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Glenys Woolcock  
President  
Horse Whispering Youth Program  
Via email: [glenys@hwyp.com.au](mailto:glenys@hwyp.com.au)

### **Re: Testimony in support of Horse Whispering Youth Program**

We welcome the opportunity to provide this testimony to Horse Whispering Youth Program (HWYP) in support of their future grant applications and fundraising endeavours.

We support HWYP's unique approach to addressing the diverse needs of youth & families. Their equine-assisted programs enhance the personal growth, well-being, and overall development of participants in a safe, natural, and outdoor environment.

Krurungal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) Corporation for welfare resources and housing is a community run organisation providing culturally appropriate support services to local ATSI people in the Gold Coast/Tweed LGA. I work in the Children and Schooling Program supporting young people 12 -18 years of age currently in mainstream schools or alternative education to stay engaged. I also support young people at risk of being disengaged from education or whom have been disengaged return to some sort of education training or work. I referred 2 young Indigenous boys from Nerang High School to the HWYP in Term 4 of 2024. Both boys were at risk of being disengaged due to low attendance and anti-social behaviour within and outside of the school environment.

Both boys were very eager to attend the HWYP each week with both parents shocked at the level of engagement and how eager they were to attend considering it was a fight to get them to school every day. I transported them each week having yarns with them about different topics or worries they might have had around friends, family, and social relationships. The boys were always respectful and never had any concerns from the HWYP facilitators either. When I would report this back to the school they would say "you must be talking about different kids". The program was hugely beneficial to the young boys, and they reported not feeling judged, loved being outdoors with the horses and learning how to be more aware of how they feel and managing their emotions better. The feeling of accomplishment finishing the 10-week program was bittersweet as they didn't want to stop coming. The boys asked if they could attend again.

In our experience, the 10-week early intervention program has proven highly capable in quickly engaging troubled youth, diverting them away from anti-social/ criminal behaviour, helping them to engage positively with others and build self-confidence and resilience. The program also works well with existing mental health services for youth and individuals requiring additional support from the community.

Yours sincerely,

Lynette Larcombe  
Children and Schooling Program  
Krugungal ATSI Corporation