveness for this group). In-depth interviews were conducted with 12 participants that demonstrated greater insight into the issues and discourses surrounding teenage motherhood. Participants were provided with a copy of the transcript for review, thus providing an opportunity for editorial comments.

**3.8.4 Performing research as a participant observer.**

Kincheloe and Berry (2004) suggested that researchers in the field of education should use multiple research approaches and theoretical constructs. After my experience researching the Plumpton High School program, I felt the most appropriate way to understand the workings of a school-based young mothers in education program was to become more situated in a program. Hence, the research investigation became more ethnographic in approach and I become more situated as a researcher. It was fortunate for me that I was able to perform the research in the program at Canberra College that was nearby and easy to access. I was able to move in and out of the program with ease as I could physically locate myself within the program on a daily basis. As bellhooks\(^{14}\) (1984) describes it, I was able to become ‘the outsider within’.

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\(^{14}\) Authors name intentionally lower case and one word
I spent over four years moving in and out of the program, this gave me the opportunity to become immersed in the CCCares program at Canberra College (the social setting) for a long period. I was able to make continuous observations and field notes on the behaviour of participants in that setting (to become ‘the participant observer’). In alignment with pro-feminist thinking, I was able to listen and engage in conversations. I established a trusting relationship and was able to conduct in-depth interviews with all participants (young mothers, teachers, support staff, volunteers and school management). Using this approach permitted me to openly collect documents and artefacts of the group. Over the four years, I was able to develop a knowledge and appreciation of the culture of the group and people’s behaviours within the context of that setting.

Having access to young mothers in an education program, their teachers, support staff and school leaders provided great insight into the complexities surrounding these groups and allowed me to understand how the program worked. It gave me the opportunity to learn from them.

I spent a great deal of time (two years out of four) observing, talking with and listening to the various groups within the program before I started the formal data collection process. I employed the use of a ‘reflective research journal’ to narrate the discord that occurs in an attempt to perform my discourse analysis as a researcher, educator and male performing research in a feminised area (Jones & Barron, 2007): ‘A reflexive approach to the research process is now widely accepted in much qualitative research’ (Ortlipp, 2008 p. 695). Using this approach has enabled me to be more reflective of my own assumptions and to value the interconnections of these with what the participants are (not) saying about their contexts. It has transposed my worldviews about young motherhood and (their) schooling as suggested by Austin (cited in Ellis & Bochner, 1996):
The essence of who we are, what we think, and how we talk is contingent largely on the others we celebrate. The celebration of others through dialogue bends back upon us reflexively, sustaining, altering, or transforming our comprehension of ourselves and our social world. (p. 206)

3.9 Analysis of Data

The analysis of data is an ongoing, cyclical process that is incorporated into all phases of qualitative research. Using inductive analysis, categories and patterns primarily emerge from the data, rather than being imposed on them prior to collection (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). A systematic process of coding, categorising and interpreting data was employed to provide explanations of the phenomenon of interest. The data collected from interviews was transcribed and then reviewed in light of the responses collected and the literature reviewed. This allowed a critical discourse analysis to be conducted that shed greater light on the discourses surrounding young motherhood in those locations and within education policy. From this, an interpretative examination was conducted utilising aspects of ‘standpoint’ epistemology (Hartsock, 1983, 1997).

Privacy was considered by identifying respondents using their respective title, for example, principal, deputy principal, program manager, program teaching staff, program support staff and program volunteers, and young mother for example - ‘Sandy’. Direct quotations were selected for inclusion in the thesis to present the various subjectivities and the presentation of their ‘standpoint’, but did not have identifying information.

Gibson and Brown (2009) define ‘thematic analysis as the process of analyzing data according to commonalities, relationships and differences across a data set ... It relates to the aim of search for aggregated themes within data’ (p. 127). Thematic identification from focus
groups, interviews and one-on-one interviews was the main form of analysis. Thematic analysis is a conventional practice in qualitative research that involves searching through data to identify recurrent issues, topics and categories (Creswell, 1994; Dey, 1993; Hayes, 2000; Holliday, 2002; Holloway, 1997; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ritchie, Spencer & O’Connor, 2003; Smith, Harre & Van Langenhove, 1995; Patton, 2002). A theme (or construct) is a cluster of linked categories conveying similar meanings. The ultimate goal of qualitative research is to make general statements about relationships among categories by discovering patterns in the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 373).

The initial analysis was achieved through the use of Leximancer\textsuperscript{15} coding software in an attempt to identify theoretical categories from the Plumpton High School study interviews and various state and territory education department policies. Of particular relevance to the case studies were the NSW DET Student Welfare Policy (1996) and the ACT DET Pregnant Students Policy and Implementation Guidelines (1988).

3.10 Limitations of the Study

In the first case study at Plumpton High School, a number of structural barriers presented; however, not being able to access current program participants was the major limitation. But a great deal was learnt from those that did participate and in fact the first case study informed the approach taken for the second case study. In the program at the Canberra College, a perceived limitation could be the lack of consultation with the young men who are fathers. Thus, a gap is present in the investigation, although a small number of young fathers were involved in the CCCares program at Canberra College, they were not part of this study;

\textsuperscript{15} Leximancer is text mining software that can be used to analyse the content of collections of textual documents and to visually display the extracted information in a browser. The information is displayed by means of a conceptual map that provides an overview of the material, representing the main concepts contained within the text and how they are related.
hence this is more so a ‘delimitation’ in the study design as the group was deliberately not included for investigation.

3.11 Conclusion

As suggested by Murchison (2010), I became the primary research instrument in this study, so I needed to be clear about my ‘standpoint’ position, that of being an educator and policy developer. Hence, this study is grounded within education policy research that is linked to the political sphere; Ball (2006) contends that research in this field:

*Is thoroughly enmeshed ‘in’ the social and ‘in’ the political and developments and innovations within the human sciences, like education, are intimately imbricated in the practical management of the social and political problems ... [also] how education policy research is caught up in the agendas and purposes of the state and the governance of education.* (p. 15)

The following three chapters are comprised of the two case studies, at Plumpton High School and Canberra College, as well as studying leadership and program support at Canberra College. Some research methodology and methods content is located in these chapters as a reflection of the research approaches taken in each case study.
Chapter 4: Plumpton High School—*Young Mothers in Education* program

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the development and outcomes of the Plumpton High School *Young Mothers in Education* program. A background to this study with an explanation of the school and its community context is provided. A brief overview of the program’s origins is also provided as well as a description of the key characteristics of the *Young Mothers in Education* program.

This case study focused on the experiences of young women who had already gone through the *Young Mothers in Education* program at Plumpton High School over a ten-year period. Hence, it is a retrospective case study in the sense that the past students were asked to reflect on the impact of their participation in the program. The main question for this case study was ‘Where are they now, the young women who had participated in the *Young Mothers in Education* program?’ The data were collected through a survey of past participants (1994–2004) as well as three one-on-one interviews with women who had been past participants in the program between 1994 and 2004.

Plumpton High School was chosen because at that time as a school-based setting it was seen as an innovative and successful approach to the education of young mothers. While there had been significant media and research interest in the program (Di Battista, 2004; Fahey & Vale, 2002; *Plumpton High Babies* ABC TV, 2003), there had not been any follow-ups of graduates, nor any analysis of the factors contributing to its success.
4.2 The School and Community in Context

Plumpton High School is situated in the city of Blacktown, which is 35km from Sydney on the Cumberland Plain in the heart of Western Sydney, bounded by the Local Government Areas of Penrith, Parramatta, Holroyd, Hawkesbury and Baulkham Hills and occupying an area of 247 sq kilometres. In the 1996 Australian Census, the median Individual Annual Income for Blacktown was $16,484. This was slightly higher than the poverty line of $15,000 (Poverty Lines: Australia March Quarter, 2000). The median Household Annual Income was between $36,400 and $51,948.

One-quarter of the population (26 per cent) were of a dependant age (under 14 years). This represented over 60,800 persons. Almost 55 per cent of two parent families had dependant children of 14 years and under. Fifty-one per cent of single-parent families had dependant children under 14 years of age.

Over the previous several decades, Blacktown’s growth had been sustained and rapid, contributing to its status at the time of the study as the most populous city in NSW. Large-scale urban development had contributed to Blacktown’s continued population growth and to the development of new estate areas that lead to the establishment of 45 suburbs at the time of the study (Westir Publications, 1990). Blacktown therefore encompassed a mix of older established government housing areas and new developing areas with young families. Blacktown’s population was culturally and linguistically diverse with over 50 countries and 63 languages represented in the community (Westir Publications, 1990). Over 57,000 residents (27.2 per cent) in Blacktown aged five years and over spoke a language other than English (ABS Census, 1996).
Over half the population (117,179 persons or 50.5 per cent) was under 30 years of age (ABS Census, 1996). Blacktown City accounted for just over six per cent of the overall population of Sydney but more than ten per cent of its population growth (ABS Regional Profile, 1998). Blacktown’s population comprised 15 per cent of Western Sydney’s total population. Blacktown City had the largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in NSW with a total population of 5,240 persons (ABS Regional Profile, 1998).

**4.2.1 Plumpton High School.**

Established in 1976, Plumpton High School is a large multicultural Year 7 to 12 secondary NSW public school. Plumpton High School is a comprehensive school, with a performing arts focus, located in Mt Druitt School District, in Western Sydney, Australia. The School Mission Statement, ‘Plumpton High School puts students first’, illustrates the school philosophy. At the time of the Young Mothers in Education program, the senior school curriculum was very broad with the school offering a wide choice of academic and school and TAFE delivered vocational courses. A number of High School Certificate (HSC) - pathways were available that led to university, TAFE or the workplace. Some students completed their HSC over two or more years and the school had many mature age students enrolled in their programs.

The intake at the time of this study was approximately 1,058, with a diverse group of students with varying cultural backgrounds, including Aboriginal, Pacific Islanders, Asian and South American. The population was generally regarded as low socioeconomic and disadvantaged with accompanying social issues, including high levels of unemployment, drug abuse, domestic violence and teenage pregnancy (Di Battista, 2004; Westir Publications, 1990). There was evidence of an emerging wealth divide within the local community with the
establishment of new private housing estates and businesses to serve the more affluent demographic.

The school had well-recognised student welfare structures and the whole school community was supportive of the policies and associated strategies that focused on the retention of students into Years 11 and 12. The *Young Mothers in Education* program began at Plumpton High School in 1994, and received considerable exposure within the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) as well as in the wider community. Over the years prior to this study, there had been a number of media stories about the success of the program. Interest in the program had gone as far as an ABC TV documentary, ‘*Plumpton High Babies*’, screened in 2003, which focused on eight young women involved in the *Young Mothers in Education* program. Figure 6.0 illustrates the flavour of the many media photographs taken over the years. Often, this imagery depicts young mothers as down and out, pram pushing individuals, or identifies them through the baby shown in the near vicinity of the mother. The fact that these young mothers are engaged in education is rarely depicted. Kelly (2000) regards this as the way in which cultural representations of teenage mothers are typically promulgated in society via the mainstream media.

*Figure 6.0. Plumpton High School young mothers’ photographs.*

4.2.2 The origins and development of the Young Mothers in Education program.

In 1994, the school’s executive expressed concerns regarding the number of students who had not returned to school that year because they were pregnant or had young babies (Young Mothers in Education program booklet p3, 2000). The principal approached the local youth nurse who was a member of the Western Area Adolescent Team to request advice and support in encouraging these young women to return to school. At this point, the principal was interested in decreasing the school drop-out rate and maximising the educational and future employment options for pregnant and mothering young women. The nurse made contact with seven students who had not returned to the high school after having their babies. It was decided by the principal, executive and nurse that the school needed to offer specific support to young mothers. It was generally considered by the leadership group that by providing support to these young women they were more likely to continue on with their education.

The program developed in two distinct stages. The first stage of the program’s development was in 1994 and 1995. In 1994, a young mothers’ support group was established and the Western Area Adolescent Team co-ordinated and ran the group with the support of Plumpton High School. Other schools in the area were invited to participate and by the end of 1994 four schools were participating in weekly meetings. By 1995, there were five schools involved in the support group and nine young mothers attended the program. At first, the program consisted of life-style information with guest speakers invited to speak on a range of topics such as finance, housing, education and training options, legal matters, birth education and parenting skills, as well as the nurse attending to any medical or health needs of the young women. As the program grew so did the need for space and the group moved to the Western Area Adolescent Team (WAAT) Youth Health Centre at Mt Druitt. Staff from WAAT provided transport for the young women to attend the meetings.
In late 1995, Plumpton High School recognised the need to focus more on education outcomes and at this point developed its own program to maximise young mothers’ educational opportunities. The *Young Mothers in Education* program was put into place with the appointment of a coordinator with a precise role statement. The coordinator was recruited from existing school staff. The school developed an initial policy statement for the program and the principal retained direction of the program.

Funding for the program came from an internal departmental source: the Deputy Director-General’s discretionary fund that was directed at assisting students who were at risk of not completing their secondary education. This funding allowed the school to employ a social worker for three days a week and a study skills coordinator for two days per week to assist students. At this stage, staff in the program comprised a part-time program coordinator (internal staff appointments) and part-time study skills coordinator. This gave the program the flexibility to work with the young mothers individually to meet their specific needs.

The second stage (1996–2003) was characterised by more formal operations, policy and focused program support. The program was designed to offer education support through whole-family support (including to fathers) and was provided by the in-school coordinator of the program, the youth health nurse from WAAT and the principal. Every effort was made to support the fathers (particularly those enrolled at Plumpton High) and confidentiality was maintained. The coordinator informed relevant staff when appropriate, and only with the permission of the student. Young women also continued to receive AUSTUDY (funding provided by the Federal Government) while on Maternity Leave, because they were still considered in full-time education. Young women were entitled to the same Maternity Leave provisions as those applying to teaching staff. Special Family Leave was also granted to the young mother, if it was required. This was to cater for the welfare needs of the child.
The Young Mothers in Education program at Plumpton High School had been established within a relatively new policy framework at the time, the NSW Department of Schools Student Welfare, Good Discipline and Effective Learning: Student Welfare Policy (1996). This policy states that:

*It is important that schools develop proactive strategies to inform school communities about the ways schools can help pregnant women and young mothers to continue their education without discrimination.* (1995, p. 12)

At that point, the program was a result of the efforts of the school to enhance the retention of students at ‘risk’ of not completing their schooling and this was in alignment with the NSW Department of Schooling Student Welfare Policy. Therefore, the program conducted at Plumpton High School is an early example of incorporating Student Welfare Policy into the operations of the school.

By 2000, Plumpton High had its own explicit policy that encapsulated its unique values, attitudes and practices in regard to meeting the needs of this group. The Plumpton High School Young Mothers in Education Policy (2000) stated:

‘From our experience, we believe:

* The school requires flexibility in terms of uniform requirements; timetable; leave; starting and finishing times; choice of subjects (especially Sport, Physical Education, and Practical Subjects).

* The school must be non-judgemental. Girls are not subjected to any discriminatory attitudes in terms of ethics, careers aspirations, and values.

* Girls have priority enrolment, despite lengthy waiting lists to enrol. Enrolments are handled with discretion and are overseen solely by the Principal and Coordinator of the
Program (the traditional role of the Year Adviser is replaced entirely by the Coordinator)’ (p. 6).

There is research supporting this approach; for example, Fahey and Vale (2002) found that those schools who had adopted more ‘proactive’ approaches to encouraging young mothers to continue at school had much higher levels of school retention compared with those schools that only provided ‘basic’ support this group. Flannery (2003) points out that school policies and procedures can have a positive effect on young mothers continuing with their school education, especially when they provide well-defined student wellbeing policies and ‘wrap-around’ support services. Boulden (2000), in her extensive review of school-based young mothers in education programs across Australia, found that programs that have proven successful in assisting young mothers to continue with education have demonstrated a positive environment and high levels of encouragement. Fraillon (2004) points out that student wellbeing has a close relationship to all aspects of schooling:

_The relationship between student wellbeing and the other vital outcomes of schooling is unequivocal. Improved outcomes in all aspects of student wellbeing are positively associated with improved outcomes in all other aspects of schooling. This educational imperative only serves to strengthen and support the moral imperative for schools and schooling to be inclusive, supportive, and nurturing in order to maintain and support student wellbeing._ (p. 12)

A number of studies over the past 12 years have shown that many young pregnant and/or parenting students are not only able but keen to continue with education; Yet, schools are often not prepared or have limited resources to support the particular needs of these students (Arai, 2009; Boulden, 2000; Flannery, 2003; Hay, 2010; Kelly, 2000; Luttrell, 2003). The research findings show that schools need to develop inclusive programs that meet the
educational, emotional and physical needs of these young women and their children. The Plumpton High program appeared to uniquely meet these criteria.

4.3 Investigating the Impact of the Young Mothers’ Education Program on Participants

The context of this first case study was not to re-investigate the social factors that affect this particular group, but rather highlight the perspectives and life outcomes for the young women who had gone through the program. It was decided to use a survey and interview approach in an attempt to capture the responses of participants at a particular point in their lives.

The Plumpton High School Young Mothers in Education program was clearly ahead of its time in terms of the unique philosophy and support it offered to young mothers; nonetheless, there was little known about the effect on young mothers in the long term. Further, it was important to analyse the overall program to identify the critical factors for success and explore what was happening to the program.

My interest was in the extent to which the demonstration of positive non-judgemental attitudes, supportive, caring and flexible learning environments for young mothers had increased retention rates of this group in education and training. My overall assumption was that data on the perceptions and attitudes of young women who have been involved in the program would help inform policy and practice in the implementation of other programs targeting young mothers in education. I was also interested in whether participation in the program had promoted self-esteem and assisted the young women in managing their lives generally.
4.4 Data Collection

As has been outlined in the methodology chapter, the research utilised a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in a mixed methods approach to gather data in two dimensions. In gathering the quantitative data, I was aiming to identify the critical factors, if any, as perceived by all participants that kept them involved in the program. Both sources of data were crucial for exploring the impact of Plumpton High on young mothers.

It was obvious from the beginning that the assistance of the principal at Plumpton High School was necessary and important in gaining access to this group. The principal’s role was to act as a conduit for the initial contact with participants as well as providing background information about the program’s history and achievements. Information packages were sent out by the school because the school had the most recent mailing address of the young mothers who had participated in the program. Out of the 50 packages sent out to participants, 23 were returned to the researcher, of which 19 were completed.

4.4.1 Ethical considerations for collecting survey and interview data.

Due to the researcher being male, it was felt that the school would be the most suitable venue to carry out the interviews. A room with good visibility was provided by the school for this purpose. This in turn required the prevention of unnecessary disruption to the school, students and teachers. It was decided that interview session would be conducted in between the meal breaks because there was little student traffic and that participants would not feel overly scrutinised by other students.

A limitation of the study is the small sample (19 out 23 returned survey responses), but from the combination of surveys and in-depth one-on-one interviews valuable insights, albeit not necessarily generalisable, have emerged.
The survey had four topic nodes:

a) Participant’s history
b) Where are they now?
c) Participants perceptions of the program;
d) Feelings about the future

4.5 Survey results

4.5.1 Descriptive statistics.

1. **Age of survey participants:** of the 19 respondents, seven respondents were between the ages of 21 to 23 years: six were between the ages of 18 to 20 years, with five in the age range of 24 to 26 years. One respondent was older than 27 years of age.

2. **Year they participated in the program:** six respondents participated in the program in 2001; five each in 1999 and 2000; one was in the program in 2003.

3. **Number of years in the program:** twelve respondents indicated that they participated in the program for one year; six participated for two years; and one of the respondents participated for three years.

4. **Age when they became pregnant:** five respondents were 14 years old when they became pregnant: three were 15 years old; five were 16 years old; and another five were 17 years old. One respondent had been 19 years old when she became pregnant.

5. **Time of pregnancy and school attendance:** eleven respondents were still at school when they became pregnant and eight were not attending school at the time they became pregnant.

6. **School of origin:** eight respondents came from another school to attend the program and 11 where already attending Plumpton High School.
7. **Awareness of the program’s existence:** eight of the respondents learnt about the existence of the program through the school, six were aware because of media reports on television and in newspapers, three learnt of the program via friends. One respondent knew about the program from word of mouth and another had been given information from a family member.

8. **Living arrangement while participating in the program:** twelve respondents had lived with a parent or parents while participating in the program. Four had lived by themselves, and two said they were living with a partner at the time they participated in the program. One reported that she had lived with friends while she took part in the program.

9. **Level of academic achievement:** while attending Plumpton High, eleven survey respondents had attained their Junior High School certification and eight had achieved their HSC.

4.5.2 Where are they now?

1. **Continuation of education and/or training after leaving the program:** twelve of the respondents had continued in education and and/or training immediately after leaving the program. Seven had not continued to engage with education and/or training at that point in time.

2. **Continuation of education and or training at the time of the survey:** twelve respondents were still in education and/or training, the other seven were not.

3. **What was the highest level of education and/or training at the time of the survey:** given that seven of the respondents reported that they had not engaged in any education and training it is not surprising to note that six of the respondents reported having a Junior High School level of certification. Of the others:
• twelve held some form of vocational training certification
• four held a Year 12 level HSC
• two had completed a university/tertiary level of education.

4. **Current employment status:** seven respondents were unemployed and receiving full welfare benefits at the time of the survey; four were studying; another four were working part time or had casual employment. Four respondents had full-time employment.

5. **Number of children had by respondents since participating in the program:** Of the twelve respondents who had had more children since participating in the program:

   • Five had one other child
   • Four had two more children
   • Two had three more children
   • One respondent had four more children since participating in the program.

6. **Relationship status:** more than half of the survey respondents (12) were single at the time of the survey, five were in a de-facto relationship, and two were married.

7. **Beliefs about their future:** thirteen survey respondents believed they would have full-time employment within five years. Nine reported seeing themselves owning their own home in five years, while five reported seeing themselves engaging with more study and/or training within five years. Five respondents indicated that they will have more children and five reported that they saw themselves as married within five years. Three respondents believed that they would own a car in five years.

   **4.5.3 Participants’ perceptions of the program.**

1. **Had participation in the program assisted in achieving goals?** Thirteen of the respondents believed that participating in the program had assisted them in achieving their
goals. Six respondents indicated that the program had not assisted them in achieving their goals.

2. **Level of positiveness to participating in the program:** sixteen respondents felt it was a positive experience participating in the program, two respondents felt it was a negative experience, and one responded that it had been a mixture of both positive and negative experiences.

3. **Perceived increase in level of self-esteem and self-confidence:** thirteen of the respondents felt that their level of self-esteem and self-confidence increased as a result of their participation in the program. Six respondents believed that participating in the program had no effect on their levels of self-esteem and self-confidence. These respondents mostly likely saw themselves as self-assured and confident before they entered the program, as expressed by the Principal.

4. **Perceived skills development and skills use:** fourteen respondents believed they had used communication skills they developed in the program since leaving the program. Five respondents felt that they had not used the skills at all since leaving school.

5. **Rating aspects of the program:** respondents were asked to rate 16 aspects of the program from extremely important to not important at all. Figure 7.0 shows that sixteen respondents rated not being judged by others in a negative way, as being extremely important, thirteen respondents felt that access to affordable childcare was extremely important, and six respondents indicated that access to transport was not important at all.
Figure 7.0. Respondent rating of aspects of the program.

6. **Three most important features of the program**: as shown in Figure 8.0, access to affordable childcare rated as one of three important features of the program by most of the respondents (15). Not being judged by others rated as one of the most important features by 12 respondents; and having a support person at school rated as one of the most important features by nine respondents.
Figure 8.0. Three most important features of the program as rated by respondents.

7. **The importance of the principal and/or executive’s role in maintaining the program:** all the respondents believed that the principal and/or executive’s role in maintaining a program of this type was important.

8. **Suggested improvements to the program:** five respondents felt that providing on-site childcare would better meet the needs of participants. Four believed that teaching students about sex education earlier in the schooling process would be an improvement. One respondent indicated that more financial support from government would be a benefit for those participating in the program. Another suggested support after leaving school would be an improvement for participants.

9. **Belief that the program should be expanded:** all of the respondents felt that the program should be expanded to other schools.
4.5.4 Feelings about the future.

1. **Continuing with education and or training because of the program:** thirteen respondents believed that they had continued with education and/or training because of their participation in the program. Seven respondents indicated that participating in the program had not encouraged them to continue with education and/or training.

2. **Goal achievement of respondents:** thirteen respondents believed that participating in the program had helped them achieve their life goals. Six respondents reported that participating in the program had not assisted them to achieve their goals.

3. **Maintaining contact with the school:** seventeen respondents reported that they did not maintain contact with the school. Two respondents indicated that they continued to maintain contact with the school.

4. **Maintaining contact with other participants of the program:** eleven respondents indicated that they do not maintain contact with other participants of the program. Eight other respondents said they did continue to maintain contact with other participants from the program.

5. **Disclosure about participating in the program:** fourteen survey respondents had disclosed to others that they had participated in the program while five had not.

**4.5.5 Summary of Survey Findings**

From the profile of the nineteen respondents to the survey, a ‘typical’ program participant was aged between 14 and 17 years at time of participation. She would have participated in the program for at least 12 months and she was most likely an existing student of Plumpton High School. Although there is a fairly high chance that she had come to Plumpton High specifically to attend the program, it is most likely she was already aware of the program from attending the school and that she was still at school when she became
pregnant at about the age of 14 years to 17 years old. While in the program, she was most likely to have been living in the parental home. She was most likely to have known about the program because she was attending Plumpton High before she become pregnant but, if not, she is likely to have learnt about it via media reports.

The ‘typical’ program participant was highly likely to have gained some form of vocational training certificate but may also have her HSC or achieved university/tertiary level. She was most likely single, unemployed, and receiving welfare benefits. There was a high possibility that she was studying, working part time or had some casual employment. Her perceptions of the program are highly likely to be positive and she is highly likely to believe that the program increased her self-esteem and self-confidence. She is highly likely to believe that she has utilised the skills she developed from the program.

She rated access to affordable childcare as the most important feature of the program and she thought that the program could be improved by the provision of on-site childcare facilities. She also rated highly not being judged by others. The typical respondent also believed that the principal and/or executive played an important role in maintaining the program.

On average, the survey respondent felt positive about her future and she is likely to have continued with her education because of her direct involvement in the program. She feels strongly that participating in the program has assisted her to achieve her life goals. The ‘typical’ respondent sees herself in full-time employment within the next five years. She feels positive about disclosing to others her participation in the program. Generally, she does not maintain contact with other women who have participated in the program. She has not maintained contact with the school since leaving the program but feels strongly that the program should be expanded to other schools.
4.6 Interviews and Qualitative Responses

This section discusses how the interview data were collected and analysed. It links the main themes of the interview data with the literature and questionnaire responses. Qualitative data was also provided through the questionnaire as respondents had the opportunity to provide comments. These comments have also been included for analysis in this section.

Three young mothers, Jenni, Kia, and Louise, provided interview data. These young women were keen to share their thoughts, feelings and aspirations about being a young mother. Both Jenni and Kia provided great insight about being in the program. Louise’s comments were limited due to her reservedness about the interview process.

The interview sessions were conducted by the researcher at the school because the school provided familiar surroundings for participants. Individual interviews were carried out in a room provided by Plumpton High School. Participants were given the opportunity to choose the most appropriate venue for the interviews. All interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed. The interviews took approximately 30 to 40 minutes to conduct.

At the beginning of each interview, the participant was thanked for volunteering and she was reminded her identity would remain confidential and that she could withdraw at any time. The participants were also informed that the school counsellor was available for debrief if she felt it was necessary. Eleven questions were asked and participants were reassured that they could take their time in answering questions and that there was no time restriction on responses. At the conclusion of the interview, the participants were provided with an opportunity to discuss any other information or issues that may have arisen from the discussion. Participants were thanked for their participation in the interview section of the study. Each of the participants expressed their gratitude for being given the opportunity to
share their thoughts and feelings about the *Young Mothers in Education* program conducted at Plumpton High School. They also felt taking part in the interview was their way of supporting the program’s continuation.

The main themes and sub-categories identified through the analysis of the interview transcripts, as shown in Table 4.8, include positive perception of others, reconnecting, place and space, education and future aspirations, and life changing.

Table 4.8 *Main Themes and Sub-Categories As Identified Through the Thematic Analysis of Interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive perceptions of others</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive non-judgemental attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seen as doing the right thing, coming back to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being noticed by others for good and bad reasons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Having someone who believes in me</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reconnection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being part of society again</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coming back to school</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place and space</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somewhere to be</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supportive, and caring environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A program that was for me</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education and future aspirations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexible learning environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-engagement with school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a difference for myself and my child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Importance of the school leaders in providing direction and support</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life changing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Becoming more self-confident, having more self-esteem and feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive about myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having control over my future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a new life</td>
</tr>
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</table>
The young mothers who took part in the interviews were able to articulate how the program, as they remembered it, helped them to achieve particular milestones in their lives. These milestones included further engagement with their education, training and gaining employment. They were able to connect the impact of their participation in the program and level of self-confidence they gained from being in the program.

The main themes from these young mothers were that positive non-judgemental attitudes and a supportive, caring and flexible learning environment were important to them. These themes are also recurrent throughout the literature: For example, Arai (2009, p. 117) argues that there is a need to move beyond judging young mothers as ‘deviant’ and a drain on the welfare system. Kelly (2000, p. 92) suggests that school-based programs contribute to group identity and solidarity as teen mothers. Luttrel (2003, p. 16) talks about the importance of programs with comprehensive services, including medical, education, and mental health services for unwed school-age mothers. Pillow (2004, p. 222) found that there is a need to address the structural barriers in schools faced by these young women.

4.6.1 Educational outcomes.

Other research (Ades et al., 2000) indicates that the single most important predictor of adolescent pregnancy is the lack of clear educational expectations and that those without such aspirations are approximately three times more likely to become pregnant (Strachan & Gorey, 1997). The importance of completing formal schooling for young mothers is highlighted throughout the literature (Arai, 2009; Boulden, 2001a; Kelly, 2000; Luttrel, 2003; Pillow, 2004).

Watson (1998) reports that in Australia, for each additional year of secondary school beyond Year 9, workers can expect average wage increases in the order of 21, 12 and 15 per
cent respectively. She contends that completing secondary school in Australia delivers greater increases in relative wages (compared to non-completers) than the completion of any subsequent years of education. Watson also notes that it is not perfectly understood why the completion of Australian secondary education delivers such good returns in terms of wages and steady employment. But, she does suggest that it may be due to an increase in self-confidence among successful Year 12 graduates, or the fact that more Year 12 completers are from higher socioeconomic backgrounds than non-completers, or simply a ‘stigma effect’ associated with not completing secondary school (Watson, 1998, p. 21).

For many young mothers, the completion of Year 12 (or its equivalent) appears important, as Watson (1998) suggests here, to ensure successful workforce participation. This was true for Jenni as she conveyed her change in attitude towards education when she became pregnant:

then I fell pregnant and that’s when I started analysing everything. It’s not just my life I’m going to stuff up now, someone else’s.

Wider research suggests that young women who become pregnant or have a baby while still at school are ‘at risk’ from disengagement from school as well as encountering social and welfare difficulties. Jenni felt that being in the program gave her a greater chance of studying at university: ‘I have always wanted to go to uni and I want to show my kids I know I can do it’.

Kia was a young mother who had used her Plumpton High School education to open a door to further education and indeed a future:

Having my HSC has given me the opportunity to get into my Vet nursing course that I am doing at TAFE. If the program wasn’t here I would have dropped out of Year 12, I very much doubt that I would have made it through Year 12 I would have failed
miserably. *Taking part in the program has given me a future that I have some control over.*

Similarly, for Jenni, Plumpton had enabled her to engage with further education in a way that could be balanced with her family commitments:

*If I hadn’t come to Plumpton, I wouldn’t have thought I could do what I’m doing now. Like at the moment, I’m going through the process ... to do my HSC that way over four years. Whereas if I hadn’t come to Plumpton I wouldn’t have known, I wouldn’t have done that. And with this four years it’s just very convenient for me ‘cause I can take my time. Plus I can spend the rest of the time with my kids.*

**4.6.2 A supportive and non-judgemental environment.**

Many of the survey and one-on-one respondents rated *not being judged by others* as extremely important. Flannery (2003) found that a number of young women left school when they became pregnant due to feeling embarrassed; feeling concerned about being judged and not accepted; and a lack of awareness of their rights and options to continue. At this point it is necessary to describe what it means to be non-judgemental in this context. The young mothers discussed how they felt while in the program; they suggested that they firstly, were not being judged as a ‘teenage mum’ by the school and teachers, but rather as a student at Plumpton High School. Secondly, they said the principal reminded them that they were being judged on their academic performance not on what kind of mother they were. Conversely, the respondents spoke about how they felt the wider community judged them; as being a ‘typical’ Western Sydney teenage mother. They believed that they were judged on the grounds of other people’s preconceived notions about coming from that area of Sydney, being poor and on welfare support.
Reconnecting with education can often be a difficult prospect for young women who become mothers in their teens (Boulden, 2000, 2009). Many of the structural barriers, like transport, access to affordable childcare and health services, confront young mothers. The Plumpton program catered for these services. The school had arranged for the young mothers to place their babies in the childcare centre not far from the school. For Kia, the Plumpton supportive environment was a clear contrast to the judgemental environments she experienced outside the school:

*Kids [other students] at Plumpton has seen the program working and it has been here for so long that everyone is used to it ... I have gotten shocking stares and rude comments just walking through shopping centres. Because I was in my school uniform and being seven or eight months pregnant you got some feral remarks. You would get these filthy stares like there goes one of the teenage mums again. I am handling it, I love being a mother.*

The participants indicated that support from the principal, and program coordinator as well as the school executive was fundamental for the success of the program and for their own progress. As Jenni stated:

*If it wasn’t for Mr. X [the principal] faith in me I wouldn’t be going this far. Mr X always stood by me. He knows I’ll get it done. His knowing I’ll get it done is what makes me get it done.*

Kia recalled the support provided by the program coordinator at Plumpton as well as the other key services that were provided:

*When they [the school] find out that a girl is pregnant um the head teacher looks after the girls, she is the support person here. If you fall behind she will let you know what you have to do and she gives you a hand with that and organise with teachers and*
supports us with uniform stuff like being able to wear comfortable clothing, there is flexibility in school rules and stuff.

Louise was aware of being able to access childcare for her baby while at school:

That you can come to school and bring your kids, day care or something like that, I haven’t been here for a while but I know people who have already gone through it. And I saw the program on ABC about it, I am thinking about ah, coming back because of it.

Research conducted by Fahey and Vale (2002) divided schools’ responses in providing support to pregnant and parenting young women into the two categories: ‘proactive support’ and ‘basic levels of support’, and concluded that proactive support was needed for young mothers to stay at school. This is borne out by Jenni’s reported experience in several schools:

I’ve moved around a lot and at then at my last school before here I got into a bit of trouble. I had no support at any of those schools; no one wanted to know if everything was alright.

Flannery (2003, p. 27) indicated that there is a positive impact that school policies and supportive procedures can have on young pregnant and parenting women continuing with their school education. Boulden (2000) also notes that programs that have proven successful in assisting this group to continue with education are ones with a positive environment and high levels of encouragement. Louise provides an example of what proactive support looks like:

I find out I was pregnant with my second child when [name] my first was two months old. I couldn’t come back. The school [Plumpton HS] has been great they have been really supportive not just for me but everyone involved with the program. [Name] the coordinator kept in contact with me, which was really good and that gave me the encouragement to come back to school when I was able.
Dedicated programs for young mothers have benefits in bringing a group of young people with similar needs together. Kia indicated the importance of peer support at Plumpton High:

*I think it is better to have one or two programs in an area providing a program because you will have more young women there and being able to support each other. More of focused program in a couple of schools where there is a demand for it rather than just having a general program. I still meet up with other women that have been through the program so I don’t think you could get that by having in isolated school environment. Having the other girls there in the program is also what helps you get through and you have someone else to discuss things with because they are going through the same thing as you.*

Jenni illustrates how the support of young mothers in the Plumpton program comes from the top down:

*The support ... Problems with their father, Mr X[the principal] has been helping me with that. The counsellor, the Aboriginal liaison, program coordinator, everyone’s just helped me out. Financially, they’ve helped me out with that. I’ve been helped out in every possible way.*

Flannery’s (2003) research indicates that in many schools when the needs of pregnant and parenting students come to light, the response they receive from school can be a ‘hit and miss’ affair. Clearly, a proactive, supportive and non-judgemental environment was one key factor in the success of the Plumpton High School *Young Mothers in Education* program.

**4.6.3 Self-esteem, self-confidence, and feeling positive about the future.**

The young mothers indicated that they felt participation in the *Young Mothers in Education* program at Plumpton High School assisted in the development of higher levels of
self-esteem and self-confidence. Boulden (2001a) found this to be the case with a number of young mothers in the programs she reviewed. Overall, they felt participating in the program was a positive experience; however, some had mixed feelings about their experiences in the program. This was often reflected in how they felt about their lives at that point in time.

It has been suggested by Flannery (2003) that many young women who are pregnant or parents do become more vocal and play a greater role in the decision-making processes that affect them and their children. In the past, being a ‘teenage mother’ would have resulted in a life hidden away from the harsh gaze of society (Arai, 2009; Daguerre & Nativel, 2006; Pillow, 2004). In the interviews, the young women indicated that the program assisted in changing their attitudes towards education and training:

\[
I \text{ had no self-confidence when I came here. None at all, I thought I was just going to be another pension mum. Just being there has showed me so much more than any other school showed me.} \quad \text{(Jenni)}
\]

Kia further knew of young mothers not in the program who were vulnerable to a downward spiral in their confidence:

\[
I \text{ know those who haven’t been in the program have copped a lot of negative flack. They get into this spiral where they become pretty negative about their futures. But being in the program you do get depressed sometimes but then everyone comes to your rescue.}
\]

The young mothers felt positive about their futures and they said that taking part in the program increased their self-esteem and self-confidence. Jenni did illustrate how vulnerability is exacerbated by negative media:
It’s very biased and they generalise, they need to realise that yes we may be young mums but we still provide for our kids, and yes some of us make mistakes but all mothers are new to it at some time.

Yet, as Louise noted, the peer support is a key factor in rebuilding self-esteem:
‘because you are with other people your age, and they have babies and want to finish their education’.

All of the respondents reported that their participation in the program was a positive experience:

_I suppose I had quite a few people said I wouldn’t be able to do being both a mum and a student. Well, that made me want to prove them wrong up. Until I was pregnant I hated school. But when I became pregnant I knew I had to get an education to be able to support my child in the future in a way it made me even more focused about my goals. The support from the school and the program helped me get through in the end._

(Kia)

These three young mothers felt positive about their future and they believed that this was a direct result of participating in the program. SmithBattle (2001) found in her research that often young mothers in education programs feel more positive about their futures and that they suggest feeling in more control of lives. The three young women featured in this study also believed that their life goals were achievable and that they saw themselves in five years’ time in full-time employment, in a ‘good job’ (a well-paying job), owning a home and married, as well as continuing to study and having more children.

Jenni indicated that Plumpton helped her understand the societal constructions of teenage pregnancy:
It’s the best thing for young mothers, we definitely need programs like this to break the cycle, instead of being negative, people need to be positive and we need to get sex education into schools earlier than it is. We need society not to be narrow minded about teenage sex and pregnancies.

Having full-time employment and owning a home within the next five years was seen as achievable. Each spoke about going on to further study or training in the near future. Marriage was still seen as an option and having more children was planned. Louise had definite long-term plans:

‘I will probably have my HSC and working somewhere, hopefully, my kids in school. So I will either be doing my HSC or finished it, with a job’.

Kia articulated the link between further education and life goals:

*I have to provide for my kids and I am responsible for that. I have been out of school two years and done three different courses and starting a new one as well as having my second child. So what if you have kids just get on with it? I think because of the program it helped me to prepare for further study. When I am 25 I want to sit my mature age entrance exam and get into Uni.*

Jenni illustrated how the program changed her life aspirations:

*Definite knowing the support I have gotten, knowing that just because I have kids it’s not going to hinder me, it will not stop me, I feel strongly that if I didn’t come to Plumpton High I would have been a bum another dole bludger and I don’t want to be one of them. I have to be a good influence on my kids. I don’t want them to go through what I had to go through. I want them to have their education before starting a family; I want them to be married.*
Similarly, Kia’s words showed how the Plumpton experience had widened her life options:

*It [the program] has definitely made it more possible to achieve what I want out of life.*  
*Because the program helped me to get my HSC I can do whatever TAFE course I want.*

This initial case study explored the life outcomes of the participants post-involvement in the *Young Mothers in Education* program at Plumpton High School to examine the impact of the program on them. The study provided an opportunity for the participants to share their thoughts, ideas and experiences since leaving the program as well give some insight into the effectiveness of the program years after their involvement. Previous research on this program has not explored the participants’ long-term outcomes (Fahey & Vale, 2002; Flannery, 2003).

The young mothers involved in the retrospective study are positive about their futures. They recognised that there is an issue of teenage pregnancy in the Mt Druitt area, but they felt that this in itself should not be a barrier to obtaining an education. Many of the women responded that they became more focused about their futures due to the program. They also believed it was very important for them and their children to obtain a formal education or vocational training to be able to secure a ‘good job, one that pays well’.

The respondents in this study also suggested that access to quality childcare near the school was a critical factor for their engagement with education and training. The importance of not being judged by others and in particular solely as a ‘young mum’ but rather a student that happens to be a parent was highlighted by participants. They viewed the proactive support at the school very positively and as paramount to their success in gaining school certification. The principal and program coordinator were regarded as key people in supporting this group of students achieve their goals. A number of respondents reported feeling supported and
welcomed by the school community throughout and after graduating from the program. They also recommended that programs such as the *Young Mothers in Education* program at Plumpton High School should be expanded to other schools.

### 4.7 Critical factors for success.

The three most important success factors of the program as indicated by participants were access to affordable childcare, not being judged by others and the provision of proactive support by school staff. All of the respondents indicated that the principal and/or executive played an important role in maintaining the program. Still, by the end of 2005, the school principal had retired and the *Young Mothers in Education* program at Plumpton High School was not a priority of the new administration. After the principal moved on, the program saw a decrease in enrolments hence, the coordinator’s position was no longer required. This suggests that the driving force of the principal was a critical factor in the success of the young mothers’ education program at Plumpton High and he did this with very little external resources or funding for the program.

This case study generated important questions. It was clear that young mothers’ education programs need to be on-going and sustainable if they are to be effective in supporting young mothers in education. However, do such programs rely solely on the drive of school leaders to be sustainable? Or can they be more effectively embedded in the school’s operations to survive changes of leadership? The answers to these questions are critical to understanding the how to sustain of programs that support young mothers (re)engagement with education.

This case study promoted my interest in investigating the experiences of young mothers who are currently in a program. I realised that the focus of such a study should
include discussions with those who provide support for the young mothers, given how important such proactive support appeared to be to the participants. Speaking with school leaders, program teachers, support staff as well as young mothers would provide greater insight into the issues involved in providing proactive support in school-based young mothers in education programs. Gaining more information from these groups would provide a greater understanding of the critical factors for the success of these programs and the extent to which this depended on school leadership. Such research was needed to inform policy developers and education authorities who sought to encourage schools and their local communities to support pregnant and parenting young people (re)engage with education. These questions guided my research in the case studies of the school-based CCCares program at Canberra College in the ACT, which is presented in the next chapter.
Chapter 5: Canberra Senior Secondary College: CCCares

program

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the Plumpton High School study examined a young mothers’ education program that operated within a mainstream program delivered by a Year 7–12 high school, in the large, state education system of NSW. By contrast, the CCCares program operates under the auspices of a Secondary Senior College (Years 11–12) in the much smaller jurisdiction of the ACT. CCCares is a program designed to support pregnant and parenting young people within an ACT senior secondary educational setting. It operates from an off-campus facility that has been refitted to support both the educational and childcare needs of those in the program. This off-site facility has enabled the program to take in young mothers from Years 9–12 and provide a more informal and customised educational, health and welfare environment than had been possible at Plumpton High. Therefore, it is an alternative program in a mainstream context. Through its partnerships with other community agency groups and government departments, the program offers a Year 12 certification; goal-orientated learning packages; online learning and employability skills (Canberra College Annual Report, 2010).

This chapter provides an overview of the CCCares program and identifies key features of the program that are different to the Plumpton High program. In this chapter, data collected through student interviews and focus groups are presented. A thematic analysis of the focus group discussion and interviews was conducted and the main themes identified. This, and other more informal discussions held over the life of this study, provided an opportunity for

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16 Staff interview data is presented in the next chapter.
the students to share their thoughts, ideas and experiences about the program as well as provide insights into the effectiveness of the program in assisting the young mothers to complete their secondary education.

5.2 Examining the CCCares Program

In order to understand the CCCares program in-depth, data was collected from young mothers, the principal and deputy principals, program teachers, support staff, volunteer childcare workers (grandmothers); and other service providers, such as ACT Health and Allied Health Service providers. The primary sources of data were focus group and interviews, policy documents, observations, informal discussions, demographic information and program records. Comparing these sources of data created a deep and substantial understanding of the many factors interacting in the operation of CCCares. It also gave research participants the opportunity to reflect on the data and allowed them to respond from a standpoint of ‘connected knowing’ (Byrd, 2011). The analysis of existing data, documents and archival records collected from the program was used to place the ‘voice’ of young mothers in context within the program.

A review of relevant policy literature on young mothers and education was undertaken to provide a situational context for the CCCares program model. To glean a greater understanding of the effectiveness of the program, it was necessary to engage in an analysis of the program’s impact in terms of meeting its stated goals. The major issues and policy objectives of the program were identified to provide some focus for this analysis. A collection of information about the services and programs delivered through the CCCares program as well as through policy documents and information gained from consultations and data from other sources was compiled. This stage of the study was informed by:
i. Interviews and focus group questions and consultations with program stakeholders, such as Departmental personnel, service delivery providers, employees and clients

ii. Demographic data on community served by the partnerships to provide contextual information about the social and economic characteristics of young mothers (these data were collected from the clients themselves as well as from published sources such as the ABS and school documents)

iii. Consultations were conducted to gather information on the full range of services provided and to develop a set of qualitative data on the resonance and effectiveness of the program. A range of consultation techniques and methodologies were utilised to gain insights into the perspectives of the diverse range of service providers and clients who are associated with the CCCares program.

5.3 The Canberra Senior Secondary College

The Canberra Senior Secondary College provides a Year 11 and 12 co-educational, comprehensive and inclusive curriculum for a wide range of students. The main campus is located in the suburb of Phillip in Canberra, Australia. The 2010 intake of the College was approximately 800 (see Table 3.0), with a diverse group of students from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

Table 3.0 Enrolments, Canberra Senior Secondary College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Numbers of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBOTE(^\text{17})</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{17}\) Language background other than English
The College offers an International Baccalaureate Diploma program and is also a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). The College’s core values and vision statement, as expressed in the 2010 Canberra College Prospectus is:

_Canberra College strives to provide a flexible, caring, dynamic learning community focusing on global communications and promoting academic, social and cultural achievements to equip all students for diverse pathways and lifelong learning._

The College has strong links with local businesses, primary and high schools and two other colleges through the ‘Brindabella Collegiate’. The College also has partnerships with other RTOs, such as the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) as well as links with the University of Canberra and the Australian National University. The College has been in its current form of operation for 12 years. It was formed when two Secondary Colleges in South Canberra—Phillip College and Stirling College—were amalgamated. It has well-recognised student welfare structures and the whole College community is supportive of the policies and associated strategies that focus on the retention of students into Years 11 and 12. The College promotes values of respect, natural justice, individuality and equality. These values were clearly articulated by the principal:

*_Just as important as our curriculum in the development of our students are the College values of respect, natural justice, individuality, honesty and equality. As a community we keep these at the forefront of our operations as guiding principles in our daily interactions._* (Principal, Canberra College)

The main campus is located near the Woden shopping complex, which has a major bus terminus, providing ease of access for students from South Canberra and NSW. A smaller annex of the College is located at the former Stirling College site and this houses the _CCCares_
program. Unlike the mainstream program, this alternative program caters to young, pregnant and parenting students studying at the Year 9 to Year 12 level. Its openness to students and the local community is demonstrated outwardly, as shown in the College’s banner—‘The Canberra College: Caring for your Future’ (see Figure 9.0). School leaders claim this philosophy flows through all levels of the College’s teaching, learning and day-to-day operations.

Figure 9.0. Canberra Senior Secondary College signage.

This outward and visible promotion of the school philosophy, as shown in Figure 9.0, indicates, as Locke (2004) suggests, that the school context is not a given but something constructed in the act of textual engagement. Putting it another way, the writer (in this case the school) postions us (in this case those outside the school) to view the participants (in this case the teachers and students) in this situation in a certain way (Locke, 2004, p. 59). Canberra College cares about the future of those who attend the school. There is also an inference that others may not care as much as this school for the success of its students. These intensifiers have a role in evoking the context, and this is made obvious in the name of the young mothers’ program at the school, CCCares. Once again the inference is set that they, the school, cares more than others. Thus, the program’s name engages implicitly with the dominant negative discourses around teenage motherhood discussed in Chapter 2.
5.4 The CCCares Program in Detail

The physical location of the CCCares program is the suburb of Stirling, approximately 5 km from the main campus of Canberra College. In 1998, the school’s executive expressed concerns regarding the number of students who had not returned to school because they were pregnant or had young babies. The principal approached interested teachers to discuss and seek out advice on how best to support and encourage these young women to return to school. At this point, key staff members were interested in decreasing the school drop-out rate and maximising the educational and future employment options for young pregnant and parenting women.

Early in 2000, several College staff identified a need to try to provide an alternate program for specific groups of young people who were unable to succeed in the mainstream setting. The initial enrolments were four young pregnant and parenting young women in 2003. After research and consultation with community groups (locally and nationally), the program was formally established in 2005. Since then, enrolments have grown from 20 students to 95, a five-fold increase. The program is offered to all eligible Canberra-based students not just to feeder suburbs. A number of students also come from Queanbeyan (NSW) to attend the program. The CCCares program is the only provider of its kind in the ACT region.

Over recent years, a number of media stories have been published about the success of the program. Interest in the program has been shown by numerous newspaper and other media organisations (see Table 4.0).

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18 Queanbeyan is located on the ACT/NSW boarder, with many students attending schools in the ACT.
Table 4.0 Media Coverage of the CCCares program 2009–2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story/Article</th>
<th>Newspaper/Radio/TV</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The school where babes are welcome</em></td>
<td>7PM Project Network TEN (TV)</td>
<td>27/7/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Teen mums school program goes national</em></td>
<td>666 ABC Canberra (Radio)</td>
<td>25/10/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Canberra College provide award-winning CCCares program</em></td>
<td><em>The Age</em> (Newspaper)</td>
<td>9/12/09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ensuring pregnancy is just a pause for teens</em></td>
<td><em>The Australian</em> (Newspaper)</td>
<td>25/10/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>$750K win for young parents program</em></td>
<td>ABC News (TV)</td>
<td>30/11/09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The CCCares program timeline (see Figure 10) illustrates the activity within the program from 2000 to 2011. The program’s activities developed incrementally over time as the school leaders and program teachers responded to the needs of students. Thus, the program developed key features that distinguished it from previous models, including Plumpton High.

A review of the developments and milestone achievements of this period includes mention of the earlier alternative ‘Eclipse’ program for students at educational risk. In one sense, the CCCares program came out of an already established program, and so the CCCares program had a foundation or model to work from. The timeline also illustrates the early discussions and planning that occurred with key stakeholders.

5.4.1 Physical location.

The CCCares program is located at the Canberra College annex at Stirling (Weston) in the ACT in a decommissioned high school, and for a number of years, the program was the only activity on-site with the remainder of the facility closed for refurbishment. The original location for the program was in existing classrooms at the rear of the school. At that time, the space was adequate for the number of enrolled students and their children. Then, in 2006/2007, the ACT Department of Education and Training (DET) opened its Centre for
Teaching and Learning (CTL) on the site. As the ACT DET commenced the relocation of its staff, there was a need to relocate CCCares to a refurbished building on the site. This enabled the program to use a wider variety of spaces that would cater to the needs of students, their children and the program staff and support services. In the twelfth year of operation, the program requires further space and the ACT DET is now in the planning stages of constructing a purpose built facility for the program on the main campus of the Canberra College at Phillip.
Figure 10. CCCares program timeline 2000–2011.
5.4.2 The CCCares program facility.

The program operates in ACT school terms, Monday to Friday, 8:00am to 5:00pm in an open-plan learning environment (see Figure 11). There are small classrooms, kitchens, playrooms, sleep rooms, change rooms, a medical suite, gymnasium and outdoor play areas. Overall, the facility accommodates a number of requirements, groups and services. Firstly, it is a teaching and learning space that is required to meet ACT Education Directorate teaching spaces obligations. Secondly, it provides childcare facilities that also are required to meet early childhood regulations. Finally, it provides a specialised health services space that needs to meet the ACT Health Directorate requirements. Providing these structural requirements inevitably creates policy tensions because the program spans a number of departmental jurisdictions.

The CCCares program leaders consider the physical, social and emotional requirements of students and staff when planning spaces and resources (see Figure 11). For example, the teaching and learning spaces are large, open and bright areas. There are breakout areas as well as more private and quiet areas within the larger spaces. Teachers also have their workspace/desks in the open areas with students, thus connection between program teachers and students is not restricted. There is one room at the centre of the space with glass partitions for students and staff to access if private or sensitive discussions need to be conducted.

At the centre of the space is the childcare facility, which links and connects all other aspects of the environment together. Students’ children are always kept within the students’ visual field to reduce anxiety and increase access. Sadler et al. (2007) suggest that this is an important factor for vulnerable and at-risk young mothers. A specialised kitchen space

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19 The ACT DET was re-named as the ACT Education Directorate in 2011
(Kitchen A) is available for students to develop their cooking and nutrition skills. Students and children often have meals together in the dining room next to Kitchen A. This illustrates how well the CCCares program is now resourced in terms of space and facilities.

*Figure 11. CCCares program facility site-map, (Freemantle Drive, Stirling ACT).*
5.4.3 CCCares program in context.

As mentioned earlier, the CCCares program is located at the Canberra College annex in the suburb of Stirling and region of Weston Creek. It is a typical ‘middle class’ Canberra region (ABS SEIFA Index). Though, the students who attend the CCCares program come from the wider Canberra–Queanbeyan area. In 2006, the median individual weekly income for persons aged 15 years and over for Canberra–Queanbeyan was $714, compared with $466 elsewhere in Australia. The median weekly family income for Canberra–Queanbeyan was $1,751 compared with $1,171 elsewhere in Australia. The majority of people in Canberra–Queanbeyan live in private dwellings with 74.8 per cent in separate houses and 14.2 per cent living in flats, units or apartments (ABS Census 2006 QuickStats: Canberra–Queanbeyan (ACT) Statistical District). In the 2006 Census, there were 96,312 families in Canberra–Queanbeyan (ACT/NSW) (Statistical District): 47.4 per cent were couple families with children, 36.0 per cent were couple families without children, 15.1 per cent were one parent families and 1.5 per cent were other families.

The young mothers and children in the CCCares program are quite visible in the suburb of Stirling because they access the local shopping centre and other community services located nearby at a mid-size shopping mall in Weston. Members of the local community appear to be accepting of the CCCares program and they often donate items to the program. In particular, the local Rotary Club provide volunteer bus drivers for the program and members of a local church volunteer their time in the childcare centre within the program.

Students in the CCCares program come from mainly non-Indigenous backgrounds with 19 per cent of students of Indigenous backgrounds and nine per cent of African background. Almost all students in the program recieve Centrelink benefits (welfare support, 2010 CCCares program Demographic Profile). With this fixed income, it is difficult for the
young mothers to access suitable accommodation due to relatively high rental costs in the ACT. In Canberra–Queanbeyan (ACT/NSW) (Statistical District), the median weekly rent was $250, compared to $190 in Australia. The average household size was 2.6 and the average number of persons per bedroom was 1.1. Hence, rents in the immediate area are often too high for program participants and most students rely on the program bus service to transport them and their children to and from the program.

Affordable housing has been identified as a major concern for the participants in the CCCares program (CCCares program Demographic Profile 2010), with 69 per cent of students living in ACT Government Housing. Since 2005, Canberra’s growth has been steady and there have been a number of large-scale urban developments to meet this population growth (ABS Census 2006 QuickStats: Canberra–Queanbeyan (ACT) Statistical District). The development of new estate areas has led to the establishment of two large suburbs near the Stirling campus of CCCares. The region of Weston Creek therefore encompasses a mixture of older established housing with some government housing areas and new developing areas with young families. In addition to becoming an expanding area, Canberra–Queanbeyan has pockets of culturally and linguistically diverse groups with 21.1 per cent of people born overseas (ABS Census 2006 QuickStats: Canberra–Queanbeyan (ACT) Statistical District).

5.4.4 The student profile.

In 2010, enrolments in the CCCares program had reached 95 students with 88 children aged less than five years attending the program with them. Some of the students have moved from as far as Queensland and Victoria to attend the program. Many of the young women have been referred to the program by others, in particular youth and healthcare workers. It is also reported that word of mouth has had some effect on the growing enrolments in the program.
At October 2010, the student profile showed a diverse cohort of students, with the majority enrolled in the Year 11 program (see Table 5.0). The average age of the students was 20 years\(^{20}\), making them, as a group, older than the general College student population.

Table 5.0 CCCares Program Student Profile 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of enrolled students</th>
<th>95</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of students completed Yr11 in 2010</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of students completed Yr12 in 2010</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student age/s</td>
<td>Age range: 15 to 24 years old with average being 20 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children per student</td>
<td>52 = 1 child; 13 = 2 children; 3 = 3+ children; pregnant = 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family type</td>
<td>Partnered = 32; Single = 36; Other = 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main source of family income</td>
<td>95% students receive Centrelink benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of students in ACT Government Housing</td>
<td>69% = Government Housing; 5% = Living with parents/family; 26% = other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural diversity</td>
<td>Indigenous (19%); African (6%); Non-Indigenous (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages and/or dialects spoken at home</td>
<td>English = 88%, Krio = 3%, Dinka = 6%, Arabic = 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English proficiency</td>
<td>Range from highly proficient to poor levels of proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational attainment</td>
<td>Many students have been disengaged from education for significant periods. Approximately 15 students have not been engaged in formal education for over 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental employment/unemployment</td>
<td>Unknown, as most students are independent and have little or no contact with their own parents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of students enrolled in the program face educational challenges not generally encountered by other Australian students in the mainstream setting. Hence students

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\(^{20}\) Even though the majority of students in the program are well beyond the compulsory age of schooling they are permitted to continue with education at the College due to the nature of the program and their particular context. These students are regarded in the system as mature aged students completing Year 12 or its equivalent.
in the program have high support needs. Challenges for the *CCCare* program that are not reflected in Table 5.0 include supporting and catering for a culturally diverse student group; a high number of students living independently, supporting themselves with little or no support from their immediate family; students that are disengaged; and a range of literacy and numeracy skills. Not visible in the table are students with children who have special needs requiring specialised support; some drug and alcohol related issues; some homeless students; refugee students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

In addition, the domestic living arrangements of this group of students are often unstable. For example, of the 95 students enrolled in the program in 2010, 13 per cent of the cohort reported that they had been subject to Care and Protection Orders at some point. This occurs when their child or children have been removed from the mother’s care. This may be temporary or longer depending on the outcome of further investigations into the welfare of the children. For many of the young mothers in this situation, they can only access their children by remaining in the *CCCare* program. They are allowed to interact with their children under the supervision of a court ordered person while at the program.

It was also common for some program participants to be involved the correctional system. Twelve per cent of the participants reported that they had been under the supervision of correctional services at some point while in the program. For some young mothers, this included that they participate in the *CCCare* program as a condition of their court orders.

A number of the young mothers experienced some form of domestic violence; this included emotional, physical and psychological abuse with, eleven per cent of young mothers in the program reporting being subjected to domestic violence at some time. At the time the data were collected, six of the young mothers had current Domestic Violence and Protection Orders against their partner. These statistics illustrate the complex and sometimes chaotic
nature of the out-of-school lives of a number of the students in the program, which is consistent with other research findings on other young mothers’ groups (Arai, 2009a; Kelly, 2000; SmithBattle, 2005).

The majority of students in the program (52 per cent of the 2010 cohort) have only one child. A small number have two children (13 per cent of the 2010 cohort); and another group have three children (three per cent of the 2010 cohort). In addition, during the face-to-face interviews, four of the young mothers reported planning to have their second child within the next three years. Of those who reported their relationship status in 2010, 19 indicated they were in a relationship; while 76 reported being currently single. Seven of the women’s partners were also attending the program.

5.4.5 The Educational program.

The CCCares program uses Personalised Learning Programs that provide certification pathways towards an ACT Year 12 Certificate, which can include vocational components. The program develops social and emotional intelligences needed by young mothers to become connected to their chosen community. The Personalised Learning Program aims to improve student’s literacy, numeracy and IT skills and develop the individual’s awareness of local and global issues. The program provides a supportive environment that encourages young people to identify and manage their personal circumstances. The program also provides designed Pathways Plans with young parents to develop the necessary skills and personal strengths they need to become marketable and employable in the future. The program also assists young people to become financially independent. The development of the Personalised Learning Programs used in CCCares is based on the Individual Learning Plan21 and Student Pathways

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21 Individual Learning Plan : (ACT DET 2008, Students’ with a Disability: Meeting their Educational Needs Policy p 3).
Plans with a case management approach, which is traditionally situated in the disabilities and gifted and talented policy domains.

Students work independently on set work modules and program teachers provide support when required. Each student works at his or her own pace throughout the week and then presents completed work for assessment. The students design their learning programs in consultation with program teachers. They can choose the days that they attend the program as well as being provided the opportunity to work from home when necessary. During school time, a number of small class activities are conducted by program teachers; these range from maths lessons to business management activities. Parenting, nutrition, health and childcare sessions are also conducted by visiting healthcare workers throughout the week. The young mothers are required to volunteer part of their day in the adjunct childcare centre. They are rostered on to prepare lunches for themselves and their children each day. The students can access a variety of learning spaces within the program facility (see Figure 5.4) these range from individual learning spaces to classrooms and break-out areas.

Strategies used by the CCCares program to provide a supportive learning environment were identified and include:

i. The explicit teaching of social and emotional literacy skills

ii. Mentoring programs and relationships training (e.g. Relationships Australia)

iii. Building supportive social networks for students with peers, workplaces, teachers and relevant community organisations (e.g. Rotary Club Australia).

The Individual Learning Plan identifies the student’s individual needs, pathway, goals and priorities for learning. An Individual Learning Plan is designed by teachers in collaboration with parents/carers, relevant professionals and the student where appropriate, to inform the planning, delivery and evaluation of the student’s personalised learning program. Individual Learning Plans are regularly monitored and evaluated. (ACT DET 2008 Gifted and Talented Students Policy p3).

An individual learning plan is a document that lists the agreed personalised learning goals and strategies that will be put in place to provide a quality educational program for a student. It is a strategy for tailoring a program or curriculum that can be used for gifted and talented students.
Recognising that students at CCCares face significant personal and social challenges, more extensive than those generally found in mainstream educational settings, CCCares provides flexible delivery of learning and content. CCCares’ staff work collaboratively with all students to develop Individual Learning Plans that meet not only the needs of curriculum, and the individual educational, social and professional goals of the student. In addition, CCCares allows for flexible learning hours that are adapted to meet students’ personal circumstances. Online e-learning management systems, for example, the MyClasses platform, and the newly introduced Connected Learning Community (cLc), are also used to facilitate flexible learning hours in ACT Department of Education schools. The flexibility in CCCares’ learning delivery is viewed as critical by the young mothers for their level of engagement (see Figure 12).

**Figure 12.** Student responses to flexible learning.

**5.4.6 Staff and funding.**

Over time, the wider school community came to accept the program as an integral aspect of student welfare at the Canberra College. In early 2005, a program coordinator/campus manager drawn from existing school staff was appointed to the CCCares
program. The College developed the program based on research and consultation performed by key staff and through advice and information gathered from existing young mothers’ programs around Australia. At the end of 2005, the CCCares program was identified in the school’s operational plan and had the support of the College Board.

Funding for the program has come from multiple sources over the years. Initially, it was funded solely from the College’s operational budget. However, the College has been proactive in seeking funding from other sources, in particular the ACT Departments of Education and Health community-based funding, and a cash prize awarded to the program when it won the NAB’s Schools First award. Some funding from the Commonwealth was also directed at assisting students who were at risk of not completing their secondary education and this funding allowed the school to employ a community liaison officer to support students dealing with external agencies. This gave the program staff more flexibility to work with the young mothers individually to meet specific needs as parents and as students. In summary, the program is supported financially by the ACT DET, ACT Health and FaHCSIA.

The ACT Education Directorate allocates staffing points and funding to the CCCares program, and these funds are managed through the College’s central funding agreement. The staffing structure in 2010 is shown in Table 6.0.

Table 6.0 2010 CCCares Program Staff

| 1 x Canberra college deputy principal—portfolio responsibility | 1 x Full-time executive teacher (Program coordinator/manager) |
| 2 x 0.6 Qualified classroom teachers | 1 x Full-time teacher |
| 1 x Full-time special teachers assistant (STA) | 1 x 0.4 English as a second language (ESL) teacher |
| 1 x 0.4 General staff administration (GSA) | 1 x 0.8 Special teachers assistant (STA) |
In addition to the funding provided by ACT DET, CCCares actively seeks grants and funding from external agencies to build organisational infrastructure, for example, the National Australia Bank’s (NAB) Schools First Awards. As a result of this active grant seeking, the program received $750,000 from NAB in 2010, which was used for an Employment Consultant; an e-Learning Consultant; a dual control vehicle for student driving instruction; three (12 seat) buses; a Schools First Project Officer and AYPN membership, plus the commissioning of a research evaluation project of the CCCares program (Hay, 2010).

In summary, the program is supported financially by the ACT Education and Health Directorates and FaHCSIA.

5.4.7 CCCares transport program.

From the beginning of the program, the school leaders knew that for many young mothers accessing transport for themselves and their children would be difficult due to the cost, timetabling and availability of bus routes. To overcome these barriers, a feature of CCCares’ operational structure is the provision of a free daily transport program. Over 65 per cent of the young mothers access the transport service provided by the program. For young mothers, the availability of suitable transport is a significant barrier to accessing education (Boulden, 2001; Hay, 2010). CCCares provides transport to the school campus for students via three 12-seater buses.

5.4.8 Enrolment and retention.

The most significant outcome of the CCCares program for its growing student community is the provision of equitable and inclusive access to education and health services. Enrolments increased from 20 in 2005 to 95 in 2010, a five-fold increase. Further, 86 per cent

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22 http://www.schoolsfirst.edu.au/
of attending students report that they would not be attending school if it was not for the 

*CCCares* program. Support services such as the childcare and transport programs contribute to 
the increasing number of student enrolments and attendance overall.

**5.4.9 Academic and social engagement.**

Another significant outcome of the *CCCares* program is the maintained academic and 
social engagement of students with education. The number of students with substantial 
engagement in academic and social support programs had, on average, remained at 80 per cent 
from 2005 to 2010. The number of students receiving an ACT Year 12 Certificate through the 
*CCCares* program had increased from three in 2004 to 25 by 2010.

**5.4.10 Student health and wellbeing.**

Increased student health and wellbeing appears to be a major outcome of the *CCCares* 
program. Community partnerships with health, financial, migrant and language services and 
other professionals led to increased knowledge, skills and employment opportunities for 
students. All students rated the healthcare information they received from the nurse as helpful 
for themselves, their children or both (see Figure 5.7). From the data collected by the College, 
86 per cent of students also listed the links to government and community agencies as 
important or very important and all students reported the information and support they 
received to help with child health, parenting skills and managing a home as useful or very 
useful.

**5.5 Key Program Features**

This section outlines the key program features of *CCCares*. It presents how the 
program has developed in areas of proactive policy development and application, holistic 
service provision, adjunct childcare, and specialised staff.
5.5.1 Proactive policy development and application.

In late 2002, the establishment of a steering committee was seen by the College executive and board as an appropriate way to engage other service providers and agencies in addressing the issues that surround being a young mother and a student. Community partnerships assisted the program to expand and provide more services. The steering committee was made up of representatives from the College, including the principal, Eclipse program manager, and teachers. There were also representatives from the ACT DET, the Child, Youth and Women’s Health Program (ACT Department of Health), the University of Canberra and the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT). A number of local authorities and non-government organisations including Mary Mead, women’s refuges, hospitals, service clubs, the Salvation Army and a number of crisis services were consulted over a two year period (2002 to 2004) about how best to support young mothers (re)engage with the College (CCCares program). The executive also consulted with staff of existing school-based programs around Australia to ascertain what worked well in supporting these students. Lengthy consultations where held with the principal of Plumpton High School as well.

The CCCares program at the Canberra College was established within an existing policy framework: *Pregnant Students Policy and Implementation Guidelines* (1988) of the ACT DET. This policy informs ACT schools that all students attending or seeking to attend ACT government schools, including pregnant students, should have equal access to education programs. The guidelines provide information that may assist schools in developing their own procedures concerning pregnant students. Flannery (2003) suggests that well-developed school policies and procedures can have an effect on young pregnant and parenting women continuing with their school education.
The College built on this policy by developing its own program philosophy drawing on the principles of education as enshrined within the UNESCO charter. These three fundamental principles of education are: non-discrimination, equity of opportunity and treatment and universal access to education.

The Canberra College principal cited these principles in interview as underpinning the CCCares program:

*These three principles lie at the very heart of our CCCares program, not just as philosophy but in all that we do. We observe, on a daily basis, the significant educational, social and health benefits delivered by this initiative to our young pregnant and parenting students and their children.*

The Canberra College executive demonstrates leadership in supporting the students in the CCCares program. As part of their efforts to maintain a high standard of delivery within CCCares, the program manager and College Executive commissioned an evaluation report as a means to ensure program quality, sustainability and guidance for future developments and goals (Hay, 2010). The role of the senior executive was explained by the principal in the following terms:

*It’s not the sort of program that you can bring into a school unless the senior executive of the school and the staff who are working on the program are absolutely passionate about it ... Here it developed from the grassroots but has been supported by myself and by the deputies over the last few years.*

Developing its own philosophy and applying it is consistent with the proactive approach shown by Fahey and Vale (2002) as critical to encouraging young pregnant and

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parenting women to continue at school. Their study showed that proactive schools had much higher levels of school retention compared with schools that provided the ‘basic’ needs of this group. Boulden (2000, 2010) continues with this line of reasoning, arguing that programs that have proven successful in assisting young pregnant and parenting women to continue with education have demonstrated a positive environment and high levels of encouragement.

5.5.2 Holistic service provision.

Its proactive response to meeting young mothers’ needs took CCCares into many areas of service provision outside the traditional scope of schools. The CCCares program, for example, assists young people to become financially independent and to develop the social and emotional intelligences needed to become positive participants in the community. CCCares’ supportive environment also encourages young people to identify and manage their personal circumstances (CCCares Information Booklet, 2009, p. 1).

The school executive justify this approach as providing the necessary foundations for learning to occur, that is, to address issues that they think distract the students from the core purpose of learning. The program therefore also provides support to young mothers in dealing with the issues of being a parent as well as a student. The school leaders and program teachers argue that only once these issues have been satisfied then quality learning can occur.

One of the deputy principals emphasised the role of the program as helping to prepare the students for learning by ensuring that any personal issues or circumstances are addressed first:

*It’s 50 per cent academic, 50 per cent social. And if you can’t clear the young people for learning then basically they’re not ready to start talking about their maths or their science, their biology. If you can’t help them with the health of their child and help them get to school and help them sort out their Centrelink issues or justice issues or*
whatever their housing needs are, if you can’t do that then they won’t talk to you because they don’t have time and they won’t be here. So it’s being able to service all of those diverse needs that create the engagement for them that enables or clears them for learning so they can basically open their minds to think about study. (Deputy principal SL3)

CCCares consistently engages with community organisations to provide improved outcomes for its students. As established in the academic literature, community links provide educational institutions with increased access to education and skills training, information provision, health and wellbeing services, volunteer/mentoring services, transport services, collaborative practice and research opportunities (Boulden, 2001a; Noble & Wyatt, 2008; Pillow, 2004; Sadler et al., 2007).

CCCares’ focus on productive community partnerships is apparent and the additional services these partnerships facilitate are highly utilised by the students. The extensive network of CCCares’ community partnerships have developed over a period of years. Among the most important is the partnership with ACT Health, which provides an on-site maternal and child health nurse twice weekly, on-site monthly antenatal nurse visits, and access to ACT Dental Health to provide students with education related to parental knowledge and skills (e.g. child health, childcare, childbirth, parenting skills and managing a home). CCCares also placed emphasis on linking with community agencies that could provide support to their large number of independent students, such as accommodation and financial management. The majority of students attending CCCares viewed the information, support and skills provided through links to community agencies and services as critical for supporting their engagement with education and overall health and wellbeing (see Figure 13).
Figure 13. Student rating of community agencies and services in the CCCares program.

This also was endorsed by the healthcare workers:

*More vulnerable families we find don’t usually seek us out, so because we’re here it’s much easier for them and the teachers encourage them to come and see us and we’ll come out and wander round and talk with the mums and try encouraging them to come and see us ... We don’t see a lot of them in the baby clinics, the young mums.* (Healthcare worker)

The ACT Health have come to view the program as useful for their service delivery to young mothers and their children. Young mothers tend not to engage with health services willingly due to factors such as mistrust of the system, lack of confidence in dealing with service providers and a fear of being judged. These barriers are highlighted in the literature (Arai, 2009, Boulden, 2010, Loxton, Stewart-Williams & Adamson, 2007).
5.5.3 Adjunct childcare.

It was decided early on in the establishment of the program that childcare should be provided on-site within the program. The deputy principal and program manager had researched the impact of on-site childcare for young mothers in school-based programs. The school could not afford to employ a childcare director/teacher; hence, the adjunct childcare model was selected for the CCCares program. The adjunct childcare uses volunteers, staff within the program and the young mothers themselves who are rostered on at some point during the day. The adjunct care approach is based on the playgroup model, where the children are supervised by an adult in charge. In the model used at CCCares, volunteers from the local community (known to the young mothers as the grandmas) performed as main supervisor in the children’s play room. All staff including the program manager, teaching and support staff are rostered on during the day. The young mothers have access to their children at any time during the day and they are able to observe or watch their children from their work area in the next room.

This is seen as a very important element of the CCCares program in that few mothers can afford formal childcare. A number of staff also mentioned that the young mothers felt anxious about leaving their children in care where they cannot see them. In 2010, for example, only a small number of the children of the students in the program were in formal care off-site. Seven children attended childcare and two were in kindergarten. These seven children had all, at some stage, accessed the CCCares program adjunct childcare prior to commencing formal off-site childcare or kindergarten.

International research has highlighted the importance of educational institutions providing free, on-site (or near-site) access to childcare for pregnant and parenting young people. The adjunct model involves the shared care by all staff and parents on-site; the parents
retain responsibility for their children at all times. The adjunct childcare also provides the opportunity for students to practice the skills they learn in training and wellbeing programs.

Figure 14. Use of childcare facility in the CCCares program.

Provision of on-site adjunct childcare is considered by the young mothers as an essential precondition for their participation in formal education. All of the students bring their child to school with them and these students report that it is very important/important to have their children at school with them (see Figure 14). As research indicates, separation of pregnant and parenting young people from their children during schooling can cause anxiety, distress and have a significant negative effect on their educational outcomes (Sadler et al., 2009). Importantly, over half of the students have reported that they would not attend CCCares at all if they could not bring their child with them to school.

Shantelle, a young mother in the program provides a good example of understanding how some of the women in the program feel about putting their children in the care of others:

*It just feels like school’s the only one there to support me during the day. They can help me out—when I have had him in here with me I can put him in there [childcare]*
for a while. I know what a lot of the girls think—like it’s their responsibility, they chose to have a kid, they can’t palm if off to someone else, you know?

5.5.4 Specialised staff.

Recognition of the need to build trust with students at CCCares program is an important part of the program. For most students, previous experiences within education, health and/or justice systems have been negative. Students’ lack of trust often extends to normally acceptable relationships with staff (in a mainstream setting) such as relationships with counsellors.

The CCCares program has enthusiastic staff that are innovative in their teaching approaches and highly trained professionals with significant experience in working and building relationships with young parents. Teaching staff at the CCCares program also adopt a far broader range of responsibilities than would normally be required from staff in a mainstream setting. Extra responsibilities include high levels of mandatory reporting, arranging student accommodation out of standard working hours, and a higher level of ongoing communication with internal and external support agencies and helping in the adjunct childcare centre. The dedication of CCCares program current staff is reflected in student feedback, with all of the students rating the staff working at CCCares program as outstanding or very good.

5.6 What the Young Mothers Say.

This section provides the findings of the thematic analysis of the focus group and one-on-one interviews the young mothers. A focus group with 25 young mothers was conducted with a further six young mothers participating in one-on-one interviews. The focus group and the one-on-one interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. The young
mothers were given the opportunity to choose another name rather than their own. Kelly (2000) notes that many young mothers feel comfortable about sharing their stories, and they want to set an example to other young mothers. The participants in the one-on-one interviews were identified as follows:

YM1—Clair       YM4—Lana
YM2—Shantelle   YM5—Breeamber
YM3—Tenneh      YM6—Stevie-Lea

The focus group main topic of discussion was ‘What is it like to be “young mother” in today’s society?’ Other topics included relationships, how having a baby is life changing, and the importance of an education for them and their child.

The one-on-one interviews were semi-structured with a set of questions used as a starting point. Most of the interviews lasted for about 30 to 40 minutes. The following questions were asked:

i. What made you return to school at this time of your life?
ii. Why have you come to the CCCares program?
iii. What do you think is the place of programs like this one for young mothers?
iv. What is it like being a young mother in today’s society?
v. What are some of the aspects of being a mother that you have experienced?
vi. How do you think other people view you as a mother?
vii. What does it take to be a mother today?
viii. How do you feel about the future? Where do you see yourself in five years time?

The focus group session and the one-on-one interviews were transcribed and coded to show the themes about being a young mother returning to education. Thematic analysis (Alder
& Clark, 2008) was employed through open coding of each transcription. Thematic analysis comes out of the sociological traditions that treat text as a window into human experience (Ryan & Bernard, 2000) and is primarily an inductive qualitative coding technique (Boyatzis, 1998; Punch, 2009; Saladana, 2009).

Within the thematic categories many of the passages quoted, while they address the question posed, also provide a window into the young women’s ways of thinking about matters such as the images they have of themselves and others, both as mothers and as students.
Table 7.0 *Main and Sub-Themes from Young Mothers’ Focus Group and One-on-One Interviews*

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<td>- Having to grow up fast, making choices</td>
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<td>- Being a ‘good mother’</td>
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<td>- Judging other young mothers in the program</td>
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5.6.1 **Place and space.**

A high proportion of the young women mentioned that the program offered a place where they could be with others in the same situation. They felt that being in a space where
they could support and encourage each other was important and having something in common, like their shared experiences as parents, allowed them develop peer support networks. The discussions also touched on the idea that they could access this space with their children and not be judged.

A participant from the focus group highlighted how being in the program has helped her to move from being isolated to making new friends who share their experiences:

*I used to just stay at home and talk to my four walls. See movies all day and you know watch ‘em. Now I actually have friends and talk to people. That’s the thing I’ve made friends, new friends being here. Because they’re all in the same boat as me. And they know how, yeah and we all understand where we’re coming from.* (FGP2)

Another focus group participant provides a reminder of the difficulties that young mothers can face in accessing program support:

*Options, there’s so many, you’ve just go to try and find them. They’re not accessible enough to anybody. I had to look and look, like I said I sat at home for a good four months. I didn’t have any of my contacts here. I didn’t have friends; I didn’t have a lot of these kinds of things.* (FGP4)

Breeamber emphasises the importance of returning to school but that mainstream schooling can often be inaccessible for young mothers:

*It’s a great thing for young parents to come back to school and finish what they can do. Not everyone decides to have a baby at the age of 16—normal school’s not going to take them in. I love this school. I recommend it to everyone that I know.*

Lana also values the opportunity to return to education:

*It gives me the chance to be able to go back to school. Not many other places give you that sort of opportunity.*
A number of the focus group participants indicated that having a place that provides support for not only themselves but also their children was vital. They spoke about being able to access services within the program that they would not normally access elsewhere. Some of the women indicated that they had negative experiences with medical professionals. Yet, they had trust in the nurse that visited the program. Several comments from participants in the focus group implied negative experiences with the medical profession:

*They know they need help but they don’t quite know where to get it and what they need.*  
*I’ve always been very lucky because I … my son’s disabilities I had a social worker and things all the time. So I also had people to talk to and stuff. And I was very grateful for that.* (FGP5)  
*That’s the thing though some mums don’t want to ask something because they don’t want other people to look badly at them.* (FGP2)  
*People make you feel like you’re silly when you ask questions sometimes. You know because they asked me. ‘is this your first child?’ Yes. As soon as you say this is your first child everything goes out the window.* (FGP3)

But Breeamber informs us that the health services staff in the program provide education and information sessions that are useful:

*Here you actually have the midwives—the principal comes down and checks up every now and then; we have people who come in and talk about sleep and SIDS and things like that, which is great for young parents I think. I didn’t even know what SIDS was until they told me.*

Many in the focus group spoke about having a special space where they felt safe, supported and respected. All of the young mothers indicated that having a facility that was dedicated to providing support to them and their children made them feel respected. They also
mentioned that having a dedicated place and space gave them a feeling of community and that for many of them a sense of belonging that they had not felt before. They all spoke to some extent about the feeling of isolation, not being connected or belonging to the broader community.

Tenneh provided a bleak example of this feeling of isolation:

*I would say bad for me because I would not have anywhere to go. Just stay home, I don’t really have many friends. In the daytime I only come to school, and then go home. That’s all.*

Breeamber spoke about the positive aspect of supporting each other, but provided an insight into how young mothers feeling judged by the wider community:

*We absolutely give each other advice; we help each other out as much as what we can because we know how tough it is. We get looked down on all the time—walking to the mall, going for a drive in the car we get looked at because we have children.*

**5.6.2 Education and future aspirations.**

Re-engagement with schooling was viewed by many as a way of building a better future. They believed that coming back to school would give them and their children a chance to ‘become something’. They felt participating in the *CCCare* program would make a difference for them and their child. They saw being in the program as doing the right thing as they viewed obtaining an education as the only way to ensure that their future would be positive. They all had aspirations for the future that would include having a ‘good’ job, that their children would be ‘happy’, they would own a house and have a new car. The majority of the young mothers felt optimistic about their futures and that they had some control over it. Many young mothers mentioned that their level of future success was dependent on how hard they worked and the level of support they received in achieving their goals.
This was true for Clair, as she felt that she could access the emotional and educational support she required from the program to obtain her goals. Clair expressed how CCCares was her only option but that it had turned out positive for her in terms of grades:

*CCCares was the only place that would accept me but in the end it was probably a better outcome that I worked here because I completed my Year 10 really well; I got As and Bs – compared to the rest of my high school years, that was the best...*

Well, they not just support us with school; they support us ... like if we need to talk to them about personal problems we’re having, they’re out there to talk to anyone. It’s really easy going and laid back but it’s not a class where you sit down and listen because we can’t do that but we can talk to a teacher whenever we want. We go off in our own ways and do our own work in our different ways ... Yeah, independent work and it’s a lot easier and better because they have the resources here. It’s not like the program when you just work from home where you can’t really go ‘Oh, how do I do this?’.

Breeamber also conveyed a positive approach to her future and career prospects:

*Doing pretty well and feeling really good about it. As I said, me and my friend are at the top of the class so we’re doing pretty well. Hopefully next year I’m back at full-time work; that’s where I’d like to be, either doing an apprenticeship or traineeship in aged care nursing.*

Some of the young mothers articulated their ‘right’ to an education. Many of them believed that they had become more vocal about their rights and wanting to be truly independent. A number said that they had more direction in their lives since becoming a mother. In all cases, these sentiments were related to support from the program.
Clair, for example, described how being in the program has assisted her to become more independent:

*I went for a job interview yesterday, I hate my job and I clean all day at home so I don’t really want to do that for the rest of my life. I’d like to work in an office. It’s been a whole transition [being in the program]. It’s made me want to get my licence; it’s made me want to be more independent; not having to rely on people.*

Lana is determined to create a better life for herself and her children:

*I just want to get somewhere for my kids—give them a better life. Oh, just once they’re all at school, being able to go to work, have a good paying job, that’s what I want out of life.*

### 5.6.3 Life changing.

All of the young mothers reported that having a child was ‘life changing’ on a number of levels. More than half of the participants indicated that having a baby when they were young changed their lives around; it gave them purpose and clarity about their future. Many were realistic about the challenges and difficulties of being a young mother and a student. Conversely, they felt that they ‘had to grow up fast, making choices’ that other women of their age did not have to face. Overwhelmingly, the young mothers believed they were creating possibilities for the future and making a new life by participating in the CCCares program.

Breeamber expresses how life is as a parent and what it means to be a parent:

*My life is the best that it can ever be. It is, and knowing that you created this little person from your own body—it’s kind of weird but it’s the best feeling ever, knowing that you are so proud of that child.*

‘J’ tells us of life of drugs and needing to change her life around to create a positive future:
I was into drugs and really bad stuff—not really bad but reasonably bad; I wouldn’t have ended up in a good future. Then, I realised I should get my head together soon and I need to go to another school.

Clair believes that becoming a mother gave her clarity about life and she realised what was really important:

*I don’t know but I don’t want to be at home any more. I know that. It’s made me grow up a lot. It’s made me think about what else is really important in life.*

Breeamber is clear about her son’s future and that of her own:

*With my son being born, I wanted to actually set a good example for him. I didn’t want him to see me as someone who dropped out in Year 9 so I came back here to do my Year 10 and this year I’m doing my Year 11, 12 together. Just because I’m young; I think that’s what it is. They think I’m still immature and don’t know what I want to do with my life.*

For Tenneh, attending the CCCares program gave her the opportunity to improve her English language skills:

*Sometimes we do some English—it makes you keep up, especially like us, [refugee women] when we came to our school I can’t speak English but now it’s getting better.*

Lana is frank about the life-changing aspect of becoming a mother. She provides an example of how contraception can fail some individuals:

*Well, I always said that I didn’t want to have kids until I was 25 or so. With my oldest one I was on the pill and I fell pregnant. Yeah, with her I was on the Depo-Provera injections and I fell pregnant.*

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24 *Depo Provera* is a hormone used for contraception. It is given by injection and its effects will last for up to three months at a time.
Breeamber feels that by becoming a mother and being in the program has had an influence on her level of self-esteem:

*It’s actually boosted my self-esteem for starters. I feel a lot better in myself. If someone asked me ‘What are you doing with your life?’ I can say ‘I’m a mother; I’m doing my Year 11 and 12’.*

5.6.4 Relationships.

A recurring theme was that of relationship breakdowns with their partners (boyfriends), friends and families. The mothers spoke about the stress and isolation of being a young mother without any support, and often discussed this as ‘going it alone’. For many of the participants, they felt that the men they were involved with were not ‘worth the trouble’ of staying with because of issues that involved peer pressure, domestic violence, unemployment and drug use. Overall, the young mothers felt that they did not have any positive male role models in their lives. However, they reported that participating in the CCCares program gave them the opportunity to make new connections and create new friendships with others in the same situation. Despite this, some young mothers reported that tensions have arisen within the group from time to time. Breeamber gives us an insight into the tensions between some of the young mothers in the program:

*They can be a bit catty. There have been a couple of dramatic fights here. There’s been a couple of issues with me and some other people but I try to stay clear now and just do my own thing. I know who my friends are and who my friends aren’t and I just leave it at that.*

Clair illustrates that some young mothers do have support networks around them. She tells us of her relationship with her mother:
I really rely on my mum. Not heaps but she does really help me out a lot and I do feel sorry for the people that don’t have their mums there because my mum’s helped me through a lot of stuff.

Breeamber feels that the support from a partner is important:

*You don’t need anyone else’s support but you and your partner.*

Lana laments the loss of friends by becoming a mother:

*Well, when I fell pregnant with [name] lot of my friends didn’t want anything to do with me anymore.*

Breeamber articulates what she believes the relationship between that of the young mother with others (in her case society in general) is:

*I think it’s just because everyone thinks it’s ‘cool’ to have sex when it’s not cool to have sex with random people. It’s giving away your dignity and your body to someone you don’t know. It’s not right—not at that age anyway. If you’re older, like 30, 20, whatever and you want to go out doing that, that’s fine, but when you’re under the age of 16 it doesn’t look all that good and people kind of look at you and think ‘Well, she just sleeps around’.*

5.6.5 Activists and rebels.

It was evident that many of the participants believed they challenged the norm of motherhood because of their age. Some of the young mothers also felt it was not just being young and a mother but the difficulties faced by any mother regardless of age. One of the focus group participants believed that being a parent at her age was not a problem for her:

*If I had a politician right now in front of me I would ask him, ‘What’s wrong with being a young parent? What’s wrong?’ I don’t have a problem telling people I’m 18*
and I have a kid. You know I am coping I’m doing very well on my own. I’m at school, my daughter’s growing. (FGP12)

Breeamber questions the historical response to teenage motherhood and is vocal about her capacity and those of her friends to support their children:

It’s not like back in the days where we had to get married and have children by the time we’re 15, 16. I don’t know why they’re looking down on us—I think maybe some people that have money think they can do a better job. Well, my son doesn’t go without anything. None of my friends’ children go without anything and we’re not millionaires. It’s the same with older people—because they’ve lived their life, they should tell us how to live ours.

Nearly all participants indicated that they did not want to be viewed as victims. Many of the participants expressed that they were trying to the right thing by their children by obtaining an education. They want the support but do not want pity from others. Clair provides a good example of this sentiment—she is strong in her opinions, and is not asking for anyone’s pity or asking for a second chance. She feels it is the way it is, that like other women trying to balance being a mother, student and worker:

We don’t need a second chance, if you really want to get somewhere, you’ll do it. It might be really fucking hard basically, but you’ll get there ... well you know it’s not just young mums; it’s everyone. It’s just getting back into the workforce and studying and qualifications and stuff. It’s not a second chance. Just for mums it’s a bit harder and a bit more time consuming if you know what I mean because we’ve got to cook the dinner, study, then clean and then ... we’ve got to do a few more things than what the other people do. (Clair)
Tenneh also shares this pragmatic approach:

_I don’t think we ruin our lives—it doesn’t mean if you have a baby that doesn’t make... that’s why they have this program at least so that you can continue your study—you can’t think that when you have baby you just have to sit at home doing nothing, stuff like that._

Clair and Tenneh’s statements indicated that they feel in control, organised and they were getting on with life. Nonetheless, they are quite vocal about how they view other women in the program that do not live up to their expectations about ‘getting off welfare’ benefits and in their view of what being a good mother is about. Clair provides a commentary on this:

_I don’t agree with mums being on the pension—this is why I’m not having another child you know. I’m on Centrelink and it’s unfair to working people—there are women here who are having their fourth child on the dole [social security benefits]. It’s unfair, why isn’t Centrelink saying ‘go out and work’. Don’t have another baby because we’re not paying for it’._

The majority of the mothers reported that they felt proud to be a young mother and that they were going to ‘grow up with their child’. They were aware of how others viewed them in the local community; they spoke about first-hand experiences of being ridiculed by others as well as understanding the stigma surrounding them as young mothers. A number of participants responded to this ridicule by inviting others to ‘live my life for a week’ and they questioned ‘what’s wrong with being a young mother?’ Some of the young mothers stated that this was the approach they would take if anyone were making comment about them being young and a mother. For example, Breeamber takes a biological stance here:

_As far as I’m aware, as soon as a female is old enough to get her period, ovulate and what not, she can become a mother; her body is physically ready and emotionally what
not, to have a baby—full stop—and if anyone ever looked down on me, I would go off.

My son is healthy, he’s a good boy, he can’t talk much but he knows what he’s doing.

Clair shares her thoughts about birth control options such as termination and decisions made in light of the situation:

*I think girls who have babies for the money are stupid, especially ones that give them away. I’m not against adoption because I don’t really understand it but before I’d adopt a child out, I’d have an abortion, definitely. I don’t think abortions are wrong either—a lot of people are against them, like Christian families and their daughters get pregnant ... So I don’t know why people are so against it?*

Breeamber highlights the politics of reproduction here, albeit unknowingly:

*If someone wants to have a child, who are you to stop them? They’re going to have children eventually anyway; it doesn’t matter if they’re young, old ... they could be 60 for all I care. If they want to have a baby, they can have a baby.*

### 5.6.6 Perceptions of others.

The majority of participants felt that they were being judged by others constantly. Some stated that this did not concern them. But, many of the young mothers felt that being judged by others made them feel that they had a ‘bad reputation’ and that they were a ‘bad mother’. Some of the participants were vocal in countering these perceptions by stating that they had ‘kept their baby not got rid of it or had an abortion’. A number of the participants mentioned that some people say to them, ‘how can you make a mistake in this day and age?’

However, the majority felt that they are starting to get more positive encouragement from those that are important to them, like the teachers in the *CCCAres* program. Interestingly, some of the participants were judgemental about other young mothers in the program, particularly around what constitutes being a ‘good mother’. The participants in the one-on-one
interviews felt it was important to ‘show the world that they are in fact “good mothers” who want the best for their children like any other mother’. Clair provides us with a good example of this:

You’re not a bad mum if you’re asking advice because even older mums don’t know some things when they have children. They don’t know what to do—they need help, and not forcing advice on us, like telling someone something—if they ask you for advice, give it, but not force it on them like a lot of people do. ‘This is the way you should be raising your child; not doing this’, because that’s what I get as a young mother, a lot.

Tenneh feels that she is a ‘good mother’ and that she provides for her daughter:

I think I’m a good mum. Like being there for your child and take good care of her or him. Everything she wants. Yeah, it’s going to take a long time. I need to take care of this one first ... it’s really hard.

Breeamber believes she goes against some of behaviour and social stereotypes that some people have about young mothers. She also highlights that these stereotypes can sometimes affect getting accommodation or housing:

I think it’s because people see you as a young teenager and they say that you’re just going to go out drink, smoke, do drugs etc. and abandon your child. I don’t do any of that. Every single time that I’ve even had one drink at a club my son’s been with me and I never get to the point where I can’t look after my kid. People don’t understand that. Same as getting a house—people look at you and say ‘Are you going to throw wild parties?’ (Breeamber).

Clair compares her parenting skills to those of ‘older mothers’ as an indicator of being a ‘good mother’:
I’m a good parent—I might just not be as old as them [older mothers]. I do all the same things you know? I take him out, I do special things with him, and I don’t just sit at home. At other groups I haven’t found that either—all the other women were really nice but because we’re at different stages in our life, we’re different.

In summary, what can be drawn from the comments made by these young mothers is the level of strength and commitment they demonstrated as parents and as students. They shared their understanding of what it means to be a ‘good mother’ and at the same time they highlighted the barriers and stereotypical judgements they face within the community. These young mothers provided an insight into reproductive politics, birth control and contraception. They were able to articulate the importance of education to them and at the same time were realistic about their futures. The young mothers were adamant that they did not want to be viewed as ‘victims’ of circumstance.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the CCCares program within the context of the mainstream Canberra College and local community. It then provided a situational analysis to identify the main features of the program planning and implementation. This analysis showed how well the CCCares program was resourced as well as illustrating its development over a ten-year period. In the second part of the chapter, a thematic analysis of a focus group discussion and one-on-one interviews with the young mothers was provided. The young women have control over their lives and feel positive about their futures. In the next chapter, the examination of the CCCares program is extended to provide a review of the leadership, program teachers, program support staff and volunteers.
Chapter 6: Studying Leadership and Program Delivery at CCCares

6.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a deeper understanding of the factors required to build successful and sustainable programs for young mothers by analysing data collected from the views of the program providers—school leaders, program teachers and specialised support personnel. The Canberra College CCCares program is a long running program with relatively experienced staff with on average 20 year of teaching service. An analysis of the perspectives of the staff at CCCares enhances our understanding of the relevance of factors such as the role of school leadership in the development of successful and sustainable programs for young mothers.

At CCCares, leadership and program support fall into three broad groups. The first group, school leaders are defined as those individuals with managerial and administrative responsibilities within the College as well as overall responsibility for the CCCares program. At CCCares, the four key school leaders identified are the college principal; deputy principal 1 (responsible for funding); deputy principal 2 (responsible for overseeing program operations); and the CCCares program manager.

The second key group are those who teach in the program. Four full-time teachers who hold substantive positions within the College have taught in the program. In addition, in 2010, there was a third group of three specialist support staff: maternal health nurse, employed by ACT Health who attended the centre three days per week; Liaison Officer, whose job was to build and maintain links with other agency and community partners; and Work
Experience/Employment Officer. These positions were part time and were funded through special funding and short-term grants (so called ‘soft money’) rather than from recurrent funding.

A thematic analysis method was applied to the transcripts of one-on-one interviews and one group meeting with the management team, program teachers, specialist support personnel and volunteers. The interview grouping and identifiers are set out in Table: 8.0.

Table 8.0 Interview Groupings and Identifiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Leaders (SL)</th>
<th>Program Teachers (PT)</th>
<th>Specialist Support Personnel (SSP)</th>
<th>Service Support Volunteers (separate interview data analysis)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SL1 (Principal—‘Advocate’)</td>
<td>PT—1</td>
<td>SSP—1 (Health nurse)</td>
<td>‘June’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SL2 (Deputy principal— ‘Management’)</td>
<td>PT—2</td>
<td>SSP—2 (Community Liaison)</td>
<td>‘Robyn’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SL3 (Deputy principal—’Strategic’)</td>
<td>PT—3</td>
<td>SSP—3 (Work Experience and Employment Officer)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SL4 (Program [Campus] manager— ‘Implementer’)</td>
<td>PCT—4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each transcribed interview (and the group discussion) was open coded. Open coding generates categories and defines their properties (the characteristics of a category or phenomenon or its attributes) and dimensions (Strauss and Corbin, 1990 in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 561). From the open coding the main themes were identified for each of the groups (see Table 9.0). The themes are ranked by level of priority expressed by each group.

Table 9.0 Themes Identified for Each of the Groups and the Rating of Importance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>School leaders</th>
<th>Program teachers</th>
<th>Specialist support personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>Social justice</td>
<td>Place and space</td>
<td>Place and space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td>Program sustainability</td>
<td>Community partnerships</td>
<td>Community partnerships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The thematic analysis reveals commonalities and differences between the leaders and other staff. Aspects of the program that pre-occupy each group are related to their roles and responsibilities (see Figure 14). For the management team, the overall program goals and long-term viability and impact of the program are of high importance. In contrast, the teachers’ and support staff priorities reflect their concern to provide a place that is a supportive and accepting learning environment. This is consistent with the broader strategic roles of the leadership team discussed in the previous section. These themes are explored in greater detail below.

The first section of this chapter identifies the strategic views of the leadership groups involved with the *CCCares* program. The following sections elaborate the key themes from the interviews with the school leaders, program teachers and the specialised support personnel. The final section shows how these themes are of core importance in understanding the critical factors for the success of young mothers’ education programs. This section also presents the findings and how they are used in the next chapter as a foundation for identifying what good practice in school-based young mothers’ in education programs is, particularly from the standpoint of school leaders, program teachers and specialised support personnel.
6.2 Dimensions of Strategic Leadership at CCCares

The school leaders demonstrated strategic thinking at various points, depending on their particular role in relation to the CCCares program. Interestingly, the members of the leadership group were future orientated, and were able to make strategic decisions (individually and collectively), knowing when to act on these decisions (Beatty and Quinn, 2010). This section highlights the dimensions of leadership evident at CCCares.

6.2.1 Shared purpose.

The school leaders believed the management of the program was a team effort with individuals having carriage of particular roles and responsibilities. The ‘school leaders’ are responsible for high-level decision making and known as the executive of the school. Each member of the leadership group has defined responsibilities. Though, at CCCares, a hierarchy is not immediately visible. While there are clear operational roles and responsibilities for each executive position, management decisions are developed more within a team, than by individuals acting alone. This works well because of the degree of unanimity in the group about the purpose of the program. From the interviews, it is clear that this group demonstrated shared attitudes, values and dispositions in regard to the program. All of the school leaders’ interviews reflected on following themes: a passion for what they do: education being socially just; the need for quality leadership; equity in accessing an education; the importance of strategic planning and governance; and, the need for evidence-based practice.

The leadership group demonstrated high levels of trust and respect for each other and this was evident through discussions about their roles in the program. For example, the principal was recognised for his drive and responsibility to ensure that the CCCares program succeeds and has a future within the College management plan. As a deputy principal said:
It’s not the sort of program that you can bring into a school unless the senior executive of the school and the staff who are working on the program are absolutely passionate about it. (Principal SL2)

Members of the executive were able to clearly articulate the goals for the program as well as its vision and needs for the future. The school leaders were focused on the core objective of the program namely in meeting the needs of the students, teachers, and support staff. They could see how the program would need to continue to change and develop over time to meet the needs of its clients.

All executive staff were attuned to needs of students and had a broad range of skills which were applied in many different contexts. In observations of executive members’ interactions with the young mothers, a high level of skill and empathy with students was manifested frequently. As I noted in my field notes: 11 April 2009.

I was able to watch the DP [deputy principal] interact with some of the young mothers in the program today for the first time. I could see how the care and compassion of this individual came through when dealing with a very sensitive issue regarding domestic violence that one of the girls was experiencing with her partner. The DP provided advice and support in a very clear and professional manner as well as dealing with the operational side of the system’s response to the issue. The DP was able to move between the school leader role and that of an individual offering support to someone in need. The DP managed the situation in calm and sensitive manner; many of the other students were unaware of the issue.

This empathy and respect for students was reflected throughout the interviews, and underpinned all strategic discussions about the direction of the program. In other words, strategic management decisions were made in the context of the program, not separate from it.
The executive’s discussions about ongoing funding, staffing, political and sustainability issues were informed and driven by the need to meet student needs, not simply to maintain the program for its own sake (or for any other purpose). There was a sense of pride among the school leaders about the program’s history, development and achievements. Each individual mentioned how the program developed from a ‘grassroots’ idea and how the program drew strength from its partnerships with the community.

6.2.2 Strategic roles.

When providing support for young mothers is not a mainstream activity of schools or systems, the success of young mothers’ education programs depends heavily on the strategic commitment and drive of school leaders. This was illustrated in the Plumpton High case study where the program declined after the principal left. At CCCares, the strategic roles that are critical to the survival of programs are distributed among the executive rather than vested in one person. These strategic roles (see Figure 15), are recognised as very important by all of the leaders and were often acknowledged in the interviews both directly and indirectly.

![Figure 15. The school leaders involved in the CCCares program and their key strategic roles.](image-url)
At CCCares, the role of the program manager appeared at times to transcend the leadership group. From observations and interviews, her role was to provide integral connection between staff groups and she acted as the ‘lynch pin’ for the whole program. She is a member of the College Executive but is also responsible for the day-to-day running of the program. She also acts as a mediator between the groups; Figure 16 illustrates the centrality of her role in the program in terms of her relationship with all groups. Collard (2005) suggests that women in leadership roles in schools are more likely to be open to suggestions and are more consultative. He cites that:

*Women were markedly more committed to collegiality and teamwork. They were more willing to foster a consultative climate within the school and allow staff to participate in decision-making. They were more receptive to advice and demonstrated a greater tolerance for debate about goals and policies* (Collard, 2005, p.22).

*Figure 16. Program manager’s central role in the program.*

This role appears important in helping the program leadership to work effectively, especially in the areas of communication, decision making and support of the CCCares.
program. In contrast, the Plumpton High School program did not have this identified role for a program manager.

6.2.3 Advocacy.

An important advocacy role is performed by the principal of the Canberra College. His advocacy raises the profile of the program in the realms of the ACT education system, the College itself, the community, in government policy forums and the media.

The principal is often called upon to discuss the achievements of the program to different organisations and senior departmental officers. He uses these opportunities to engage people in the issues that surround young mothers. He lobbies senior public servants, politicians, and the private sector to provide more funding and support to young mothers in education. The principal is vocal in highlighting the importance of providing enhanced support for young mothers, as he said in a media interview for 666 ABC Radio Canberra:

*It is not just the importance of providing education for these young people but providing the support programs around the education which makes it possible for the education to happen ... We make sure that students have support with issues that are going on outside of school. We give them support with parenting skills, we have ACT Health that come in weekly and do health checks on the mothers and their children ... Once we’ve got all that in place, we look at the education side of things.* (Principal, 25 October 2010).

Advocacy is necessary for this group because often young mothers lack the agency, status and power to be heard. The principal is cognisant of this and uses his status as a school leader to inform others of the issues confronting young mothers and their children.
6.2.4 Operational management.

The deputy principal 1 is the manager who ensures that the day-to-day operations of the CCCares program meet the requirements of the Canberra College in relation to budget, staffing and policy demands. She works closely with the program manager in her role as well as making site visits one to three times a week. If the program manager requires assistance with policy advice, general program operations and/or human resources management the deputy principal 1 is the key executive school leader that provides this advice and helps to address the program’s operational needs.

6.2.5 Funding and support.

The deputy principal 2 has the strategic role of seeking out funding and support for the program especially from external sources. He is very proactive in making connections with other government agencies and NGOs that can provide support for the program. He is also responsible for writing grant submissions for further funding and resourcing of the program. Deputy principal 2 is a member of a number of networks and committees and he promotes the work of the CCCares program via these relationships. He lobbies high-ranking public servants and a number of politicians in education and human services portfolios at Territory and Commonwealth levels of government. This approach has proven to be successful in gaining publicity and funding for the CCCares program. A major success of his strategic work was securing a $750,000 grant from the NAB’s Schools First program in 2009.

6.2.6 Implementation.

The program manager is responsible for implementing the CCCares program at the service delivery level and she oversees the day-to-day running of the program. She manages the program’s teaching staff, program support staff, and the program volunteers. She works with the student young mothers and is responsible for the development and implementation of
the Individual Learning Plans. She is also the key connection with other service providers and departmental officers. As the teacher in charge of the program she provides reports and advice to the management team (school leaders) about the *CCCares* program and any issues or concerns that may arise within the program. Her role is much broader than that of ‘teacher in charge’ as she is also responsible for the overall education, care and safety of the young mothers and their children.

In summary, the leadership group at *CCCares* has a strong sense of shared purpose in regard to the program. Each of the four members of the executive plays a key strategic role in supporting the program, which strengthens its capacity to survive within the mainstream school system, whereas at Plumpton High School most of these strategic roles were vested in one person—the principal. At *CCCares*, they are distributed among the management team. These strategic roles were often referred to in the interviews as shown in the following section. Still, school leadership is multifaceted than what has been presented here. The school executive involved with the *CCCares* program move beyond the gender binary, in that male and female leaders work together to support the education of young mothers, which is often viewed primarily as women’s work.

> [that] School leadership is a complex matter and that while gender stereotypes have some explanatory power they cannot be regarded as foundational truths that comprehend the phenomena of school leadership. Essentialist typologies are too simplistic. (Collard, 2005, p.35)

The categories from the thematic analysis were compared across all interview groups to identify the main themes and sub-themes, and in each interview grouping the themes were compared for validity. The themes are discussed in detail below.
6.3 Place and space.

A key theme that kept arising throughout the interviews with the school leaders, program teachers and specialist support personnel, was that the young mothers need to have a place and space of their own, where they and their children felt supported and connected to schooling (see Table 6.4). Sub-themes identified included special and different settings to support young mothers; a place where young mothers can access other services; that mainstream school has not worked for these students in the past; staff in the program need to want to be there; positive and supportive environment for learning and personal needs; young mothers develop a feeling of belonging and encouragement; that they feel they have their own space; and that it is a place where they can be supported to be job ready.

The principal felt strongly about providing appropriate facilities for the young mothers as well as ensuring that the program staff also worked in a suitable environment. While ‘they do need that specialised setting where you can do some intensive work with them’ (principal SL1), it is also important that the formal element of schooling is acknowledged:

*Working in a school, I think they’d feel maybe a bit of normality; that they’re completing school like their other peers, in a slightly different setting and a slightly different way ... we had 20 odd young women and men, who graduated last year and they went to a larger formal graduation that recognised their achievements in a much larger formal setting. It’s recognised by the community and it’s educationally acceptable ... would carry the same weight.* (Program teacher 2)

The teachers spoke about the importance in celebrating the achievements and success of individuals. Students are encouraged to attend the various College speech nights, award
ceremonies and graduations. This demonstrated that the teachers were encouraging the young mother to think of the main campus as also their ‘place’.

*Well the thing I like about it is that we’ve always got the main college’s support and I’m still part of a school and the kids don’t feel as if they’re getting perhaps a kind of wishy-washy piece of paper. They see it as a Year 12 certificate.* (Program teacher 1)

The program teachers mentioned how the school demonstrates its support for the *CCCares* program.

*We have executive [school leaders] that come over here to visit us ... They’re very supportive, if not physically I think educationally and emotionally they’re with us. I think they’ve realised we’re fighting the good battle—we’re all in it together.* (Program teacher 2)

*The physical location of CCCares program is not seen as a problem or issue by staff. The thing about the space is that we had much more space over there when we had the whole building ... it is sort of tucked away with the TCL25 and many people don’t know that it’s there or in some cases don’t want to know that it’s there, that’s true, but I don’t know that the students see themselves as being isolated.* (Deputy principal SL2)

Interviewees were more preoccupied with the suitability of space in terms of meeting the purposes of the program and catering to the student’s needs. The ACT DET commenced the refurbishment of the old high school to create office space for the ACT DET Teaching and Learning Centre. This allowed the *CCCares* program to relocate to another wing of the building. A refurbishment of this wing of the building provided the opportunity for the program to develop the spaces to meet the various needs of the program, from childcare to

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25 ACT DET Teaching and Learning Centre
teaching and learning spaces. The refurbished building was a much brighter and lighter environment.

*This space has been a huge injection into the program because the students who are in the other space were on top of each other ... They’re able to find a place that’s right for them and physical environment is so important and that’s been a really good thing.*

*The program’s expanded; we needed this space.* (Deputy principal SL2)

*I think that the kids feel as though this is their space so they take more ownership of it than if it was just an attachment to the other campus.* (SSP2)

With these *purpose built spaces*, the program was able to broaden its range of services, with a health clinic, cooking facilities, and play areas for the children. The importance of place and space has also been valued by ACT DET as there are now plans to build a *CCCares* program centre on the main campus of the Canberra College, commencing in late 2012.

All of the school leaders made reference to the importance of a *non-judgemental place* that encourages a sense of belonging for its students. They felt that many of the young mothers already had negative experiences in mainstream schooling and that this program had to be safe and supportive.

*You see them walk in the door some days and you just hear the story how they got on a bus and they felt ostracised, and you know it, you sense it that people do look down on them. And I think as a society we don’t treat these young people fairly, I don’t think we treat them equitably.* (Deputy principal SL3)

### 6.3.1 Teaching and learning in another ‘space and place’.

The program manager identified that the program was not a ‘soft option’ for these students. She spoke about ‘tough love’ in the program; she did not want the students to think ‘just because you are a young mother does not mean that you will get special treatment’. It
was obvious from the interviews that program teachers have high expectations of the young mothers to complete their schooling. To the teachers the program is simply meeting the educational needs of students whose needs cannot be met in a mainstream school setting.

*I think it’s just fulfilling a need that’s there in the community that’s otherwise not available for the women or young girls that find themselves in the situation missing out on education because they’re not catered for. This provides them with an opportunity to continue with their education in a setting and set up that’s more appropriate to their needs, because most of them find it very difficult to fit into mainstream schooling with structured timetables and classes and things like that and I think they feel that sets them up for failure and so they don’t pursue education.* (Program teacher 2)

*We had 20 kids graduate last year and graduation was just ... they were just so stoked and they were all over us, cuddling us and grateful and thankful for that to happen.* (SSP2)

Another theme that kept coming through the interviews was that the teachers knew the students very well and had a great deal of empathy for them and their babies. The teachers were familiar with the students’ context and at the same time they were aware of the student’s achievements, capacity and aspirations.

*I think they realise maybe at the time they don’t value school, don’t value education but I think once they’ve had their own children they realise that they need to start doing something to improve the life for their own children. Also, I’ve heard so many of them say ‘I just don’t want to be at Woollies being a check-out chick’, because they realise that that’s all that they may qualified for and they’d really like to give their children a chance.* (Program teacher 1)
The program teachers all agreed on the importance of the link between student wellbeing and its effect on the individual’s ability to connect with the curriculum, education and training. They felt that the young mother’s participation in the program was a major step towards creating positive futures for the student and their child.

*Re-engaging them with a place like this actually gives back that sense of belonging, that sense of I can do this ... they’ve had the tenacity to stick to school whilst they’ve been a mum as well and get a Year 10 or get a Year 12 that is a brilliant thing to be able to show an employer for the future.* (Program manager SL4)

The teachers all spoke about how they had witnessed individuals develop self-confidence from their participation in the program; they viewed this as empowering young mothers to be their own advocates.

*I thought they’d eat me alive. But I’ve found they have just been so respectful and I think what I see in the girls here is an attitude of gratitude really for this place. I guess I’m looking at it now with more knowledge than I was before, whereas before I might’ve put teenage pregnancy down to just carelessness whereas now maybe ignorance* (SSP3).

All of the teachers saw the program helping young mothers to break down the social isolation they faced and they viewed the program as a place to come together, celebrate and learn. The program specialist support personnel reported seeing the value in providing a place and space for young mothers in education. They felt that they could access and best support these students in a program like *CCCares.* The program specialist support personnel made mention of the need to be non-judgemental, compassionate and supportive in their roles:
They don’t seem to feel judged which is good, and the teachers certainly are pretty open to anything. I mean the girls will certainly tell us anything and are comfortable with us. I think the fact that they feel comfortable here is the biggest thing. (SSP3)

They provided advice and support to young mothers beyond their formal education program. The program specialist support personnel highlighted the importance of encouraging peer support and connection between the young mothers in the program. They spoke about their roles in health prevention sessions, providing education and wellbeing for students and their children.

Well that’s the wonderful thing about this program because they get such good support. It’s like an extension of their family. They are so well supported in this environment and I think that they do very well. I think it’s brilliant because otherwise they probably wouldn’t be doing their Year 11 or 12 so it’s giving them the chance to complete their education at school and it’s wonderful (SSP1).

The program specialist support personnel (community liaison officer, employment consultant and maternal nurse) believed they played important roles as advocates, to motivate, and support each young mother to achieve as a student and as a mother. All of the support personnel believed they were making a difference, helping young mothers to get an education.

And that’s why a program like this is so important in that they can finish their education. I mean, for example, even a lot of the TAFE courses available you can’t do it unless you’ve got your year ten, now some of the girls I’ve spoken to haven’t gone past year six (SSP3).

The program specialist support personnel stated their admiration for the young mothers and mention they have witnessed the growth in self-esteem of students. They were aware of the particular needs of vulnerable families in the CCCares program.
when you explain to the people what the program offers they think it’s a wonderful program and there should be more of them ... because I’ve got a daughter also who is a single mum and I believe that she made decisions that weren’t necessarily right decisions for the child. And they’re just amazing these mums—how they cope with it. I was married with the support of a family and everything and a lot of these kids do it singly and without parental or any other support. I mean we become their family to a lot of them (SSP2).

6.3.2 Social justice.

It was apparent from the interviews that the teachers shared a sense of social justice and this seemed to be at a core value in their education philosophy. Even though teachers and specialist support personnel also mentioned the concept of social justice, the school leadership group were passionate about it and articulated how the program provided a ‘route to education’ for a generally marginalised group of students. The sub-theme identified by the school leaders group was the idea of young mothers being socially isolated and excluded. They spoke about the concept of supporting young mothers in education as a matter of social justice and equity in access to quality education.

There is a huge issue of equity and access that should be addressed ... it’s one of social justice and equity and we believe strongly ... every student has a right to access quality public education and it’s up to schools to adapt their programs. (Principal SL1)

The program, as they saw it, not only reconnected the young mothers with education but also reconnected them with government agencies and services such as ACT Health and ACT Housing.
What clearly is happening is that if this program wasn’t in existence and wasn’t delivering the program the way that it is, then we would have a whole lot of isolated pregnant or young mothers at home without any access to a range of services which they have here ... with facilities that they obviously need for their support for the wellbeing of themselves and their children ... there are people supporting the program; there’s no two ways about that, in government and in the community ... Yet it seems funding is something we’re constantly aware of. (Deputy principal SL2)

The school leaders group discussed how this approach supported social inclusion and empowered students to make decisions in their own lives:

I don’t think we treat them in a socially just way. I think we look down on them as a society and I think that’s to the detriment of the young people, but I think as importantly it’s to the detriment of us as a society ... we’re not providing diverse solutions to help them, to support them so they’re not on welfare. So there’s 10,000 young people in Australia that are young and parenting and if we don’t reach out to them they will maintain the difficulties they have which is basically needing a lot of social welfare and support, feeling ostracised, feeling removed, feeling like second class citizens ... they get poor physical and mental health compared to older parents. (Deputy principal SL3)

The leadership group were realistic about the resourcing required to keep an alternative program in a mainstream setting like CCCares sustainable but justified the funding in preventative terms:

If you put a dollar in now it’s going to save a lot of dollars down the track. And the socially just concept just isn’t a schools factor; I mean there’s a lot of very prominent public servants that believe in that and want to do it. (Deputy principal SL3)
Nearly the entire school leaders group saw the importance of ‘clearing them for learning’ which means ensuring that the student’s living circumstances and personal needs were met before even engaging with learning:

*If you can’t help them with the health of their child and help them get to school and help them sort out their Centrelink issues or justice issues or whatever their housing needs are, if you can’t do that then they won’t talk to you because they don’t have time and they won’t be here. So it’s being able to service all of those diverse needs that create the engagement for them that enables or clearing them for learning so they can basically open their minds to think about study.* (Deputy principal SL3)

6.3.3 Program sustainability.

The school leaders group were focused on ensuring that program sustainability was achieved through forward planning and secure funding for the CCCares program. Although the program teachers and specialist support personnel were sensitive to the issues of program sustainability they did not rate it has a highly as did the school leaders group (see Table 6.3).

The sub-themes identified from the interviews include ensuring that specialised and appropriate staffing was a focus for future; planning for the immediate, short-term and the long-term, funding and transport to meet future demands; sustainability and longevity shared goal; and wider recognition of the program.

Funding was a recurring theme in the one-on-one interviews with the school leaders group. They mentioned how they constantly had to seek funding to keep the program going.

*That we were allocated a certain amount of money every year that was a good amount of money and I mean that can cater for the program as it is now and that that was*

26 Australian Government welfare support agency
ongoing. We have funding now for this year and yes, there have been promises but it doesn’t always stay the same. (Deputy principal SL2)

They identified the need to ensure that appropriate staff worked in the program. There had been instances in the past were the staff working in the program had difficulties dealing with issues surrounding young mothers. The principals identified the particular qualities teachers required to work in an alternative program of this type:

*Number one is empathy, if you don’t have people that are empathetic and that understand that these young people don’t fit mainstream, they need a range of techniques to support them then basically it’s just not going to work ... You have to be flexible; you have to be willing and want to help these young people to bring them along.* (Deputy principal SL3)

*By and large it’s not a program that most teachers would choose to go to because it’s a very different style of learning and you have to be committed to it and resilient and you have to be the right sort of person.* (Deputy principal SL2)

The training and development of program staff was also seen by the leadership team as important. It was felt that formalising the new staff induction process was required to ensure staff were aware of the issues surrounding young mothers in education.

*I genuinely hope or wish that they [the Department] would fund staff to specifically cater for the young people as in early childhood type paid positions.* (Deputy principal SL3)

Concerns were also raised with regard to the ACT DET staffing mobility policy and how this could affect the staffing of the program:

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27 An initial placement is for a maximum of five years and placements thereafter are for a total of eight years.
I’m supposed to leave at the end of next year. I should have left at the end of this year but with the new whatever it is enterprise bargaining agreement or whatever we were extended by a year. Unless things change with mobility I’ll leave at the end of next year as well. (Program manager SL4)

All members of the school leaders group said that the provisions of childcare and transport are ‘vital’ in making sure that the young mothers and their children attend the program on a consistent basis. The group was very aware of the challenges faced by young mothers in accessing childcare and suitable transport.

A recurring concern from the interviews was that of transition from the program. The group believed that the program needed to provide greater support for young mothers transiting from the program and this needed to be a sustainable practice, which meant employing a specialised staff member for that role. The school leaders felt that more needed to be done in this area, as they did not want to ‘set the young mothers up for failure’ in the sense that they had completed their formal schooling without any forward planning into future employment.

None of the women here want to stay in the poverty cycle. Unfortunately it’s going to be very, very difficult for them to break and that is not only because of the public opinion about being a young mum but that there, they don’t have any experience when it comes to the workforce ... Yeah, they’ve got a Year 12 certificate but they can’t take that next step. (Program manager SL4)

In 2009, to assist with transition an employment consultant worked part time to support the students to gain work experience and further vocational training.

I would like it so that all students attending CCCares were doing regular work experience or part-time work in a mentored position, ... I would just like all the steps
laid out and I would like that the students know that there’s someone there with a plan and that they can go to that person. (SSP3)

The consultant left the program after 12 months and since late 2010, this position has not been filled. Several staff noted the feeling of not being supported by the education system. I think it would be interesting if there was a little bit more official support—recognition of the program, its value. We’re the only college that won a national award last year ... the silence was deafening. (Program teacher 2)

The teachers were very aware of the program’s sustainability being linked to the level and source of funding. They felt they spent a lot of their time planning for the program’s future, something they did not feel their colleagues in the mainstream setting had to deal with in their day-to-day work as a teacher. The program specialist support personnel saw the CCCares model as a legitimate approach/program and realised that it needs to be supported at a variety of levels across a number of departments and agencies. They spoke about the costs of keeping such a program operating and program sustainability if the two main departments (ACT DET and ACT Health) do not formalise funding and resource agreements. ‘I think the government should fund us more and if there could be more in other areas’ (SSP2):

I think the CCCares is a bit of an exemplar to other jurisdictions around Australia ... provide a model on how local partnerships can work ... there’s a thread of danger in that individuals can’t be relied on to sustain it all the time, you need a sustainable model ... Because if it’s not a federal initiative that attracts federal money there will continue to be a scattergun of approaches ... it falls over like Plumpton, because somebody moves on ... Which was socially just education for everyone not just if it happens to work at the time. (Deputy principal SL3)
6.3.4 Making a difference.

The school leaders group saw supporting young mothers in education as a means of breaking the poverty cycle. They saw education and in turn the CCCares program making a difference in the lives of young mothers and their children. As shown in Table 6.3, ‘Making a difference’ rated highly with the leadership group and they linked it to the philosophy of social justice:

_Schooling works for 80 to 90 per cent of kids ... but there’s a group of young people out there that it just doesn’t work for ... with a social conscience that I have, a social inclusion conscience and looking and feeding off other people who’ve got similar consciences you realise ‘Well look that’s part of what our job is’. Our job is not just to cater for the ones who it works for but to try and make sure it’s a genuine opportunity for everyone ... social justice for all ... Well it’s very valid, these young people deserve a chance like anybody else’. (Deputy principal SL3)_

There were four sub-themes identified in the school leader’s interviews and group discussion: support, philosophy, disadvantage and being realistic. This means that those involved in such programs need to have a good understanding of the core philosophy of the program, comprehend the impact of disadvantage on young mothers and their children; and at the same time be realistic about the circumstances of these students:

_Here, we expect problems [with students] to arise and not be engaged in study for a whole semester—that’s quite possible with some of these young women, depending on what’s happening in their lives. We keep them enrolled and we give them the time to come back to us and re-engage educationally. (Program teacher 1)_

The leadership group felt that they were making a difference in the lives of young people who were living in difficult times. They also said that the program in general offered
more than just schoolwork to the students. They had the belief that the program provided a *wrap-around services* provision that these young mothers generally did not engage with elsewhere. They understood that such services were necessary to meet the needs of clients and was consistent with national policy:

*The new ACT government initiative and it’s on the national agenda, is looking at support for low socioeconomic students ... we are providing here for students who are so at risk, who are so isolated, who are vulnerable, who are at the lower end of our socioeconomic level; they’re really at the bottom ... They’re going to be a drain on community resources because they then are disadvantaged ... But if they come through this program and they have individualised learning plan, they have support on all sorts of levels education-wise, community-wise for the health of their children etc, well then it’s going to make a difference. They’re going to be participating members of our society. The offshoot of this is just so many things are going to happen from this program—not all are going to be successful* (Deputy principal SL2)

The leadership group suggested that the success of the program might be due to the size of Canberra, and the smaller governing authorities, which made it easier to net and gain political support. They were unanimous in believing the work they do in the program has positive outcomes for this group of students in the future:

*There’s an incredible energy in the program and it’s exciting ... really exciting and sometimes frustrating and sometimes worrying ... Many of them, in fact most of them, are terrific young mothers and what we’re doing is providing them with the chance to have their education as well, not miss out on that so that then they’ll be part of community and society and function.* (Deputy principal SL2)
6.3.5 Partnerships.

A significant level of effort and time is required to establish and maintain links and partnerships with other stakeholder agencies. Interestingly, the school leaders group viewed partnerships more generically, whereas the program teachers and support personnel were able to identify community partnerships (see Appendix 5). The sub-themes that were identified include the program being a hub for other services; the importance of building genuine partnerships with other services; connecting community beyond the school, maintaining ongoing relationships with support providers and services; being open to community interest and becoming known; provide positive feedback about support from service providers; job guidance can occur beyond the program with the support of industry partners; and recognising and being aware of the different roles of the service providers.

The program is dependent on the relationships and networks the leadership team creates, but building and maintaining these relationships is very time consuming. In the early years of the program, these relationships and connections were informal and came about through established networks. For example, the program has had strong links with a variety of community-based organisations since its inception. When the program first started, it was located in two classrooms at the rear of the decommissioned Stirling High School and catered for a broad range of ‘at-risk’ students:

*We had an alternative high school for kids who couldn’t get their Year 10 anywhere else and an alternative Year 12 certificate for the same student group ... We applied for a grant to the Community Inclusion Fund because we had seen over the years that this was the target group who no one seemed to be able to meet their needs.* (Program manager SL4)
We have Rotary come and drive our buses for us one day a week now and they’re very supportive. (SSP2)

Open lines of communication with partners are recognised as important, but leaders mentioned how these were sometimes difficult to maintain. Each of the school leaders sits on a number of interagency committees that have a direct effect on the CCCares program. Their involvement with these committees has enabled them to ensure that the program is known to other support agencies:

Well, I think the bureaucracy over time have learnt how we function now and I think early on we didn’t communicate well, and I think people thought ‘Well what’s going on there?’... I think people were a bit sceptical and that’s because we didn’t communicate well. (Deputy principal SL3)

A number of the school leaders indicated that the CCCares program received a great deal of local community support through volunteers, donations and assistance. The teachers viewed the community partnerships very positively:

We get lots of people donating things which are fantastic. Government agencies that we’re in connection with, are fantastic, the MACH [Maternal and Child Health] nurses, will come in and there are lots of people interested in the program ... The community have been fantastic like that. (Program teacher 1)

The teachers saw the CCCares program as the ‘conduit for other services and partnerships’. The teachers emphasised a ‘trust in what others do’ as important in supporting young mothers. They felt the cross-agency team approach in supporting the students was positive and something to appreciate:

We invite all these agencies like Centrelink, Housing, any number of them to come in and run sessions with the kids ... our kids know the system inside out ... they’re very,
very good at managing their own issues except when they need support in dealing with bigger issues, that’s where we can help, with the links we have with partners.  

(Program manager SL4)

All of the teachers see the community partnerships as opportunities to connect with experts that can provide advice in supporting young mothers:

We really do see ourselves first and foremost as an educational institution ... we work with them through various agencies to try and assist them.  (Principal SL1)

It just opens up so many other options for them. And I guess not only that, I mean you know this isn’t just a school it’s sort of a one stop support shop.  (SSP3)

Support staff discussed the importance of teamwork with other agencies, sharing resources and collaboration in working with young mothers and their children. They felt the ‘holistic’ approach ensured that the students would receive sound advice, support and encouragement:

You just do whatever; you might be making sandwiches one minute or taking someone to court the next or working with the nurses. You just go with the flow of whatever needs to be done. Everyone just jumps in and does it. We just do whatever needs to be done.  (SSP2)

The leadership team mentioned how important partnerships were to the core purpose of the program:

The other central partner really is your community groups. If it’s just somebody with a noble idea who doesn’t have links with community agencies then the best will in the world isn’t going to cut it, it’s got to be a genuine partnership because the community people are the ones that do a lot of the clearing for learning. So making sure those partnerships are appropriate, they’re valid and they’re relevant and they’re nearby.
There’s no point setting up young people, for example, with a community nurse if they’re never going to be able to catch up with them again. So I think the backbone of the partners, their availability and then the backbone of the school leadership to enable you to do the work. (Deputy principal SL3)

The program specialist support personnel believed that the program assisted them to access this group of young mothers thereby making connections with a group that generally does not seek out advice and support from other agencies or groups:

One of the first things we did was re-establishing work experience, there are girls who’ve never done work experience and the biggest issue was childcare. I make the phone call, set up the appointments but I do it in areas that interest them more. (SSP3)

One of the difficulties in interagency partnerships identified by the program specialist support personnel was the tension of working within an existing program yet servicing clients in a program under another department (i.e. education):

We can get quite a connection with the girls here and they get to know us so it’s quite valuable and they’ll come and see us about their stuff as well as babies’ issues … We volunteer to work here yep and so a few other nurses they’ve come and had a trial period and some of them didn’t like it so they didn’t come, they didn’t stay. (SSP1)

Many interviewees mentioned there were discussions around how well received the program is in the wider community. The program has been given positive feedback:

We often get other groups saying ‘Gee this is a great program or a great thing you’re offering for these young women’ and they’re very supportive of it. In seeing that these young women are looking to improve themselves—to give themselves greater opportunity, they’re very supportive of that. (Program teacher 2)
The school leaders indicated they drew strength from networks with the providers of young mothers’ education programs when engaging with various government departments, community agencies and politicians:

*I think the interesting thing has been the development of the national network, as an individual school we approached ... the principal and myself approached the head of a Federal Department of ... to try and create a national approach to supporting pregnant and young people ... we genuinely believe we’ve got a substantial amount of money to kick that off.* (Deputy principal SL3)

### 6.3.6 Shaping and leading policy.

*We would’ve been shut down years ago without a strong leader because there are too many roadblocks and barriers.* (Deputy principal SL3).

The one-on-one interviews with the school leaders and program teachers emphasised the theme of the need for continual review, leadership and evaluation in the program and this was linked to program sustainability. They were aware of how and what they did in the program shaped and led policy, not only within their own Department but also in the Department of Health. The sub-themes highlighted in the interviews and group discussions include passion for teaching and working with young mothers; providing strong leadership in this area; the importance of support from the department and management to achieve the goals of the program; being aware that CCCares is the only place that does it, supporting the educational needs of young mothers in the ACT region; understanding the support needs of young mothers in transition from the program; and dealing with other agencies on a daily basis.

The program specialist support personnel felt positive about their experiences with the two key departments (i.e. Education and Health) working closely together. However, they
believed more could be done to formalise some of the processes. The leadership personnel were aware of the need to constantly ‘push boundaries’ in order to obtain ongoing departmental support:

*The Department’s been very supportive in a whole range of ways, enabling us to keep going. Along the way there have been difficulties ... we don’t fit the mould and we tend to push boundaries and they don’t always fit in with what guidelines suggest should happen.* (Deputy principal SL3)

The support personnel highlighted the need to formulate a transition program beyond *CCCares*, and saw the participation of young mothers in the program and the completion of their secondary schooling as means of breaking the welfare cycle of dependence. As one of the specialised support personnel believed: ‘We probably are the only place in Australia that does it [conduct a program like this]’ (SSP2). They felt more leadership in this area is required to ensure such programs as *CCCares* continue to provide quality education and support.

**6.3.7 Curriculum and learning.**

Flexible delivery of the curriculum was seen by all groups as an import aspect of teaching young mothers. The development of a unique approach to supporting student learning arose from a process of observation and review. The program teachers now work with individual students to ascertain their knowledge, skills and abilities before developing Individual Learning Plans. The majority of the program teachers said they were ‘playing catch-up’ with the curriculum—‘filling in the gaps’ in student knowledge as many students disconnected from schooling in their early teens and for some their literacy and numeracy abilities were only at a primary school student level.

The school leaders spoke about the need for the young mothers to have access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at home and at school. They saw not
having appropriate access to ICT impacted on the flexible delivery of the curriculum, particularly online learning, as the majority of young mothers accessed the learning programs via online delivery.

The school leaders also noted that the students would become even more disadvantaged by not developing the required IT skills needed in the school and the workforce. The deputy principals with the program manager developed a focused IT program for the young mothers in collaboration with the CIT by conducting short courses in the use of information technology:

*When you’re dealing with people that are doing an accredited package over three years compared to most mainstream students that do it in two years it’s not as clear cut. And that causes questions and people want to know what’s going on, so it’s ... It is a systems issue and again in the ACT we’re very fortunate because we’ve got flexible curriculum. So that flexibility means we’re able to write our curriculum to match the Year 12 certificate, in other jurisdictions I’m not convinced that’s as easy.* (Deputy principal SL3)

The program teachers also highlighted the need for the program operations to be flexible. They saw the *CCCares* program as an ‘alternative program operating within a mainstream setting’ and that its flexibility suited the needs of the students. This view also carried over into discussion around the curriculum and how it needed to have flexible delivery as each student in the program was at a different point in their learning. The teachers all spoke about the need for their own pedagogy to be more flexible and less rigid in dealing with the individual learning requirements of the young mothers in the program:

*All the evidence shows they basically won’t engage with society if we don’t provide a flexible approach, it’s 50 per cent academic, 50 per cent social. And if you can’t clear*
them for learning, then basically they’re not ready to start talking about their maths or their science, their biology. (Deputy principal SL3)

The support personnel discussed the need to have flexibility in all areas of their practice when dealing with young mothers and their children. They spoke about delivering programs that specifically targeted this group and how these approaches differed from the mainstream approach:

See my role? I hate to say this, but I think I do very little teaching in the general terms of teaching. I tend to do a lot of listening, perhaps trying to push the young women in certain directions, try and give them positive self-esteem, trying to boost their confidence; tell them that they can do things not only in their mother skills but also about themselves, that they are young women that have got the potential to do whatever they like. Not as much teaching as I’m used to, certainly, but a lot of talking and listening. (Program teacher 1)

6.3.8 Resourcing.

Teachers and specialised support personnel were aware of the micro level of management issues around program resourcing. In the leaders’ interviews, this issue was incorporated into discussions of program sustainability. The sub-themes identified from the interviews with the program teachers and specialised support personnel include appropriate resources; facilities; catering for the young mothers and their children; and high-level support.

The teachers were concerned about the future staffing of the program, and in particular, the position of the program manager was mentioned by some of the teachers. They also highlighted that more support for gaining further funding and resources was required to ensure the program’s sustainability. They felt they had a great deal to offer any discussion around the required support needs of the program and that they were willing to provide advice.
As was highlighted by one of the deputy principals, ‘the program is about keeping those students in a school environment providing them with a whole lot of resources, including educational; not just educational’ (deputy principal SL2).

The program support personnel also discussed funding issues concerning joint funding between departments and how to formalise the process. The program specialist support personnel spoke about limited staffing and how staff had to perform many roles. They identified the effect on the ability to provide full-time service delivery when some staff could only work part time.

The transport scheme offered by CCCares was viewed as a vital means of ensuring that the young mothers and their children were able to attend the program:

*Well, now I’m the bus driver as well. Because we run the transport program to pick them up. We do a north side and a south side run and we actually ring the kids, or they let us know if they’re not coming—we drive to their home. It’s not like a bus route where you pick them up at a shelter; you actually drive to their home and pick them up.* (SSP2)

Their discussions also centred on the financial stresses and poverty faced by young mothers. The program personnel felt that the ACT DET and the ACT Health should continue to take care of all the costs incurred by participants in the CCCares program:

*Oh it’s that whole ‘Takes a village to raise a child’ thing I think, I don’t think women were meant to raise children in isolation and I think this provides a very positive support group for young women?* (SSP3)

Although costly to run, the CCCares program has proven to be effective in its delivery. It has made excellent use of transport options for students, and its physical resources to enhance curriculum and program delivery. The program has made effective usage of
purchased and donated resources to assist in the management of students’ children. The College and program leadership have continued to seek out a variety of funding sources over the years. Nevertheless, a more sustainable funding program is required for the program to continue its support of young pregnant and parenting students.

Another issue is the amount of time (as a resource) taken up securing funding. As stated previously, the deputy principal spends the majority of his time writing submissions. With a salary of $100,000, this becomes an expensive way to attract funding.

Transport costs, although high, have significantly enhanced student attendance. Financial aid, in terms of food and other purposes, has been necessary to support some of their more vulnerable young families. Despite CCCares’ history of supported funding of resources, there has been no guarantee of recurrent funding, and, like most alternative programs, CCCares will not be sustainable without recurrent funding.

6.3.9 On-site childcare.

On-site childcare was viewed by the program teaching staff and the specialist support personnel as pivotal to the success of the program. All of the program teachers commented that ‘they won’t come if children are not included’. The childcare provision within the program is seen by the teachers as the ‘carrot’ that ensures young mothers come to the program. The sub-themes that come through the interviews with both groups centred on providing quality support for them and their children:

*I think something like this gives them the support with their children. They can bring their children. I don’t believe you’d be able to do that at CIT.* 28 You would probably have to put them into childcare so a school setting—maybe the structure of it, maybe because it is exactly what you want to get your Year 10 certificate. (Program teacher 1)
They also believe that having the childcare at the site for young mothers and their children to access other services ensures that attendance in the program is not an issue. The teachers also viewed the childcare centre as another site for learning. The childcare service not only takes care of the children, but also provides a focus for social interactions between the childcare staff and other young mothers:

*We’ve tried to build into our program as well with the welfare issues and support for things that come for young women in this situation where they’re working with Centrelink and maybe care and protection ... with or need support in dealing with. We’ve tried to build that into our program and that’s the sort of thing they would get in a youth centre, so maybe we’re trying to give them a bit of both I think.* (Program teacher 2)

The program specialist support personnel view the on-site childcare as means of providing more options for young mothers in gaining parenting information and skills. They viewed the childcare as essential in supporting young mothers as a safe place to leave their children care while engaging with their own learning:

*It’s hard to talk to a girl about her career when she’s going to give birth in two weeks and she doesn’t know where she’s going to live. But at the same stage you don’t want to write off girls because they’re pregnant and having a baby and ‘Well you’re not going to have a career’. I mean for some of these girls it would be better to put the child in day care and work full time.* (SSP3)

The support personnel were conscious of the varied backgrounds of the young mothers in the program. They spoke about the need to be culturally sensitive when it came to providing parenting advice and information. The program manager highlighted that childcare facilities
were central to the program. It was important that the young mothers could access education as well as being able to bring their children with them to school.

The new *National Quality Framework for Early Education and Care* was implemented on 1 January 2012. As the *CCCares* program uses an adjunct care model, it is exempt from these framework requirements. Yet, if the *CCCares* program was required to adhere to the framework, this would have a major funding effect on the program’s capacity and sustainability to function in its current mode because it would not necessarily be able to use voluntary childcare workers, or require the young mothers in the program to be rostered on in the childcare centre for part of each day.

6.3.10 Staff development.

The program teachers were able to articulate the preferred or best practice ‘teacher qualities’ needed to work with young mothers. They spoke about passion for the job and the need to be flexible and to expect the unexpected. The sub-themes that came through from the interviews with the program teachers included being a positive role model for the students; staff wellbeing, dealing with difficult situations; making a difference in someone’s life; admiration for what the young mothers are doing as a parent and student; and having realistic expectations of the students.

The teachers believed working in the *CCCares* program required ‘more than a teacher’ in the mainstream school setting. They also felt that different approaches to teaching were required when working with young mothers:

*You need to get the right staff. I think that’s a big thing. J, [program manager] she just does everything but her knowledge of who to go to, who to get help from and all that is just phenomenal and the way she speaks to the kids and they confide in her. You’ve got to be that sort of person, or similar, for the kids to actually warm to.* (SSP2)
Teachers felt it was important that staff appointed to the program be supportive of the particular needs of the students and the unique working conditions:

*You’ve got to go with the flow. Don’t expect anything to run in a way—don’t pre-empt what a day is going to be like. Don’t have something set in your mind that this is going to be done ... a group of students and it totally gets wrecked and you can’t be upset by it. You’ve just got to go with the flow*. I think that’s our motto here is. (Program teacher 2)

The teachers all mentioned the need to be non-judgemental about the young mothers context:

*I guess there’s a huge number of young women out there who are choosing to have their babies at a younger age and I guess they’re starting to see that there is a way out of this cycle of being on welfare and staying on welfare that they realise through word of mouth that there is a place that can help them break that cycle and they can come back to school and it’s not as rigid as any other schooling that they’ve had. I think it hits home too with a lot of them that they want a better life for their children as well.* (Program teacher 1)

One of the male teachers in the program felt that he needed to be a ‘role model’ as a teacher and a man because he believed many of the young mothers’ experiences of men were not positive:

*I am aware of the role I play as a role model because a lot of the women really do have very dysfunctional relationships, not only with their partners but with males in general and with their families. I think if you can be like a normal male and show that this is normal behaviour; this is how people interact with each other and how a male might interact with them, I think that is a very important role.* (Program teacher 2)
The program specialist support personnel also highlighted how establishing relationships with disadvantaged young people can be difficult and time consuming. They spoke about the need for further staff development in this area. There is a general feeling that more needs to be done to support staff working with young mothers and their families:

*You need to be very empathetic, non-judgemental. Also find a way to air out your own personal frustrations when you listen to all these things. And you do get frustrated with some of the decisions that these students make. Find a way to be able to either talk to staff members and laugh about it.* (Program teacher 1)

The work is demanding because of the social determinants that impact on young mothers. On the other hand, there was a general feeling that the work they do can cause change in the lives of these young women:

*I really enjoy the program. I think it’s a great thing; we do a good job. I just feel as though I’ve made a difference to someone’s life, maybe a very small way but just being able to support the kids and being here—even just menial things because a lot of them have got nobody else. It’s a feel-good thing.* (SSP2)

All interviewed thought there needed to be more consideration given to the future staffing of the *CCCares* program. Staff pointed out that suitable personnel are required to work with students with ‘complex needs’. While most staff at *CCCares* have ‘hands on’ knowledge and experience of the dysfunction associated with drugs, violence, abuse and pregnancy, several individuals previously introduced to the program had difficulties as they did not sufficiently understand or empathise with the realities facing many of *CCCares*’ students. They found it difficult to deal with challenging and inappropriate behaviours exhibited by some of the young mothers. This was apparent if the teacher tried to enforce standard school discipline strategies or procedures.
I note from my observations that those not closely associated with the daily running of the program tend to have more idealistic, and therefore unrealistic, conceptions of what is involved in the running and sustaining the program (particularly with regards to engaging and building relationships with students).

6.4 The role of ‘grandmothers’: What the volunteers say.

The CCCares program has a number of female volunteers from the local community who work in the childcare facility, and are affectionately referred to as ‘grandmothers’. These volunteers have direct contact with the students by caring for the students’ children while they are in classes and working with the students who are rostered on to assist in the childcare facility during the day. The volunteers played an important role because without the on-site childcare, student attendance would be more erratic. Volunteers greatly supported the aims of the program and are very encouraging of the young mothers’ efforts to continue their education.

The thematic analysis of the volunteers’ (June and Robyn) interviews was not combined with the other interview data because they are not involved in the program in a professional (employed) context. The volunteers had other motivations for their involvement in the program. They possess an insight to the program, albeit from a different standpoint, and their responses have influenced the development of our understanding of young mothers in education. One volunteer, when asked about her perceptions of the program, commented:

*Oh well I think it’s a wonderful program really. I think it’s just, you know they’re girls and they need to continue their education and if this program wasn’t happening, where would they be? They’d probably be just home with children and not continuing to be educated.* (June)
The same volunteer, commenting on the role of the volunteers, expressed the view that education was important as a means for the young mothers to change their lives and create positive futures for themselves and their children:

_It’s not easy and I just think I’d try to encourage them, keep going with what they started because I think it will lead on to a more successful life in the future so you know I’d want to just congratulate them on getting involved to start with and encourage them to keep going._ (June)

Volunteers also saw themselves as having parenting skills and experience they could pass on to the young mothers. The following sections illustrate this.

6.4.1 Social responsibility: ‘Someone has to do it’.

The volunteers in the CCCares program work mainly in the childcare centre. From the interviews, a theme of social responsibility come out. They spoke about the idea that ‘we have to help; it is the right thing to do’. They also grounded their support for the young mothers and the program on their previous experiences and religious faith, as they came from a church group, ‘it’s my belief, to show them that people care’. When asked ‘do you think your faith is sort of part of your involvement as well’, volunteers responded:

_Yeah, I think that’s what brought me here. I sort of felt well you know this is maybe I could do to show the girls that people care._ (June)

_I guess I try to put myself in other people’s shoes sometimes. It’s very easy to be judgemental and criticise and you know I try to ... By the grace of God go I sort of thing you know, I could have been there too I suppose._ (Robyn)

6.4.2 Personal connections: ‘I had a friend once’.

In the interviews with the volunteers, they spoke about having personal experiences with young mothers at some point in the past, for example, ‘I knew a girl in my town that got
pregnant’. This type of discussion was common across the interviews with the volunteers. One of the volunteers ‘worked with teenage mothers before as a nurse’. She mentioned how they were treated in the hospital and that she felt sorry for them:

I worked at the Royal Women’s Hospital in Melbourne and we had just a huge verandah for young girls and basically they all gave their babies up. (Robyn)

[Interviewer: Were they encouraged to do that or was that the only way, the only option for them?]

I guess that they were encouraged to do that. It was just sort of—probably from their parents but maybe from social workers. Certainly, I don’t think, that probably went on until about the 1960s or late 1960s. Um they certainly weren’t—I guess there was no, the parents would sort of think well there’s no other option. You can’t be 15 and have a baby unless the parents were willing to sort of say I’ll come on board and help you look after the child and you can live with me. (Robyn)

These interviews were able to shed light on how young mothers were treated in the past. They mentioned ‘if you got pregnant in my day you gave the child up for adoption’. The volunteers believed that the ‘making of a new life’ was wonderful but they wondered what kind of life the child would have without a father and how the young mother would manage by herself:

Well, I guess to me that is the ideal is to have a father and a mother because to me that’s the way we were meant to live, to have another person to support. So if there’s one on their own I think it must be very hard for them to be on their own, to try and bring up their children on their own. (June)
A recurring theme that came through the interviews with the volunteers was the idea that the government made it ‘easier’ for mothers to keep their babies nowadays. They spoke about how young women today are under a great deal of peer pressure to be sexually active:

*Forty years ago I suppose they weren’t given anything but they were still getting pregnant so I suppose it’s just the same really these days. I don’t know that anybody would have a baby just because they were going to—but I think it may, the government ... made it easier for them to have, maybe have another child. They’ve already had one. I guess you come across the odd person who ... seems to get a lot of benefits and they’re sort of happy just having more children.* (Robyn)

6.4.3 The place to support: ‘Keep going’.

From the interviews with the program volunteers, it was obvious that they provided the young mothers with encouragement by ‘telling them to keep going, to make their lives better’. They spoke about the importance of education as a means to change their lives and create positive futures for themselves and their children:

*Well, I think if they’re not educated then they’re always going to be behind for the rest of their life. For them to be able to get proper employment in the future or even to be mothers and bring up their children they need to have education. It’s important that they—are just not left. Yeah and just left, well you’ve got a baby now so that’s the finish of your life basically.* (Robyn)

6.4.4 Shared motherhood: ‘Telling them about my experiences’.

Throughout the interviews with the program volunteers, a theme of shared motherhood came out: they felt they could share some of their wisdom with the young mothers. For example, one volunteer commented, ‘I tell them about my experiences as a mother and grandmother’.
Yeah, just trying to help them about being a new mother and bringing up children and that sort of thing. I mean I’ve got that experience, I mean my own children, my grandchildren. (June)

6.4.5 Perceptions of others.

They were aware of the perceptions held by other people about young mothers. They were positive about informing other people about the program. They ensured that other people became informed of the issues surrounding young mothers and their children, and they shared their experiences of volunteering in the program.

6.5 Conclusion

The program is highly valued by the young mothers themselves. One indication of the value of the program to clients was the observation that some young mothers in the program have in the past intentionally sabotaged their completion of their studies so as to remain in and connected to the program:

They were putting the brakes in that; they just didn’t want to graduate because they didn’t know what the next step was. And they didn’t want to not come back because obviously friends, support, it’s like a family. (SSP3)

The work of the leadership team, program teachers, support staff and voluntary workers, in the CCCares program at the Canberra College have contributed to developing a program that is highly resourced compared to the program at Plumpton High School. The CCCares program is well supported by the Canberra College school leaders and receives support also from the ACT DET and ACT Department of Health. The program is also well regarded in the wider Canberra community and region and it has received wide-ranging
publicity locally and nationally. It has been recognised formally as a centre that provides quality support and education for young mothers and their children.

The program has been the recipient of a number of national awards. In November 2009, the CCCares program was recognised for its achievements and impact by being awarded the NAB Schools First\textsuperscript{29} award, was the inaugural National Impact winner and recipient of $750,000. This award was recognised of the program’s partnership with the Child Youth and Women’s Health Program of ACT Department of Health and their work in supporting the educational and health needs of young parents. The then Commonwealth Minister, Ms Julia Gillard MP, presented the award to the CCCares program.

In addition, the College staff have been involved in working with other professionals in this field. In 2009, the AYPPN was formed to support young people and professionals around the country working to create positive futures for young parents and their children, with a particular focus on reconnecting pregnant and parenting young people to education and training. The establishment of AYPPN has been made possible because of the support of Canberra College’s CCCares program. AYPPN currently needs evidence to take to government and funding bodies to highlight best practice and to lobby for further research, funding support and national action. The CCCares program continues to contribute to this evidence base.

Over the past five years, there has been an increased interest on the part of education authorities in Australia in how best to support young mothers in education through programs and policy frameworks. The data collected in this study revealed key themes that are important

\textsuperscript{29} NAB Schools First is a national awards program that recognises and rewards outstanding school–community partnerships. This is a partnership between NAB, Foundation for Young Australians (FYA), and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).
to all stakeholders involved in the program delivery—leaders, teachers and support staff. The key themes revealed from the analysis of interviews include:

1. Place and Space
2. Community Partnerships
3. Flexible Delivery (Program and Curriculum)
4. Resourcing
5. On-site Childcare
6. Staff Development
7. Policy Shaping and Leading

The next chapter draws together the findings of this study to develop a model that can be used as a basis for developing future programs that support young mothers in school-level education.
Chapter 7: Towards Good Practice in School-Based Young Mothers’ Education Programs

Supportive, integrated education needs to meet the intellectual, personal and social needs of young women who are pregnant and parenting. (Arwen, 2007, p. 10)

7.1 Introduction

The previous three chapters examined what two schools have done to support students who are also young mothers. Both Plumpton High School and Canberra College provide good examples of how focused program delivery can work in either a mainstream setting or an alternative program within a mainstream setting. Study of the CCCares program enabled detailed examination of aspects of the school and program leadership that impacts on program sustainability, as well as successful outcomes for students. These two case studies have informed the discussion of good practice in policy and programs for supporting young pregnant and parenting people to remain in secondary education explored in this chapter.

This chapter begins by reviewing the main features of the two programs as a way of highlighting the strengths and weaknesses inherent in each program, which may by extension, be relevant to many of the programs now operating in the other 80 sites across Australia (see the AYPN website\(^\text{30}\) for a list of current programs).

Then it draws on the evidence from the case studies and literature to identify the significant factors that underpin the implementation of successful and sustainable programs. At the core of this chapter, and the thesis, is the understanding that school-based programs for young mothers are much more than just education programs for students with particular needs.

It is a realisation that these programs play a greater role in connecting young mothers to other services that can support them and their children into the future. Stephens, Wolf and Batten (2003) contend that:

*Efforts to improve outcomes for these young families must take advantage of every opportunity to connect them with the services and supports that will help them move toward positive growth. There is tremendous potential for school-based programs to meet the needs of and improve outcomes for both adolescent parents and their children. However, many school-based programs for adolescent parents often face many barriers and do not reach their full potential.* (p. 5)

As seen in the Plumpton case study, school-based programs can fold, fade away or collapse due to lack of structural support and the political will and leadership to ensure program sustainability.

A summary of the findings from both the Plumpton High School and Canberra College programs is presented. It then provides a model of identifying critical factors for success in supporting young mothers in school-based education programs. The chapter also illustrates the domains of activity present in the critical factors. Then, it highlights the importance of strategic and distributed leadership in promoting the sustainability of young mothers’ education programs.

### 7.2 A Summary of the Findings from the Plumpton High School and Canberra College Programs

The analysis of Plumpton High School and the Canberra College highlighted how these programs have developed over time from ‘grassroots’ beginnings. This has had a beneficial outcome in the sense that the programs have arisen from a perceived need within
the local community. Since the programs were developed at the school level, the program
designers were able to identify the needs of particular students, and the resources their school
could mobilise to mount the program. Both programs provided pregnant and parenting
students with an opportunity to remain connected with the school and to participate in the
mainstream curriculum offerings. For those students who managed to overcome the
difficulties associated with juggling the competing needs of high school with the demands of
being a young mother, their participation in the program provided better opportunities for
entry into work or into further education and training than those who cut their ties with the
school when they became pregnant.

In both cases, the school leaders had to work hard to ‘manage up’ and to involve other
agencies in order to maintain the program. But, when the two programs are compared from
this study, it can be observed that the Plumpton High School program had to rely too heavily
on the energy and commitment of the school principal.

7.2.1 Plumpton High School: Young Mothers in Education program.

This program was established to address a perceived need as identified by the principal
of Plumpton High School who, in 1994, observed a number of young mothers of school age
not attending classes. He felt that he had to step in to rectify this situation so he approached
the local area Youth Health Team for their support in encouraging these young people come
back to school. Over time, the principal formed other community links. These included the
local area health centre staff, the youth health workers and various local NGOs such as the
Benevolent Society, Uniting Care, Salvation Army and Youth off the Streets, while the
Blacktown Local Area Council also provided some support to the program over the years.
Clearly, partnerships with community agencies beyond the school were an important factor
underpinning the establishment of the program and its continuation.
The main aim of the program was to encourage young mothers to re-engage with education. The principal approached a staff member to be the program coordinator and that part-time role included encouraging young mothers in the local community to consider returning to school. Other duties of the coordinator included supporting young mothers in the school to attend class, complete assessments and deal with behaviour issues within the group. Funding came from internal sources within the school’s own budget. The majority of this funding went on the cost of the program coordinator salary, a refrigerator in the young mothers’ room and setting up a toy bank. After some years of lobbying by the principal, the NSW DET provided partial funding for the position of the program coordinator, but the school still had to provide funding for the other 50 per cent of salary costs. There was no formal funding support agreement from NSW DET for the program at Plumpton. The Department regarded the program as a school-based initiative and hence indicated it should be funded from its own money. Hence, resources for this program were limited and what resources were available were often directly from the school funding pool.

As Plumpton High School is a large NSW public high school, catering to Years 7–12 and the young mothers attended the school as standard students in the mainstream setting, there was relatively little flexibility in program provision. They were required to wear the school uniform, attend classes throughout the school day, and complete assignments and class activities much like any other student attending the school. Those in the program were seen as students that happened to be young mothers. They were provided with a young mothers’ room where they could meet with the program coordinator and sometimes bring their children (although this was against NSW DET policy). Not only were there no formal support mechanisms within NSW DET, but there was no explicit young pregnant and parenting policy in the NSW DET schools. Reference was made to young mothers within the NSW DET
(1995) Student Welfare Policy, but this policy was somewhat out-dated even in 1994 and lacked any scope to provide school communities with advice or direction when supporting young mothers in education. Hence, while efforts were made to provide a supportive environment for the young mothers in the Plumpton program, this was highly constrained by limited staffing, space constraints, the organisational demands of a Year 7–12 public high school and the lack of formal policy and guidance from the Department. Through the efforts of the principal, the Young Mothers in Education program at Plumpton High School received considerable media coverage, which was not always positive, but in the main, the program was well known across NSW (Glendinning, L., Sydney Morning Herald 13 June 2002 Principal aims to end pregnant pauses in education). The program become known across Australia in 2003 when ABC TV produced a ‘fly on the wall’ documentary (Plumpton Babies), where various young mothers and the principal were followed around to show the workings of the program, and to show the difficulties of being a young mother and a student. The program, because of this wide media coverage, had an impact way beyond the Plumpton school community and did much to bring the needs of this group of students more fully into the public debate.

The program at Plumpton High School started in 1994 and concluded in 2005 when the principal retired. The height of the program enrolment in the Young Mothers in Education program was 30 students (in 2000). A number of young women attending the program came from out of district or even moved into the Plumpton High School catchment to attend the program.

7.2.2 Canberra Secondary College: CCCares program.

The CCCares program at Canberra College is broader than that at Plumpton in its aim to cater for the educational, social and emotional needs of both young parents and their
children. It provides a ‘wrap-around’ service provision that brings together other service providers that have an interest in the outcomes for young parents\textsuperscript{31} and their children.

Unlike the Plumpton High program, this program is relatively well resourced in terms of facilities, recurrent funding and staffing. Since this program is an alternative program operating under the auspices of a secondary college, it has its own facility. The space has been modified to meet the needs of its students and those of their children. The children can access an (adjunct) childcare centre within the facility. The College puts a great deal of its own resources into the \textit{CCCares} program, including funding, staff, teaching and learning resources, buses, cars, food and research. The ACT DET provides cyclical funding.

In addition, the program partners at Canberra College are extensive (see Appendix 5). The program is also supported by the ACT Health Department with healthcare staff attending the program on a weekly basis. A fully equipped health clinic is also included in the facility. The Minister for Education, the ACT Chief Minister, and the Health Minister all provide high levels of political support. In 2010, the NAB awarded the program $750,000 for the future development of the program and NAB has partnered with the College to provide a program in which their staff provide financial advice to students in the \textit{CCCares} program. The University of Canberra and the CIT are active within the program and provide support via short courses and research.

Various not-for-profit organisations, for example, Rotary Club Australia, Marymead\textsuperscript{32} and Relationships Australia also provide support to the program. Since the Canberra Senior Secondary College is in the ACT, it caters for Years 11 and 12 students that can access

\textsuperscript{31} Unlike many other earlier programs, \textit{CCCares} also had as an initial aim to cater to both young mothers and young fathers.
\textsuperscript{32} Marymead is a community based not-for-profit organisation with a 45-year history of supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged children and families in the ACT and region.
vocational education and training as well as tertiary packages. College students are not required to wear school uniforms. Although the CCCares program is located off campus in an annex of the Canberra College, the students in the program are given the opportunity to access any of the courses conducted at the main campus of the College if they wish to. Therefore, the program’s curriculum provisions can be viewed as an ‘alternative program within a mainstream’ context.

The program offered in the annex is flexible and the students have Personalised Learning Programs and can access online learning materials. Students are given the opportunity to learn at their own pace and can complete their schooling over an extended period if required. There are program teachers and support staff within the facility that work closely with the students. Childcare and transport are also provided and the timetable is flexible. At graduation, students from the program access the College-wide graduation ceremonies and celebrations.

The CCCares program in the present form came into being in 2003. However, a previous alternative program for ‘at-risk’ students was established in 1999 and the CCCares program developed through a process of evolution; one that shifted focus from non-compliant students to that of supporting young mothers. In the first year of the CCCares program, three young mothers were enrolled. At the commencement of the school year in 2011, there were over 100 young mothers with 85 children attending the program.

There is an explicit ACT DET policy relating to the school support of pregnant and parenting students. This policy is currently under review as it was first published in 1988 (ACT DET Pregnant Students Policy and Implementation Guidelines Supplement to Schools Bulletin No.331, 5 May 1988). The leadership team at Canberra College also take every opportunity to engage with the media and they work closely with the media adviser in the
NAB Schools First program to ensure that their program is presented in a professional and sensitive manner. The CCCares program has featured on a number of national television shows, for example, the Channel 7 morning show Sunrise and the 10 Network’s 7pm Project. The CCCares program is well known in the ACT through media exposure on radio and newspapers. Members of the program are also on the management committee of the AYPNN. They were invited on to this committee because of the reputation of the CCCares program in supporting young parents to re-engage with schooling.

The case study suggests that the well-resourced CCCares program is a product of a different style of leadership (that being distributed leadership model), on the part of the school principal, compared to Plumpton High. While both principals were clearly committed to their program goals, the CCCares model is built around a distributed leadership model where each member of the executive plays key strategic roles. At Plumpton, all these roles were vested in the principal and this may have contributed to the closure of the program when he retired.

In their extensive study of the education of young mothers in the UK, Dawson, Hosie, Meadows, Selman and Speak (2005) identified key features of successful young mothers’ education programs:

*The features of specialist units which were cited as of particular importance include: the on-site childcare facilities; work, practical and emotional support; and the locations are often set up to deal with post-birth issues (such as ill health of mother/or baby). Other features identified as important by those attending such units were that they were respected and treated like adults; allowed to be educated at the same time as enjoying being mothers and in many cases be educated alongside their babies; able to undertake more flexible timetables; that there was more one-on-one level teaching and
that they had the ability to play an active role in decisions about their education. (p. 10)

The case studies of Plumpton High and CCCares, taken together with insights from the literature, suggest there are eight key elements or domains of activity that contribute to the success of young mothers’ education programs:

i. the provision of a dedicated place and space for the program to operate within
ii. strong interagency and community partnerships
iii. flexible curriculum delivery
iv. appropriate and secure resourcing
v. on-site childcare
vi. staff development
vii. policy shaping and leading
viii. program sustainability

These factors are discussed in more depth in the next section.

7.3 A Model Identifying Critical Factors for Success in Supporting Young Mothers in School-Based Programs

This study has sought to identify the critical factors for success in supporting young mothers in education programs. As noted from the analysis of the programs at Plumpton High School and Canberra College, summarised above, it is possible to support young mothers to re-engage and continue with their education in school settings. The evidence collected from former and current students in these programs, as well as from staff and program leaders, provides insights into what is required to ensure that school-based programs are successful in supporting young mothers in education. The domains of activity identified are not hierarchical.
Rather, there is an inter-connected relationship between them. These factors are set out in the model shown in Figure 17.

*Figure 17. Critical factors for success in supporting young mothers in school-based education programs.*
The model is Figure 17 illustrates eight key domains of activity that need to be present for a young mothers’ education program to succeed in a school setting. Each of these domains incorporates sub-set of factors that illustrate dimensions of activity under the top level of the identified domains.

Table 10.0 Sub-Set of Factors Within Domains of Activity for Success in Supporting Young Mothers in Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program domains—critical factors for success in young mothers’ education programs</th>
<th>Resourcing</th>
<th>Flexible delivery</th>
<th>On-site childcare</th>
<th>Staff development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantum of funding required</td>
<td>Flexible learning delivery</td>
<td>On-site childcare and/or adjunct care—the importance to have their children with them</td>
<td>Professional and well trained staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking grants and funding</td>
<td>Personalised learning programs</td>
<td>Develop parenting skills</td>
<td>Staff training and induction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate transport and/or access</td>
<td>Relevant curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td>Staff wellbeing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program sustainability</td>
<td>Place and space</td>
<td>Policy review, leadership and evaluation</td>
<td>Financial sustainability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community partnerships</td>
<td></td>
<td>Importance of quality leadership in policy development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health information</td>
<td>Not being judged</td>
<td>Important that programs have stability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic service provision</td>
<td>Reducing social isolation</td>
<td>Strategic planning and governance to be reflective</td>
<td>Program sustainability and longevity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linking with agencies</td>
<td>Social and personal support</td>
<td>Young parents as active members in decision-making processes</td>
<td>Evidence-based practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy and support</td>
<td>Specialised support for young mothers and young fathers who are students</td>
<td>Mentoring/peer program</td>
<td>Seek out funding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition support: employment consultant/guidance</td>
<td>Maternal education/parenting skills/peer mentoring</td>
<td>Further research: the need to investigate longitudinal outcomes for young parents and their children</td>
<td>Recurrent program funding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach program to those not connected or re-engaged</td>
<td>Access to ICT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assisting young parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds</td>
<td>Somewhere to be and share experiences a sense of ‘belonging’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The sub-set of factors (see Table 10.0), within each domain are also inter-connected, they do not stand in isolation from each other, and are linked on a number of levels. You cannot discuss one factor without understanding the links that exist with other factors. For example, it is apparent that appropriate and sustained funding underlies all aspects of the program and flexible curriculum delivery and strong interagency partnerships are equally important to most domains. Similarly, strategic and distributed leadership is central to all domains of activity, and must be fluid and flexible in meeting the needs of service providers and the end users of the program—the students. For a program to be successful at re-engaging young mothers with education and to sustain their interest and commitment to course completion, it is necessary that all aspects of the program interconnect. As Arwen (2007) points out, for young mothers’ education programs to be effective and long lasting, all areas of support need as much attention and nurturing as the others or the program is at risk of not being sustainable and this increases the chances of the program collapsing and inevitably closing down.

The model highlights the various tensions that surround these domains of activity. These tensions impact the domains of activity in both direct and indirect ways and need to be continually negotiated. Policy and leadership tensions are a product of lack of alignment between existing policy within different systems (schools, departments and communities) and the needs of young mothers’ education programs at an operational level. Personal tensions surface at many levels, for example, the young mother is often managing issues in her a home life that impacts on her participation in the program. Personal tensions can also play out between staff within the program, particularly if staff are ‘assigned’ to the school and there is a mismatch between their skills with the needs of the program. Educational program tensions can arise when the program’s pedagogy, such as Individual Learning Plans, is viewed as a
‘soft option’ for these students. The curriculum and pedagogy differs so much from mainstream schooling that some teachers and educational professionals do not consider it ‘real’ teaching and learning. Societal tensions are ever present given the dominance of negative discourse about young mothers in the media and are often manifested in backlash from local communities and judgemental reactions to the program. These tensions continue to feed off each other in ways that create and perpetuate challenges for school-based young mothers’ education programs including their participants and stakeholders. These are discussed more fully in the following chapter.

7.4 Domains of Activity

7.4.1 Resourcing.

As with most specialised school-based programs, resourcing them is problematic due to the amount of resourcing required not only to establish but also to maintain the level of service required by young mothers’ education programs. For many schools in this situation, funding or resourcing the needs of a small number of students is also perceived negatively (by staff, students and community) as taking resources away from the main cohort of students (Dawson et al., 2005; Kelly, 2000; Pillow, 2004). This reinforces the view that young mothers futures are made, and their choices are limited. As Boulden (2009) points out, ‘support services are too few in number, too poorly funded and inequitably distributed to meet the needs of young people’ (p. 3). School systems are reluctant to acknowledge the sheer quantum of resources required to meet the needs of young mothers’ education programs.

Both schools studied in this thesis used their own funds to establish the programs. At Plumpton High, the young mothers were expected to ‘fit in’, rather than receive ‘special treatment’. In contrast, the success of the CCCares program is a result of its range of support
services to assist young mothers to re-engage. For example, the CCCares program has a transport program in place that collects the young mothers and their children from their homes and takes them to school and home each day. Providing this type of service ensures students can attend the program consistently. The transport service provided by the program has three 12-seat buses fitted with baby capsules/seats. As transportation can be expensive, particularly for people on a fixed income, this support mechanism ensures that the students are not disadvantaged in accessing the program. Nonetheless, this aspect of the program also takes considerable resourcing and funding as the buses are usually leased; they require maintenance, insurance and drivers. At CCCares, a number of the support staff within the program take on the role of driver and CCCares attracted support from community volunteer drivers from the local Rotary Club.

Having designated transport assistance is critical to young mothers’ education programs because it ensures that students are on time and able to bring their children, as well as the materials and items they need during the school day. In contrast, young mothers in the Plumpton High School program had to rely on public transport. This proved to be very difficult for some of the young mothers because they had to transit between the bus terminus and train stations with their child and the required equipment and school bags/materials. Some of the young mothers indicated that if they did not have any money to spare, in the ‘bad week’ (welfare payments are paid fortnightly), they would not attend school.

Policy recognition of the quantum of resources required to support young mothers’ education programs, to help ‘clear kids for learning’ is critical to success of young mothers’ education programs. Long-term financial sustainability is a difficult domain for most young mothers’ education programs.
7.4.2 Financial sustainability.

At Plumpton High School, funding came from within the school central budget at first, then another stream of funding was provided by the then Deputy Director-General of Education. Both schools used their own funds to establish the programs. Plumpton High School program had little success in attracting external funding. Conversely, from the inception of the Canberra College program, it was decided that one of the deputy principal positions would include the role of seeking funding from beyond the school’s budget. A lesson that the Canberra College staff learnt from studying the experiences of Plumpton High School was that program sustainability is reliant on secured long-term funding. This has proved successful for the CCCares program, as the deputy principal has been able to obtain approximately $1.6 million over five years.

Programs are usually funded with one-off grants, and depend on a cycle of submissions for funding. Experiences of programs in Canada, the US and the UK highlight the importance of secure, consistent and ongoing funding (Boulden, 2001a; Boulden, 2009; Harrison, Shacklock, Kemp & Angwin, 2004; Kelly, 1993, 2000). In many cases, program staff spend a great deal of time and effort putting together funding proposals and applications that the majority of the time are not successful. Those young mothers’ education programs that are funded in a sustainable way tend to be those able to plan further into the future and those able to be more strategic in their service delivery. They can use their time and resources more profitably to evaluate what they do and how to improve upon it, instead of chasing funding.

Programs that are proactive and successful in obtaining further funding in addition to that already provided by the central funding system or organisation are likely to last longer than those programs that do not engage in such activities. However, this task is difficult and time consuming; it requires staff that have the capacity and skills to search for and attract
funding. For example, Canberra College had in 2010 a senior staff member who spent the majority of the time engaged in this activity. This approach has proven to be worthwhile for the program because it has attracted high levels of funding, both recurrent funding and special grants and awards, over the life of the program. Its success in attracting external funding and public recognition of the program made it more resilient to scepticism from within the education system. However, this activity of chasing money to secure financial sustainability is time consuming and difficult for schools involved in young mothers’ education programs.

7.4.3 Flexible delivery.

In both case study schools, the delivery of curriculum was flexible to meet the life needs of the students in the programs. The students in these programs were provided with more time to complete their course (senior studies over three years rather than two years) and extra time to complete assignments and homework. The curriculum content was provided via a class teacher and access to online materials. In the Plumpton High School mainstream program, this created some tensions with certain teachers. Yet, in the CCCares program, students had more freedom with their learning and more autonomy to negotiate their curriculum and learning. Dawson et al. (2005) discussed the importance of personalised, flexible and relevant learning and timetables for students with their parenting responsibilities and Boulden (2001a), Kelly (2000), and Pillow (2004) also emphasise this.

Flexible delivery allows the individual to engage with their learning at different points or junctures in their lives. The use of ICT, flexible timetabling, less rigid assessment deadlines and study leave provides a greater opportunity for a young mother to succeed in completing the required learning. Giving an individual the opportunity to work from home if their child is ill and/or if they have other parenting responsibilities allows the student to negotiate their learning program rather than being forced to complete work in sub-optimal conditions. Many
young mothers have negative previous experiences with schooling (Arai, 2009; Coles, 1997; Daguerre & Nativel, 2006; Edin & Kafalas, 2007; Kelly, 2000; Luker, 1996; Luttrell, 2003; Musick; Pillow, 2004). Having this flexibility assists the students to move in and out of the program over a period without compromising their chances of success and of course completion.

Having a Personalised Learning Program is a useful element of a flexible approach to learning delivery. Personalised Learning Programs that are developed in consultation between the program teacher and the student allow the individual to work at her own pace over a set period of time, working to mutually agreed deadlines. The student has a greater say over their learning and can complete set tasks over a greater length of time. The program teacher facilitates the student’s learning rather than providing a mainstream instructional approach. Teachers argue that the students develop a greater sense of ownership of their learning through this process.

It is important that the curriculum that young mothers study engages their interest. The curriculum delivered in young mothers’ education programs is, in most cases, provided by distance education providers within the education jurisdiction. Teaching parenting skills within the curriculum has proved to be successful (Sadler et al., 2007). For example, in the CCCares program students can study childcare training modules leading to a recognised vocational qualification. This is achieved through a joint program between the CIT and the Canberra College. Planning with the young mother about what she wants to do once she has finished her formal education allows for curriculum development that is designed to assist in obtaining those goals. If the curriculum feels relevant to the students, they are more likely to engage with it and complete the set curriculum assessments.
7.4.4 On-site childcare.

Over the past ten years, there has been growing awareness of the importance of providing on-site childcare for young mothers in education programs. In the two case study programs, both had childcare provision that was well received by the students. The Plumpton High School program students could use a subsidised childcare facility not far from the school but this required students dropping their babies off at the centre prior to commencing school for the day. The CCCares program uses an adjunct care model where the students have their children with them in the centre and the childcare facility is at the centre of the program. This model allows the student to spend part of their day on duty in the centre involved with the children. The research around the adjunct care model suggests that there are a number of positive outcomes for young mothers’ education programs. Sadler et al. (2007) found that:

For at-risk teen mothers, this parent support program and school-based childcare setting appears to offer promising opportunities to help young mothers with parenting, avoid rapid subsequent pregnancies, and stay engaged with school, while their children are cared for in a close and safe environment. (p. 121)

Dawson et al. (2005) note that on-site childcare was important for young mothers to remain connected with schooling. Like other mothers with parenting responsibilities, the balance of childcare and work creates stress and tension. Added to this, young mothers who are students often lack the resources to pay for childcare and/or lack the capacity to seek out childcare that is some distance from the school where they are studying (Sadler et al., 2007; Arai, 2009; Kelly, 2000).

Through the adjunct care model at CCCares many of the young mothers can speak with other mothers and support staff about parenting issues. Hence, a de-facto peer-support program arises from the shared experience of providing care for their children as well as being
able to learn from each other. Some of the literature suggests that for many young mothers in these programs, they do not have contact with their own family or support networks and they are not exposed to the collective experiences and wisdom of those networks (Kelly, 2000; Luttrell, 2003; Pillow, 2004). Thus, being exposed to other young mothers and trained staff allows for a shared learning of parenting skills. At the CCCares program, a health clinic/room also has been established that connects with the childcare space and this allows for greater continuity of healthcare service provision within the program. The healthcare workers in the program feel they can access the young mothers and their children in one context while the maternal-care nurses are able to provide advice as well as information and education sessions within the centre.

With the implementation of the Australian Early Childhood framework in 2011/12, the adjunct childcare model at CCCares (see Chapter 5) was under threat of closure, as it did not meet the regulatory requirements of this framework. The program was unable to fund the qualified required staff to run the childcare component and as well meet the facility upgrade requirements. The school leaders and the program manager lobbied a community partner, the AEU, to assist them seeking an exemption from the regulatory requirements of this framework. With the support of the AEU, the program was successful in gaining exemption in late 2011. This is an example of the link between domains in the model.

7.4.5 Staff development.

Finding appropriate staff to work in school-based young mothers’ education programs is difficult, partly due to system staffing and human resources policy and procedures. For example, staff working with young mothers are not specifically trained to do so, but they are mainly classroom teachers. For the Plumpton High School program, the young mothers had to fit into the mainstream classroom conditions. In the CCCares program, the teachers elect to
come into the program; hence, they may have some interest, experience or background in working with at-risk young people. Nevertheless, because of staffing policies, including the mobility program in ACT schools, all teaching staff including the program manager are under threat of being transferred to another school. There was also an example of teachers being transferred into the program without any consultation with the program leaders about their suitability. Dawson et al. (2005) found that teachers need to be sensitive and non-judgemental about young mothers in schools.

While young mothers’ education programs that are based at school need to be staffed by teachers, the need for additional support and assistance is very high. Few teachers would be trained to deal with the stresses and issues that surround students who are also young mothers, let alone assist in providing care for their children. Both case study schools illustrate that program staff need to be experienced teachers with a genuine care and concern for the wellbeing of their students and their children. The staff were usually given training and professional development that related to supporting young mothers’ education programs. It is inappropriate, and perhaps even dangerous, to transfer a teacher into a young mothers’ education program without considering their experience and knowledge of the issues involved in supporting young mothers in education.

Teachers and support staff working in young mothers’ education programs need to have access to professional learning dealing with young pregnant and parenting students. Staff training and induction programs must pay particular attention to student welfare policies and procedures as well as clarity of roles and responsibilities in young mothers’ education programs. All young mothers’ education programs need a clear and structured induction process for staff when they are employed.
Staff wellbeing also needs to be taken into account. The interactions between staff and young pregnant and parenting students can be challenging, stressful and complex, as the young mothers’ lives are often challenging and many have poor experiences of formal learning. At times, the pressure of being a mother and a student escalates behaviours that would be deemed inappropriate in the mainstream setting. These behaviours include anger, sudden outbursts, swearing, depression and withdrawal. For staff involved with these students, there needs to be a well-defined staff wellbeing program. The one-on-one interviews with program teachers indicated that staff provide support for each other in an informal way, on a needs basis. However, due to Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) legislation across Australia, staff working in young mothers’ education programs need to be able to access assistance to manage their own wellbeing.

7.4.6 Community partnerships.

Establishing and maintaining community partnerships is a key domain of activity for the success of young mothers’ education programs (Arai, 2009; Boulden, 2001a; Dawson et al., 2005; Kelly, 2000; Pillow, 2004). One of the challenges faced by both schools in the case studies was the time and energy it took to establish, maintain and manage the community partnerships. The CCCares program has addressed this by instituting a formal steering committee with representatives from the key community groups participating. It also invited a senior community figure to be a Patron for the program. The Plumpton High School program had an ‘interest group’ established at the beginning of program; but, the role of this group was ill defined and it diminished as time went on.

Being able to access appropriate and quality health information for young mothers and their children is an important component of young mothers in education programs. The Plumpton High School and CCCares programs both provided health information to the
students. This information was provided by the respective state/territory departments of health. For many young mothers, their only access to quality health information was through the program, due to their reluctance to seek help from mainstream health services. Young mothers’ education programs therefore need to work beyond the traditional boundaries of schooling to establish partnerships with organisations that can provide expert advice and information in supporting young mothers and their children in areas such as health (Arai, 2009a; Boulden, 2009; Kelly, 2000).

Community partners are essential to supporting the holistic (wrap-around) service delivery in young mothers’ education programs. Successful programs that provide support to young mothers in education should act as a service point for many other human service departments and organisations. As the complexity of the issues and needs surrounding young mothers is high, many support services are required to meet the needs of individuals in young mothers’ education programs. For many of these service providers, the only way they can connect with the young mothers and their children is via the program. To help co-ordinate these services, the CCCares program has established a community liaison officer who co-ordinates the services that need to access young mothers through the program. This officer ensures that individual young mothers are accessing the appropriate services when required. For many young people, it is difficult to navigate, negotiate and deal with large departmental systems. The community liaison officer provides support, and mentors and encourages the young mothers to engage with these service providers. This in turn provides the young mothers with the skills to voice their needs and concerns as well as empowering them to deal effectively with service providers.

Young mothers’ education programs that manage to engage with and create links with other human service agencies and organisations; (government and non-government) are more
likely to succeed in connecting the young mothers in their programs to various service providers. This in turn helps address many of the issues that serve as barriers to young mother’s engagement with learning. In the words of a deputy principal, it helps to ‘clearing them for learning’.

Early on in the development of the CCCares program, a steering committee was established with key stakeholders. Each agency representative on the steering committee was able to provide strategic advice from the perspective of that organisation. This allowed the agencies to provide expert advice on resourcing issues, policy and procedures. What occurred, in a rather organic way, was a whole-of-government response to the issues of supporting young mothers. There was no formal agreement on the part of the government at the time, but through this ‘grassroots’ approach, the linking of agencies has become a key to the success and sustainability of the program. The ACT Department of Health has formalised some aspects of its support role—in particular with the supply of nurses visiting the program up to three times a week to run the health clinic.

Community partnerships also assisted with advocacy and support. Through its links with support agencies, programs such as CCCares currently have interagency support and advocacy for the program in the wider community. By maintaining communication with key stakeholders on a regular basis, other agencies have become ‘champions’ of the CCCares program, particularly when seeking funding or government support. The ACT government now views the partnerships created from the program as a suitable model in supporting at-risk young people (ACT Young People’s Plan 2004–2008: Progress Report).

There is a need to develop transition strategies from young mothers’ education programs, since once a young mother has completed her formal schooling her job prospects are still limited and she will most likely be employed on a casual or temporary basis in a low
paying job (Boulden, 2009; Kelly, 2000; Littlejohn, 1998; Loxton, Williams & Adamson, 2007). Programs that provide support through an employment and/or guidance consultant have shown to demonstrate positive outcomes for exiting students (Arai, 2009; Kelly, 2000; SmithBattle, 2000). Australian research (Quinlivan, 2003) suggests that many young mothers do not see career prospects beyond that of being a mother. Many young mothers also lack work experience. Transition programs can be defined as designed approaches that assist students to move from one learning context to another, whether that is further formal learning or into the workforce (Perry, Dockett, Whitton, Vickers, Johnston & Sidoti, 2005). Effective transition programs need to be collaborative, well thought through and planned:

*Effective transition programs are based on detailed planning and have clearly defined objectives, which are developed in collaboration with all of the stakeholders and against which the program is assessed* (Perry et al., 2005, p. 8).

The CCCares program has a work experience program in place that offers the students the opportunity to do work experience over a longer period part time and assists with obtaining childcare for the period they are on work experience. A number of students have gained part-time employment from their work experience placements. One example cited is of a young mother who did the work experience program at an architecture firm and is now at university studying to become an architect. The firm is providing ongoing mentoring to this student.

For the number of young mothers that have reconnected to schooling there is a higher number who have not. This is for a range of reasons—such as limited access or living in an area that does not have a program. It may be that the young mother sees no future for herself in returning to school (Burdell, 1995; Kelly, 2000; Pillow, 2004; Luttrell, 2003). There has been limited action in the area of developing outreach programs for young mothers. Many
programs do not have the resources to do this and in most cases, the programs are too busy dealing with the students they are already working with. However, some programs are now encouraging young mothers in their program to connect with other young mothers they may know who are not involved. In the CCCares program, for example, many of the young women reported they attended the program after hearing about it via word of mouth or were referred by another agency.

There is a wide diversity of students participating in young mothers’ programs and this is reflected in Australian school populations. Many young mothers’ programs provide assistance to refugee and Indigenous students via specialised support programs that are inclusive and culturally sensitive. These include, for example, the Burdekin—Youth in Action Inc: Supporting Young Parents program in Western Australia and the Strong Young Mums program in Bourke, NSW. It is important that the cultural diversity of students in these programs is valued and celebrated as this increases student participation and connection.

7.4.7 Place and space.

The evidence collected from interview data emphasised the importance to young mothers of having their own place and space. Over the past 20 years, students with special needs are increasingly being placed into mainstream school settings. Pressure is placed on programs like CCCares not to create a ‘country club’ mentality (as stated by a departmental representative at a meeting I attended) for its students by having a ‘special’ place for them. The Plumpton High School program did not encounter this pressure as much as CCCares does, because the model at Plumpton High School was situated in the mainstream school setting. Yet, the provision of dedicated places and spaces is critical for young mothers to re-engage and continue with schooling, education and training (Boulden, 2001b; Dawson et al., 2005; Kelly, 2000; Sadler et al., 2007).
Dawson et al. (2005) also highlighted the nature of support programs in their UK study that:

Specialist units or other non-mainstream flexible provision should be available in all LEAs (Local Education Authority) especially for those with poor attendance. They should be seen as a method of inclusion, rather than exclusion (p. 11).

Young mothers have to face being judged by the wider community on a daily basis. Many young mothers in the first case study talk about not being judged by others and they rated this highly in the survey. Some young mothers have suggested that they left their school when they became pregnant because of the ridicule they faced from other students and some teachers. Successful programs do not overtly make judgements on how the individual became pregnant or make judgements on parenting approaches used by the young women in their programs. If the program environment is safe, supportive and positive, it provides encouragement to the young women to re-engage with education.

For many young mothers, the reality of being young and being a mother can create stress, depression and isolation from friends and family (Arai, 2009). School-based programs are often the only place that young mothers can access other services, as well as establishing new networks. Many young mothers have spoken about the fact the program is somewhere for them to go. Somewhere to be and share experiences with a sense of belonging is very important in young mothers’ education programs also. The program staff need to be aware of the important role they play in creating the individual’s sense of belonging.

It is apparent that the young mothers that attend programs such as Plumpton High School Young Mothers in Education program and the CCCares program gain the social and personal support they require to be successful mothers and students. They can also access
maternal education, parenting skills information and peer mentoring. Many young mothers talk about learning from each other as well as being able to access the education programs conducted by healthcare professionals. Programs also provide access to ICT that many young mothers do not have the ability to access, as they cannot afford computer hardware and related costs while on a limited income. These critical services are dependent on having a dedicated ‘place and space’ for program delivery.

**7.4.8 Policy shaping and leading.**

Both case study schools demonstrated leadership not only in developing educational provision for young mothers but also in evidence-based policy development. The *Young Mothers in Education* program at Plumpton High School developed out of a local need but at the same time was responding to the newly released *Student Welfare Policy* for NSW Public Schools (1996). The school leaders at Canberra College continue to engage with policy review at a territory and national level. For example, this team lobbies state and Commonwealth education officials to engage with the issues surrounding the support and education of young mothers. Another example of leadership in this area occurred when the program provided seed funding for the establishment of the AYPPN in 2010. The Canberra College also commissioned a research evaluation project of the *CCCares* program that same year. Pillow (2004) found that programs for young mothers often proved to be ‘breeding grounds’ for leadership in response to policy directions and development. She also cites the importance of educators being involved in policy formation in this field.

In many jurisdictions, young parents in education policies are under review. In Western Australia, a new framework[^33] will guide further program development to support

[^33]: 2011 DRAFT, *Supporting pregnant and parenting young people to continue with their education: Practical guidelines for public schools in Western Australia* Department of Education, Western Australia.
young parents in education. The AWE has conducted a number of National Symposia and informed policy development in recent years and continues to advocate for the rights of pregnant and parenting young people to access quality education (Boulden, 2000, 2001a, 2009). Program leaders need to engage with policy development and evaluation at higher levels. They need to inform policy makers of the importance of incorporating the experiences and knowledge of program staff in any framework that will affect young mothers.

Program leaders also need to engage in strategic planning if a program is to be sustainable. They need to be reflective about the weaknesses of their individual programs and adapt the programs to meet the needs of its participants. School-based programs need to be incorporated into school governance measures, and be reviewed like any other program within the school. This has been demonstrated in the CCCares program, with the School Board having a member from the program, as well as program reports and updates as a feature of the College Annual Report.

Programs that have continued to operate effectively have consulted young mothers in many decision-making processes. Their commitment to providing a space for young mothers to voice their opinions about the program’s management and strategic goals makes the program more reflective of the needs of these students. An example of this is the consultative group involved in advising the architects about the design requirements of the new CCCares program facility due for completion late 2013. The CCCares program encourages the young mothers to provide feedback to the program management committee and regular consultation with the student cohort is a necessary way to ensure the program meets the needs of the end user.

There is a clear need for young mothers’ education programs to support each other, as the opportunities for school leaders, program teachers and support staff to mentor others are
few. Establishing a process that allows this to occur helps to avoid repeating mistakes as well as to share the frustrations of program management. The *CCCares* program was developed on the advice of personnel from Plumpton High whom the College leaders actively sought out for guidance. Recently, a number of young mothers’ education programs from around Australia have created the AYPNP of which the *CCCares* program is a founding member. The network now has over 80 member organisations around Australian and New Zealand. This network shares resources, information and knowledge about supporting young parents in education and lobbies government and advocates a national approach to supporting young parents.

7.4.9 Strategic and distributed leadership.

In the model presented here in Figure 7.3, strategic leadership sits at the centre of all eight domains of activity, as this is the overarching dynamic that drives success in young mothers’ education programs. For a young mothers’ education program to function and be sustainable, the leaders need to share the common goal of making sure that the basic needs of its participants must be met, and that the program is flexible enough to do this. Leaders must also take responsibility maintaining and building on their own resources, to build the capacity to address problems as they arise. As illustrated in the *CCCares* model, strategic leadership responsibilities such as advocacy and funding were distributed between members of the leadership team. Conversely, this was not the situation at Plumpton High School, where the *Young Mothers in Education* program concluded once the principal retired. What we can draw from this is that the program at Plumpton was too dependent on the leadership of one person. This is not an uncommon situation and is an experience faced by many programs in Australia as well as overseas. For young mothers’ education programs to continue, they need leaders focused on securing ongoing funding, appropriate staffing and facilities to ensure policies and
procedures meet the needs of the program, staff and students and help achieve program goals (Boulden, 2009; Dawson et al., 2005; Kelly, 2000; Luttrell, 2003; Pillow, 2004).

7.5 Operational Implications

The program domain model indicates the key areas of activity necessary for the sustainability of young mothers’ education programs. As this thesis aims to provide information that is relevant and useful for policy makers, and school systems, the findings can be extrapolated to provide operational guidance specifically for stakeholders at the program, school and system level.

7.5.1 Program level.

- Develop program objectives that align and link more with appropriate education and health authorities’ policy and procedures
- Develop a program strategic plan to ensure the sustainability of the program
- Establish a staff induction process in consultation with the school executive and appropriate Human Resources departments
- Formalise the induction and training processes of volunteer staff, in particular those involved in the adjunct childcare setting
- Establish ongoing training and development for staff in areas of student welfare/wellbeing, policy and procedures
- Establish a student representative group to be involved in decision-making processes and program advocacy
- Provide advocacy training for students
- Develop clear staff succession plan in consultation with school executive and departmental officers
- Ensure each student has a transition from program plan.

7.5.2 School/college level.
- Establish a registered childcare facility in or near the school
- Review the program performance regularly against the set objectives and intended outcomes of the school/college
- Collect detailed data on participation, engagement and life outcomes for those women who have passed through the program
- Encourage those women who have participated in the program to become mentors for other students at the school and in particular those women involved in the program currently
- Establish a formal process of induction for new staff joining the school/college
- Develop a program for those young men who are fathers to participant in a similar and/or the same program.

7.5.3 System level.
- Review and update policy statements for Young Mothers in Education, and relevant policy frameworks
- Ensure that all schools with young parent programs become members of the AYPN
- Sponsor a memorandum of understanding between relevant agencies such Departments’ of Health, Community Services, Chief Minister/Premier, Education and Training to ensure cross-agency policy and support services for young women who are pregnant or parents
• Review the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education syllabus to ascertain the feasibility of teaching life education and power in relationships
• Provide training for Student Welfare Consultants, principals and head teachers’ in the area of teenage pregnancy and parenthood
• Collect appropriate data from school education areas across the states and territories for use in developing policy and programs to support young students who pregnant or parents.

7.6 Conclusion

It became apparent by the conclusion of this study how much education policy research can be situated within the agendas and purposes of the state and the governance of education as suggested by Ball (2006). I found that this was also a tension experienced by the school leaders at Canberra College. They spoke about how they had to manage the CCCares program within a broader governance structure that often was non-responsive to the needs of the program sustainability.

The school leaders also sounded out a caution about the program not being used as the only example of best practice without considering other programs around Australia. They expressed their concern about the Education Department seeing what they do to support young mothers in education being replicated in all schools. Ball (2006) regards this as a generative effect, to concentrate exclusively on one policy bracketing out all others:

The result is typically a reiteration of the ‘policy-practice gap’ with an implicit or explicit assumption that the gap represents an implementation failure on the part of teachers or schools—schools are presented as being not anti-racist enough or as not taking special needs seriously enough—without any attempt to consider the other
things they are expected or required to take seriously and which compete for attention, effort and resources in the complexities of practice. (p. 17)

The need to investigate longitudinal outcomes for young parents and their children has become apparent. There are some programs that have been in operation in some form or another in Australia for up to 20 years. There is little research around the long-term successes of these programs. Programs are now collecting a log of data about their students and their transition beyond the program. There are also gaps in research around Indigenous young mothers, young mothers who have children with disabilities, young mothers in rural and remote areas and research about the experiences of young fathers. Recently, the Gillard Government announced a $47 million pilot scheme to engage young mothers with education and/or training—this ‘earn or learn’ style of welfare for teenage mothers requires them to be involved with work or training/learning 12 months after giving birth. Existing programs need to be proactive in identifying, gathering evidence and reporting on the quality outcomes of their programs in supporting young mothers in education in order to capitalise on government initiatives and to provide the best opportunities for their students.

This chapter has drawn on the studies of Plumpton High and CCCares programs to identify the factors that are significant in determining the success of school-based young mothers in education programs. The program domain model provides an understanding of the significant factors in supporting school-based young mothers in education programs and these are: place and space; community partnerships; flexible delivery; reliable resourcing; on-site childcare; aligned staff development; demonstration of policy review, leadership and evaluation; and financial stability. The chapter signposted the importance of being aware of these critical factors, in particular for education authorities and policy developers when they consider the establishment of young pregnant and parenting students in education programs.
The model also highlighted the importance of strategic and distributed leadership in promoting the sustainability of young mothers’ education programs. Program leaders must continually engage in the domains of activity identified in the model, while also negotiating the tensions that surround all young mothers’ education programs. These tensions in the program domain model are explored further in the next chapter.
Chapter 8: Tensions Surrounding School-Based Young Mothers’ Education Programs

8.1 Introduction

The two case studies set out in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 illustrate the many challenges that face educators who aim to provide effective and sustainable programs for young mothers. These challenges arise from tensions inherent at the macro (societal and policy) level. However, they are played out at the micro level of individual students’ lived experiences and the day-to-day classroom behaviours that affect students’ learning outcomes.

In this chapter, these macro and micro tensions are explored more fully. Four major sources of tension have been identified: tensions arising at the societal level, policy and leadership tensions, and tensions from students’ personal experiences and those from education and program delivery.

These tensions compound each other in ways that create and perpetuate barriers that challenge these particular school-based programs and their participants in what SmithBattle (2005) calls ‘clashes in understanding’.

8.2 Societal Tensions

Many of the young mothers in the CCCares program talked about how they moved between two worlds within their society. The first is the world of the program where they felt supported and encouraged, in a non-judgemental environment, to continue with their education and training. They said that while in the program they were seen as students who happened to be a mother and they were constantly being provided with positive feedback from the program staff. They spoke about having a place where they could come when things were tough or in times of trouble. Yet, the second world they moved in was that of the community
(‘out there’) where they felt isolated, scrutinised and stigmatised by others. Not only were these young women simultaneously dealing with being mothers and students, they were dealing with how the community judged them.

8.2.1 ‘Good mother’ discourses and forced adoptions

The young, not married, woman has been a major ‘deviant’ of the ‘good mother’ across the last 100 years. Many studies highlight the ‘good/bad’ mother binary (Arai, 2009; Daguerre & Nativel, 2006; Kelly, 2000; SmithBattle, 2001; Luker, 1996; Luttrell, 2003; Musick, 1993; Pillow, 2004). Societal tensions are revealed by an analysis of the media, the types of backlash from local communities and ongoing judgemental reactions experienced by the young mothers. In the context of delivery of a young mothers’ education program, tension arises from the dominant societal valuing and privileged status of ‘mothering’. Such privileging of ‘motherhood’ as a natural and central role of women is based on a narrow construction of the ‘right’ or ‘good’ mother as an individual who is married, settled in a home, educated, and employed prior to pregnancy—an essentially middle-class construction. If a woman deviates from this narrow social construction, they can be viewed by society as the ‘wrong’ or ‘bad’ kind of mother (Daguerre & Nativel, 2006; Luker, 1996; Luttrell, 2003; Musick, 1993; Pillow, 2004).

In the past, this construction of ‘good mothers’ has been used by numerous governments and other welfare organisations as a justification to place children of ‘deviant’ mothers in better families and homes. For example, the assimilation policy of the 1950s and 1960s saw many Indigenous children forcibly taken from their parents and families and placed in ‘better’ foster care homes (later becoming known as the Stolen Generations). In the 1940s to the 1970s, forced adoption policies and practices with unmarried mothers, usually young women, were employed to achieve a similar outcome. Between 1951 and 1971, approximately
150,000 babies were put up for adoption in Australia, the large majority from single, unwed (young) women. During this period, it was common that between 15 and 30 per cent of births to single mothers resulted in ‘hospital arranged adoption’ (Community Affairs References Committee, the Australian Senate 2012; Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices, Canberra). The fact that young and single mothers were not eligible for any form of federal government income support until the 1970s suggests that these mothers were seen unworthy of assistance. There was little income assistance for single mothers, either through the Commonwealth Social Security System or through services provided by the states prior to this period. As highlighted in the Commonwealth Social Services Consolidation Act (1947–1970):

*The mother of an illegitimate child [was defined] as a person who does not qualify for any other pension, benefit or allowance, who is unable to provide for himself and his dependents without assistance.*

The number of adoptions in Australia peaked in 1971–1972 when 9,798 adoptions were recorded (Community Affairs References Committee, the Australian Senate (2012) *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices*, Canberra, pp. 8–9). The swift decline in adoption after this period very closely correlated with a rapid decline in births among women generally, teenage women in particular. While there is a clear relationship between the two, there is a range of possible causes. It may have been influenced by the effective legalisation on abortion, or by the widespread introduction of family planning advice and contraception (both of which occurred around 1969 and 1970). Other factors such as the economic circumstances of mothers may have also played a role, although the

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introduction (by the Whitlam Government in 1973) of the Supporting Mothers Benefit did not occur until two years after the rate of adoption started to drop (Community Affairs References Committee, the Australian Senate (2012) Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices, Canberra, pp. 8–9).

Although forced adoption is no longer common, many young mothers in Australia still face social disapproval and are discredited as mothers, resulting in spoiled identity in the eyes of others. They often encounter exclusion from normal social interactions. This stigmatisation is reflected in young mothers being stereotyped as ‘bad’ parents that are immature, irresponsible and lack the capacity to support their children properly. The CCCares program challenges this by ensuring that all students in the program are treated with respect and that they celebrate the successes of their parenting. The young mothers are regularly affirmed by program teachers and support staff and reminded of how well they are doing with their children and with their education.

8.2.2 Media constructions of young mothers.

In the main, the cultural representations of young mothers are re-produced and presented by the news media via stories that are constructed in a way that fulfils the dominant stereotypes of this group. For example, many representations are based on generalisations of young mothers having children to gain welfare and/or financial benefits. Another stereotype is that young mothers are too immature and thus are incapable of being good mothers or unable to look after their children. Hence, the media continues to perpetuate these notions of ‘bad mothers’ as being the norm among teenagers.

Both young mothers’ education programs featured in this thesis took direct action in combating these ill-informed and negative images of young mothers by engaging with the media themselves to present their side of the story. The media representations of this group
continue to be varied, but some media does now show them as ‘survivors’ or ‘good’ mothers because they have returned to school. Since the mid-2000s, there has been a marked increase in the number positive news stories about young mothers engaging with education. The programs at Plumpton High School and the Canberra College have both been featured extensively in the news media (see Chapters 4 and 5). The school leaders in both programs reported that they wanted to change people’s opinions about young mothers and they saw the media as a means to convey this message to the wider community. For example, both schools made sure that the experiences of young mothers in the programs were shared widely. To combat the stereotypical presentations in some media reports, the programs provided support, advice and training for young mothers in dealing with the media. This approach was also used when the schools had to deal with politicians, governments and departmental personnel. Young mothers were given the opportunity to share their stories and experiences—they were able to participate and have a ‘voice’ in these discussions.

8.2.3 Young mothers: Labelling is disabling.

Even though there are now more positive representations in the media, young mothers still encounter the negative labelling that socially defines their identities as ‘poor’, ‘single’, ‘young’ mothers, although each of these labels does not directly correlate with ‘bad’ mother. The young mothers in this study were able to identify these negative labels. They spoke about frequently experiencing these negative attitudes and comments from people in their local communities. Some of the young mothers in the case studies presented here reported that they were publicly ridiculed; for example, a number of young mothers discussed how some people have said that there was no excuse for them to become pregnant in this day and age. These comments were often made by strangers to the young mothers on public transport, in shopping centres and in the street. Nearly all the young mothers that participated in the case studies have
reported being called names like ‘immature’, ‘stupid’, ‘slut’, ‘welfare cheat’, ‘dumb’ and ‘bad mother’. They all reported experiencing targeted anger from other people, including family and friends. As strangers feel authorised to label young mothers; these labels obviously come from the societal construction of a ‘young mother’ as a ‘deviant identity’. Such labels can be resisted but often result in the individual being in some ways trapped in that identity (Bilton, Bonnett, Jones, Lawson, Skinner, Stanworth & Webster, 2002).

By their very existence, ‘young mothers’ continue to challenge the cultural norms of motherhood; they affront what is socially accepted as ‘correct’ or ‘proper’ forms of behaviour as a mother within our society. Still, all of the young mothers interviewed in the case studies stated in some form that they wanted ‘to be a good mother’. They were quite clear in defining what being a ‘good’ mother entails; that is, someone who ensures that their child is clean, fed, well dressed, well-educated and looked after. They were articulate about their strengths as ‘young mothers’ noting things like being able to keep up with their children, being active, physically strong and growing up with their children. Re-engaging with education and/or training were seen by the young mothers interviewed as one major action a ‘good mother’ does to ensure a positive future for themselves and their children.

**8.2.4 Young mothers and mixed messages.**

Within public policy, there are a number of mixed messages about young mothers that fuel societal tensions. For example, alongside the Gillard Government’s ‘earn or learn’ agenda there are policy directions such as the lump-sum Baby Bonus; a pronatal policy the government has adopted in the interests of future economic stability and age balance (Anderson, 2011). When the Baby Bonus was first announced, there was some public debate about whether this would promote teenage pregnancy. This was proved wrong, with only the fertility rate for women age 26 years to 33 years increasing (Anderson, 2011; Dever, 2005).
Though, the impact of such a policy was felt by the principal at Plumpton High School. He reported receiving an increased community and media backlash, as reported in the media of the time, for providing a program that would ‘encourage’ students at his school to become parents. This kind of societal tension can have an effect on other schools wishing to establish a program that supports young mothers. School leaders, naturally, do not want to attract negative attention and are less inclined to set up a program that arouses political and societal tensions (Luttrell, 2003; Pillow, 2004).

8.2.5 The medical ‘gaze’.

Outside the school setting, as ‘good mothers’ the young mothers interviewed wanted the best outcomes for their baby and understood the need for medical care and advice. However, they reported facing discriminatory and judgemental environments with service providers. Young mothers from both programs spoke about how they were negatively treated by the medical profession during their pregnancy and the birth of their children. Many of these discussions centred on how they believed they were perceived by hospital staff, including nurses, midwives and doctors. Many of the young mothers said that they did not engage with the health system until ‘it was absolutely necessary’. This was confirmed by the healthcare workers and nurses in the CCCares program at Canberra College, who said the only way they can access the young mothers and their children is through the CCCares program clinic. For example, studies such as the research project ‘Barriers to Service Delivery for Young Pregnant Women and Mothers’ (2007) conducted by, Loxton, Stewart-Williams and Adamson showed examples of health programs for young mothers that were supportive, inclusive, proactive and sustainable, but these are the exception to the norm.

The young mothers in this study reported their experiences with the medical profession as being varied and inconsistent. There were positive experiences where they felt included in
the decision-making process and respected as mothers but also negative experiences, for instance, being asked to consider putting the baby up for adoption. Tellingly, the majority of young women mentioned that they felt like they were under surveillance before, during and after their pregnancies. This can be described as the ‘medical gaze’, a concept employed by Foucault (1977) to denote the power of modern medicine to define the human body (Bilton et al., 2002).

Being treated like second-class mothers by the medical profession, particularly by midwives, is a common experience (Harman, 2010), and this was reflected in statements by a number of young mothers in the CCCares program. Many young mothers said they felt excluded from the decision-making process and believed they were ‘spoken over’ when it came to decisions about their body and the treatment of their children. A number of studies have highlighted similar experiences of young mothers in Canada, the UK and the US, revealing the pervasiveness of negative societal constructions of young mothers (Ades et al., 2000; Arai, 2009a; Daguerre & Nativel, 2006; Diehl, 1997; Kelly, 2000; Larkins, 2007; Littlejohn, 1996; Musick, 1993; Sarantakos, 1996; SmithBattle, 2004). It is understandable that health care professionals could feel that they are justified or believe it is necessary to treat these young mothers differently because they are under the legal age of consent. This may force the health care professionals to follow child protection, legal and/or ethical protocols that the young mother may not understand.

8.2.6 The risks of mothering young and the feminisation of poverty.

Young mothers are generally viewed as an ‘at-risk’ group in the community due to higher rates of psychological ill health, depression, illicit drug taking, smoking and alcohol use (Ades et al., 2000). In addition, longitudinal studies show that compared with children of older mothers, children of mothers aged 18 years and under were more likely to have a disturbed
psychological behaviour, poorer school performance, lower reading ability and were more likely to smoke regularly (Shaw, Lawlor & Najman, 2006). Data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children show that children aged four to five years whose mothers were under 25 when they were born have distinctly lower levels of functioning than those with older mothers (Bradbury, 2011). While there will be a number of variables that lead to these findings, ensuring that young mothers access supportive services is key to their future and their educational success.

Even with welfare support, the majority of young mothers in Australia experience extreme social disadvantage and poverty. The ‘feminisation of poverty’ or the increasing concentration of poverty among the female population is well documented (Bilton et al., 2002). The impact of poverty on young mothers returning to education provides another personal tension for students and the program. This results in education programs needing to develop expertise and links outside the normal expectations of schools. For example, in the CCCares program, all of the young mothers and their children are provided with meals. The program also gives financial assistance, when required, to some women in the ‘bad week’ of their social/welfare benefits. The Plumpton High School program provided food vouchers on a needs basis.

The management of crisis food, housing and transport is a common service provided by programs that support young mothers. Although this addresses immediate needs, one outcome can be an increased marginalisation, whereby this group are excluded from mainstream activities because of lack of income. To overcome this, the CCCares program includes financial advice, budgeting and savings education programs into its curriculum. Volunteers from the local NAB support this aspect of the program. The program also offers access to other services that these young women generally are unable to access because of
their limited income. For example, CCCares has leased a dual controlled car for the young mothers to learn how to drive. One of the ex-students from the program has been trained as a driving instructor, which was also funded by the program.

In summary, societal tensions can be seen in the social disapproval and stigmatisation of young mothers and what they represent. The narrow social construction of ‘motherhood’ results in a young mother in turn presented as a social problem by the media. The privileging of ‘motherhood’ as a natural and central role of women is based on a limited and limiting construction of motherhood. Another societal tension is reflected in the level of community backlash and judgemental reactions about the establishment of school-based young mothers’ programs. Further, young mothers often do not engage with service providers and medical professionals. The provision of the health clinic within the CCCares program has locally changed this situation greatly. The feminisation of poverty represents another significant tension in that it locks many young mothers and their children into social isolation and works to reinforce negative stereotypes.

The societal tensions surrounding young mothers’ education programs cannot be ignored. There is a need for proactive management of the media by the schools with a constant focus on the positive mothering actions taken by young mothers who return to school. Schools must be alert to the need to show the wider community the benefit more broadly for mothers who complete their school education. In addition to managing and informing the wider community, young mothers’ programs need to be alert to the regular experience of discrimination faced by the students in their daily lives. In order to optimise the learning environment, young mothers’ programs need to find ways to help young mothers to understand and positively resist the negative labels.
8.3 Personal Tensions

Personal tensions are linked to the many disadvantages experienced by young mothers’ results in social exclusion. In the past, young mothers experienced social exclusion on a number of levels; they were often marginalised from society by having limited or no access to public services, and little participation in education and the political process. Social exclusion manifests in many ways as experienced by the women in this study. In the majority of cases, young women experience social exclusion prior to their pregnancy. Particular circumstances can be associated with an increased ‘risk’ of adolescent pregnancy. These include inadequate or abusive family structures or non-supportive environments; behaviour problems at school or lack of educational engagement; low academic attainment and/or failure; low socioeconomic status or poverty; poor self-esteem or self-image; early onset of sexual activity; lack of psycho-social or personal skills; poor labour market outcomes or unemployment; cultural background and ethnicity; and geographic location (Ades et al., 2000; Arai, 2009a; Daguerre & Nativel, 2006; Diehl, 1997; Harman, 2010; Kelly, 2000; Littlejohn, 1996; Musick, 1993; Sarantakos, 1996). These circumstances contribute to further social exclusion once a teenager becomes pregnant and has a child.

8.3.1 Personal communication skills.

As many young mothers have missed a great deal of schooling (prior to becoming pregnant), they often have poor or low levels of personal communication skills. This was apparent in both programs featured in this thesis as well as reported in a number of studies. Many young mothers experience high levels of frustration and anxiety when it comes to communicating with others. This may lead to defensiveness that develops due to negative experiences in the past and these attitudes are brought to the school. Often, this anxiety leads
to tensions around personal relationships with other young mothers and teachers in the programs. With limited ability to articulate their needs, desires and frustrations and to communicate about core problems and issues, many young mothers lash out and can become irate and violent. The CCCares program therefore works with young mothers on dealing with anger, anxiety and depression by providing counselling, peer support activities and education programs.

The previous chapter highlighted that young mothers involved in the program may be managing a complex home life that affects their participation in the program and therefore affects their education. This tension can then play out at a group level where personal conflicts between participants can arise due to the stresses of managing the complexities in their lives. These behaviours can also create tensions between students and staff. Often, the tension between the young mothers and the teachers is manifested through lashing out verbally or acting out situations. In most cases, this results from the young mother not being skilled or experienced in articulating her frustration. It may reflect that many young mothers have lacked the modelling of a coping or resilient adult reaction to frustration and/or stress. Many young mothers have life circumstances that are difficult to manage and often the stress of this is brought into, and acted out in, the program because it is often the only ‘safe’ place they have to do so.

The programs at Plumpton High School and Canberra College address these personal tensions by allowing the young mothers space and time to deal with their frustrations. In mainstream school settings, this would be difficult due to the teacher reaction to the episode being more focused on the action rather than the reasons behind the situation. These personal tensions can be dangerous for staff in the way that this behavioural response to stress can be confronting, stressful and potentially physically harmful. The CCCares program deals with
this by making sure staff are safe and that they deal with the situation in pairs. The staff member employs a response process that includes moving the student into a quiet area within the building to calm down and work through the issues or problem with senior staff.

Staff members in young mothers’ programs may view the mainstream education behaviour policies as not very useful, relevant or effective in addressing personal issues. This also demonstrates the importance of having carefully appointed experienced staff in these programs that understand and have empathy for students with multiple support needs. A ‘blanket’ approach to staffing across the department and schools will not address the specific needs of these students. Staff require specialised training in order to perform their roles as teachers in an alternative program in a mainstream setting.

8.3.2 Developing group cohesion.

Even though many of the young mothers in education programs face multiple disadvantages, for some this is alleviated by the support they receive from their partners and families. This can create some tensions within the programs as the majority do not have high levels of support external to the program and when they see those that do have this support this can create friction between individuals. It is not unusual to see different subgroups forming around ethnicity, individual status, level of education attained, resources and support. The CCCares program uses a peer support model to help to alleviate these tensions within the group. Through peer support activities, young mothers are encouraged to work with other women with whom they would not normally interact. The program teachers and support staff also develop group activities and outings as a means to create greater group cohesion for the young mothers and their children.
8.3.3 The importance of childcare within the learning space.

Personal tensions can be addressed by supporting the young women to develop their mothering skills and communication skills and to further their education by providing appropriate childcare. This is a central aspect of successful programs (Arai, 2009; Dawson et al., 2005; Kelly, 2000; Sadler et al., 2007). Many young mothers become anxious if they are unable to access their children throughout the day because they fear they will be judged a ‘bad mother’. Some studies (Boulden, 2001; Sadler et al., 2009) show that young women will not access education programs unless childcare is on-site or nearby. The Plumpton High School program experienced this. Some young mothers did not feel confident about leaving their children with others, particularly when the childcare facility was some distance from the school. The personal tension here is that many of the young mothers see being a ‘good mother’ as being there for your child—not ‘leaving them’. This was a common response among young mothers interviewed in the CCCares program. The majority of the young mothers interviewed expressed anxiety about leaving their children with others and they rated having the children with them at school as important. As societal expectations of good mothers are internalised, to be a ‘good mother’, young mothers want and need to have their children nearby.

The school leaders from Canberra College and CCCares program staff conducted research into providing appropriate childcare for young mothers, which informed the implementation of an adjunct care model. This model allows the childcare facility to be placed at the centre of the program, physically and figuratively (see Figure 5.4). A number of studies show that this approach works well with this group because the young mothers are exposed to parenting knowledge and skills from other mothers, both their peers and older ‘grandmothers’. The tension that arises here is that they need to learn to be a mother and that they have few
role models, and they need to be affirmed as the mother while they learn more. The presence of on-site adjunct childcare allows this learning to occur in a supportive environment. Together with the peer mentoring process, where one of the mothers in the program provides advice, encouragement and support to the new mothers, social isolation and lack of confidence in parenting are addressed.

**8.3.4 Dealing with other agencies.**

Personal tensions play out when the young mothers need to deal with outside agencies. For many well-educated, resourced and functional adults in society, dealing with various laws, regulations, agencies and organisations can be difficult. Nonetheless, with maturity and experience, the skills required for communicating and negotiating with these groups develop over time. But for many young mothers, they are often not skilled or lack the support in dealing with organisations, institutions and departments. Many of the young mothers involved in the programs have to deal with bureaucracy on a daily basis and they have experiences of these services being negative, pointless and frustrating. It is common for young mothers to engage with a variety of departments all at one time. For example, one young mother in the CCCares program was dealing with Juvenile Justice, Care and Protection, Transport, Health, Education, Housing and Centrelink and spent the majority of a week trying to obtain support. This illustrates that these students have to deal with more government agencies than non-parenting students in mainstream schools.

Staff also have to deal with a wide range student welfare issues and related support agencies that their colleagues in mainstream schooling do not. Some of the young mothers in the program discussed how much they have learnt about dealing with others particularly government organisations. The CCCares program assists its students in navigating governmental barriers by providing a community liaison officer who supports the young
mothers in these dealings. The tension at a personal level is that the young women do not always come to the program in a settled state for learning; this can affect other students as well as flow on to the staff. The Plumpton High School program attempted to provide such support but was unsuccessful because they did not have the personnel or experience to deal with the range of agencies with which young mothers have to engage.

8.3.5 Student diversity and identity.

Another personal tension that has arisen in both programs relates to the diversity of culture, race, language, class, age and experience as mothers of the individuals in the programs. This has caused tensions as personal conflicts have arisen due to cultural and language barriers and differences. This tension leads some to believe that specialised programs for young mothers should not be developed and these students should be placed into the mainstream schooling context (Luttrell, 2003; Pillow, 2004). But, many of the young mothers that took part in the two case studies insisted on the value of such programs as providing them with a place and space where they felt safe and supported, something they felt they would not receive in a mainstream setting. Although they have closer contact with other students with differing backgrounds, the young mothers are progressively experiencing the more adult adaptations of tolerance of diversity.

Overall, while many young mothers face difficult circumstances and situations in their lives, the majority of young mothers that took part in this study agreed that having their baby gave them greater clarity and purpose in their lives. It gave them a new identity, and one over which they felt they had more control. This is a theme that SmithBattle (2005) also found in her work:

Mothering placed them on a new path and gave new meaning and depth to their lives.

In spite of adverse childhood experiences, mothering for some teens provides a
corrective or turning-point experience. Some mothers face many challenges but it’s not strictly because they had a baby when they were teenagers. (p 848)

8.4 Policy and Leadership Tensions

Young mothers’ programs like those at Plumpton High School and Canberra College continue to generate tensions for policy makers for several reasons. First, they do not fit nicely into one particular area of policy. Second, they generally have ‘grassroots’ origins and develop from the school-based level rather than from the top down. These policy and leadership tensions are similar to those experienced by special education schools—that is, they endeavour to provide inclusive education that is well resourced, using a model that supports fewer students compared to a mainstream setting, but they operate in an environment of policy overlap and complexity and have requirements that ‘disrupt’ routine procedures of mainstream schooling delivery.

8.4.1 Policy lags and overlaps.

Typically, programs that focus on supporting small numbers of students on the margins are constantly threatened with reduced budgets or program closure. Aniftos and McLuskie (2003) identify the core principles of inclusive education in which the CCCares program is grounded:

At the school level, inclusive education seeks to address the learning needs of all with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion’ (UNESCO, 1994). UNESCO promotes inclusive school communities as the most effective way of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.

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The policies that exist around parenting students lack an evidence-base and have been challenging to implement, as they are often dated and not explicit. For example, the NSW DET does not have an explicit young mothers’ policy and any reference to this group is limited to the overarching Student Welfare Policy (1996). Even though the ACT DET does have an explicit policy statement, *Pregnant Students Policy and Implementation Guidelines* (May 1988), its focus is on the pregnant student’s rights to an education. Little reference is made to young parents in education and how schools can and/or should support these students. Since it is an out-dated (1988) policy, it does not align with other contemporary ACT DET policies. Even though there are some barriers and advantages of having both explicit young mothers education policy and a general student welfare policy, what is evident from the two case studies is that in the NSW context, that of a generic student welfare policy, the Plumpton High School program did not survive as there was not a firm policy direction or set of procedures to ensure the programs longevity. In the ACT context, with an explicit policy the program at Canberra College can use this policy as leverage to ensure that the Department continues to support, and even expand the program.

Analysis of the two programs presented in this thesis illustrates that there are a number of policy overlaps and funding sources not realised. This is mainly due to the large number of policies and procedures with which schools need to contend. School leaders are student centred and responsive in their practice. They are often faced with developing a program first then looking at the relevant policy requirements. When asked if they were aware of the relevant policy to support young mothers, one of the school leaders responded: ‘I didn’t know there was a policy, now that you have drawn it to my attention I will have a look at it, or could you just email it to me?’ This is an example of how the school leadership can often become so focused on the *doing* and that the policy framework is regarded as secondary or irrelevant.
8.4.2 Policy versus practice.

Tensions arise between existing departmental policies, frameworks and schools developing their own approaches. As seen in the programs in this thesis, practice often supersedes departmental policies because they are responsive and developed using an evidence-based approach that meets the needs of the local situation. Many of the young mothers in education policies in Australia have not been evidence-based policies. It is important to develop an approach that bridges departmental quality assurance, performance, legal responsibility and governance requirements and practice at the school level. Often, there are a number of policies that operate in parallel, but they are not consistently consulted. The main policy areas that need to be considered in a policy renewal process addressing school-based young mothers in education programs include inclusive education; early childhood education; childcare and protection; risk management and insurance; school attendance; staffing; resourcing and funding; teaching, curriculum, assessment and reporting; school leadership and governance; teacher/staff training and development; children, and young people; transport, and facilities. In addition, there are an equivalent number of subordinate policies and procedures needing to be reviewed.

School principals and/or program leaders are required to adhere to departmental policy and procedure and at the same time lead and manage flexible programs. Frequently, tension emerges between the implementation of policy and the reality of what is required at program level. Staff in the programs featured in this thesis discussed experiencing a number of barriers when it came to providing childcare for their students. The Plumpton High School principal tried to establish a childcare facility on-site as he saw the off-site approach was not working appropriately. Having a childcare centre on a high school site in NSW was unprecedented and there were a number of policy issues that became apparent in trying to establish a centre at
Plumpton High School these included for example, childcare sitting outside the portfolio responsibility of the Education Department. Child protection policy was also difficult to navigate because there had never been a childcare situated within a high school. Staffing policy was problematic in the sense that there was a limited number of staff in the school that had the appropriate attitudes and experience to provide specialised support to this group of students. Another policy tension that arose was around the need for funding to cover the costs related to the establishment and maintenance of the program and linked childcare facilities. The cost inhibited the provision of childcare at Plumpton High School because the establishment of a school-based program for young mothers was viewed within the context of other competing program priorities by the NSW DET. The issue was seen as a local school community initiative that had to be resourced by the school and its local community. In other words, the NSW DET dealt with policy tensions by passing responsibility (and costs) on to the school community.

The ACT DET supports school-based governance and management and the CCCares program was located in an ACT DET Senior Secondary College so the principal of Canberra College was able to incorporate an adjunct childcare centre within the CCCares program. This was viewed by the school leaders and the program staff as paramount to ensuring the success of the young mothers’ program. Recently, tensions have arisen related to the requirements of the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care. On 1 January 2012, a National Quality Framework was established that applies to most long day care, family day care, preschool (or kindergarten) and outside school hours care services, with key requirements being phased in over time. Requirements such as staff qualifications, educator-to-child ratios and other key staffing arrangements will be phased in between 2012 and 2020. Under the regulatory requirements of this framework, there was a real danger that the
childcare model employed at *CCCares* would not satisfy these requirements. The school leaders engaged in a process of policy pro-activeness where they lobbied the AEU to seek exemption from the framework requirements on their behalf. This proved successful as the adjunct care model was granted exemption from the requirements due to the particular focus in supporting young mothers re-engage with education.

In comparison, the policy tensions experienced by Plumpton High School concerning *CCCares* were not resolved and compromised the sustainability of the program. The school leaders and program staff at *CCCares* witnessed this and they were able to adapt their program to meet the challenges already experienced by the program at Plumpton High School. However, even with this level of experience, knowledge, research and planning the *CCCares* program still encounters policy challenges and continually negotiates tensions between policy and practice.

### 8.4.3 Strategic leadership.

The importance of strategic leadership in resolving and managing policy tensions and ensuring the sustainability of young mothers in education programs cannot be overstated. There are multiple leaders within schools and not all of them are aware of policy and procedure. Often, policy makers need guidance on how to make policy more responsive to the complexity and diversity of issues that affect those on the ‘ground’. Policy makers need to work with and for leaders as they are the personnel responsible for implementation, evaluation and reporting on the impact of these policies. Ball (2006) takes this concept further:

*By thinking about what sort of people and ‘voices’ inhabit the texts of policy analysis we also need to think about how we engage with the social and collective identities of our research subjects—the ‘teacher’, ‘parent’, ‘policy maker’; their gender, class, race, sexuality and physical ability. It is one thing to consider the ‘effects’ of policies*
upon abstract social collectives. It is another to attempt to capture the complex interplay of identities and interests and coalitions and conflicts within the processes and enactments of policy. (p. 22)

There have been recent policy developments that attempt to meet these challenges as ‘governments are moving to engage in networked governance and more fluid interaction between different sectors of society in the policy process’ (Althaus, Bridgman & Davis, 2007, p. 11). This was more apparent in the Canberra College context than at Plumpton High School but this may reflect the pace of policy development and change over a five-year period. The school leaders at Canberra College were involved in all aspects of CCCares; they all had roles to play within the program, which included engaging with policy makers. Conversely, the principal at Plumpton High School was on his own in regard to the program, he was isolated and lacked support from the school executive and the NSW DET.

The amount of time school leaders in young mothers’ education programs spend pursuing interagency partnerships and relationships was immense; leaders in both programs discussed the time and effort put into developing strategic partnerships that would provide the support that the young mothers in the programs needed to re-engage with education. The tension is between having an education focus (as expected by the system) versus a focus on developing wider partnerships (as required to achieve program goals). The school leadership at Canberra College saw the strategic benefit in assigning a deputy principal to pursue these partnerships, whereas the principal at Plumpton who performed this role himself. The CCCares approach to building partnerships has proven extremely successful with the program receiving high levels of political, financial and community support. The deputy principal responsible has spent the majority of his time performing these tasks, which took him ‘off-line’ from other teaching tasks and duties within the College. This wider dedicated role has
been essential, but it has not been seen as core education business by some system officials. As education systems become more holistic and focused on full service schools, there is a need to consider the appointment of appropriate staff to lead and manage this interagency services model to provide overall program sustainability and to ensure that the contextual factors affecting young mothers’ programs are carefully managed.

In addition to strategic leadership, distributed leadership is essential to the sustainability of young mothers’ education programs. In most school-based programs, the principal is the person who drives program, priorities and/or agendas. In the Plumpton High School program, once the principal left the school, the program was not a key priority of the new school executives’ agenda and the program collapsed. In contrast, the Canberra College employed a distributed leadership approach (Camburn, Rowan & Taylor, 2003; Gronn, 2002; Harris, 2004, 2009; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008; Spillane, 2005; Spillane, Diamond & Jita, 2003; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001, 2004). This means that the role and responsibilities of school leadership are purposefully distributed more widely than the executive team. While this approach to leadership is often seen as an elusive concept (Harris, 2004, 2009), the concept of distributed school leadership is consistent with shared, collaborative, democratic and participative leadership (Harris, 2009, p. 1). The distributed leadership model has proven useful for the CCCares program as all school leaders have commitment and an in-depth understanding of the program and its goals that is consistent with Harris’ (2009) definition of distributed leadership:

*Distributed leadership helps to advance a larger agenda about optimal forms of organising and optimal ways of securing improved performance. It is primarily concerned with the co-performance of leadership practice and the nature of the interactions that contribute to that co-performance. It lies at the extreme end of what is*
typically known as participatory leadership and is premised on the idea of optimal adaptability when those closest to the action are empowered to shape the organisation’s responses. In this model, formal leaders prompt emergent and creative actions among groups to whom leadership is distributed and those in formal leadership roles emphasise the management of interdependencies, rather than controls over process or outcomes. (p. 3)

Observations of the school leaders over four years of data collection at the CCCares program indicated that the distributed leadership approach was the preferred model for the principal and the leadership team at Canberra College. They overcame the risks of isolated leadership by sharing the program responsibilities, sharing strategic roles and supporting each other in managing the CCCares program. One indication of the benefits of this approach is the amount of funding that has been secured by the leadership team for the program and the imminent construction of a purpose built state of the art facility costing upward of $14 million. Further, the team has been able to have a nation-wide impact through the establishment of the AYPN.

8.4.4 Child protection and mandatory reporting.

Another policy tension that has required careful management and leadership is that of child protection policy and procedure. Many of the young mothers in both programs had their first child at about 15 years of age. Under the child protection requirements of mandatory reporting, the questions about the context of their pregnancy are not asked or discussed. This was apparent in programs at Plumpton High School and Canberra College. Although the majority of women in the programs were in their early 20s, there was a constant tension surrounding the teachers’ responsibilities as mandatory reporters and what the young mothers wanted to disclose to them about their pregnancy as a teenager. The staff often engaged in
‘protective interrupting’ as a means to focus on the present rather than discussing what occurred in the past. Once again, this demonstrates the need to have experienced, well-trained and appropriate staff in these programs. The situation faced by the teachers in these programs is that some young mothers want to disclose the historical narrative of their pregnancy as they feel they can trust the staff member with this information. Nevertheless, the teaching staff maintains a ‘professional distance’ from the students. This is not because they do not want to support the young mother in their working through the details, but more to do with the legal requirements of being a mandatory reporter under child protection legislation. Once again, a more nuanced policy environment would take these factors into consideration.

### 8.5 Educational and Program Tensions

Each of the preceding sections reveals the need for young mothers’ programs to be cognisant of tensions beyond their core business of education. In order to ensure effective education and learning, young mothers’ programs need to manage the tensions in an ongoing way. However, there remain a number of direct education tensions that are not typically experienced in mainstream school settings.

#### 8.5.1 Mainstream versus special treatment.

Educational tensions associated with young mothers’ education programs can be related to the fact that the young mothers have a range of educational backgrounds. In both programs examined, the majority of students had disengaged from schooling some time ago or had had bad experiences of schooling in the past that created barriers for learning. It was reported that many Year 10 level students in the program had literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills at a Year 5 level. Such students require extra support and time to

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36 Protective interrupting is a strategy to prevent a child disclosing in front of other students and providing them with the opportunity to disclose in a safe and confidential manner.
complete their formal schooling. One way the *CCCare* program addressed this tension was to ensure that students had Individual Learning Plans that they worked through at their own pace and competency level. Since the students also have parenting responsibilities, the programs were delivered through flexible learning. This allowed for interruption of learning when a child is ill or if the young mother needs time away from the program. This individual learning approach is a key to success but does not mirror other mainstream practices.

Although these approaches to teaching and learning are pedagogically sound, tension develops because young mothers’ programs are viewed as a ‘soft option’ by some in the school community. Although students are working through accredited packages and programs, which have the same assessment requirements as mainstream students, there is still a perception beyond the program that the learning in these spaces is not at the same standard expected of other students in the schooling system. The school leaders and program teachers at Canberra College all spoke about how some individuals in the department and others in the wider community view the young mothers in education program as a ‘soft option’ or ‘country club’ for these students.

To combat the perception that the *CCCare* program is a soft option, the school leaders have ensured that teachers from the main campus taught within the program at some point during the school year. The program teachers at *CCCare* take every opportunity to be vocal about the standard of teaching and learning that occurs within the program. Three years ago, one of the young mothers in the program topped the school in English. This was a great achievement and the school leaders made sure that it was publicised throughout the College and the ACT DET. On average, 20 young mothers graduated from the College each year and this number has increased over the past five years.
A related educational tension that emerged for this research is the perception that ‘pushing’ all young mothers into one program ‘ghettoises’ them, as *out of sight out of mind*. The mainstreaming versus separate (purpose built) space dilemma is evident in both case studies and in the literature. In NSW DET, it was believed that there should not be one particular school or program for young mothers to attend. It was felt that all public high schools across NSW should provide support for young mothers on a needs basis as a core response to the NSW DET Student Welfare Policy. This ‘mainstreaming’ approach was used as a means to cover the large geographical area of NSW. It also placed the responsibility of providing educational support to disadvantaged groups, like young mothers, on to schools and their local communities. Hence, the program at Plumpton High School was a response to a local need identified by the principal and those in the local community. Recurring arguments include young mothers are seen as a small percentage of the student cohort who are generally beyond the compulsory age for schooling; and, redirecting funds for these initiatives depletes resources for competing departmental agendas and priorities. Creation of an appropriate facility for young mothers’ education programs can cost up to $6 million (as demonstrated in the *CCCares* program, with the construction of a purpose built facility commencing in early 2013).

In comparison to the situation in NSW, the ACT *CCCares* program takes responsibility for servicing the region in supporting young mothers. This has been possible because the ACT region is relatively small geographically and it is more cost effective and a better use of resources to have a centralised program that caters for young mothers and their children. The Senior College system also assists in that it caters only to students in Years 11 and 12. Many of the young mothers in the *CCCares* program felt that having a place and space of their own, where they could engage with education, was far more important than its
location. On the other hand, the school leaders believed that a new facility ought to be built on
the Canberra College main campus so young mothers in the program can access all aspects of
the curriculum on offer at the main campus. They also believe it is important that the rest of
the College community be exposed to the workings of the young mothers’ program. Reflecting
on the two case studies, each operating in very different policy environments, it is evident that
there are different ‘degrees of freedom’ available to school leaders when negotiating the
tensions arising from the need to provide ‘bespoke’ programs to meet the educational needs of
young mothers within a mainstream educational policy framework.

8.5.2 ‘Clearing them for learning.’

The school leaders and program teaching staff at CCCares recognise that access to the
curriculum is enabled by other parts of the program. They state the importance of ‘clearing
them for learning’: dealing with the personal/social/emotional issues as a priority enabling
‘good pedagogy’ and ‘effective’ learning. They have a strong philosophical belief that
learning cannot occur unless these other conflicting issues are dealt with first. A number of
staff in the CCCares program reported that they believed preparing the students for learning
was the first priority and that the curriculum could only then be addressed. Once a balance was
achieved in the young mothers’ life, learning occurred and was sustained for a longer period.
Some practices, for example, when students are given more time to complete their schooling
compared to other students, can be misinterpreted by individuals outside the program, who do
not recognise the number of barriers to learning that individuals face. These issues need to be
addressed in the program on a continuous basis, so that problems associated with poverty,
housing, conflict, stress and mental illness; for example, do not pose obstacles to learning.
‘Clearing’ these obstacles is the necessary first step to preparing young mothers for learning.
As they are small number (population) in the overall school system, there is a belief that young mothers’ programs are expensive to resource and support. Though, there is little evidence to suggest that this approach is any more costly than any other specialised education program. Bradley (2010) and Daguerre and Nativel (2006) have demonstrated the cost effectiveness of ensuring young mothers complete their formal education and or training. They argue that, with a school qualification, young mothers are more likely enter the workforce, obtain long-term employment, increase their skills level and become continuing tax payers over their lifetimes. In comparison, the outcomes for those not completing Year 12, or equivalent, results in the increased chance of poverty, social disadvantage and welfare dependence.

Another education tension identified by the school leaders is the need to ensure that the right staff are in the program and retained in the program. In most educational jurisdictions, the management of the staffing process is centralised and the school/college has little influence over who comes into the program as a teacher. This makes it difficult for programs to guarantee the suitability of teaching staff working with this vulnerable group. The experienced teachers already in the programs highlight how the teaching differs from the mainstream setting. The teaching practices and pedagogy needs to be informal, and the teachers are more facilitators and mentors than typical teachers in mainstream classrooms. Not all teachers will be interested in this more dynamic and flexible pedagogy and indeed not all are suited. It is an ongoing tension for young mothers’ programs to recruit, support and develop staff and to avoid mandatory transfers that affect the maintenance of a collegial and supportive staff team. Just as ‘special education’ is seen as an important speciality within teaching, the holistic pedagogical skills of staff working with young mothers’ programs should be acknowledged.
8.6 Conclusion

The critical domains of activity in delivering sustainable school-based programs for young mothers identified in Figure 16 are permeated with societal, personal, policy and leadership, and educational tensions. These tensions are fluid and need to be negotiated constantly. They can create possibilities and new directions but at the same time create barriers that can affect the delivery and sustainability of specialised education programs for young mothers. This chapter explained how these tensions were negotiated in young mothers’ education programs at Plumpton High School and Canberra College. An appreciation of these tensions should assist program leaders and managers in developing young mothers’ education programs by providing an understanding of the complexities involved in this type of program delivery at the school level.
Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This thesis explored the challenges, tensions and complexities in supporting young mothers in school-level education by presenting the perspectives of young mothers, school leaders, program teachers and support staff involved in delivery of young mothers in education programs. Most previous research performed in the area of young mothers and education does not include the participation of those that provide support within school-based programs, such as school leaders, program teachers and support staff.

The literature review demonstrated that education is critical for improving the life outcomes for young mothers and their children who are predominantly from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. This thesis fills a gap in research on quality school-based education programs for young mothers by enabling participants and stakeholders to share their thoughts, ideas and experiences of the programs. Analysis of this evidence has provided insight into the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of young mothers’ education programs. This thesis also identified some of the negative stereotypes and attitudes that still exist in relation to teenage pregnancy in the Western world that shape the content of education programs for young mothers.

These stereotypes continue to exist in an era where an extended education, delayed childbearing, smaller families, two income households, and careers for women are increasingly the norm. The thesis demonstrates how high-quality, school-based parent support and childcare provision can offer parenting knowledge, support and behavioural (parenting) modelling for young mothers and safe and developmentally stimulating care for their children. Such programs can assist in promoting school retention and graduation, positive mother–child
interactions, lower rates of subsequent births, and positive indicators of child health and development in the children of young mothers.

This research identifies the critical factors contributing to the success and sustainability of school-based young mothers in education programs. Through an analysis of the literature and the case studies at Plumpton High School and Canberra College, this thesis provides a guide to the development and delivery of programs for supporting young mothers at the school level. Drawing on the literature review and thematic analysis of interview data, eight program domains that require particular attention in supporting young mothers to re-engage with education and/or training, are identified: place and space; community partnerships; flexible delivery; resourcing; on-site childcare; staff development; policy review, leadership and evaluation; and financial sustainability. These domains of activity highlight the ways in which education policies and programs can support the needs of young mothers in education programs. The thesis also illustrates the importance of strategic and distributed leadership, particularly in negotiating the tensions surrounding young mothers’ education programs at the societal, personal, policy and educational level.

This thesis contributes new knowledge about young mothers in education programs particularly in the Australian context, as well as providing insights into the challenges facing programs that aim to re-engage young mothers with education. In addition, the study indicates the impact that dominant discourses about teenage motherhood have on young mothers’ engagement with education. It also highlights how these discourses influence and inhibit the establishment and sustainability of school-based programs for young mothers. The research reveals that young mothers want to engage in countering these discourses and that they feel strongly about speaking for themselves rather than others speaking for them. This thesis suggests that it is time to re-frame the ‘problem’ of teenage motherhood and challenge out-
dated societal views about young mothers’ right to an education. This study also contributes to a greater understanding of policy challenges and drivers surrounding the establishment and delivery of young mothers’ support programs in school settings. The findings have implications for the development of education and social policy, including student wellbeing strategies, school-based support programs and public awareness of the issues surrounding young mothers’ education programs.

The thesis identifies gaps in the literature that require further investigation. These include more in-depth research on Indigenous young parents and their contexts; research on the experiences of young fathers; longitudinal research that extends beyond program participation; and research on Cultural and Linguistic Diverse (CALD) groups including refugee young mothers. Research is also needed on the life and educational outcomes of children of young parents; the issue of sex education in curriculum development in Australia; rural and remote teenage pregnancy and motherhood; and the scope and quality of pre-service teacher education in this area.

Research on the education of young fathers is particularly limited. This area is also problematic as a field of inquiry because there are very limited services provided to young fathers who wish to be connected with their families. Even though the focus of this thesis was on young mothers, the CCCares program includes young fathers. While this group deserves further investigation and study, most young mothers’ programs do not include young fathers. Moreover, some programs exclude male teachers, male visitors and young fathers from entering the space inhabited by the young mothers, on the grounds that many young mothers have had violent, negative and stressful relationships with men. It is believed having men in these spaces can create an unsafe situation for some young mothers. However, this does not appear to be an issue in the CCCares program and some young fathers access the curriculum
with their partners as well as engaging in parenting skills development with the healthcare workers. This topic should therefore be the focus of further research.

9.2 Final Remarks

This thesis is timely, given that in May 2011, the Australian Government announced a pilot program that requires teenage mothers to make contact with Centrelink when their child is six months old and to make plans to return to school and/or training when the child is one year old or lose their parenting payment. Given the number of young mothers who receive Centrelink support, schools in the ten targeted areas around Australia are likely to face an increased demand from young mothers for educational support in response to this policy initiative.

As demonstrated by this thesis, there is a clear need for a more explicit policy framework to guide education authorities and school communities in supporting young mothers to re-engage with education. The findings of this study suggest that policy development should be informed by the ‘voices’ of young mothers and other stakeholders in young mothers’ education programs by presenting the ‘voices’ of women who have participated and continue to engage in school-based young mothers’ programs as well as program staff. This study contributes significantly to our understanding of what it takes to support young mothers in school-based education.

It is appropriate that this thesis concludes with the ‘voice’ of a young mother engaged in education. As the thesis opened with Kia’s comment, her full quotation is offered as a reminder of the importance of providing a socially just, inclusive and equitable education for young mothers:

“CLEARING THEM FOR LEARNING”
If they [society] want a whole heap of girls that have no education and stuck in the slums, that’s their issue. Keeping us in school and giving us an education and giving a chance to get a decent job to be able to raise our children properly. Money is a big issue! You need it to support your kids. You need the education to get the jobs that pay well. Because, I have been through the program I don’t want to stay on the pension. I am using it as a way to support my kids while I am studying. I’m planning to get a decent job; I am organising childcare for my kids so I can study full time. Life for me is really positive and without the program I wouldn’t be where I am today, I wouldn’t have been able to go to TAFE and do the courses I wanted, if I had not been involved with the program.
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Appendix 1: Reports and Research Conducted on the Topic of Young Mothers (2001 to 2011)

There have been 20 key research projects and reports conducted on the topic of young women who are pregnant and/or parents in Australia in the period of 2001 to 2011, most of which have been commissioned by a number of human services government (State and Commonwealth) and non-government agencies. These include DEEWR; MCEETYA; FaHCSIA; the NSW Government, the Families First initiative; area Health services and Local Area Councils and the Benevolent Society. A number of Australian universities have supported research including PhD research on this topic under the auspices of the following universities: Australian National University, University of Canberra (this author), University of Sydney, The University of Melbourne, Deakin University, the University of New South Wales, La Trobe University, James Cook University, University of Newcastle, Edith Cowan University and Notre Dame University (Australia).

1. Present, pregnant and proud: Keeping pregnant students and young mums in education (2001).*

*Present, pregnant and proud* explores what schools can do to better support pregnant and parenting young mothers. It documents some good examples of what school communities around Australia are doing to support these young women. These schools provide a platform of outstanding achievement of innovation and social justice in the retention of pregnant and parenting students in education and training. *Present, pregnant and proud* offers a model policy for schools and systems and provides recommendations for further action. Three simple questions are put forward to service providers:

1. What is it like to be a pregnant or parenting student at an Australian school?
2. What do schools do about pregnant and parenting students?
3. What should schools do?

The AWE developed this publication and it has been devised within a sound context of the latest research into teenage pregnancy.

2. *Motherhood or abortion: Pregnancy resolution decisions of Australian teenagers (2001).*

This research explored the factors that discriminate between those who terminate and those who continue a teenage pregnancy. To achieve this aim, a survey was conducted on young pregnant women throughout NSW and the ACT. The survey sought information on young women’s characteristics on three different levels: individual; institutional; and societal or cultural.

The findings suggest that, at each of the three levels proposed, there are factors that discriminate between young women who choose abortion and those who choose motherhood. At the individual level, attitudes to abortion and career aspirations were found to affect pregnancy resolution. At the institutional level, factors relating to education, family, relationships and religion were found to discriminate between the two groups. Finally, at the cultural level, ethnicity and area of residence were found to be associated with pregnancy resolution, in addition to modifying the effect of characteristics at other levels.


3. *Young mothers of the West: An exploration of support and issues surrounding young pregnant and parenting women from Western Sydney in State Secondary education (WESROC Ltd) (2002).*

This report was commissioned by Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) and funded by the NSW Department of Women was produced in 2002, *The Young Mothers of the West Project.* It proposed to investigate the range of issues affecting the completion of school education of student mothers in the region, particularly those relating to role of schools. The report was critical of the NSW DET’s perceived lack of support for young pregnant women and young mothers. The research was undertaken to examine the ‘support and issues surrounding young pregnant and parenting women in public high schools in the Western Sydney region’ (WSROC, 2002, p. 2). A number of principals (or their nominees) were interviewed from Parramatta, Fairfield, Liverpool, Blacktown, Mt Druitt and Penrith districts. The research failed to include alternative options and pathways available to young mothers within NSW TAFE. A number of programs for this particular group have or are currently running in the area where the research was based.

4. *Leaps and bounds: Linking young pregnant and parenting women to education (2003).*

This report was funded through *Families First*, an initiative of the NSW state government. The project took approximately 15 months to complete and set out to investigate the educational experiences, needs and aspirations of young pregnant and parenting women living in the Fairfield and Liverpool areas of South Western Sydney. The *Leaps and Bounds* report utilised solid mythological research approaches to develop a resource that could be used by the local community as well as to inform government policy development.

The overall goal behind the project was the hope that the socioeconomic circumstances and the health and wellbeing of young pregnant and parenting women and their children would be improved through greater access to and participation in education and training (Flannery, 2003, pp. 19–20). The project aimed to investigate the educational experiences, needs and aspirations of young pregnant and parenting women in the Fairfield and Liverpool Local Government Area. A set of recommendations was developed to address the potentials and barriers identified by research and that build on young women’s strengths and existing support networks. The project also developed local collaborative partnerships for future service planning and delivery.


5. *The Lifting Educational Access for Pregnant and Parenting Students project (2003).*

In 1999, Education Queensland formally recognised the needs of pregnant and parenting students with the development of the *Pregnant and Parenting Students Policy*. The LEAPPS Project began in June 2003. Funding for the project ceased on 30 June 2005.

The LEAPPS project aimed to:

- promote and expand the implementation of Education Queensland’s *Pregnant and Parenting Student Policy*
- develop and trial differentiated models of support for pregnant and parenting students in diverse communities across Queensland
- develop models informed by current research into the needs of young pregnant and parenting students, including childcare and transport barriers to continuing education, Indigenous health and community issues, and relationship and domestic/family violence issues.
The evaluation of the program found that key factors that impact, either positively or negatively, on the support of pregnant and parenting young people in Queensland include supportive school personnel, community links, system level support, supportive school environment, educational pathways, and personal circumstances.


6. **How can we better support young pregnant women?—Voices from Blacktown/Mt Druitt (2004).*

The Blacktown Teenage Pregnancy Initiative aimed to explore the experience of teenage pregnancy in the local area in order to answer the question: *How do we better support young women who become pregnant in the Blacktown Local Government Area?* The study encompassed the views of young women who became pregnant and chose to continue with their pregnancy, and those who decided to terminate. This project was funded through the National Women’s Health Program (*NSW Public Health Outcomes Funding Agreement*).

The project aimed to explore the issues within the local context and develop strategies that would be a direct response to young women’s experiences and needs expressed through their own voices (Di Battista, 2004, p. 6). It was hoped that from this initiative service provision would be better able to respond to the needs of young women, therefore increasing the possibility of better life outcomes for themselves and their children.


7. **The taking your baby to school report, the Young Parents’ Access Project (YPAP), Corio Bay Senior College (2004)**

A report on one school-based intervention in a Victorian secondary school (Corio Bay Senior College), designed to improve the educational and social outcomes for a group of young mothers. The project team found that a successful program for parenting teenagers adopts a multi-dimensional approach, providing childcare, fostering high aspirations and supporting opportunities to graduate. These opportunities can occur through negotiate, realistic, supportive academic programs, through equity of treatment, health services that include contraception, prenatal care and nutrition, through social support such as transport and through case management including mentoring and counselling. YPAP is one local response to this multifaceted challenge. The objectives of the program are to:
• retain, re-attract and support young parents into the education system
• improve education levels and future educational and employment opportunities
• improve the parenting skills of the students
• provide positive role modelling for the parents and their children, and life skill education to the parents
• develop opportunities for CBSC childcare students to use the childcare centre for work placements (Armstrong 2003).

When mapping the establishment of YPAP, researchers investigated the teaching and learning needs of young parents returning to school and found that they faced specific obstacles. Many had been out of school for substantial periods and often lacked the necessary literacy, numeracy, ICT and life skills to enable successful transition into a Year 11–12 learning environment.


8. Windows of opportunity: creating pathways to education and employment: An evaluation of the Young Women who are Parents Program (2004).*

This report documented the evaluation of the Benevolent Society’s YWWAP program, in particular the Opportunities and Choices Training Program for YWWAP. The evaluation intended to add to the developing body of knowledge about young women who are parents and their children, and the pathways these young women sometimes take to education and employment. In particular, it explored the outcomes of participation in a community-based program focusing on opportunities and choices for further education, training and employment.

The aims of the evaluation were to:

1. Examine how the young women’s participation in the Opportunity and Choices Training Program for YWWAP has impacted on their lives and the lives of their children
2. Explore the pathways young women take into the program
3. Identify the ways in which the program has influenced the young women’s intentions and capacity to participate in further education or employment (p. 5).


This report provided an overview of the activities and achievements of the Young Parents Project (YPP) for the period from June 2004 to July 2006. The project advocated for the adoption of a holistic and integrated approach to support the development of an innovative and continuous service that would meet the needs of young women who are pregnant and/or parents in south-eastern Sydney. The first year of this project was funded by Families NSW as part of their initiatives in South East Sydney Area Health Service (SESAHS). The second year of this project was funded by Area Women’s Health and Community Partnerships through the Public Health Outcomes Funding Agreement—National Women’s Health Program.

The NSW Framework for Maternity Services (NSW Health, 2000) identified young pregnant women as a group with special needs, including often complex psychological, social and economic issues. The NSW Department of Health has identified the need for the provision of an integrated approach to antenatal and postnatal care for pregnant teenagers and young mothers and has suggested that there be a holistic government approach to service planning and collaboration with NGOs (NSW Department of Health, 2004).

The project aimed to create connections between maternity, child and family health and community-based services for young women who were pregnant and/or parenting. This included the Royal Hospital for Women (RHW), St George Hospital and the Sutherland Hospital (TSH). The project aimed to develop strong and sustainable links between service providers that would improve the transition of young women from one service provider to another, as well as ensure access to peer and professional support.

Although the two-year project has gone some way to achieving its aims, there were a number of barriers including the delay in signing memorandum of understanding (MoU), the resistance to engage in youth friendly outreach projects, the lack of staff attendance at and involvement in Young Parent Committees and the deficiency of service referral pathways that prioritise young women into continuity of care models during the antenatal period.

10. Connecting Young Parents: engaging and empowering pregnant and parenting teens (2005).*

‘Connecting Young Parents’ (CYP) was a cross-border; multi-sector project based in Albury-Wodonga that quickly became effective in the development of a variety of services with and for teen parents. CYP was the major outcome of this working group; the project was federally funded until 2008, and acted as the facilitator for further developments. The overall goals for the project were to improve services to, and the connectedness of, pregnant/parenting teens by:

- developing service provision for young parents
- connecting young parents with local services
- strengthening the parenting skills of young parents
- building social networks for young parents
- linking young parents into further education.

CYP is a project has been successful addressing the needs of a vulnerable population group (i.e. rural and regional young parents aged under 20 and their families) through developing a broad multi-sectoral collaboration, partnerships and pathways in Albury-Wodonga. Over the period of the project, the collaboration has resulted in the establishment of a broad, deep multi-sectoral network; provided for the provision of co-ordinated service information; created active engagement in ongoing multiple partnerships; increased the expansion of service capacity and choices. All of these outcomes have, in turn, contributed towards the final outcome of an increased connectedness of young parents through a variety of projects in which young parents have successfully linked with local services, engaged with social networks, strengthened their parenting skills; and been connected into further education.


11. Barriers to service delivery for young pregnant women and mothers (2007).*

This report was produced by the Research Centre for Gender, Health and Ageing (RCGHA) at the University of Newcastle. The project was funded by the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme. The aim of the project was to identify the barriers (as identified in
earlier research and allowing for the addition of barriers not yet identified) to service delivery for young pregnant women and mothers. This project set out to:

1. Identify the covert and overt structures that exist within services that operate to prevent young women from accessing those services
2. Identify the attitudes and beliefs that are perceived by young women to exist within services, policy, and the community and media, that deter them from accessing services
3. Identify and describe the experiences that young women have had when accessing services
4. Determine the barriers that service personnel perceive as acting to prevent young women from using their services
5. Determine and specific barriers to service use that occur for women from subgroups nominated by the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme. (The subgroups included those who have experienced or are at risk of substance abuse; those who have been in foster care; those who have a disability; those that come from diverse cultural/linguistic backgrounds; and those who are of Indigenous descent)
6. Describe examples of models of best practice on young women’s experiences, findings from current research literature.

The project employed a qualitative methodology to examine the barriers to service delivery experienced by young pregnant women and mothers. Consultations with service providers and with young pregnant women and mothers were undertaken using a variety of methods, these included focus groups and telephone interviews. The project was able to identify the barriers to and facilitators of service delivery to young pregnant women and mothers. In addition, it determined the elements of best practice and some models of best practice for service delivery. The project made 17 recommendations, from enhancing relationships between the provider and the client, to providing specific support programs to subgroups. However, the relevant recommendations that relate to this study (see Chapters 6 and 7) are as follows.

**Recommendation 1:** that facilitating factors of a strong positive relationship with young pregnant women and mothers be distributed to service providers across a wide range of
services, particularly those that do not offer services exclusively to young pregnant women and mothers (p. 95).

**Recommendation 2:** that service networking be encouraged at a community level across all relevant services (p. 95).

**Recommendation 4:** the success of the ‘one-stop-shop’ leads to the recommendation that the feasibility of introducing more of these services be examined (p. 96).

**Recommendation 8:** that a set of best practice principles for working with young pregnant women and mothers be developed and implemented (p. 97).

**Recommendation 12:** that services be funded to include the provision of transport and childcare to young pregnant women and mothers, without the need for assets or income tests (p. 98).

**Recommendation 13:** that the feasibility of introducing specialised in-school programs for young pregnant women and mothers into more schools be examined. It is further recommended that childcare and support workers be made more readily available to alternative education providers who offer services that are of potential benefit to young pregnant women and mothers (p. 98).

**Recommendation 14:** that cultural sensitivity training be introduced to services where this is not currently conducted. In addition, that multicultural service be made known to women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds during their antenatal and birthing care, where this is not already routinely done. Further, that services endeavour to supply written material in languages that are common to their areas (pp. 98–99).

**Recommendation 16:** that further research be conducted into the situation of young pregnant women and mothers who have mental health problems, substance use problems and/or intellectual disabilities (p. 99).


12. *Attitudes and behaviours of teenage Indigenous women in Townsville, Australia with respect to relationships and pregnancy: the ‘U Mob Yarn Up’ Young Parents Project (2007).*

This research formed the basis of a PhD thesis based in North Queensland. The project focused on how young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Townsville ‘story’
their past, current and future lives in particular in terms of sexual relationships and the transition to motherhood, but also in the broader context of current lived experience, family background, and hopes and aspirations. A mixed methods approach was used and a participatory action model was employed. Data collection was made up of semi-structured interviews (individual and small groups) and a multimedia computer-assisted self-administered survey (CASI) with peer assistance, involving 186 students from three high schools and homeless youth shelters, and ten further young mothers.

The findings from the electronic survey and small group discussions show young Indigenous people in schools and a homeless shelter in terms of their educational and employment aspirations, their health, relationships, sexual practices and contraceptive use, and their views about teenage pregnancy and parenthood. Many students showed a high level of educational aspirations, as did their parents. The qualitative data from group discussions and interviews provided a picture of disadvantaged young women struggling with high mobility, family dysfunction and abuse within their families-of-origins, disengaged from a schooling system that was not meeting their needs.


13. **HYPE: Healthy young parents in education (2007).**

Healthy Young Parents in Education (HYPE) started life as Healthy Start Pathways in 2003, an initiative of **SHine** South Australia in partnership with the Department of Education and Children’s Services. **SHine** SA, a metropolitan-based organisation with a state-wide mandate, implemented and coordinated the project, supported by a steering group from a wide range of government, educational and non-government agencies. This 15-month project aimed to improve the educational, social and physical health and wellbeing outcomes for teenage mothers and their infants through increasing school retention and social inclusion.

The project had six distinctive arms:

- research
- identifying interagency pathways
- documenting curriculum pathway options
- developing a resource for pregnant teenagers
- developing a resource for agencies
- developing a whole of school package.
Some of the project’s achievements included:

- a literature review
- research with schools, employees and pregnant and parenting students
- the HYPE journal—a resource for pregnant and parenting young women
- a framework for developing a policy for the retention of pregnant and parenting students
- a web-based resource for agencies
- a Model of Collaboration
- a Whole School Approach package (p. 5).

Key findings from the research

The response from pregnant and parenting students offered practical strategies for effective integration. These included:

- the importance of providing education that meets the social and intellectual needs of the student, while also acknowledging the student’s parenting responsibilities
- allowing newborns (not toddlers) to be with the mother in class when and if necessary
- good quality and site-specific childcare
- accessible and regular public or school-based transport provision
- non-judgemental, youth-focused, antenatal care. Most participants reported feeling embarrassed or ‘judged’ when using mainstream antenatal services. In fact, 51.9 per cent of the participants reported a negative experience with services
- the importance of a pregnant and parenting friendly culture within the school (pp. 10–11).


This research was commissioned by the Australian Government DEEWR. This project investigated the welfare participation and welfare transition for women who had a first child at an early age (15 to 19 years). Their welfare participation and transitions were compared with those mothers who had their first child at an older age (20 years or over).
The report showed clear correlations between education and a range of other characteristics and teenage motherhood. These were evident from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics Survey (HILDA), (which is longitudinal data set collecting information on all individuals for a number of randomly selected households on a yearly basis), and from the Census 2001 (ABS, 2001). The data indicated that teenage mothers have lower levels of education and tend to leave school early. Although there is a strong correlation between low education attainment and teenage motherhood, it seems unlikely that teenage motherhood causes low education outcomes, given the timing of school leaving, which is usually prior to becoming pregnant.

From the descriptive analysis of the data, teenage mothers are relatively disadvantaged when compared to the group of older mothers. They tended to be Indigenous, and more likely to have lived in a single-parent household in their childhood. The project also indicated that teenage mothers were less likely to be partnered (and were less likely to be married at the time their first child was born), and the date showed that they had more children on average. They were more likely to be unemployed or out of the labour force and this was the same for the partners of teenage mothers (if they were partnered). Yet, if the teenage mother was employed, she would have more than likely have worked longer hours than her partner. Due to the low labour force participation for the teenage mothers (and partners), their incomes are lower than those of older mothers.


15. Optimising wellbeing: Young mothers’ participation in parents’ groups (2008).*

This project was funded by a special grant from the Windermere Foundation. This report details the findings of a study undertaken in Melbourne, in which focus groups were conducted with young mothers attending support groups for young parents. The project aimed to identify barriers and facilitating factors to access and participation in parents’ groups, identify those aspects of groups that are perceived to be beneficial and investigate the impact of attendance at parents’ groups on the mental health and wellbeing of young mothers.

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37 The Windermere Foundation was created by Windermere Real Estate to support assistance programs for low-income and homeless families.
The young mothers reported that their needs were not met in mixed age groups such as the Maternal and Child Health Service first-time parent groups. It was reported that the key reasons for non-attendance at the Maternal and Child Health Service mixed age groups were experience or anticipation of judgemental attitudes from older mothers and feeling like they ‘don’t fit in’ due to differences in age and life circumstances. The reports shows that the young mothers preferred to attend groups with their peers. In turn, the young mothers reported that the young parents’ groups they did attend met their needs and that they felt that mothers and children benefited equally through group attendance. The report highlighted that the young mothers attending young parents’ groups who participated in this research were commonly experiencing significant mental health issues, with anxiety and stress as common as depression.

The project made eight recommendations, from enhancing publicity about young parents’ groups to encouraging discussions of power and control in relationships within groups. However, the relevant recommendations that relate to this study (see Chapters 6 and 7) are:

**Recommendation 2:** Strengthen and formalise links between services running young parents’ groups and health services (p. 4).

**Recommendation 3:** Provide information about mental health and mental health services at young parents’ groups through informal discussion and guest speakers from local health services (p. 4).

**Recommendation 6:** Locate groups in community hubs where young parents come into contact with other relevant services and public transport is available (p. 4).

**Recommendation 7:** Remove any cost barriers to attendance by making group attendance free.


16. **Teen parents research project (2010).**

This study is part of an Astarte Project, the *Teen Mothers Project* consisted of qualitative research conducted in 2009 with teen mothers in Western Australia, and involved

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38 Astarte began in 1995, the same year that the Reproductive Health for Refugees (now the Reproductive Health Response in Crisis) Consortium was founded. Astarte was established to increase the number of organisations providing quality reproductive health services in crisis areas.
both surveys and face-to-face interviews. There were 46 surveys returned, and 30 interviews were conducted. The data analysis showed that five main themes emerged: these included:

- **Changes:** Generally, the young mothers reported that they had to change direction when it came to education and subsequent employment: deferral or accesses via another means were common responses (p. 2).

- **Support:** Approximately 90 per cent of respondents said that the father was still involved with the baby; of that 90 per cent, about half of the teen mothers were still in a relationship with the father (p. 2).

- **Perceptions:** Almost all the teen mothers reported negative reactions from other people when out in public. The teen mothers also reported a negative reaction from those in the medical profession, including doctors, midwives and child health nurses (p. 2).

- **‘Good and bad’ mothers:** They commented that the appearance of their child was especially important, because they felt that they were being judged on how their child was presented (p. 3).

- **Future:** Almost all said that they loved being a mother, despite the challenges, and would not change anything. Many of the teen mothers foresaw a positive future, where they would be educated, employed, partnered and not reliant on welfare benefits (p. 3). These themes are significant to this study are explained in more depth in Chapters 6 and 7.


17. **What it takes: Supporting pregnant and parenting young people (2010).**

The AWE was successful in obtaining a grant from the Australian Government Office for Women to conduct a national symposium in Brisbane in 2009. The main purpose of the symposium was to bring key stakeholders together from many fields to share information and insights on the kinds of support that best minimise the risks young parents and their children may encounter. The symposium wanted to facilitate the voices of young pregnant and parenting people to be heard, and to provide the opportunity for both their challenges and their successes to inform the development of a national network of agencies and advocates to

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39 In 2010, this network was formalised as the Australian Young Pregnant and Parenting Network (AYPPN)
secure better support in all parts of the country. The 2009 symposium was able to highlight 11 key messages and produce four recommendations. The key messages delivered from the symposium place the recommendations in a broader context. The messages were the incidence of teenage pregnancy and parenting is strongly related to the quality of life experiences of girls throughout their childhood; the majority of negative outcomes of teenage pregnancy and parenting can be ameliorated by quality service provision; improving outcomes for pregnant and parenting young people also means improving the prospects of their children; high-quality youth-specific services are the key factors in helping young people make appropriate choices; support services are too few in number, too poorly funded and inequitably distributed to meet the needs of young people for advice on sexual and reproductive health, and on issues related to early pregnancy and parenting, around the country; a range of initiatives to ensure pregnant and parenting young people remain engaged in or reconnect to education and training is required; further research is need to understand and respond to the different issues surrounding teenage pregnancy and parenting; proactive work is as important as responsive service delivery; attention needs to be placed on the provision of high-quality sex and relationships education, both in schools and in the community; need for coordination of, and communication between, services supporting pregnant and parenting young people across the country; and a public education campaign to challenge negative stereotypes is required. From these key messages, the recommendations were formed, these are:

**Recommendation 1:** A national approach to reducing the incidence of unintended teenage pregnancy as a matter of urgency, through the mechanism provided by COAG.\(^{40}\)

**Recommendation 2:** A long-term proactive strategy to reduce the teenage birth rate be developed and implemented. Such a strategy should be part of a whole-of-government effort to reduce inequalities in the lives of families.

**Recommendation 3:** A national whole-of-government working party be convened to develop a comprehensive strategy to reduce negative outcomes for young people and their children associated with early parenting.

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\(^{40}\) Source: COAG website, The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) is the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia. COAG comprises the Prime Minister, State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). It was establish in May 1992 and it first met in December 1992.
**Recommendation 4:** A national working party of education authorities be convened to develop, implement and monitor policies and programs that meet the need to retain diverse groups of pregnant and parenting young people in education and training and to reconnect those who have left school before completion of a Year 12 equivalent qualification.

Recommendation 4 holds particular significance for this study and are discussed further in Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis.


18. *Supporting pregnant and parenting young people to continue with education—critical factors for success: CCCares program case study report (2010).*

This project evaluated the CCCares program in its role of supporting pregnant and parenting young people to continue with their schooling and developed a model of best practice in the field. The impact of the program’s achievements against its stated policy objectives was assessed. The evaluation report identified key success factors in the CCCares Program and defined critical factors for success in approaches to supporting pregnant and parenting young people in secondary school systems. The methodology was participatory and capacity building, with data collected through extensive consultations with stakeholders and partners of the program, such as departmental personnel, service delivery providers, employees and clients. Administrative data collections were also analysed to inform the findings of the evaluation, which are now being disseminated nationally.


19. *Young motherhood and child outcomes (2011).*

This research project looked at young motherhood and the outcomes of their children. The main aim was to identify the impact of maternal age on child outcomes. This was achieved by drawing on data in relation to the pre-school outcomes and parental age was observed via the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children and a comparison with siblings was conducted through the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics Survey (HILDA). The data from LSAC showed that children aged four to five years whose mothers were under 25 when they were born had distinctly lower levels of functioning than those with older mothers.
The Census data on 16–18 olds who were still living with their mother show that this disadvantage carries through to education and employment outcomes. The data showed that those born when their mother was in her teens were much less likely to be still in school. The researchers found no significant difference in sibling Year 12 completion (controlling for a first-born child effect). A similar story applies to youths’ self-ratings of their educational performance and life satisfaction (pp. 33–34).


**20. Investigating the Australian lump-sum Baby Bonus and the reach of its pronatalist messages with young women in Far North Queensland (2011).*

This research forms the basis of a PhD thesis and was conducted in Far North Queensland. This research focused on the impact of the Australian lump-sum Baby Bonus on the fertility of young women. A mixed methods approach was used to ascertain what young women thought of the Baby Bonus and whether it encouraged young women to have children. The first proposition of this thesis was that the introduction of the Baby Bonus sits within the context of a pronatalist social policy. The second proposition was would this strategy increase Australia’s fertility rate, with an unintended consequence of lowering the national mean maternal age at first birth. This exploratory study addresses four research questions:

1. At what age do participants idealise age for first-time motherhood?
2. What views do young women hold about the lump-sum Baby Bonus?
3. How do participants comprehend fertility, their own and others?
4. How do participants view abortion and adoption?

This thesis possesses similar parallels to this study in that the research had to negotiate the ethical issues of performing research with young people still in schools. Hence, dealing with the particular ethical approval processes within a variety of systems and dealing with the tensions that bring to the research.

Appendix 2: Examples of School-Level Distance Education Programs

Brisbane School of Distance Education (BSDE) (Queensland)

The Young Parents’ Group at BSDE was formed initially in the late 1990s and provided some specialised support for parenting students from their pastoral care teachers. As an extension of the group, a support program was established for those who were attending Alternative Education Centres for students at risk. For some students, alternative placements and pathways are needed for them to reach their educational goals. Districts employ a variety of strategies to support students at risk of disengaging from learning, including Positive Learning Centres, District-based Centres and Flexible Learning Services. One of the initiatives was to create a regular newsletter, which was designed to give advice, helpful hints and interesting information to parenting students study at BSDE. A website has been developed as an extension of the Newsletters, and has been compiled from the articles contained within various issues.

Tasmanian Open Learning Service

Those students who are pregnant can enrol in the distance education mode. Such enrolments may be extended to the postnatal period. Dual enrolment is possible with a student’s local Department of Education School, where the combination of school attendance and distance education facilitates a more effective program.

Claremont College (Tasmania)

This is a government school for Year 11 and 12 students. It provides a full range of college courses, preparing students for University, TAFE, traineeships and employment. Courses are provided on campus and off campus. The school won the National award for one of the ten most innovative schools in Australia by The Australian newspaper’s Best Schools Project (November 2001). The school has a student population of approximately 1,100 students from diverse backgrounds, including Aboriginal students. There is a clear focus on student retention to completion of Year 12. The school’s young mothers’ program was awarded the Outstanding Program in Adult Learners’ Week 2001. The program is a joint venture between the school and the local council. The program is delivered in a distance education mode.
Appendix 3: Examples of School-Level Programs Delivered in Alternative Setting

An example of this model is the *Albert Park Flexi School (Qld)*. The Albert Park Flexi School is a joint Brisbane City Council and Education Queensland program that provides educational support to young people between 14 and 22 years of age who are considered ‘at risk’. Students can undertake formal studies through the School of Distance Education with staff available on a daily basis on site to support students.

A more fully developed example of this model is the program offered by *St Philips Christian School, Newcastle (NSW)*. The *DALE* (Dynamic Alternative Learning Environment) *Young Mothers’* program started in 1997 for disadvantaged and ‘at-risk’ young people. In 2000, it expanded to include a young mothers and their children program. The two programs run quite separately, although both are housed in the old Waratah Public School site owned by the Police Services. The young mothers’ program caters for about 30, 14- to 20-year-old mums who follow a distance education program with teacher support and has an on-site crèche for their babies. But, due to the size of the crèche, not all can attend on the same day. This program has had good success with some of the mums going on to study at university and TAFE. The participation of current and ex-students and representatives from the health, employment and welfare sectors on the steering committee has been significant in the development of the program.

The program was developed to meet the needs of young women in the Newcastle and Hunter area who were unable to complete their education because of pregnancy or young motherhood. In report of the program prepared in 2004 it was reported that many of the young mothers had felt discrimination and isolation in mainstream schools after becoming pregnant. They were also often coping with the financial pressures of being a single parent, legal issues involving custody of their child, Apprehended Violence Orders, accommodation and transport difficulties.

This program highlights the advantages of programs that provide the opportunity for young mothers to attend classes in an alternative learning environment that is both flexible and supportive of their particular needs and has the added support of an on-site crèche, which allows the mothers to participate in the daily nurturing of their babies. Such programs also
provide the peer support structure that is so essential for these young women to cope with the changed conditions and the arrival of a baby in their lives.

In 2004, the *DALE Young Mothers' Program* was granted funding as a pilot through the Department of Education, Science and Training under the POEMS Pilot initiative. The addition of the on-site crèche is the unique factor in this educational program. The program is still providing support to young mothers in the Hunter region.
Appendix 4: Examples of Mainstream School Approaches:

*Corio Bay Secondary College, Geelong (VIC)*

This school has established a registered crèche on campus. Students can place their children in the crèche centre between the hours of 6:30am to 7:00pm. In 2004, the then Victorian Government announced increased funding for the crèche to be doubled in size due to demand.

*Balga Senior High School (WA)*

This is a Western Australian government secondary school. It has provided support to young mothers since 2002. There were approximately 600 students and 60 staff. The school is committed to providing its students and community access to a wide range of educational opportunities in a supportive and caring environment. As part of that commitment, it has established a registered childcare centre. The childcare fees are paid through assistance from Centrelink and *Jet* and all meals, formula, and nappies are provided.
Appendix 5: CCCares Program Community Partners

Community Partnerships

CCCares consistently engages with community organisations to provide increased outcomes for its students. As established in the academic literature, community links provide educational institutions with increased access to education and skills training, information provision, health and wellbeing services, volunteer/mentoring services, transport services, collaborative practice and research opportunities.

An area of particular consideration for CCCares is the linking with community agencies and professionals such as Nurses from ACT Health to provide students with education related to parental knowledge and skills (e.g. child health, childcare, childbirth, parenting skills and managing a home).

CCCares also places emphasis on linking with community agencies that can provide support to their large number of independent students, such as accommodation and financial management. CCCares’ focus on productive community partnerships is highly utilised and appreciated by the students. The extensive network of CCCares’ community partnerships, taken from Clayden (2010, pp. 4–5), are listed below:

- On-site Maternal and Child Health Nurse twice weekly (ACT Health)
- On-site monthly Antenatal Nurse visits (ACT Health)
- Access to community learning programs (Canberra College Brain Gym)
  - Training and wellbeing programs include;
  - ACT Dental Health (ACT Health)
  - SIDS
  - Sexual Health and Family Planning
  - Skills session for hairdressing and beauty therapy (SASSY Hair and beauty)
  - Donations (Canberra Milk)
  - Relationships training (Relationships Australia)
  - Financial Management (NAB)
  - Transition support (University of Canberra)
  - Transport assistance (Rotary)
Advocacy and Support Programs

- Male Mentor program (Men’s Link)
- Shared Client referrals (Canberra Hospital maternity unit)
- Support programs (Rec link/PCYC)
- Shared client support (Care and Protection)
- Drug and alcohol support and referrals (DIRECTIONS ACT/Ted Knoffs/Arcadia House)
- Local Medical doctors and Nurses (Fisher Family Practice)
- Domestic Violence (Domestic Violence Crisis Service)
- Child and Mental Health Service (CAMHS–ACT Health)
- Young families support (Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre)
- Family Support program (Marymead Child and Family Centre)
- Refugee support (Companion House)
- Migrant support (Migrant Support Centre)
- Mothers’ refuge (Karinya House)
- Youth accommodation (Oasis/Llowana/George Lloyd House/DORIS/Tumladden/Louisa women’s refuge/St Vincents/LIONS)
- E-learning toolbox champion (CIT)
- Road Ready and Driver Training (on-site driving instructor)
- Fresh fruit and vegetables program (ACT Health)
- Volunteer and mentoring program (community Volunteers and ex graduates)
- Post-school transition options (Employment Coordinator—Funded by Schools First)
- AYPPN

Australian Young Pregnant and Parenting Network

In 2009, it was agreed to form the AYPPN to support young people and professionals around the country working to create positive futures for young parents and their children, with a particular focus on reconnecting pregnant and parenting young people to education and training.
For more information please contact the researchers below:

Group discussions will be held over the next two weeks (starting <date>) in the common room at 10:30am – 12:30 pm, lunch will be provided. Come along, join in this important research and discussion, share your ideas, thoughts and feelings about being a teenage mother and being a student.

Barbara Pamphilon
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Do you want to have your say about being a mum and a student?

If you have questions or problems which are not answered in the information you have been given, you should consult the researcher or the research supervisor. If you wish to discuss with an independent person a complaint relating to:

- Conduct of the project, or
- Your rights as a participant, or
- University policy on research involving human participants,

You should contact the Secretary of the University Research Committee Telephone (02) 6201 2466, University of Canberra, ACT 2601

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We are conducting research about teenage pregnancy and motherhood

If you are interested come along and talk about your situation. Here's a chance to have your say. Join other young women for an informal chat.

Do you want to have your say about being a mum and a student?

Dates: <insert>
When: 10:30am – 12:30 pm
Where: Common room area
A n i n v i t a t i o n  t o  Y O U !
H a v e  y o u r  s a y !

We invite you to participate in some very important research. If you are interested in sharing your experiences, feelings and ideas about being a mum and a student come along to one of our group discussions.

Researchers from the School of Education and Community studies at the University of Canberra are interested in hearing what you have to say about being a teenage mother and going to school.

We are trying to find out how young women who are parents feel about the issues and complexities that teenage mothers face on a daily basis. This research is to help other schools understand the issues you deal with and how they can provide better support at school for teenage mothers.

Everything that you say is in confidence and in any research projects or papers presented at a later date your name will not be used.

We will be meeting in the familiar surrounds of the common room at the school and childcare is provided. Our group discussion will be relaxed and participation is totally voluntary, you can withdraw at anytime from the research. You will be able to access a counsellor if you become distressed in any part of the discussion, afterwards.

We would really appreciate your participation in this research as it is very important that other people hear your voice, telling your story about how it is for you and your child(ren).

There has been a lot of research done over the years about teenage pregnancy and motherhood. However, in many cases young mothers were not even asked their options, thoughts or ideas. This is where our research is different, it starts with those young women who are parents and it explores the issues and complexities from their point of view.

Barbara Pemphilon and Iain Hay and will take part in the group discussions. They are both experienced researchers and have an keen interest in 'hearing the voices' of the participants. This research will form the basis of Iain's Doctor of Philosophy thesis and he is more than happy to supply participants a summary copy of findings at the end of the study.

Other people are also invited to participate in this important work, they are Ms Jan Marshall, Program Co-ordinator, Ms Kerri Grundy, Deputy Principal and Mr John Stenhouse, Principal. They will be asked about their thoughts regarding the issues surrounding teenage pregnancy and motherhood and how school based programs can support young mothers.

Interested in taking part in some important research? The project is: A critical discourse analysis of the complexities of teenage pregnancy and motherhood in Australian society. Conducted by PhD student Iain Hay form the University of Canberra.

If you can answer yes to one of the following we need YOU:
- You are a mother and a student
- You are pregnant and a student

There will be three groups meeting over a three week period. Check out the following dates and times: <insert>. There will be approximately 10 people in each group. It is expected that these meetings will not go for more than one hour. Pizza and drinks will be provided afterwards.

There will be follow up interviews at a later date. Those people interested in taking part in the one-on-one recorded interviews will receive a $25 Myer voucher for their time. Childcare will also be available for those requiring it and a counsellor will be available for debrief if you so require. You will also be given the opportunity to review the transcript of what you have said in the interview.

Records and transcripts of this research will be kept in secure place at the University of Canberra and will only be accessed by the project researchers.

So if you have the time to spare come along! Have your say!

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If you have questions or problems which are not answered in the information you have been given, you should consult the researcher or the research supervisor. You may wish to discuss with an independent person a complaint relating to:
- Conduct of the project;
- Your rights as a participant;
- University policy on research involving human participants.

You should contact the Secretary of the University Research Committee. Telephone 6201 2946, University of Canberra, ACT 2601.
Appendix 7: Service Delivery Barriers Identified by Loxton, Stewart-Williams and Adamson (2007)

1. Common barriers: Barriers that were common across service types for all young pregnant women and mothers included a lack of knowledge, literacy problems, structural barriers (e.g. lack of Medicare cards & bulk billing, insurance coverage, age limits), cost, transport, moving to a new area, characteristics of local neighbourhoods that discouraged service access, a lack of time or routine, previous negative experiences with service providers, and a lack of social and family support. A lack of available services constituted a major barrier, since the absence of a service necessarily means that the service will not be accessible. Supported accommodation and housing were specifically mentioned by participants as being unavailable, with child care also being scarce in some areas.

2. Barriers specific to particular services: Government and housing services were criticised for overly complex systems and forms. Barriers to secondary education included expulsion for behavioural and other problems, a lack of transport and/or child care, low social support, expenses, and a lack of motivation. Tertiary education was difficult for young women when the service delivery methods were inflexible or inconveniently located. Women’s attitudes to child care prevented some young women from using the service, for fear of being seen as a ‘bad mother’. Cost and local availability were other barriers to child care. Barriers to the use of early childhood health centres included feeling uncomfortable near older mothers in waiting rooms and finding individual nurses to be ‘too bossy’ and ‘judgemental’, in addition to feeling as though the service was unnecessary. Mothers’ support and play groups were not attended when young women feared joining a group where they knew no one or feared being the only young mother in the group, and where they had transport difficulties.

3. Vulnerable subgroups: Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds experienced barriers to service delivery that included language, legal obstacles, a lack of services that were equipped to provide for the needs of specific cultures and religions, social isolation, and cultural conflict between young women and their family. Our findings for young Indigenous women were limited, but barriers to service delivery were found to include a judgemental attitude, a lack of individualised service, a lack of family orientation, no Indigenous centres, a lack of counsellors, social workers and Indigenous health workers, and poor word of mouth.

Source: Loxton, Stewart-Williams & Adamson (2007).
Appendix 8: Conferences, Presentations and Reports in the Progress of the Thesis


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41 In 2010, I delivered a key note address about my research at the Australian Young Pregnant and Parenting Network (AYPPN) Research symposium in Canberra, over 220 delegates from across Australia and New Zealand were in attendance. Also in 2010, I published a report: Supporting pregnant and parenting young people to continue with education—critical factors for success: CCCares program case study report. This report was distributed to participants at the AYPPN research symposium, as well as to various government departments.