Evaluation of the IAST *plus* Project

Second Interim Evaluation Report

Dr Isabelle Bartkowiak-Théron
Associate Professor Roberta Julian
Dr Sally Kelty
Loene Howes

UTAS — FACULTY OF ARTS

TASMANIAN INSTITUTE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT STUDIES

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Figures and Tables

Acknowledgements

Our gratitude goes to all survey respondents who reflected on the aims and objectives of the scheme and their expectations of it, and especially to those who communicated their thoughts in the survey. This report would not be complete without their views and input.

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Isabelle Bartkowiak-Théron

Roberta Julian

Sally Kelty

Loene Howes

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADS   Alcohol and Drug Services

CP   Child Protection Services

DHHS   Department of Health and Human Services

DoE   Department of Education

DPEM   Department of Police and Emergency Management

IAST   Inter-Agency Support Teams

IAST+   Inter-Agency Support Teams + (pilot project)

NGO   Non-government organisation

OfC   Office for Children

TILES   Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies

UTas   University of Tasmania

YJ   Youth Justice

Introduction

Context

This document is the second of two interim reports, prepared in the first year of the two-year evaluation of the 'IAST+: Three Approaches to Case Coordination' pilot project (IAST+). This evaluation was commissioned by the Office for Children, Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in 2013. It will conclude in December 2015 (with the dissemination of the final report). The aim of the research is to examine inter-agency collaborative processes, with a long-term goal to better understand and build collaborative practice. This second interim report presents the analysis of self-assessment surveys completed and returned by participants in IAST meetings at three pilot sites throughout the first year of this evaluation. This analysis specifically considered stakeholder satisfaction regarding collaborative process and stakeholder feedback about monthly meetings. It also took into account the broader context in which the IAST+ initiative is taking place, acknowledging shifts in governance and political requests for service rationalisation.

Self-assessment surveys

At the beginning of this evaluation, the research team designed a short 'self-assessment survey' for all stakeholders to fill in at the end of each committee meeting. This anonymous five minute survey (identified by site only) allows for some reflection on whether the meeting was well run, and whether collaborative mechanisms were clearly outlined for all cases discussed. It also enables the identification of possible obstacles to collaboration or good case management. It provides participants the opportunity to identify possible frustrations or praise proceedings. To encourage participation, a raffle of a $30 Coles, Woolworths or Plants Plus voucher is drawn every six months.

Self-assessment surveys are ongoing throughout the research, however, in order to collate as much data as possible, several changes were made to the surveys as the research has progressed, and as particular issues have become clearer. Some topics had reached saturation (demonstrated by the repetition of responses to the same question), and in order to avoid participant fatigue (either by choosing not to respond to questions or being frustrated with the survey), the research team adjusted the final questions to address issues that seemed more pressing to participants, and to tap into other, more complex aspects of their IAST experience. These new topics will be as specialised 'vignette issues' in the final report.

Chapter 1 – Collaboration satisfaction across the pilot sites

Attendance data: report and analysis

Meeting attendance at the three sites fluctuated greatly over the first year of this study (Fig. 1)[1]. Devonport is the pilot site where attendance has been the most regular, with number of attendees between 7 and 11 (average of 9) per meeting. Glenorchy IAST meetings have been well attended throughout the year, with between 7 and 12 participants (average of 9.3) per meeting, despite a declining trend in numbers after January 2014. Launceston is the site where attendance has been the most irregular, with numbers varying between 3 and 10, and an overall average of 5.3 attendees per meetings.
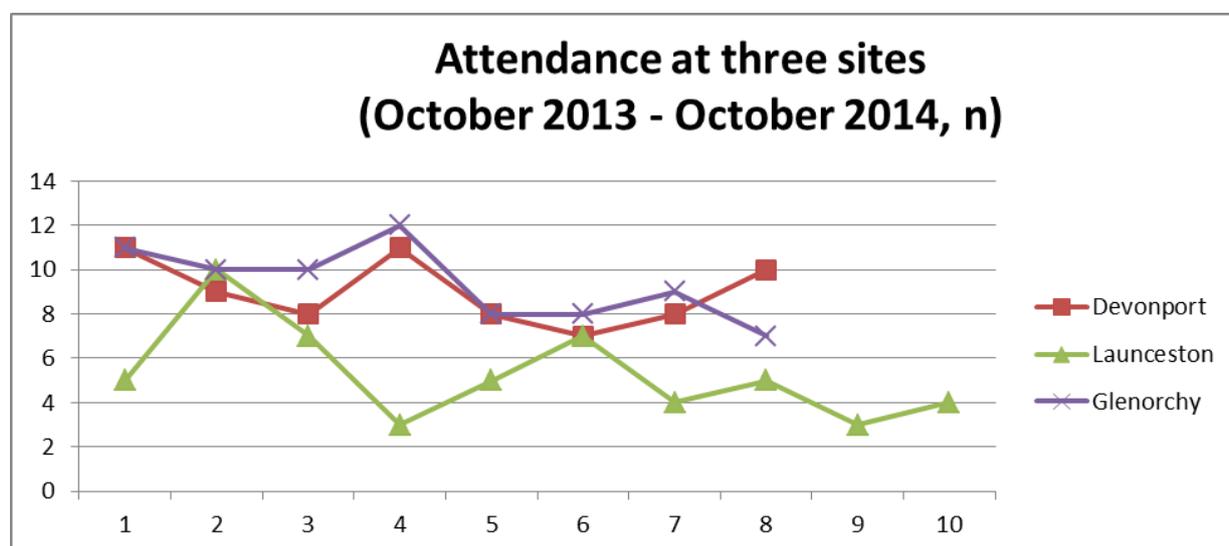

Figure 1 - Meeting attendance

Satisfaction data: report and analysis

Meeting attendance seems to be directly linked to satisfaction with the IAST process in general. Figures 2, 3 and 4 provide a visual representation of stakeholders' satisfaction over the year. Satisfaction is indicated by green (very satisfied) and blue (satisfied); dissatisfaction is indicated in orange (not satisfied) or red (very dissatisfied)[2].

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[1] This report takes into account all self-assessment surveys filled in since the beginning of this research, and returned to the research team by 31st October 2014.

[2] Please note that attendance attrition impacts on declining satisfaction numbers, since there are sometimes fewer participants answering our monthly survey. However, the nature of our data-gathering exercise, as well as the different administration of the three sites (co-located, self-directed and existing model), never intended to allow
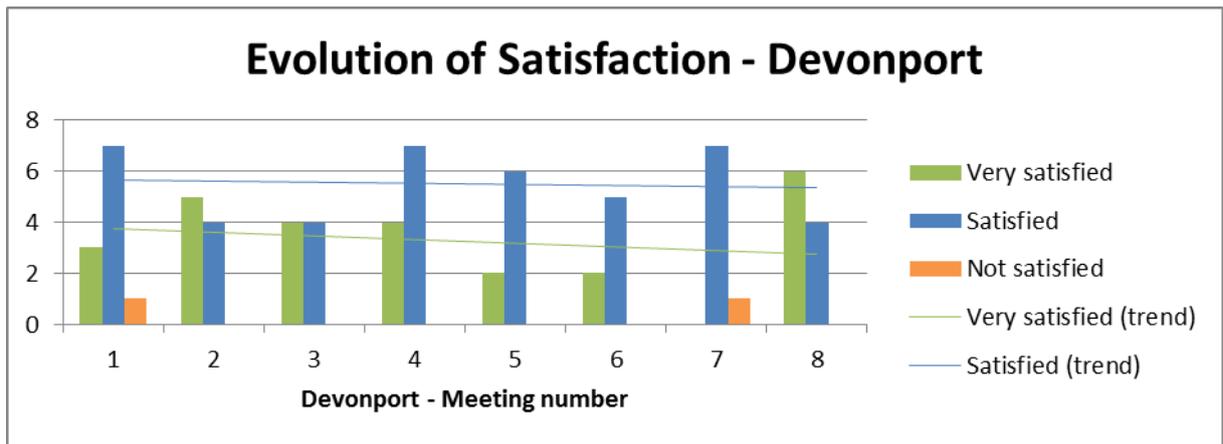
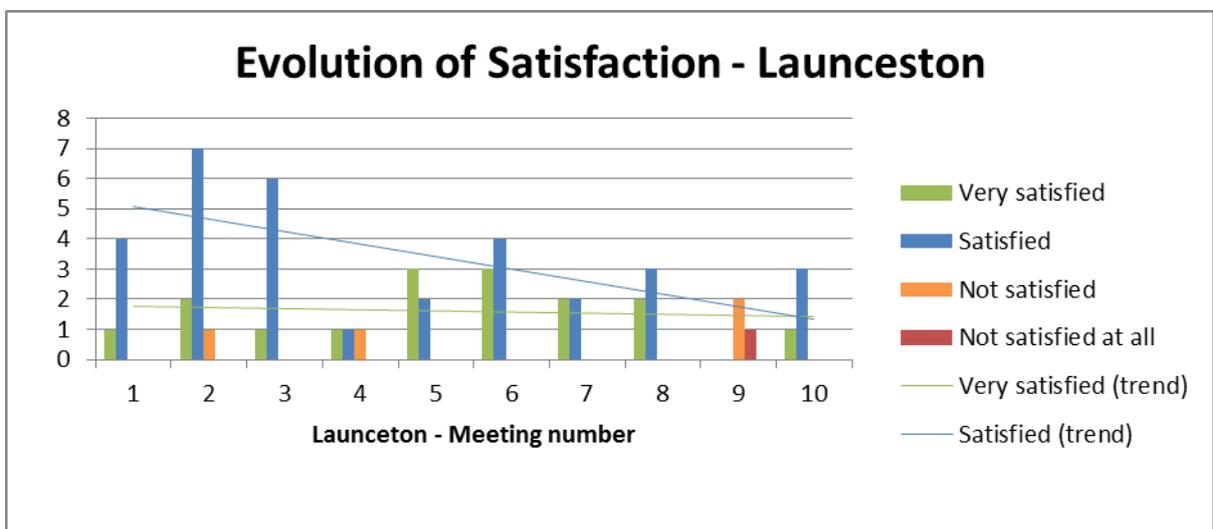**Figure 2 - Stakeholder satisfaction – Devonport**

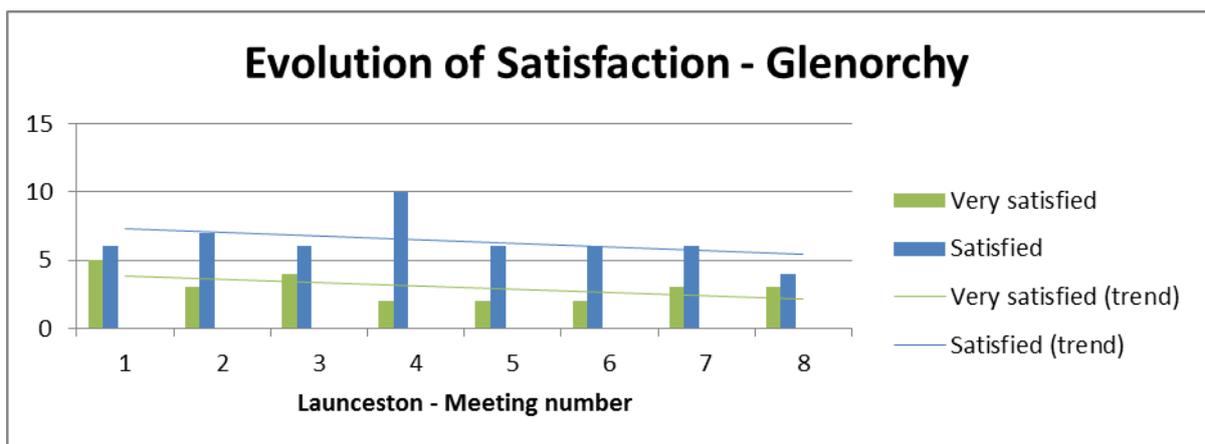**Figure 3 - Stakeholder satisfaction – Launceston**

Figure 4 - Stakeholder satisfaction – Glenorchy

for cross-sectional satisfaction comparison. Rather, this evaluation examines governance and collaboration processes, and assesses these *in situ*.

Overall, participants remained satisfied with the IAST process and meeting proceedings, despite a downward trend in overall satisfaction[3]. Whilst meetings in Glenorchy seem to have gone smoothly with relatively consistent satisfaction rates, meeting attendees in Devonport and Launceston expressed dissatisfaction on several occasions (Fig. 2 and 3). Dissatisfied participants indicated each time that their negative appraisal of the collaboration process during these meetings was due to a lack of attendance by representatives from other agencies. This was expressed several times in Launceston, first from the point of view of general non-attendance:

> *"lack of participants", "not all agencies present"; "non-attendance of many agencies"; "lack of other support services in attendance"; "no rep from XXX and YYY[4]"; "school holidays seem to have impacted on attendance of some key members of IAST"; "poor turn up – last minute apologies"; "poor attendance by services"; "XXX did not attend or provide any information".*

Second, other participants estimated that relevant agencies were not part of the process, and that there was no flexibility in agency participation. One participant indicated specifically that the presence of some specific NGOs was required for a smoother and more efficient discussion of cases and follow up of some families. This is a point of dissatisfaction that was raised early in our evaluation, and is discussed further in the second chapter of this report.

Some points of dissatisfaction were more specific, with one respondent indicating that a "key" agency had not attended a meeting, and another mentioning that a case referral from another regional IAST had not been processed. On a specific point of process, a survey respondent indicated that: "[I am] sometimes unsure of purpose of IAST, which can be more discussion based rather than action oriented. Perhaps the IAST process needs to be more clearly defined." This specific point also was raised early in our research, and we re-address this point in Chapter 2.

Most participants, however, were happy with the IAST, and their answers clearly identify key areas in which the IAST is doing well. We have grouped these key areas into four broad categories, of which an overview is provided in Table 1. Key areas of satisfaction revolve around themes of information sharing, case assessment, collaborative process and care for young people at risk.

Whilst the initial background survey did not provide a clear picture of collaboration to emerge, the self-assessment surveys allowed for more insight as to how the IASTs work and how the collaborative process unfolds. These key themes highlight what IAST mechanics account for stakeholders'

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[3] Please note that this downward trend can be linked to other factors, such as participation fatigue (i.e. : respondents fill-in a survey at the end of each meeting), a decline in participation numbers and an actual dissatisfaction with the scheme over time.

[4] The actual agencies were mentioned in the participant's answer.

satisfaction; from meeting schedules and agendas, to assessment processes, case management and core ideal of the scheme (ameliorating life circumstances of at risk youths).

Key IAST Satisfaction Areas			
Information sharing	Assessment	Process	Care
• Teams are able to provide a good overview of cases • Discussions are sufficiently open to ensure everyone has all the information • Clear information on client outcomes and future actions • Information generally circulates well • Free flow of information between agencies • Good communication across agencies • Relevant information to clients / young people agencies work with	• Teams are able to accurately identify risks and needs, and discuss outcomes and actions • Cases are discussed in depth • Assessments are precise and informative, excellent level of detail • Good insight into updated circumstances of clients • Thorough conversations about young people • Assessments are accurate, which allows for a good response to client issues • Clear actions identified for most young people • Comprehensive discussions • Awareness of connections between clients / students • Updating of information to enable support	• Referrals and reporting are timely and appropriate • Discussions are clear, respectful and communication is generally excellent • Speed of process is satisfactory • Meetings are kept to agenda • Discussions are robust, structured and on task • Jobs / tasks are delegated appropriately • Good coordination of meetings, tasks, and services for high risk children • Good links to other services • Clear guidelines and understanding of young people involved • Obvious collaboration occurring within and outside meeting	• Discussions focussed on how to move forward with cases • Obvious concern for clients from all agencies • All parties have the same goal: to support young people • Focus on potential support for clients • Active engagement by all parties, input from all concerned • Constructive discussions & real actions for some children • Collaboration for the interest of the children • Meetings allow for urgent responses to children's circumstances (extraordinary meeting) • IAST allows for urgent intervention (via case conference) to help family • Meeting allows for all agencies to offer views to maximise outcomes for young people

Process issues

Overall, stakeholders perceived that group meetings allowed for an accurate analysis of all cases presented in meetings, as indicated in figures 5, 6 and 7. Such satisfaction matches levels of satisfaction reported in our earlier background survey (First Interim report, 2013, 28).
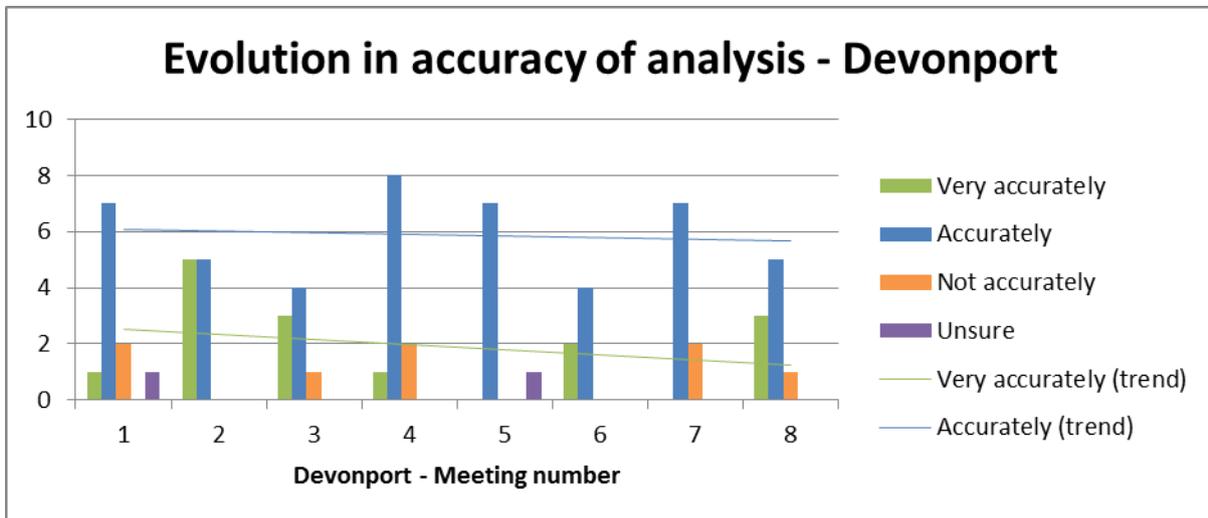

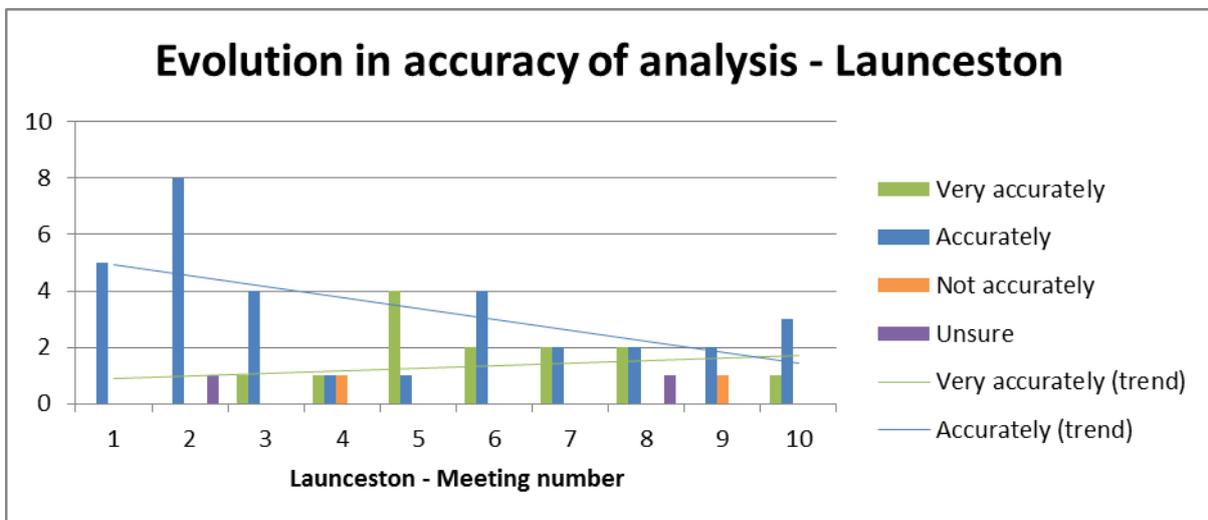**Figure 5 - Accuracy of analysis – Devonport**
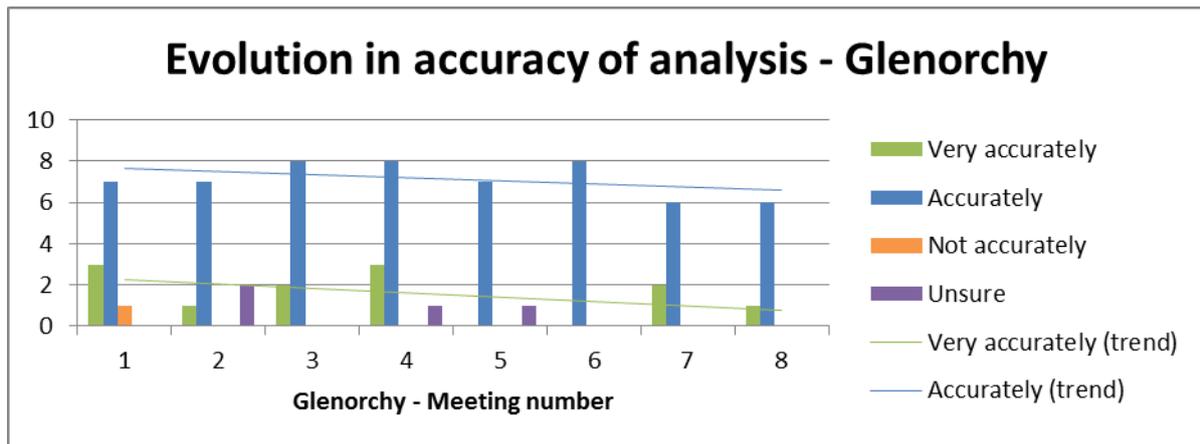

Figure 6 - Accuracy of analysis – Launceston

There were only a few instances where meeting participants did not think cases had been discussed well: 5 meetings in Devonport where some participants were dissatisfied with the analysis of cases, 2 in Launceston and 1 in Glenorchy. For each of these cases, participants provided explanations for their dissatisfaction. As suggested previously, the most prevalent critique was that of non-attendance by representatives of some of the agencies. Some participants indicated that analysis cannot occur smoothly and comprehensively when key agencies do not provide relevant information. Specifically, one respondent indicated that:

> *'it is hard to analyse cases correctly when relevant people are not there'.*

Other survey respondents expressed some confusion as to the nature of data that was shared, specifically when information seems contradictory or conflicting with other information provided on the same case. Another urged meeting attendants to come prepared for meetings, which necessitates having good case knowledge:

> *'not all information consistent'*

> *'representatives should come more equipped with up-to-date information on clients'*

One respondent felt that the responses from IAST meetings did not match the needs of some cases, and that discussions should have focussed on:

> *'earlier intervention with services/support that can make a difference'.* (emphasis in text)

Chapter 2 – Inter-agency collaboration: discussion points

Participation of non-government organisations in IAST meetings

The topic of non-government agencies' (NGO) participation in IAST meetings was a point raised early in our research. Responses to our first IAST background survey unveiled considerable frustration and misunderstanding as to why NGOs could not participate in proceedings and were not invited to IAST meetings or specific case discussions. At the time, many survey respondents indicated that 'there was a need to invite others to take part in case discussion, not only for the purpose of information sharing, but also to contribute to problem-solving' (First IAST+ Interim Report, 2013, 20). Two salient observations were as follows, with respondents suggesting that IAST business rules be changed to invite key community service providers to the table (with Gateway and Youth Support Services cited as new members to be invited as a matter of urgency):

> *The refusal of allowing NGOs to attend the meetings, especially when they are providing family support and know the families well [is an obstacle to collaboration]. This restricts the knowledge and resources of the family and their supports and limits the ability to identify what works, what doesn't and what could be implemented. (First IAST+ Interim Report, 2013, 21)*

> *NGO's working with clients/families were not allowed to attend meetings which meant that we did not have the information needed where we could report to the IAST members. Even if all IAST members agreed on an outcome, there were obstacles in making a final decision, therefore nothing got done, and a decision was delayed until next meeting. (First IAST+ Interim Report, 2013, 24)*

As inviting additional agencies to the discussions was often mentioned as an area where IASTs could be improved upon, and their absence deemed an obstacle to good collaboration, the research team proceeded to make several recommendations relating to the invitation of other agencies to IAST monthly meetings (First IAST+ Interim Report, 2013).

Most recommendations focussed on the confusion surrounding whether it was possible to invite NGOs and external agencies to attend IAST meetings. As indicated in our first interim report (2013, 41) there is currently no obstacle to NGOs attending whole or parts of IAST meetings, as long as they were engaged with and of relevance to problem-solving. Some NGOs already participate – albeit in an ad-hoc manner – in discussions in some sites. We therefore reiterate our suggestion that the DPEM and DHHS consider formally inviting agencies of relevance to problem-solving and to addressing families' needs, and to formalise their possible participation by way of a memo to all IAST stakeholders. The invitation of relevant NGOs to IAST proceedings could be the responsibility of the Chair, with the support and advice of other IAST meeting attendants. As this is the second time this issue has been

raised within the research, we urge the IAST+ project team and the DPEM IAST management team to reflect on this finding and provide suggestions to Chairs in all IAST+ sites.

Discussion-based rather than action-based meetings

Our earlier research has already flagged that some respondents felt IAST meetings were too focussed on discussion-focussed rather than action (First Interim report, 2013, 24). More specifically, some respondents thought relatively negatively of the scheme, and had offered the following comments:

> *[the IAST is not valuable] in its current form. There seems to be a lot of information sharing but very little strategy building and forward planning. The language used in relation to young people and their families is often derogatory and hopeless rather than solutions focussed. More time is spent lamenting the lack of resources than brainstorming possible interventions.*

> *There appears to be a varied result with no key actions or outcome identified for the family or young people.*

> *It has changed over the years into a forum that does not achieve much at all.*

The absence of action resurfaced in our self-assessment surveys. We dedicated a large section of our first interim report (2013) to the issue of discussion versus action, reminding readers that '[while] respondents called for more action to be taken by IASTs, (…) the teams' remit remained that of information sharing'.

Nonetheless, there was frustration expressed early in the research, in relation to information sharing being insufficient as a sphere of activity, with a preference for an outcome-based approach to be included in IAST policies and guidelines, as well as supervision and monitoring of cases. Respondents thought that:

> *IAST should be developed back to developing strategies/interventions/actions for families rather than sharing information.*

The topic here seems more mitigated, as indicated in Table 1 (page 12). While only a couple of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the absence of action, many responses in the self-assessment surveys indicated that participants thought that the purpose of the IAST meeting was the conceptualisation of strategies meant for implementation outside meetings, and as part of the core-business of partner agencies. The themes of information sharing and assessment were clear areas of satisfaction according to meeting participants, and themes of process and care seem to indicate that participants perceived that the decision-making process occurs successfully, with room for urgent actions to be decided upon, and clear guidelines as to how support occurs in the field. Responses such as 'constructive discussions and real actions for some children', 'meetings allow for urgent responses to children's circumstances (extraordinary meeting)', or 'IAST allows for urgent intervention (via case conference) to help family', indicate that there is sufficient flexibility within IAST processes to not only

discuss cases, but also to take appropriate action when the need arises. According to one respondent, IAST meetings also 'allow for all agencies to offer views to maximise outcomes for young people'. Such responses point towards the capacity of IASTs not only to offer cross-agency collaboration, but also to allow agencies to tailor efficiencies and make the most possible use of available resources. At a time where continuous calls for service rationalisations (DHHS, 2012; DPEM, 2013), budget cuts and service mergers are being made for a number of regional support agencies, this identification of needs and avenues for resource allocation is to be appreciated and encouraged.

Non-attendance doesn't allow for case updates

The topic of agency non-attendance was raised many times in the earlier part of our research. We dedicated several sections of the first interim report to this topic.

> *Participants regretted agency non-attendance to monthly meetings, and strongly suggested ways to assert agency representation to monthly meetings (e.g.: technological communications), as well as organisational incentives for participation (e.g.: IAST membership becoming part of a job description). We recommend that these ideas find consideration, especially for regional IAST sites. (First Interim report, 2013, 11).*

The issue was flagged as one necessitating particular attention, with background survey participants identifying it as an area relevant to improving IAST processes and outcomes.

As indicated in the First Interim Report, when survey respondents were asked to provide two ideas that they thought could improve the scheme, fifteen respondents suggested that any improvement of IAST processes had to be about regular meeting attendance and membership. This respondent identified two aspects of this:

- *it was important that agencies maintain a monthly presence at meetings, and that*
- *agency representatives should <u>not</u> rotate, in order to maintain organisational and case knowledge.*

(…) They indicated that IASTs needed:

- *Consistency in having the same members from different agencies attending on a regular basis.*
- *Attendance of all agencies all the time (First Interim Report, 2013, 30).*

This issue of lack of representation by each agency at IAST meetings has resurfaced in the self-assessment surveys. Self-assessment surveys are filled in at the end of each meeting, and it is evident that the absence of key agencies around the table is a key area of frustration for attending agency members. It is therefore urgent that the IAST+ project team and IAST management team address the issue, and find a way to ensure or encourage the presence of all key agencies at monthly IAST meetings. It may be helpful to send memos to remind agency representatives (and their immediate supervisors) of monthly meeting dates. However, as it is natural to expect some non-attendance due

to illness, leave or agency core-business demands, there should also be a reporting process articulated to allow for information to be updated regardless of whether agency representatives attend meetings or not. Since agency attendance is important in order to share information across agencies on specific case updates, we suggest that an alternative information sharing pathway is created, with the preferred information sharing process being that of agency representation at meetings. In case an agency representative is unable to attend a monthly meeting, we suggest that an electronic (or other alternative) process be designed for case information to be sent to meeting Chairs, in order to be disseminated at the meeting. Such an alternative pathway would align with key elements of successful inter-agency collaborations as identified in literature (see Literature Review, 2014, and First Interim Report, 2013, 44).

Future research steps

The research team will continue to collaborate with IAST+ project and IAST management teams to establish what documentation is needed to effectively assess the scheme as to both its collaborative processes and its impact on families and young people. Due to the Office for Children being absorbed in broader DHHS structures, and some complications with data collection regarding the impact of the scheme, the research team, in consultation with DHHS and the DPEM, have reoriented the research towards a process evaluation focus, rather than an impact evaluation. Consequently, the IAST research was re-designed to include interviews with all IAST+ meeting chairs, as well as site observation and focus groups. An amendment of project ethics was submitted to the UTas Social Science Human Ethics Research committee, and approved in November 2014.

The next research steps are underway, with Chair interviews, meeting observations and focus groups already scheduled. One Chair interview was conducted in December 2014. Interviews in the other two sites and observations will continue in 2015. A focus of these steps is the creation of a meeting observation tool, intended to gauge the elements of collaboration, identified in the Literature Review (2014), which are evident in current IAST meetings. At the time of finalising this report, two IAST+ meetings have been observed in two of the pilot sites. Meeting chairs are in the process of being interviewed. By June 2015, members of the management team will be re-interviewed, and all stakeholders re-surveyed. This part of the research will be the focus of the third and final evaluation report.

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APPENDIX A – Research Timeline

Action Items	Timeframe	Project Phases	By	Completed
Planning and scoping of evaluation	July/August 2013	Phase 1	TILES	√
Consideration of methodology and evaluation tools	August 2013	Phase 1	TILES	√
Project team Interviews	August 2013	Phase 1	TILES	√
Preparation of surveys	August 2013	Phase 1	TILES / OfC	√
Formatting of all surveys	September 2013	Phase 1	TILES	√
Administration of background survey of 20 IAST sites	Early September 2013	Phase 1	TILES / OfC	√
Administration of background survey of 3 IAST+ trial sites	Early September 2013	Phase 1	TILES / OfC	√
Design of day-to-day tracking tools	Mid-September 2013	Phase 1	TILES / OfC	√
Release and administration of day-to-day tracking tools	From October 1st 2013	Phase 2	OfC	√
Release and administration of Client exit survey		Phase 2	TILES / OfC	N/A
Ad-hoc visit of IAST+ trial sites		Phase 2	TILES	Ongoing
Design of meeting observation		Phase 2	TILES	Ongoing

tool			(SK)	
Ongoing collection of data	From October 2013, every 3 months	Phase 2	OfC	Ongoing
Release of data to TILES for Analysis		Phase 2	OfC	Ongoing
Desktop Analysis of data, three-monthly reports		Phase 2	TILES	Verbal report 1 √ Verbal report 2 √ Interim report 1 √ Verbal report 3 √ Interim report 2 √ and ongoing
Desktop Analysis of all data; preparation and delivery of final report	From late September 2015	Phase 3	TILES / OfC	TBA
Quality control and information checks of surveys	Ongoing	Phases 1, 2 & 3	TILES	Ongoing

Appendix B – Research outcomes and deliverables

OUTCOMES	SUB-AIMS	DELIVERABLES
1. Mapping of how agencies work together and how they can work together better	Mapping of chair facilitation skills (what makes a good Chair?)	Series of recommendations on: • Meeting facilitation • Meeting chairing • Information sharing • Follow up on information • Process 'invisibility' • Needs identification and assessment • Outcome identification • Exit / retirement process for children and their families • Impact identification AND documentation • Stakeholder expectation • Project purpose(s)
	IAST+ meeting dynamics (how are meetings run, and could they be better run?)	
	Overall collaboration and responsibility allocation	
	Identification of information sharing pathways (+ what is done with this information)	
2. Impact study: how have IAST+ changed kids' lives?	Acquiring an indication / establishing qualitative indicators of behavioural changes (for example)	Series of recommendations on: • Current impact measures • Possible impact measures (identification of possible qualitative and/or quantitative KPIs) • 'Hard' and 'soft' measure of impact
3. Overall IAST+ SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis		Trends analysis, with extractions of: • Collaboration gaps • Collaboration strengths • Possible process warning • Economic argument (how many hours are saved, through agencies meeting via the IAST model)
4. The effect 1, 2 and 3 (above) have on service delivery		