One Dataset, Many Destinations

Building evaluation routes to policy impact and systems change



Dr Annabel Prescott

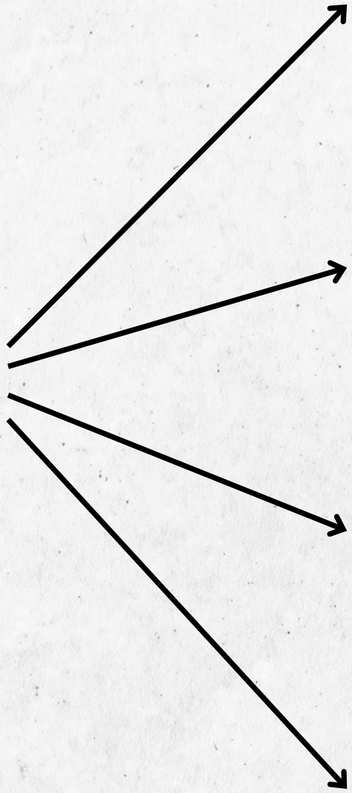
TRACTION
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

One dataset, four destinations

TRACTION
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The data set

Collected to run good programs and know whether they worked.



TREASURY, CORPORATE FUNDERS, BOARDS

"$3.39 of benefit for every dollar invested"

Route: an independent economic impact study.
Cost: months of work and an external firm.

LOCAL MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

"This many young people, in your electorate"

Route: program locations mapped to boundaries.
Cost: an afternoon, if the postcode was kept clean.

COMMUNITY, FAMILIES, FUNDING PROPOSALS

"What it was actually like"

Route: participant case studies and lived experience.
Cost: an editorial choice about whose story travels.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

"Here is what your cohort is carrying"

Route: anonymised reporting to the schools each quarter

Dr Annabel Prescott - TRACTION for Young People

Why routes, not reports

TRACTION
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

A report is a destination you hope someone visits.

A route is a decision about who you are trying to reach, made before you collect.

Most evaluation produces reports, and hopes.



TRACTION's strategy names three levels: young people, educators, sys
The route map and the strategy are the same map.

Theory of change

However, if we...

THE PROBLEM WE SEEK TO SOLVE:

Across Australia, up to 20% of young people disengage from school by Year 10, eroding their confidence, connection, and future pathways.

Systemic response often deepen disengagement and accelerate harm.

Australia faces an estimated A$50.5 billion social cost from a system not desinged to keep young people engaged.

TRACTION'S OUTPUTS

BUILD & IGNITE
We create safe, practical spaces where young people make things, build confidence, and have a go

01

CONNECT
We bring young people and employers together to try out real, hands-on work in a safe, supported way that can lead to on-going work-experience

02

INFLUENCE
We host and participate in events to share what we learn and help schools support young people earlier and better

03

FUNDER'S OUTPUTS

PHILANTHROPY & CORPORATE PARTNERS
Invest funding and practical support that enables TRACTION to run and grow its prorgams

TRACTION'S OUTPUTS CONT.

CONSOLIDATE
Build a sustainable, diversified revenue base that enables TRACTION to reach every young person who needs our support.

04

then we expect that...

CHANGE AGENTS' OUTCOMES

	MENTORS	EMPLOYERS	PRINCIPALS & TEACHERS	STRATEGIC PARTNERS
SHORT TERM	Establish predictable, trust-based routines that create psychological safety.	Show openness by engaging in low-stakes workplace exposure activities.	Identify and refer disengaged young people earlier.	Share insights and referal pathways to align around disengagement needs.
MEDIUM TERM	Tailor activities and feedback to individual strengths and learning profiles.	Provide structured, scaffolded work-experience opportunities.	Integrate TRACTION into coordinated, flexible engagement pathways.	Embed TRACTION within local youth engagement and transition-to-work strategies.
LONG TERM	Sustain long-term mentoring ecosystems that support transitions to work or training.	Adopt inclusive hiring and onboarding practices for diverse young people.	Instititionalise trauma-aware, relational, flexible learning practices.	Amend education regulations and practice to support disengaged young people.

which will engage and empower young people to...

THE IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE

SHORT TERM	Re-engage through feeling safe, seen and sucessful in hands-on activites.
MEDIUM TERM	Stay engaged while building confidence, persistence, and readiness for learning and work-like environments.
LONG TERM	Sustain engagement in education, training, or employment and building stable, future-oriented lives.

Collected vertically. Read horizontally

Depth of collection on one axis, breadth of analysis on the other. Neither is useful w

VERTICAL — what we collect, and from whom

Young People
WEMWBS, KIDSCREEN-10. Pre & Post

Young People, confidentially
Self-report on barriers and help seeking. 12 to 16 band

Mentors
Communication Ladder observation, scored by young person

Delivery itself
Trauma-informed fidelity, rated against six principals

Families and schools
Survey and engagement data, plus school practice change

Employers and partners
CONNECT placements, confidence and capability to host

Staff and finance
Annual engagement survey, Cost per program, per outcome.

Public and published data
Economic modelling, administrative data, published research.

HORIZONTAL — what we read across them

→ **Is it right for these young people?**
Young Poeple, plus mentors, plus the fidelity check on our own delivery. If safety is not moving, nothing downstream will.

→ **Is it working, and does it last?**
Self-reprot and observation together, across four timepoints, with schools for whether it holds after the program ends,

→ **What did it take?**
Finance and delivery data against one shared definition of a meaningful outcome, so cost and effect use the same unit.

→ **Did the system actually move?**
Schools, policy audiences and public data. The influence arm, evaluated rather than assumed.

→ **Can we sustain doing both?**
Staff engagement, funding volatility, pipeline against stated strategic priorities.

Six things that make this framework ur

BREADTH AND DEPTH

Every indicator
is measured twice

Breadth is the share of the cohort. Depth is the magnitude per young person. A high percentage with no movement behind it is visable.

ONE SHARED SPINE

Effectiveness &
efficiency share a tool

A meaningful outcome is defined as one Ladder level of movement, so cost per outcome and outcome measurement use the same instrument.

DELIVERY-SIDE FIDELITY

The program is
evaluated too

Trauma-informed practice is rated against SAMHSA's six principales each cycle. If outcomes are flat, the delivery is a candidate, not only the child.

DEVELOPMENTAL BANDING

Calibrated to age, not
averaged across it

Separate expectations for 10 to 12 and 12 to 16, with observation weighted at the younger band and confidential self-report added at the older one.

CITED INDICATORS

Every indicator carries its
evidence base

Not a bibliography at the back. Each indicator names the literature it rests on, in the same row as the measure and the tool that collects it

SELF EVALUATION

Whether policy work changes school practice. Whether the funding model resists volatility. Whether TRACTION can scale wihtout compromising outcomes.

And a set of interpretation guards that assumes the instrument, not the young person

Including an explicit warning that self-report will under-count the very cohort TRACTION exisits to serve.

None of these are expensive. All of them are decisions somebody had to make on purpose, before the first young person was measured.

Route one: the economic route

TRACTION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Destination: Treasury, corporate funders, boards. Independent impact study, 2025.

$3.39

of benefit for every dollar invested in TRACTION

$6.95m benefit | $2.05m cost

WHERE THE BENEFIT SITS



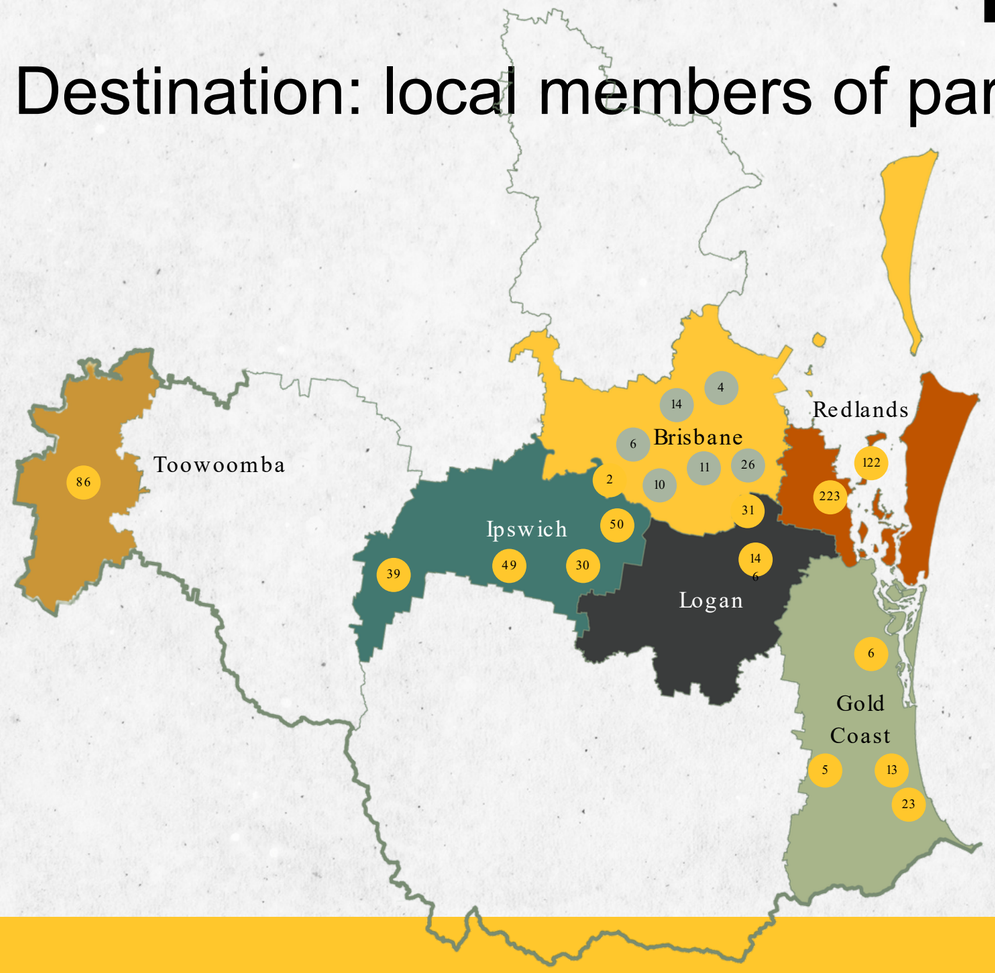
WHAT MAKES THE NUMBER DEFENSIBLE IS WHAT IT REFUSED TO DO

- Declined subjective stakeholder valuation, the technique common in SROI that most have flattered the figure. A lower number, and one that survives scrutiny.
- Applied a 7% net present value discount, and assumed program effects decay over time.
- Accrued no benefit beyond ten years, because no longitudinal data justifies going further.

Route two: the political route

TRACTION
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Destination: local members of parliament



A member of parliament cannot act on $3.39.

They can act on the number of young people in thier electorate.

The economic route cost months and an external firm. This one costs an afte

Almost no community organisation builds it.

Dr Annabel Prescott - TRACTION for Young People

Route three:

TRACTION has helped me build more confidenc
as asking for help when I needed it even talking
adults. I also learned new skills about life and bui
bikes that could be helpful throughout my life.

– Young person from a BUILD program

Three tensions

1. Packaging the same data differently, without losing in
2. Serving political decision making and community need at once.
3. What gets lost, and what gets amplified, in translation.

TENSION ONE

Integrity is protected by what you refus

TRACTION refused

Subjective stakeholder valuation: the technique that would most have falttered the number. A lower figure that holds up.

Deficit Language

Screening tools are intentional strengths based
Surveys
Program notes

A route stays honest when the constraint travels with the data

Whatever you cannot support goes in the same sentence as the claim, not in the appendix nobody opens.

TENSION TWO

Political decision making, & community

These are not naturally compatible. The reconcilliation has to be

Political and funder audiences want...

aggregation, comparability, confider

Community audiences want

specificity, recognition, texture

Aggregation is precisely the process that removes what community aud

Build the parallel readings in at the point of collection. Retrofitting a second audience is expensive everysingle time, and you pay it again every reporting cycle.

TENSION THREE

Two instruments. Two blind spots.

Built by different professions, for different destinations. Both blind, and neither badly made.

THE ECONOMIC INSTRUMENT COULD NOT MONETISE

- Enhanced identity and resilience
- Increased connectedness, belonging and community participation
- Increased benefits of philanthropy

THE CLINICAL INSTRUMENT DID NOT ASK

Vaping

The single fastest-moving adolescent health behaviour of the period, invisible to an instrument built by clinicians who read the literature carefully.

23%

selected "other" for substance use.

In hindsight, that is almost certainly what they meant.

The route that could not be built

TRACTION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

A second TRACTION program, reviewed in the same period. The reviews set out to consider return on investment.

COSTS	
Partner staff time to establish the program	$50,000
Partner staff time to run an excursion	$6,000
Other partner costs to run an excursion	$1,000
TRACTION staff time to establish the program	?
TRACTION staff time to run an excursion	?
School staff time to run an excursion	?

BENEFITS	
Avoided recruitment costs	?
Increased lifetime earnings	?
Increased taxation revenue	?
Decreased welfar payments, decreased justice costs	?

Return on investment: could not be calculated.

The program is working. The review found strong evidence of value. The record the route needed was never kept.

What makes a route work

TRACTION
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Five conditions, from two case studies and one route that failed.

1. **Name the destination before you design the instrument**
   Retrofitting is possible, and always more expensive.
2. **Build parallel readings into one collection**
   The individual view is a parallel output, not an extract from the population view.
3. **Let the constraint travel with the data**
   The caveat belongs in the same sentence as the claim, not in an appendix nobody opens.
4. **Route through consent, not around it**
   Data young people chose to give is the only kind that safely aggregates. Consent is the route's warrant, not its limitation.
5. **Keep a mechanism for finding your blind spot**
   An interation cycle, an honest exclusions list, an "other" box somebody actually reads.

Evaluation becomes a tool for systems change

the routes are designed in, the constraints travel with the data, and the path to the systemruns with the young person rather than around them



TRACTION

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

REGISTERED CHARITY
acnc.gov.au/charityregister