



Communities That Care®

Yarra

July 2019

# Yarra Communities that Care Strengthening Family Relationships in Yarra



**Evaluation Report:**

**Tuning in to Kids™ and Tuning in to Teens™**

**Collaborative Program Delivery**

**June 2017 – July 2019**

With thanks to Founding Partners



**NJC** NEIGHBOURHOOD  
JUSTICE CENTRE

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The high quality of the program delivery and the program benefits outlined in this report can be attributed in no small part to the incredible facilitators involved. We would like to thank everyone in the facilitator team and their organisations: Brotherhood of St Laurence; cohealth; drummond street services; North Richmond Community Health; Relationships Australia Victoria; Victoria Police and Yarra City Council.

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Finally, and very importantly we would like to thank Sophie Havighurst, Anne Harley and Christiane Kehoe, authors of Tuning in to Kids™ and Tuning in to Teens™ from Mindful: Centre for Training and Research in Developmental Health, The University of Melbourne.

**Further information**

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# Table of Contents

- Table of Contents..... 2
- 1.0 Executive Summary..... 3
- 2.0 About Yarra Communities that Care..... 4
- 3.0 Why focus on Strengthen Family Relationships. .... 4
- 4.0 The local response: ..... 5
- 5.0 Evaluation measures..... 6
- 6.0 Program delivery (July 2017 - June 2019)..... 7
  - 6.1 Reach..... 7
  - 6.2 Growing our collaborative delivery capacity ..... 9
  - 6.3 Building facilitator capacity..... 9
- 7. Findings ..... 10
  - 7.1 Meeting a need ..... 10
  - 7.2 Improvements emotional competence ..... 11
  - 7.3 Improvements in parenting confidence ..... 15
  - 7.4 Strengthened parent-child connection..... 16
- 8. Conclusion..... 17

## 1.0 Executive Summary

*'We were being drawn apart and now we are connected and tuned in to each other. It's been amazing for both of us.'*

### Parent, Tuning into Kids™ (CALD) delivery 2018

Yarra Communities that Care (CTC) is 'Strengthening Family Relationships' for middle years young people and their families in Yarra.

This report presents findings from the evaluation of eighteen Yarra CTC Tuning in to Kids™ and Tuning in to Teens™ programs delivered between July 2017 to June 2019. The findings consistently show that parents who attend these programs report:

- Improvements in their emotional competence;
- Improvements in their parenting confidence; and
- Positive progress towards a strengthened parent-child connection.

These findings were consistent for the six-week standard Tuning in to Teens™ program and the seven-week Tuning in to Kids™ and Tuning into Teens™ programs that were tailored for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) parents in Yarra.

In 2015, Yarra CTC partners surveyed more than 600 middle years young people about their health and wellbeing. One key area that stood out was the need to 'Strengthen Family Relationships', and this was a consistent message for all family types in Yarra. In response, Yarra CTC partners decided to expand the reach of Tuning in to Kids™ and also deliver Tuning into Teens™. The high program uptake and high participant attendance, satisfaction and engagement rates all indicate that the need is real in Yarra and is now beginning to be met.

Yarra CTC is made up of more than 24 local partner agencies, with the shared commitment to support the healthy development of young people aged between 8 – 14 years in the City of Yarra. This shared commitment has been the driver for the genuine collaborative delivery of the Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ programs in Yarra, involving eight partner agencies. The Yarra CTC collaborative delivery approach is greater than the sum of its parts. This is evident in the impact it is having on 'Strengthening Family Relationships' in Yarra as well as towards strengthening shared professional skill sets and, local service providers' ability to work in partnership to achieve the best outcome for Yarra young people and their families.

## 2.0 About Yarra Communities that Care

Yarra Communities That Care (CTC) is a community-led effort made up of over 24 local partner agencies, with the shared focus of supporting the healthy development of middle years young people aged between 8 – 14 years in the City of Yarra.

The priorities of Yarra CTC are guided by the experience and views of young people in Yarra, identified in partnership with Deakin University.

Yarra CTC partners are committed to working together to deliver programs that focus on prevention, are evidence-based and the right local fit.

Yarra CTC partners are currently working to strengthening family relationships, build young peoples' personal resilience; and reduce underage drinking and other drug use.

## 3.0 Why focus on Strengthen Family Relationships.

In 2015, Yarra CTC partners surveyed more than 600 middle years young people about their health and wellbeing.

This survey collection was done in partnership with 17 Yarra schools and Deakin University.

One of three key areas that stood out was the need to 'Strengthen Family Relationships', and this was a consistent message for all family types in Yarra.

In short, young people reported that:

- Many young people in Yarra were experiencing family management and conflict issues with their parent/s carers;<sup>1</sup>
- By year 8, these issues were significantly higher in Yarra compared to Australia;<sup>1</sup> and
- Family protective factors known to be important for young people's positive health and wellbeing, dropped substantially as young people in Yarra increased in age.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to being a universal issue in Yarra, family relationships and management was identified as amongst the most common risk factors facing vulnerable young people in Yarra.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hall, J., Cooney, H. & Toumbourou, J. (2015). 2015 Communities That Care Youth Survey Report: Communities That Care Yarra. Geelong: Deakin University.

<sup>2</sup> Leung, R. & Toumbourou, J. (2016). 2015 Communities That Care Youth Profile Supplementary Report: Communities That Care Yarra. Geelong: Deakin University.

## 4.0 The local response:

After mapping existing evidence-based initiatives, Yarra CTC decided to deliver the Tuning in to Kids™ and Tuning in to Teens™ parenting programs as one strategy towards strengthening family relationships in Yarra. This aimed to build on the pre-existing delivery in Fitzroy of Tuning in to Kids™ programs for culturally and linguistically diverse families led by The Brotherhood of St Laurence.

Tuning in to Kids™ and Tuning in to Teens™ are evidence-based parenting programs, created by Mindful at Melbourne University. They are run with small groups of parents, in six or seven two-hour sessions.

The programs focus on building parents', and their children's, emotional intelligence. The programs help parents establish stronger relationships with their children and build their children's skills to understand and regulate their emotions.

The target audience for the Yarra CTC Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ program delivery was parents/carers with a child(ren) aged between 8 – 14 years old.

Given that the need to 'Strengthen Family Relationships', was found to be a universal issue for children aged 8 – 14 years in Yarra, Yarra CTC partners decided to offer:

- **Tuning in to Teens™ programs**

*Six-week standard Tuning in to Teens™ program*

*Target audience: parents/carers with a child(ren) aged between 8 – 14*

*Open to: Parents/carers who live in Yarra or have child(ren) who live/are educated in Yarra*

*Lead Agencies: Relationships Australia Victoria & Yarra City Council*

- **Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ programs (CALD)**

*Seven-week Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ program tailored to culturally and linguistically diverse communities*

*Target audience: CALD and lower SES parents/carers with a child(ren) aged between 8 – 14*

*Open to: CALD and lower SES Parents/Carers who live in Yarra or have child(ren) who live/are educated in Yarra*

*Lead Agencies: Brotherhood of St Laurence & Yarra City Council*

Yarra CTC partners recognised that collaborative delivery of these programs would be key to having the maximum reach and impact for Yarra families. The following Yarra CTC partner organisations



have contributed their expertise and support to enable the Yarra CTC Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ program delivery:

- Beginners Mind;
- Brotherhood of St Laurence;
- cohealth;
- drummond street services;
- North Richmond Community Health;
- Relationships Australia Victoria; and
- Victoria Police
- Yarra City Council

Alongside the strong collaborative delivery model, Yarra CTC built on existing networks with Yarra schools in order to deliver the programs in school-based settings, in addition to local community centres. Connecting with parents in their local school environment has been a key factor in participant engagement success.

## 5.0 Evaluation measures

An evaluation framework was developed so that it could be identified if the Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ program delivery in Yarra was leading to improvements in parents' emotional competence, parenting confidence and strengthened relationships as demonstrated wider in Efficacy Trails of the programs.<sup>3</sup> The findings of these Efficacy Trails were the basis as to why these programs were selected to be delivered to 'Strengthen Family Relationships' in Yarra. Yarra CTC partners wanted to make sure that the Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ programs were leading to intended changes for local families, that is that the programs were the right local fit.

At the conclusion of each six to seven week Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ program, participants were asked to complete an evaluation survey. The survey measured satisfaction and the changes that the parents experienced as a result of doing the programs at one time point (the completion of each program delivery). Different surveys were used, pending on the program delivery type, with the culturally and linguistically diverse survey having a plain English focus. Given this, the findings for

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<sup>3</sup> Refer to <https://www.tuningintokids.org.au/professionals/research/>

Tuning in to Teens™ and Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ (CALD) are presented separately throughout this report.

**Table 1: Parent survey return rates**

<b>Tuning in to Teens™</b>	Program participants: 71 parents (attended ≥ 4 sessions) Surveys returned: 63 (88%)
<b>Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ (CALD)</b>	Program participants: 59 parents (attended ≥ 4 sessions) Surveys returned: 51 (86%)

In addition to participant feedback, in order to measure participant engagement, each week the program facilitators rated the group’s engagement on a scale of 0-3 across four different markers: being absorbed, investing, stay on track, connecting (where 0 is low engagement, 3 is all signs present).

## 6.0 Program delivery (July 2017 - June 2019)

This report focuses on the findings of the Yarra CTC Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ program delivery in Yarra, from its beginning in July 2017 up to July 2019 (eight school terms).

### 6.1 Reach

Since the project commenced in July 2017, Yarra CTC partners have delivered 18 programs. Nine of these programs were tailored to culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Parent participants came from a wide range of cultural backgrounds.

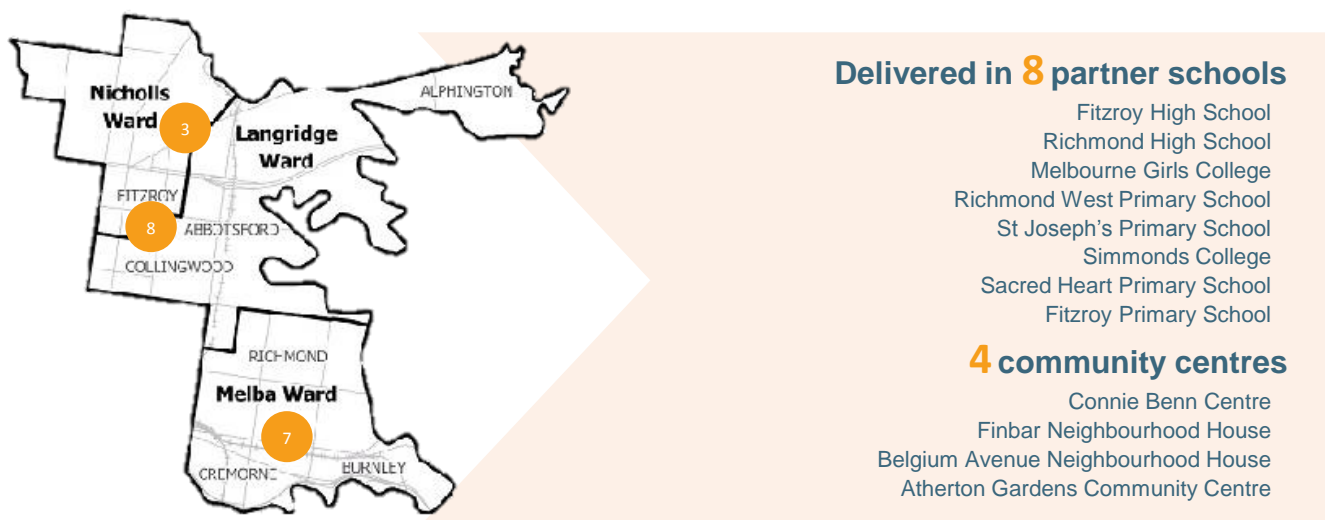
To date 130 parents have completed the program, who are parents of more than 300 children and young people in Yarra.



**Table 2: Yarra CTC Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ program delivery July 2017 – June 2019**

<b>Total number of programs</b>	<p><b>18 programs</b> (9 CALD programs)</p> <p>11 Tuning in to Teens; 7 Tuning in to Kids</p>
<b>Total number of participants completed the program</b>	<p><b>130 parents</b> (59 in CALD programs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18 Fathers</li> <li>• 12 Couples</li> <li>• Parents of 309 children (172 middle years, aged 10-14)</li> </ul>
<b>CALD programs</b>	<p>Tailored to CALD groups in Yarra (run over seven weeks)</p> <p>Participants from a variety of cultural backgrounds: Myanmar, India, New Zealand Maori, Afghanistan, Tanzania, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Pacific Islands, Croatia, Greece, Lebanon, East Timor, China, Iran, Malaysia, and Vietnam.</p>

Yarra CTC partnered with eight schools and four community centres to deliver Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ programs across Yarra. Parents from all postcodes in Yarra attended the programs.



**Figure 1: Delivery locations**

## 6.2 Growing our collaborative delivery capacity

Prior to program delivery starting in July 2017, there were four community workers available who had experience delivering Tuning in to Kids/Teens™. Now, from eight partner agencies, Yarra CTC has 21 facilitators, eight of whom have facilitated two or more times.

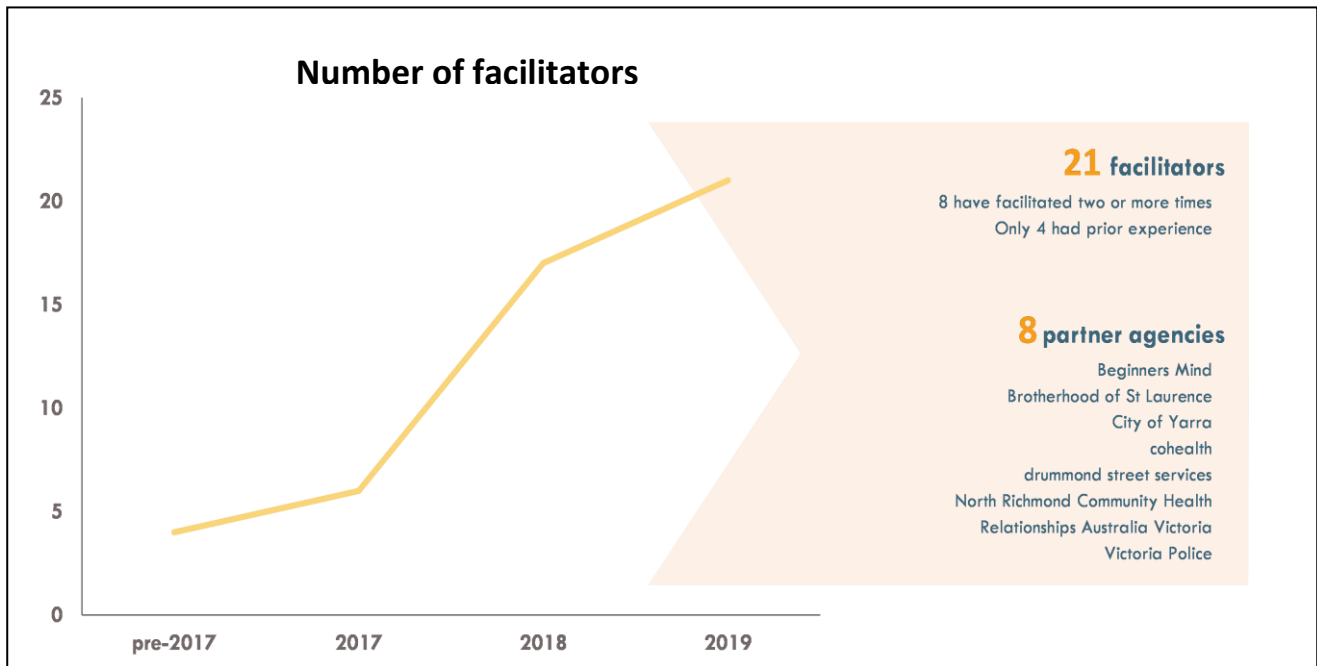


Figure 2: Facilitator numbers and partner agencies

## 6.3 Building facilitator capacity

Care was taken to ensure that facilitators were supported in a way that they could build strong connections with each other and were enabled to deliver the Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ programs at a high standard.

Through careful planning, less-experienced facilitators were matched with more-experienced ones. Supervision support was provided for all facilitators delivering a program each term. In addition to this, quarterly professional upskilling sessions were provided for the whole Yarra CTC Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ facilitator team.

For the facilitators this: created a sense that they were part of a something bigger; built their professional skill set and; strengthened their knowledge of the local service sector. This has resulted greater benefits for local families with more supportive referral pathways.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Yarra Communities that Care Tuning in to Kids™ and Tuning in to Teens™ - Facilitator Reflection Sessions and Feedback, 2018-19.

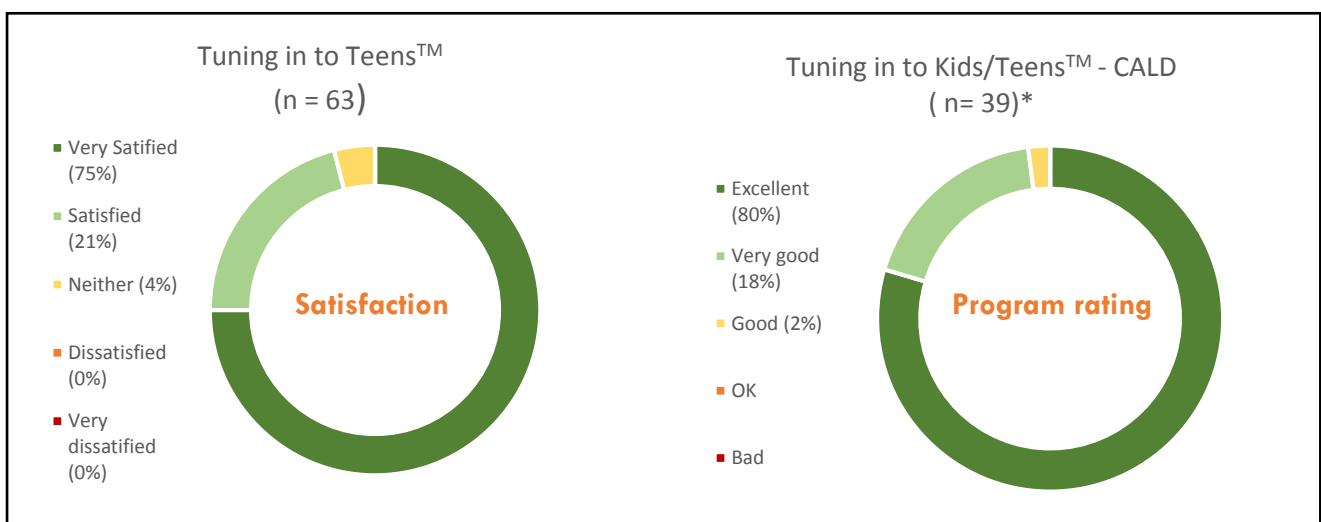
*'I really enjoy being part of this team. Every time I facilitate a program I know I am much more reflective on my professional (and personal!) practice. I've learnt so much from the collective knowledge of the facilitator team.'*

**(Yarra CTC Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ Program Facilitator, 2019)**

## 7. Findings

### 7.1 Meeting a need

The program engagement rates and feedback received from participants demonstrated that the Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ program delivery clearly meets a need for Yarra parents and families. More than 90% of participants indicated that the program was to their satisfaction.



**Figure 3: Parent satisfaction**

\*n <51 as 2017 questionnaires did not ask this question

Programs also had high attendance, engagement and completion rates.

**Table 3: Parent Attendance, Engagement and Completion Rates**

	Tuning in to Teens™	Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ (CALD)
<b>Attendance (Average)</b>	<b>4.7/6</b> sessions per parent	<b>5.9/7</b> sessions per parent
<b>Engagement (Average)</b>	<b>3/3</b> engagement score <sup>5</sup>	<b>2.5/3</b> engagement score
<b>Completion rates</b>	<b>81%</b> completed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>71 completed (min 4 sessions)</li> <li>88 participants (at least 1 session)</li> </ul>	<b>83%</b> completed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>59 completed (min 4 sessions)</li> <li>71 participants (at least 1 session)</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> 0 is low engagement, 3 is all engagement signs present

Consistently parents indicated that they would recommend the program to other parents

*‘Every parent should do this. Being given the opportunity to reflect on my [parenting] style and make changes has made me a more confident and happier parent.’*

**Parent, Tuning in to Teens™ delivery 2019**

It is also evident that working in close partnership with schools in Yarra supports them to meet the social and emotional needs for their students and families.

*‘It ties in really well with our Social Emotional Program, in that it validates how everyone is feeling...It helps develop emotional intelligence and the parents are hearing the same thing as their children are learning at school.’*

**Wellbeing Team Leader, Partner School, 2018**

## 7.2 Improvements emotional competence

*‘I changed my perspective on the relationships I have with my daughter. I am now aware of my role in the dynamics between us.’*

**Parent, Tuning in to Teens™ delivery 2017**

Emotional competence refers to the essential social skills to recognize, interpret, and respond constructively to emotions in yourself and others.

Finding from the Yarra CTC Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ program delivery in Yarra, consistently showd that parents who attended the programs reported an increased:

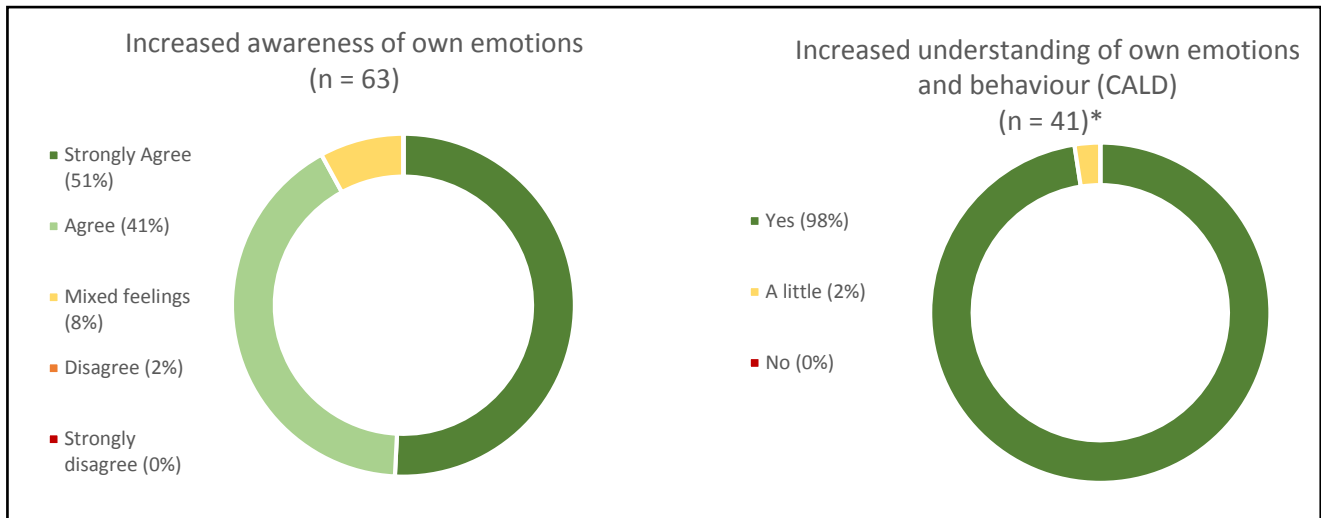
- Awareness of their own and their child(ren)'s emotions;
- Emotion coaching knowledge and skills; and
- Capacity to positively regulate their own behaviour.

### 7.2.1 Parents awareness of their own and their child(ren)'s emotions increased

*‘The most valuable part of the program for me was stopping to reflect on my children’s emotions and my own emotional reactions to those.’*

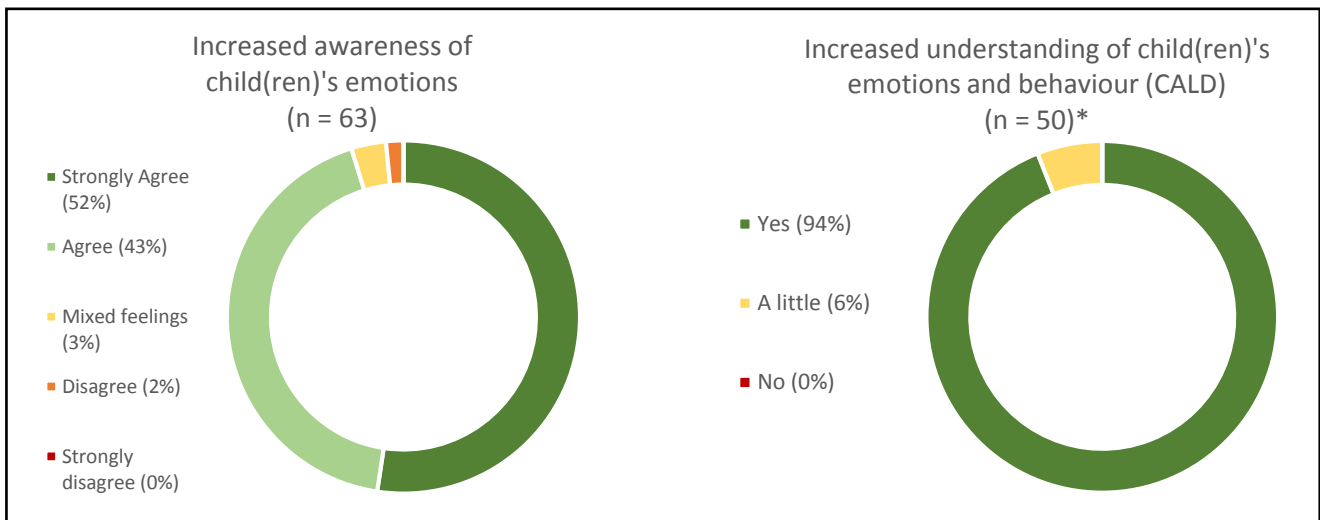
**Parent, Tuning in to Teens™ delivery 2018**

In all program delivery, parents report that by the end of the program that had an increased awareness of their own emotions (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4: Change in parents' awareness of their own emotions**  
*\*n <51 as 2017 questionnaires did not ask this question*

Parents also reported that they had an increased awareness of their children's emotions by the end of the program (see Figure 5).



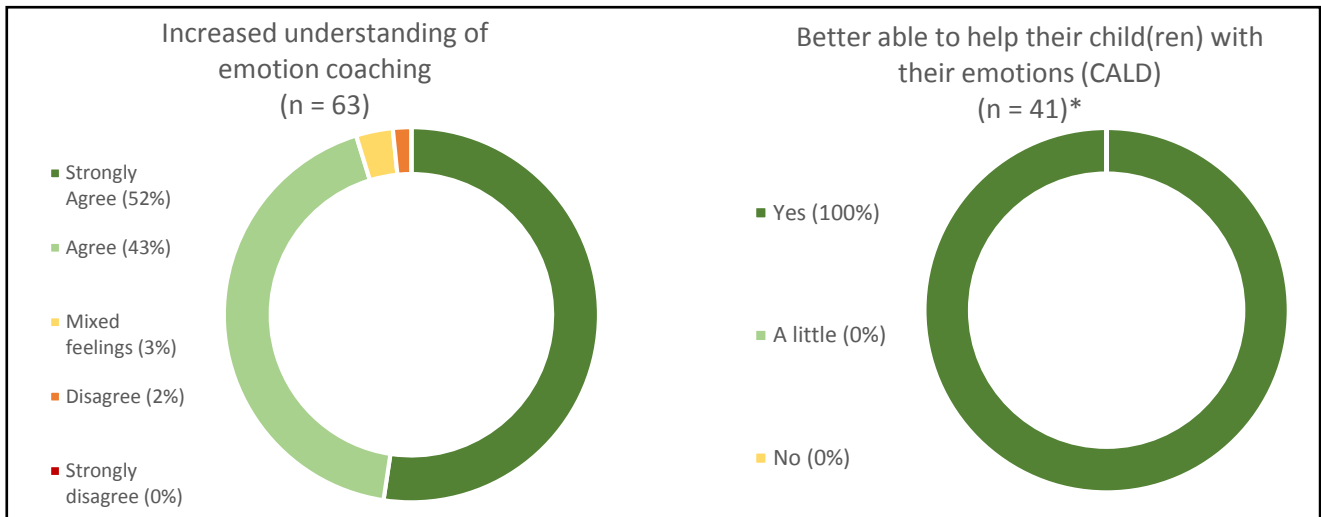
**Figure 5: Change in parents' awareness of their child(ren)'s emotions**  
*\*n <51, as 1 no response to question*

7.2.2 Parent’s emotion coaching knowledge and skills increased.

*‘Learning about emotion coaching – to stop and acknowledge feelings is such a powerful thing for both parent and child.’*

**Parent, Tuning in to Teens™ delivery 2018**

Parents reported that by the end of the program they had an increased understanding of emotion coaching (see Figure 6).



**Figure 6: Change in parents’ knowledge of emotion coaching**  
*\*n <51 as 2017 questionnaires did not ask this question*

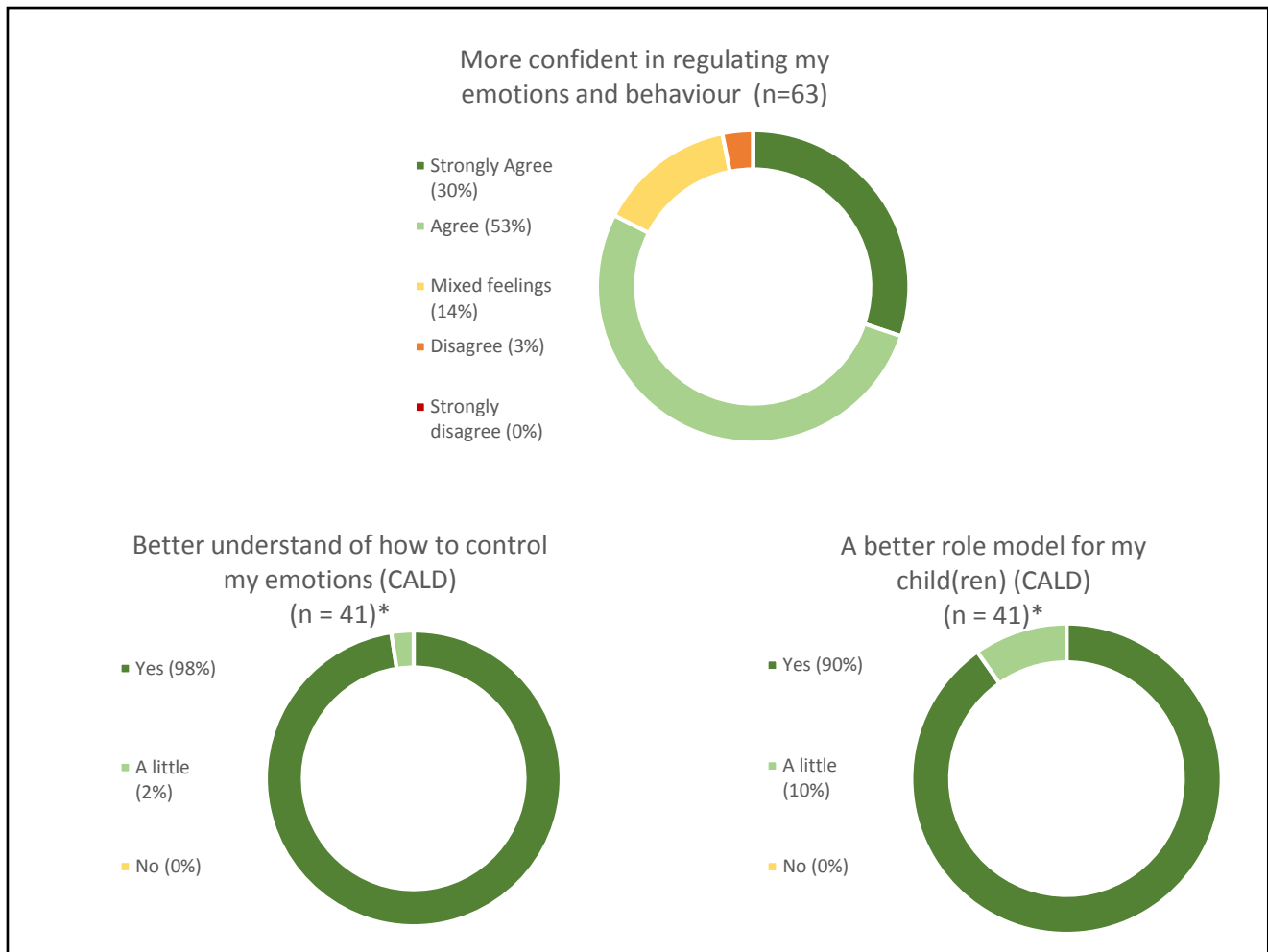
Parents also reported positive emotion coaching behaviour change, with a high number of parents indicating that as a result of doing a Yarra CTC Tuning into Kids/Teens™ program they had an increased confidence and ability to positively regulate their own behaviour (Figure 7).

*‘I have changed my behaviour with my kids. I know how to manage my anger.’*

**Parent, Tuning into Kids™ (CALD) delivery, 2017**

*‘Thanks so much for the course... It is no exaggeration to say that I am changed... I have a new and helpful perspective of [my children]. Sincere thanks.’*

**Parent, Tuning into Teens™ delivery 2018**



**Figure 7: Change in parents' confidence and ability to positively regulate their behaviour**

*\*n <51 as 2017 questionnaires did not ask this question*

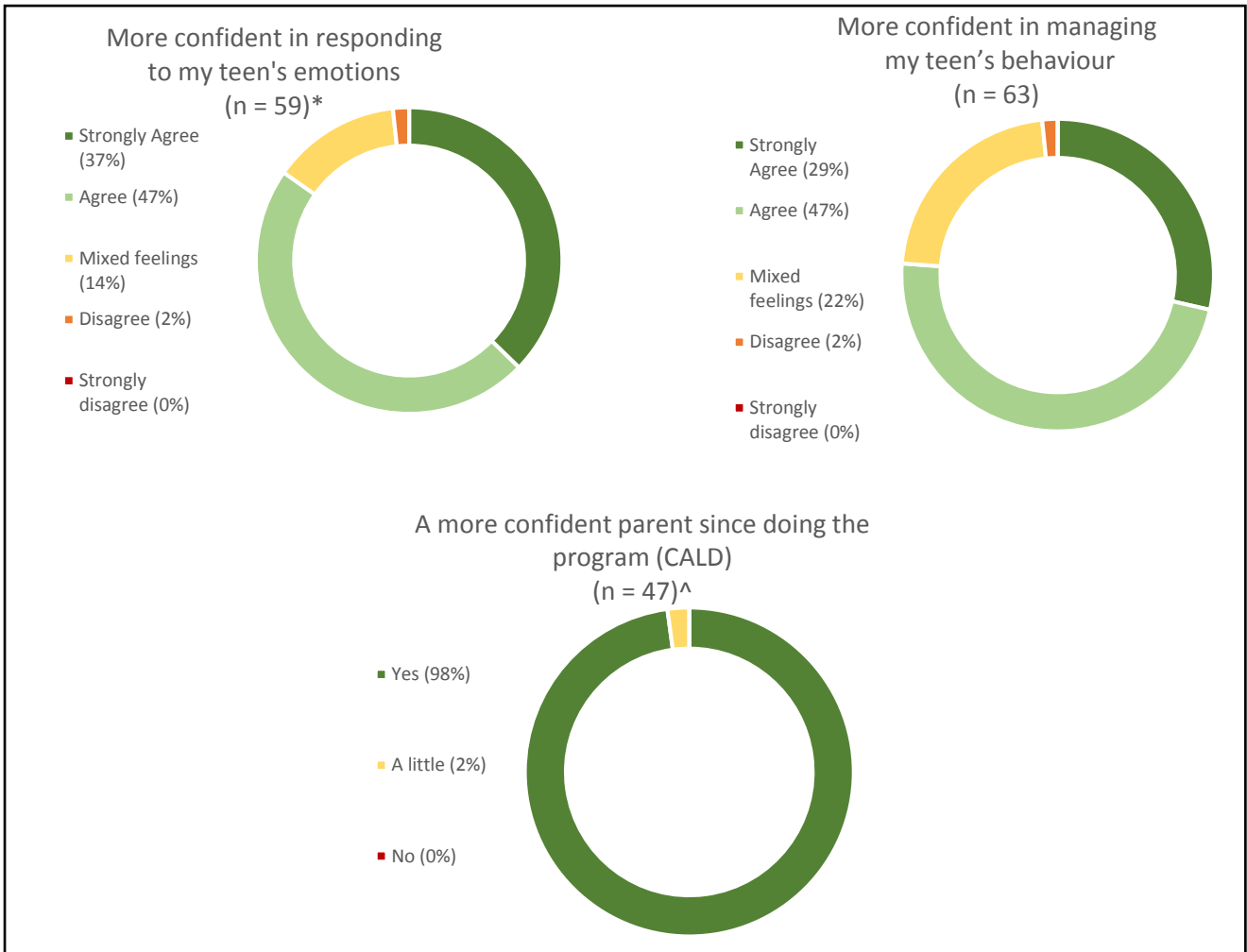
*'I came to this program at the right time. My daughter was disengaging from school and I was worried for her. I use to react and get angry and tried to get answers from her but never did. After this program I learnt not to react and to realise she is having challenging times. I became empathetic. I also learnt the links of teenage brain development and behaviour. Most importantly I was able to emotion coach her and she was able to share and better communicate with me. I feel like I am a better parent and we are better connected.'*

**Parent, Tuning into Teens™ (CALD) delivery 2018**



### 7.3 Improvements in parenting confidence

Parents reported that they were more confident in responding to their teens emotions, managing their teens behaviour and were generally a more confident parent since doing Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ (see Figure 8).



**Figure 8: Change in parents' confidence and ability to positively regulate their behaviour**

\*n <63 due to 4 no response, as incorrect questionnaire administered

^n <51 due to 4 no response, due to questionnaire update removing this question

Many parents highlighted the value of learning about brain development as well as the value of participating in the program with other families. They reported that this helped to normalise their experience of 'raising a child/teen' and how these factors were important contributors to building their parenting confidence.

*'Really important to share experiences and remember that you're not alone.'*

**Parent, Tuning into Teens™ delivery 2018**

*“This program really helped me to learn I was not a bad parent. Hearing the other parents having the same issues with their children as mine, made me feel not so bad. The group of women were supporting of me and I felt comfortable to share and I also made new friends”*

**Parent, Tuning into Teens™ (CALD) delivery 2019**

*‘The most valuable part of the course for me was understanding the teenage "frontal" lobe thinking. At least in general I know it's quite "universal" for all the teens to go through some similar experiences.’*

**Parent, Tuning into Teens™ delivery 2018**

#### 7.4 Strengthened parent-child connection

*‘We were being drawn apart and now we are connected and tuned in to each other. It’s been amazing for both of us.’*

**Parent, Tuning into Kids™ (CALD) delivery 2018**

A major theme of parents’ qualitative feedback was how what they learnt through the Tuning into Kids/Teens™ program is leading to a stronger relationship with their child(ren).

*‘Tuning into Teens was a fantastic course that helped me to better understand what my teen is feeling, and to coach her through her emotions. I feel we are closer as a result and that this will help her establish healthy emotional habits for her future.’*

**Parent, Tuning into Teens™ delivery 2018**

*‘This program has really helped me be kind to my children and the children I take care for [of]. I used to react and get angry and never talked to my children. Now I have learnt to talk and try and understand what the problem is for them. This has helped me to understand their emotions and fears. In my country we do not talk or listen to our children. I now know how important this is if I want to better support my children. I feel like a much better mother after this program.’*

**Parent, Tuning into Kids™ (CALD) delivery 2019**

## 8. Conclusion

From the evaluation findings presented in this report, it is clear that the collaborative delivery of Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ parenting programs in Yarra is improving parents' emotional competence, parenting confidence and strengthening parent-child(ren) relationships.

It can therefore be concluded that the programs are working to address the key issue for which they were selected, that is to 'Strengthen Family Relationships' for young people and their families in Yarra. In addition, to this it can be concluded that the standard six-week Tuning into Teens™ and seven-week Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ program tailored to culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Yarra are suitable for the target parent audiences and the Yarra setting in which they are being delivered.

What is also clear, is that the collaborative delivery model being implemented by Yarra CTC partners, with a strong shared commitment to the health and wellbeing of young people and their families is:

- Leading to greater benefits for young people and families in Yarra, than a single organisation could achieve on its own; and
- Strengthening Yarra's local service sector's
  - Shared professional skill set and,
  - Ability to work in partnership to achieve the best outcome for local families.

It is recommended that Yarra CTC partner organisations continue to support, deliver and seek funding to sustain and grow the collaborative delivery of both the six-week standard Tuning in to Teens™ program and the seven-week Tuning in to Kids/Teens™ programs tailored for culturally and linguistically diverse parents in Yarra.