



# Integrated service delivery for young people

A literature review

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2010



Brotherhood  
of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

Published by

Brotherhood of St Laurence  
67 Brunswick Street  
Fitzroy, Vic. 3065  
ABN 24 603 467 024

Tel (03) 9483 1183  
Internet: [www.bsl.org.au](http://www.bsl.org.au)

ISBN 978 1 921623 17 2

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## Acronyms and abbreviations

AYF	Australian Youth Forum
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DHS	Department of Human Services
DPCD	Department for Planning and Community Development
GFC	Global financial crisis
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs (succeeded by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) and the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment (MCTEE).
NSYA	National Strategy for Young Australians
OST	Out-of-school time
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
VCAL	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
WIA	Workforce Investment Act (United States)

## Summary

The purpose of this literature review is to examine youth hubs or centres and consider supportive policy frameworks for them. The findings will inform Brotherhood of St Laurence service delivery in Frankston and at the proposed Caroline Springs Community Youth Centre. The larger objective of this review is to survey international and Australian research and policy on local youth services that respond to the needs of the whole person by integrating or ‘joining up’ local services and programs.

The early part of this report considers how the strengths and weaknesses of young people are taken up in youth policy and programs: for example, is a deficits approach taken, in which youth are treated as ‘at risk’ and their issues conceived as ‘problems’, or is a capabilities or strengths-based approach adopted?

## Policy and practice

In the United Kingdom and United States, major programs are supported by legislation to deliver more integrated services for young people. The UK’s Extended Schools and Aiming High policies seek to create service hubs in schools and youth centres where all young people have access to learning support and recreational activities. As in the UK, major funding in the US of out-of-school time programs is guided by evidence of positive social, behavioural and learning outcomes, particularly for low socioeconomic students. In the US, the full-service schools movement, care models such as Wraparound for young people with complex needs and One Stop Career centres are further initiatives in integrated youth services.

Australia lacks a substantive and well-resourced national youth policy and supportive legislation. Although young people’s educational and economic participation is taken up in the National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transition, young people are not among the priorities set for the Social Inclusion Agenda (DPMC 2009). While the National Youth Strategy provides a list of programs, it lacks a coherent, national vision for integrated service provision for young Australians. Positive movements towards integration may be seen in the pilot of Extended School Hubs funded through COAG, Victoria’s Better Youth Services pilots, the ACT’s Turnaround program for young people with complex needs, and the increasing number of ‘youth foyers’ which deliver housing, social support and training to young people at risk of homelessness.

Youth hubs or centres represent another approach guided by the ideal of integrated service delivery. Run in partnership with schools, training providers, social services, business groups and government, they provide community-based services and programs. Operations range from universal programs focusing on prevention to targeted early intervention through to tertiary and crisis services. This review examines key components of youth centres before providing three case studies: the Pathways Enterprise Centre located in the master-planned community North Lakes, Queensland; Visy Cares hubs in Dandenong and Sunshine in Melbourne; and Reynella Enterprise and Youth Centre on the outskirts of Adelaide.

## Implications

Clear policy trends for effective youth services emerging from this review of Australian and international literature are prevention, partnership, service integration, holistic care and strengths-based participation.

To bring about change, vision, leadership and federal support are required, such as through the development of a National Strategy for Integrated Youth Services.

Given that many services are delivered by state governments, such a strategy would need to be presented at the Council of Australian Governments, with a call for a whole of government commitment to service integration to address the broader wellbeing of young people.

# 1 Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to examine youth hubs or centres, and to consider supportive policy frameworks for them. It examines the argument that youth centres deliver more holistic and robust youth services than do other community development approaches. These findings will inform Brotherhood service delivery, both at High Street Frankston, and at Caroline Springs Community Youth Centre.

One review of Australian and overseas hubs suggests that in their essence, hubs aim to build socially sustainable communities by cultivating a sense of place and local identity, providing a focus for community building activities, and bringing together diverse facilities, services and activities that address community needs. Based on broad stakeholder consultation, Rossiter proposes the following definition for hubs:

A conveniently located public place that is recognised and valued in the local community as a gathering place for people and an access point for a wide range of community activities, programs, services and events (Rossiter 2007, p.2)

Hubs and youth centres range from those providing just one or two activities through to major providers of programs and services. However, beyond analysis of effective youth centres is a much larger question that warrants consideration. How can we achieve an individually-tailored response to the needs of the whole person through the delivery of ‘joined-up’ services and programs that are easily accessible within the local community?

This is by no means a new field of inquiry, nor a concern unique to the Brotherhood of St Laurence. However, a critical concern for this review is that young people be approached in a respectful manner, focusing on capabilities and taking an assets or strengths based (rather than deficit based) approach that views them as part of the solution rather than a problem. Furthermore, taking a holistic, integrated approach to youth services requires consideration of the myriad of approaches taken by professionals working in health, education, employment and social recreation. This review will also examine diverse policies adopted by different levels of government and departments, and the role of business and community sectors. Finally the potential synergies and partnerships between these players must be considered. Rather than giving a detailed but narrow account, this review surveys the landscape and documents some critical points for further consideration.

Section 2 is an examination of policy supporting integrated approaches both in Australia and overseas, discussing the evidence base. Section 3 takes a closer look at service delivery through youth centres; Section 4 presents some Australian case studies; and Section 5 contains some final remarks.

## Thinking about youth

At the foundation of all youth policies lie assumptions about young people. These assumptions concern the ways in which young people are defined, whether a deficit approach is adopted, and whether policy is guided by a concern for the achievement of happiness and human potential, and the democratic participation of young people. Consideration of the assumptions made about young people is important given their critical role in shaping the services that young people receive.

## Defining youth

‘Youth’ is often viewed as a transitional state, with a focus on the safe passage to adulthood. However, viewing youth primarily as a transition runs counter to the central tenets of youth work because it does not value young people as human beings and for ‘what they are now’, but only ‘for what they will become’ (Milson 1970; Smith 2001, p.85). Jeffs argues that:

youth work was based upon an assumption that adults led young people through a period of ‘storm and stress’ and danger toward the stability of adulthood. The sociologists of youth tended to work on the basis that youth was problematic and adulthood was not. However, the notion of ‘adulthood’ needs to be viewed as being as enigmatic as ‘youth’ (Jeffs & Smith 1999, pp.7–8).

Various authors, including Wyn and White (1997), have highlighted and challenged the way ‘youth’ is constructed in opposition to ‘adulthood.’ For example, ‘youths’ are perceived to be in transition, having emerging identities, powerless and vulnerable, less responsible, dependent, ignorant, prone to risky behaviours and rebellious. In contrast ‘adults’ are assumed to have ‘arrived’, have fixed identities, be powerful, responsible, independent, knowledgeable, considered in their behaviour and conformists (Bessant & Watts 2007).

## Youth as a ‘problem’: considering risk and stigma

As indicated previously, youth are often viewed as a ‘problem’ that must be solved. This is referred to as a ‘deficit approach’. Jeffs and Smith (1999) argue that politicians in the United Kingdom talk about young people in three ways: as thugs, users and victims.

As **thugs** they steal cars, vandalize estates, attack older (and sometimes, younger) people and disrupt classrooms. As **users** they take drugs, drink and smoke to excess, get pregnant in order to jump the housing queue and, hedonistically, care only for themselves. As **victims** they can’t find work, receive poor schooling and are brought up in dysfunctional families. Yet so many of the troublesome behaviours associated in this way with young people are not uniquely theirs (Jeffs & Smith 1999, p.1)

Deficit approaches focus on avoiding undesirable social outcomes. Identifying and managing perceived risks, or what could go ‘wrong’ with young people, is a common approach.

Sociologist Ulrich Beck famously argued that social change and ‘globalisation’ has brought new risks and hazards such as the decline of traditional institutions and social roles. Freed of these former social binds, it is now up to individuals to create their own identity and biography, reflect upon, and choose between life’s options, and navigate the many risks (Beck 1992). From a developmental perspective, for young people still forming their identity, these social changes provide an added challenge.

Psychologists and educators have taken up the problem of young people and risk in a major way. There is no shortage of literature examining these perceived social risks which include underage



drinking, substance abuse, mental illness, suicide, sexually transmitted disease, teenage pregnancy, early school leaving, unemployment, antisocial behaviour and incarceration. A review of two major studies examining non-school risk factors for educational disengagement in Australia drew attention to:

- individual factors, e.g. poor self-esteem, low intelligence, frequent or chronic school non-attendance
- family factors, e.g. large or dysfunctional family, parental illness, low socioeconomic status
- social factors, e.g. being male, non Anglo race or ethnicity, neighbourhood or regional characteristics (Murray et al. 2004, p.9).

UK policy has been influenced by research indicating that participation in self-development activities reduces the incidence of risky behaviours (Cebulla & Tomaszewski 2009). In Australia, the risk factors approach is widely used, for example by the Victorian Education Department through its Student Mapping Tool, while risk is discussed in great detail in the Victorian Vulnerable Youth Framework (DHS 2008). However even proponents of the approach are aware of its shortcomings:

Many young people are surprisingly resilient, despite experiencing a raft of disadvantages or personal setbacks, and effective identification processes must include a way of recognising such students, and be flexible enough to note that the social/emotional well-being of most adolescents will change over time. Also, a label that follows a young person may prevent them from making a fresh start once a risk factor is removed from their lives or as they move on to a new year, new teacher or new peer group. At worst, the label might inspire schools to ‘nudge’ such students down a predetermined path for ‘at risk’ young people. Finally, focusing on ‘risk factors’ or what is ‘wrong’ about individual students may inhibit reflection on the potential for systemic or whole-school change that could increase engagement by all students (DET 2005, p.8).

Kerka’s review of literature on alternatives for at-risk and out-of-school youth draws on the work of others such as Sanders, who observes that ‘at risk’ is a problematic term which ‘may place students at more risk than internal or external factors’. Kerka argues that risk refers to ‘probability, not explanation and this ambiguous label creates and perpetuates low expectations’ (Kerka 2003, p.1). Often those identified as ‘at risk’ do not fit into mainstream educational settings as a consequence of a ‘mismatch between the learner and the system’ and this ought to prompt the question ‘Do we change the child or the environment?’ She identifies eight factors in effective alternative programs: the presence of caring, knowledgeable adults; a sense of belonging and community; respect for youth; high expectations of academic achievement and responsible behaviour; treating individuals holistically; authentic and engaging learning opportunities that can instil hope; support; and long-term follow-up services (Kerka 2003).

A study of participants in the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) suggests that both traditional education and the at-risk category need to be re-thought. Blake found that students labelled ‘immature learners’ and ‘at risk’ identified learning needs similar to those of adults, and had a low tolerance for learning that separated theory from practice. He found that, by Year 12, VCAL students were likely to have ‘shaken off the “at-risk” label they received in the middle years of schooling, and the low self-esteem that went with it’ (Blake 2006, p.43).

These writers point to the stigmatisation of young people through the at-risk or deficit approach and corresponding service delivery. Providing universal rather than targeted programs is one means

of addressing this. For example delivering flexible and alternative education programs for all students, and bringing services into schools rather than pulling out students, is one approach in which young people do not have to ‘declare themselves as patients’ (Noam & Malti 2008). Taking universal provision one step further, Jeffs and Smith argue that welfare services offered specifically to young people ‘almost invariably, heighten stigmatization’ (Jeffs & Smith 1999, p.12). Programs for young mothers, provided on the assumption that they are inferior parents, is one example. They maintain that discrete services for young people (e.g. education and health) tend to receive less funding, involve lower expectations and apply more stringent conditions on users. Even in providing education of risks such as drug use, the authors argue that ‘the justification for generic provision is strong’ (Jeffs & Smith 1999, p.12).

An alternative to the deficit approach is an assets approach that builds upon youth resources. A study by the US National Academy of Sciences identified the following assets: connectedness, feeling valued, attachment to prosocial institutions, the ability to navigate in multiple cultural contexts, commitment to civic engagement, good conflict resolution and planning for future skills, a sense of personal responsibility, good moral character, self-esteem, confidence in one’s personal efficacy, and a sense of a larger purpose in life (Eccles & Gootman 2002).

Capability approaches make a further contribution to thinking about youth. Amartya Sen examines human wellbeing in terms of people’s capability to ‘achieve valuable functionings’, these defined as ‘an achievement of a person: what he or she manages to do or be’ (Sen 1993, p.31). Martha Nussbaum identifies 10 central capabilities: life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation (interacting / caring for others, social bases for self-respect, dignity, non-discrimination); other species (animals, plants); play; and control over one’s environment (political participation and material rights, e.g. property and employment). These different capabilities are essentially a strengths-based approach to youth wellbeing that examines the positive ‘functionings’ that allow them to ‘flourish’, experience dignity and live a good life (Nussbaum 2006, pp.76–8).

The capability approach has influenced theories of social exclusion, proponents arguing that disadvantage is multidimensional and an impediment to social integration (de Haan 1998). This influence may be seen in the UK and in national policies such as *A stronger, fairer Australia*:

An inclusive Australia is one where all Australians have the capabilities, opportunities, responsibilities and resources to learn, work, connect with others and have a say. In Australia today, not all Australians can do these things. Our social inclusion strategy is about making sure that, over time, every Australian can play an active part in shaping their own life and contributing to the economy and community (DPMC 2009, p.2).

In relation to young people, the political focus has been on their inclusion or participation in education, training or employment, with these rights and obligations epitomised by the Youth Compact (discussed later) which has been described as an ‘earn or learn’ approach.

### What type of social inclusion?

Within the social inclusion agendas of the UK and Australia, a critique of youth policy and programs is that concern for a young person’s wellbeing is too narrowly framed and focuses heavily on employment, economic productivity, making a ‘contribution to society’, such as through volunteering, and reducing the public cost of anti-social behaviour (Bond & Horn 2009; Smith 2001). This is not to suggest that productivity concerns are unwarranted, but that young people’s responsibility/right to participate economically (e.g. through full employment) must be complemented by recognition of their

other social rights. In addition to economic participation, policy should be concerned with the achievement of human happiness and potential as an end in itself. This is in accordance with Kant's categorical imperative:

Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means. (Kant 1993, p.36)

Fostering the aspirations and psychological and social wellbeing of young people is also important, not only for their own sake but also to facilitate their participation and contribution as citizens. Edwards argues that a lack of affordable housing and the imposition of stringent participation requirements in a labour market with limited opportunities for those with low skills reduce people's ability and willingness to participate. Without policy to address these issues, she maintains social inclusion will be 'defined in limited and instrumentalist ways, individuals will be blamed for 'being excluded', and strategies for inclusion 'will rely on coercion and compulsion' (Edwards 2008, p.2).

It is also important that youth work is not limited to 'doing things to young people to increase their commitment to work and learning (and avoid antisocial behaviour)' (Smith 2001, p.10). In policy terms, this can result in programs overly focused on outcome measures and reporting requirements. This can impede relationship building (Smith 2002) which, while not easily measured, is a central component of youth work:

building relationships of trust and respect; giving young people the recognition that is often missing in their lives—recognition for their achievements but also simply as themselves—thus building their confidence and motivation to engage (Merton 2004, p.42).

### Young people at the centre: democratic participation

Another consideration is the place of young people in youth work and programs. Are young people viewed as passive consumers of services organised by professionals? Or, are they seen as active participants who articulate their needs and shape a relevant response? As observed in a youth service planning document: 'it is easy to make decisions about young people when they are not in the room' (Paterson 2008, p.5).

Stella Creasy of 'Involve' in the UK argues:

... across the public realm there is a growing consensus that the state can no longer direct the actions of citizens without their cooperation ... we are entering an era in which progress can only be made in a society in which individuals, communities and public services are each able and willing to play their own part. For this to happen public participation must become the core, not the counterpart, of the future of public service decision making and delivery (Creasy 2007, p.1).

Many programs perceive young people as the central players in addressing challenges, seeking to empower them to manage their own relationships, self-development and education (Noam & Malti 2008). The UK Department for Children, Schools and Families has promised young people 'genuine influence over local services' (DCFS 2010a, p.12). Influencing this policy is an increased emphasis on democratic citizenship, the movement toward citizen-centred services and the idea that citizens can be relied upon to determine what is the common good (Furedi 2005, p.162).

However, Milbourne has argued that the effectiveness of such initiatives can be limited by the operational requirements in traditional institutions. She argues that many programs continue to operate under a youth deficit approach guided by a narrow conception of 'participation':

It is possible to conceptualise young people's participation as a somewhat narrow, individualistic model concerned with individual rights to access services and facilities, that is, inclusion in existing adult institutions. A second model, focused on young people's political and civic education, addresses concerns about voting and the wider democratic deficit. A third approach to conceptualising participation focuses on community and civil engagement, assumed to achieve wider social inclusion, increased reciprocity and community cohesion (Milbourne 2009, pp.350–1).

In these models, 'democratic participation' is being offered to secure the compliance of young people who are perceived to be bereft of a sense of social obligation within the dominant (adult) culture. This occurs in the absence of genuine institutional reform. A further critique is that underfunding, short-termism and rigid outcomes reporting limit the effectiveness of the community organisations in delivering these programs. This can mean that the community organisations select which young people to assist, avoiding the most 'at risk' groups in favour of less resource and time-intensive clients so that government performance targets can be met. Appreciative of the US emphasis on young people's personal and social development, Blundell (2008) critiqued the UK's focus on measurable outcomes and outputs, stating that youth work should be about quality not counting (2008).

## Co-location, cooperation, coordination and integration

Critical to implementing a strengths-based or capabilities approach concerned with the economic and social rights of young people is the movement toward integrated service delivery. In practical terms, this is the 'joining up' of services that address different facets of youth wellbeing (e.g. health, education, housing, social support). This final part of the introduction examines conceptual language relevant to youth services structure and inter-relationships, with an emphasis on integrated approaches.

Offering complementary programs and activities at one centre through the physical *co-location* of different service providers suggests some clear and immediate benefits such as improving access and communication between agencies (as discussed later). However, it takes considerable coordination, resources and time to develop trusting relationships between partners representing various levels of government, business, education and the community sector. Of the United States Workforce Investment Act's mandate to create youth councils to bring together resource and delivery systems that have youth as a major 'customer,' Callahan and Pines (1999, p.6) observe that 'collaboration is an unnatural act among unconsenting adults'. And reflecting on the full-service schools movement, Ferguson (2009) asserts that 'most community collaborations fail because they do not pay adequate attention to building and sustaining relationships' (p.85).

However, co-location in itself does not constitute a joined-up or holistic approach. In the absence of careful pre-planning grounded in clearly articulated and shared expectations, co-location can create a situation in which agencies are merely co-tenants rather than collaborators.

One approach is to first co-locate and then seek to *coordinate* services. Coordination is often taken to mean planning support for individuals based on a range of services (Brown, Thurman & Pearl 1993; Summers et al. 2001). However, reflecting on the coordination of UK services for young children, Owen asserts that liaising with providers, consulting parents, writing funding applications, managing staff and responding to a myriad of government initiatives leaves little time for this development. Lack of definition and shared understanding is a further issue:

...coordination seems to mean different things to everyone who uses the term. It can range from co-operation, of varying degrees of formality, between providers, through a range of

local authority corporate management initiatives, all the way to fully integrated services, with harmonized pay and conditions, managed within one department and planned and delivered in a co-ordinated way. The lack of a clearly defined concept makes co-ordination very difficult to work with in managerial terms: almost anything you do counts (Owen 1995, p.19).

She adds that a further risk is that coordination becomes an exercise in ‘making do’ rather than ‘moving towards a rationally structured service’ (Owen 1995, p.19).

Although the distinction between coordination and *integration* is often blurred, integrated service is often defined as involving formal activity at a systemic level between organisations as well as the individual level (Banyule and Nillumbik Youth Services Network 2003; Summers et al. 2001).

Integrated service seeks to counter the ‘silo effect’ through re-alignment of multiple services, effective use of resources to avoid duplication, timely transfer of information and development of a transparent and seamless response to the complex needs of individual service users.

In an evaluation of one-stop-shop legal services in the UK, the four areas critical to the delivery of this multi-layered advice service were accessibility, seamlessness, integration and tailored services. Accessibility was related to the logistics of access, e.g. location and hours, knowledge of the service, experiences at reception and client satisfaction. Critical to seamlessness were the clear identification of roles and responsibilities, clarity in policy and process including organised paperwork, procedures for sharing case management, information exchange and aftercare. Integration related to the ability of advisors to detect multiple problems and future needs. The tailoring of services depended on advisors’ judgments about client capacity, their understanding of service aims and their perceived role within the wider service context (Buck et al. 2010).

An ARACY-funded literature review of international and national integrated service models found that integration enables a joined-up response to ‘wicked’ problems, and can be resource-effective, enable knowledge and resource sharing, lead to long-term solutions and foster a sense of responsibility for young people’s outcomes (Brechman-Toussaint & Kogler 2010).

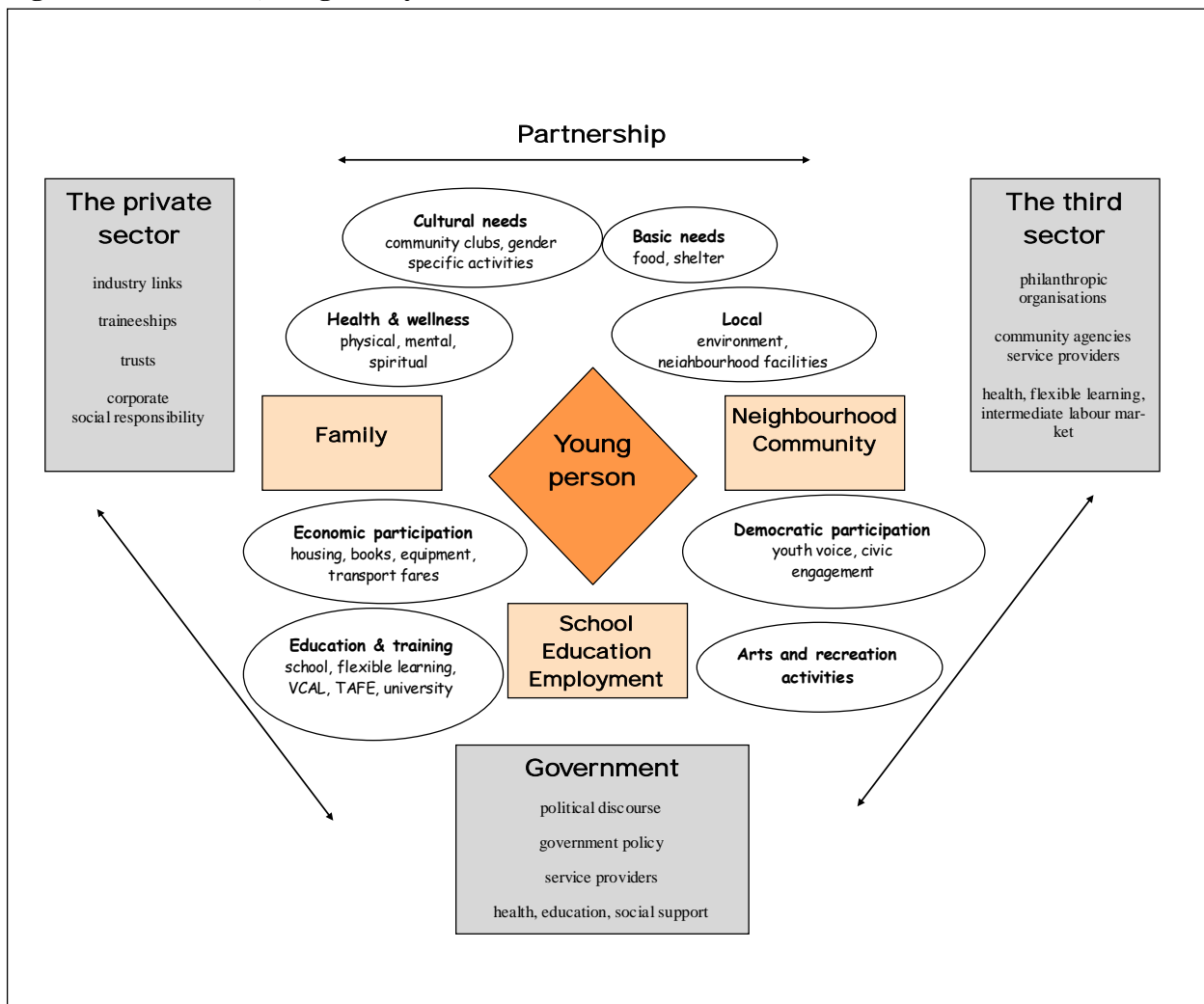
The review compared top-down initiatives, in which integration is prescribed by policy, with bottom-up initiatives, which pool grassroots resources to meet local need. Barriers for top-down approaches include time-limited funding, withdrawal of government interest over time, lack of funding for the integration process, differing agency philosophies, lack of clearly defined roles and difficulty assisting hard-to-reach groups. Enablers on the other hand can include early community consultation, establishing a shared vision and communicating the strategic and operational model, vertical and horizontal engagement (e.g. spanning government departments and community agencies, and tasks from policy and finance to local participation and needs assessment), ‘soft entry’ programs (e.g. recreational activities) and built-in evaluation. Turning to bottom-up approaches, potential barriers can be concern over turf loss (for example, competitive tendering does not encourage cooperation), reliance on champions, failure to formalise partnerships and lack of funding for integration or evaluation. Enablers, however, include a common vision, commitment to partnership and honouring agency expertise, knowledge and resource sharing and a ‘whatever it takes’ philosophy in addressing the challenges faced by clients (Brechman-Toussaint 2010; Brechman-Toussaint & Kogler 2010).

In conceptualising integrated and holistic youth services, an ecological approach is required such as that of Zubrick, Williams and Silburn (2000) in which the child is located at the centre of his or her immediate environment of family, school and neighbourhood and is also influenced by the larger social, economic and political structures. Also instructive are full service models such as that depicted

in Ferguson (2009) where school and neighbourhood are brought together to address multiple aspects of youth wellbeing. Drawing on these, Figure 1.1 represents the form and function of an integrated youth service from a theoretical perspective. Essentially it incorporates three diagrammatic ideas or dimensions:

1. The young person is located at the centre of the service (the diamond), surrounded by the domains of family; neighbourhood or community; and school, education or employment (small rectangles). This part represents the young person's primary ecological context.
2. The ovals articulate critical needs: basic needs, local environment, democratic participation, art and recreation activities, education and training, economic participation, health and wellbeing and cultural needs. These bear a resemblance to some of the 'valuable human functionings' or capabilities that allow people to 'flourish' (Nussbaum 2006, pp.76–8).
3. The private, government and third sectors are located around the outer edge (larger rectangles). Each offers services and access to social and economic goods. Integrated service delivery benefits from partnership across these sectors.

**Figure 1.1 Holistic, integrated youth services**



Note: This is an original diagram which builds on ideas in the diagrams 'Ecological contexts shaping child development' (Zubrick, Williams & Silburn 2000, p.11) and 'Dayton's Neighborhood School Centers' (Ferguson 2009, p.91).

## 2 Policy and practice

This section has two parts. The first briefly describes legislation, policies and programs in the United Kingdom and United States that apply a more integrated and holistic approach to service for young people.

Key approaches focus on schools and broader community settings, both via neighbourhood centres and the networking of community service professionals. They include the co-location of youth services, the provision of learning and career support and social and development activities, as well as the development of integrated care models. Although the school is frequently a central component, many programs blur the traditional boundaries of school–community involving a broad range of partners. While some approaches, such as out-of-school-hours learning support programs and career centres, address specific needs, these are included because they could be key planks of a larger integrated service and because they are pertinent to youth centre models. Most examples represent a place-based approach, serving a particular community or region.

The overall purpose of Part 1 is thus to document some international precedents for integrated and holistic youth service provision and highlight some influential approaches.

While Australian legislation, policy or programs lack the size or scope of those in the UK and US, national and state policy suggests a trend toward holistic youth services. These commonly aim to ‘join up’ government efforts in partnership with business and the community sector to ensure that services are a ‘place-based’ response to local needs. The latter part of this section identifies Australian policies and programs which provide evidence of this trend.

### Part 1: Overseas

The United Kingdom and United States both have major policies and supportive legislation focused on the broader wellbeing of children and youth, even if implementation at the local level is varied. These policies are briefly described below, as is the contribution of innovative but smaller-scale programs adopted by districts and states.

#### United Kingdom

Two major UK policy developments in the last decade are those of Every Child Matters and Youth Matters. ‘Every Child Matters’ aims to ensure that children aged 0–19 are healthy, safe, make a positive contribution, have opportunity to enjoy life, achieve educational success and economic wellbeing. Under the *Children’s Act 2004*, each local authority has a duty to promote cooperation between service providers such as schools, hospitals, police and voluntary groups. Ensuring that the children and youth have a voice on the issues and services that affect them is a further component (DfES 2004).

‘Youth Matters’ is a place-based policy to provide young people with local activities and places to go, opportunities to contribute to their communities (e.g. through volunteering), and information, guidance and support with the issues that affect them. It also seeks to reshape youth services toward a preventive, universal model, but with targeted support for those classified at risk. The policy runs alongside the 14–19 White Paper reform of the school curriculum to make it more engaging and better prepare young people for life beyond school and for employment. However, Youth Matters focuses on enriching non-school activities to facilitate personal and social development with additional targeted programs to address issues such as substance abuse,

offending, teen pregnancy and homelessness. The Connexions program provides information and guidance including careers advice. (DCFS 2010c; DfES 2006b).

### Extended schools

An example of place-based and integrated service provision is the 2006 Extended Schools policy which seeks to reshape schools as services hubs for their communities, by providing broader education, social support and care services in collaboration with other organisations. Some £840 million was provided to schools 2003–08 to assist the set-up phase, with £1.3 billion in 2006–08 for personalised learning opportunities during and after school hours (DCFS 2009). The Extended Schools ‘core offer’ includes study support, sport, childcare/activities for young people either at school or a local provider, swift and easy referral to specialist health and social services, and community access to the school premises and resources (DfES 2006a, p.18).

### Youth centres and activities

A holistic approach is taken by Aiming High, a 10-year strategy commenced in 2007. This seeks to provide young people with ‘positive leisure-time activities’ and high-quality services in their local area, and empower them to help plan these local services. The strategy is:

supported by strong evidence which showed how getting involved can help teenagers to develop important social and communication skills, build their self-esteem and self-confidence, improve their attitudes to school and help them avoid taking risks such as experimenting with drugs or being involved in crime or anti-social behavior (DCFS 2010a, p.7).

The DCFS draw support for the Aiming High approach from a neurological study Blakemore and Choudhury (2006) indicating that social and behaviour skills may be more malleable than cognitive skills. Furthermore, a study by Carneiro et al. (2007, cited in DCFS 2010b) found that an improvement in social skills provided greater gains to children from low socioeconomic backgrounds: it linked below-average social skills with lower educational attainment, employment and earnings in adult life, and found that social skills at age 11 were predictive of future criminal proceedings and health including mental health. The study found that: ‘Adolescence presents real opportunities to help young people to develop improved social skills, which in turn are likely to be of great benefit to them throughout their adult lives’ (DCFS 2010b, p.17). A further benefit identified in the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE) was that young people involved in out-of-school-hours self-development activities engaged in fewer risky behaviours (Cebulla & Tomaszewski 2009).

Aiming High’s guiding principles are the empowerment of young people through participation in and influence over local services, access to opportunities and the removal of barriers for those facing disadvantage, and improving the capacity and quality of youth services through investment in the best providers from the public, voluntary and community sectors.

Aiming High seeks to provide ‘a good offer of activities and opportunities for all’ through its Pupil and Parent Guarantee of access to learning, sporting, cultural and community opportunities. Disadvantaged young people have a greater entitlement through the Extended Services Disadvantage Subsidy. Results have included the participation of 90 per cent of young people in up to two hours sport per week, and of two thirds of 11–15 year olds in five hours per week or more of cultural activities in and out of school. In addition, the Positive Activities for Young People Programme, a diversionary holiday program for 8–19 year olds at risk of social exclusion, operates year-round and is supported by a key worker (DCFS 2010a).



Special funds enable young people to choose which projects and facilities are developed in their area. Additionally, the ‘myplace’ component concerns the development of over 100 new places for young people to go, e.g. youth centres. A set of Quality Standards for all service providers has been developed through consultation with young people, their parents and carers. This process documents what they perceive as important in a service, what quality looks like and what prevents young people from attending activities. In addition, financial support and training has been provided to voluntary and community organisations. The British education department acknowledged the role of the community sector in youth provision accordingly:

A significant proportion of local places for young people to go are often owned and operated by third sector organizations—many of whom are often uniquely placed to offer innovative, attractive and effective activities and support to young people. This ranges from numerous smaller scale community facilities through to some of the most ambitious, leading edge facilities—often driven by the inspiration and innovation of third or private sector providers working in partnership with local authorities (DCFS 2008, p.4).

An evaluation of the Aiming High policy’s Empowering Young People Pilots found that the young people enjoyed participating in the activities, which included sport, art, recreational, educational and residential holiday programs. They gained new interests and skills, and that this increased their confidence and provided other social benefits. The evaluation identified the following best practice suggestions: the importance of one-to-one interaction, working with schools and other key professionals, peer to peer approaches, the involvement of parents, development of promotional materials with a local brand, listening to young people and putting them in the lead, enabling young people to bring a friend and allowing more time for program establishment (DCFS 2010b).

Youth Matters, Extended Schools, Aiming High and myplace are manifestations of the UK’s major investment in place-based and a more integrated model of service provision for young people.

## United States

In the United States, care systems for children young people with complex needs, out-of-school time programs (OSTs), full-service community schools, integrated care models such as Turnaround and One Stop Career Centers warrant examination as examples of integrated services or components of holistic services.

### Out-of-school time programs

The US has a long history of diverse after-hours programs. More than just homework help, these programs have varied aims such as promoting academic improvement, providing sport and recreational activities, developing social skills, and reducing risk or criminal behaviours.

In 2001, education reform via the *No Child Left Behind Act* sought to measure and address gaps in student achievement. One important outcome was the shift of the 21st Century Community Learning Centres program from federal to state administration, with states able to apply for some of the program’s one billion dollar funding to address the after-school needs of children (Grossman et al. 2002). Evaluation of OST programs in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco indicated positive effects on school attitudes, behaviours, homework completion, school attendance and achievement (Huang et al. 2000; Reisner et al. 2004; Russell et al. 2007). Programs also enable young people to participate in productive leisure activities such as art and music, providing leadership opportunities (Walker & Arberton 2001, 2004) while keeping them away from ‘high risk’ behaviours and street risks (Warren, Brown & Freudenburg 1999).

### Full-service schools

The 'full-service school' movement is a larger integrated service approach which became influential by the 1990s in some US school districts. While the movement gained traction under No Child Left Behind legislation, legal action has mitigated its growth. Making the link between a lack of necessities such as food, health care and family supports for children, and academic failure, *Abbott v. Burke* was filed in 1981. This led to a New Jersey State Supreme Court order that supplemental programs and services be provided in 'poorer urban districts'. In 1998, the court recognised the right of individual schools and districts to request on-site health clinics, social services, academic after-school and summer programs, nutritional, bilingual and special education programs. These decisions provided the impetus for a district-wide approach (Tagle 2007, p.51).

It was recognised that children often come to school unprepared to learn as a consequence of multiple non-school problems which affect their wellbeing, and that these problems are 'too large and complex to be taken on alone by any one system' (Levy & Shepardson 1992, p.46). Guthrie and Guthrie (1991) argued that schools and youth services represent a 'bewildering array' of agencies within a 'large and unwieldy bureaucracy' with an 'emphasis ... on self-preservation'. They called for a reconceptualisation of the school's role within the community and larger society, and for interagency collaboration, to enable an approach that is comprehensive, preventative, child-centred and flexible.

A full-service school may be defined as 'a school center in which health, mental health, social, and/or family services may be co-located, depending on the needs of the particular school and community' (Dryfoos 1994, p. xvi). To overcome fragmented service delivery, in this model the school becomes an equal partner with community agencies to produce a web of sustained interventions and a 'seamless institution' (Dryfoos 1994, p.12). Grossman describes this as a coordination of nonschool community, family and existing school resources to create complementary learning opportunities and support for young people as they move between the school, community and home environments (Grossman & Vang 2009).

Full-service schools are the hub around which the community revolves. In addition to traditional education, a range of social, health and educational services are delivered either at the school or a nearby centre (Walker & Hackmann 1999). Core activities include learning support, recreation, health, mental help, employment counselling and preparation, substance abuse treatment and prevention (Warren & Fanscali 1999). Assisting under-served groups is a focus, as is bringing parents into schools by making them a positive and helpful place with services and adult education classes. Benefits of this collaborative approach include: one-stop-shop convenience and improved access; synergies between young people, their families, service providers, administrative and funding bodies; and a longer term shift from tertiary and crisis care to prevention.

Evaluations of School-Based Youth Services Programs (SBYSP), an early program for school-based service integration, demonstrate significant benefits for young people. An Iowa-based study showed improved retention and school attendance, maintenance or improvement of grades, decreased substance abuse, improved relationships with family and friends and college aspiration (Walker & Hackmann 1999). In a New Jersey-based SBYSP study in which the experimental group represented an at-risk population and the control did not, statistically positive effects were observed in relation to health including mental health and prevention, vandalism, and educational attainment and aspirations (Warren & Fanscali 1999).

Key steps towards service integration in full-service schools include conducting a needs assessment, extensively mapping current services and the overlap with the school, and securing sustainable funding to avoid the pitfalls of three-year block funding. Project 'champions' are required while the creation of superagencies and a new level of bureaucracy is to be avoided. There is also agreement that time must be allowed to develop strong partnerships based on mutual trust, a clearly articulated vision, transparent goals and accountability through evaluation (Bundy 2005; Diehl, Gray & O'Connor 2007; Ferguson 2009; Guthrie & Guthrie 1991; Tagle 2007).

#### Integrated care for young people with complex needs

The need for integrated approaches for youth with complex needs relating to severe emotional disturbances has been noted. Rosenblatt & Attkisson (1997) observe that California was just one of many states which developed this approach, following successful class action, *Christopher. T v. San Francisco Unified School District*, in which it was argued that 'schools should provide appropriate education and related services to all children, at no cost to the parents, and without the parents having to give up custody of their child'. Subsequent legislation enabled the blending of agency funding to deliver joint mental health, probation and education services via community schools, special classes and family therapy. The approach was guided by the Ventura Planning Model, which captures additional state funds for mental health services through a 'return on investment' approach: 100 per cent of program costs must be offset through reduced hospitalisations, incarceration and out-of-home placements, or programs must achieve a 50 per cent offset as well as social outcomes such as improved school attendance and performance. Evaluation of Ventura county's project in the early nineties indicated that in most instances it exceeded cost offset expectations (in Melton & Barry 1994).

The Wraparound model adopted in several states was informed by the Canadian Brownsdale programs, the Chicago Kaleidoscope program and Alaska Youth Initiative. Wraparound aims to provide a person-centred and strengths-based approach to children and family, using a unique team to develop a plan for each enrolled client (Wyles 2007). While a place-based approach, Wraparound need not be delivered from one central site such as a school or community agency. Instead it is concerned with regional coordination and collaboration to deliver the services needed by the individual client. Wraparound uses a standardised referral form to collect client demographic information and register them in a management information system. Funds allocated to specific services are combined and decategorised to purchase services and supports from some 200 providers according to each family's needs. Over five years, Wraparound Milwaukee recorded a statistically significant decrease in recidivism and residential treatment, an 80 per cent decrease in psychiatric hospitalisation and large falls in average monthly care costs. Reinvestment of the savings enabled the provision of services to 650 young people with the same child welfare and juvenile justice funds that previously served 350 youth in residential treatment centres (in Banyule and Nillumbik Youth Services Network 2003, p.47).

#### One Stop Career Centers and youth councils

A place-based response focused on the career planning, training and employment needs of young people and adults was enacted through the *1998 Workforce Investment Act* (WIA). The Act converted 60 federal training programs into state block grants for One Stop Career Centers which act as hubs for community partners. Individual choice and control of supports and training services is an important aspect of the program. Each person receives an individual account with funds dedicated to their employment plan. To support youth transition, centres contain resources about job choices, and the staff coordinate career club curricula with schools, engage parents in their

children's career planning, provide internships with local business for disabled youth, and provide support services including representation and negotiation with employers (Targett 2007).

The WIA also provided for the creation of youth councils to bring together services with youth as 'customers'. Councils require representation across sectors including education, public housing, temporary assistance for Needy Families agencies, juvenile justice, WIA partners and the private sector. Representation from parents of eligible youth is also sought (Callahan & Pines 1999).

## Reflection on UK and US initiatives

Initiatives such as extended schools and full-service schools provide examples of integrated service provision for young people with school at the centre. The Wraparound model similarly provides care through the integration of a team of professionals. Finally, out-of-school time programs and One Stop Career Centres contain one or more of the components necessary to provide a holistic approach to youth wellbeing.

## Part 2: Australia

This section briefly describes the national policy context before identifying examples of place-based, person-centred approaches that address the employment, health and wellbeing, voice and participation of young people. Given that the Brotherhood is based in Victoria, policy interest in place-based and integrated services will be discussed in relation to the Extended School Hub pilots, flexible learning options, primary care partnerships, the Better Youth Services pilots and youth homelessness interventions such as foyer approaches.

Australia lacks policy equivalent to the UK, which stipulates the provision of extended school services, youth centres and activities in all local areas. It lacks major policy statements such as No Child Left Behind and Every Child Matters, or the statutory requirement to provide services, such as learning support, for young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The Youth Compact (discussed later) is perhaps the largest policy but its purpose differs from the examples cited. The longer history of UK and US youth investment means new approaches, such as 'myplace', can build on existing infrastructure. Australia's different geography and culture also impose challenges which require a fresh approach. However, it has the advantage of being able to learn from the successes and mistakes made overseas.

The need for a national youth agenda with agreed targets was stated in Melbourne Citymission's 10-point national plan of action for disadvantaged young people (Melbourne Citymission 2007). In its submissions, albeit to the state government, the Brotherhood has called for a Youth Framework guided by a universal preventative approach, and consolidation of the currently fragmented array of programs into a single youth support structure (BSL 2008; BSL 2010b). Similarly, Strategy 3 in ARACY's 2009 Conference Declaration and Call to Action is for COAG and non-government action to establish 'a national child and youth development agenda integrating existing early years, middle years and youth agendas'. Critical elements of this agenda for 0–24 year olds include program integration, prevention, a whole of government response and listening to the voices of children and young people (ARACY 2009).

There is considerable evidence in federal and Victorian policy of an interest in integrated or 'joined-up' approaches to youth education and service delivery. This could form the focus of a new National Strategy.

## National policy context

The Social Inclusion Agenda provides an important context for subsequent analysis of Australian youth policy. The priorities of the Agenda are:

- targeting jobless families with children to increase work opportunities, improve parenting and build capacity
- improving the life chances of children at greatest risk of long term disadvantage
- reducing the incidence of homelessness
- improving outcomes for people living with disability or mental illness and their carers
- closing the gap for Indigenous Australians
- breaking the cycle of entrenched and multiple disadvantage in particular neighbourhoods and communities.

The Agenda addresses a broad range of barriers to social and economic participation. Its guiding principles emphasise building on individual and community strengths, partnerships with key stakeholders, tailored services, early intervention and prevention, joined-up services and whole of government solutions, using evidence to inform policy, place-based approaches and planning for sustainability (DPMC 2009).

These principles are consistent with current thinking around planning more-integrated delivery of youth services. However, as Smyth (2010) comments, the focus on ‘joined up’ approaches to ‘networked governance’ is not new. Nor, he adds, is it clear whether social inclusion policies are to be a ‘suite of social measures for the specially disadvantaged’ or more of a mainstream approach to the creation of an ‘inclusive economy and welfare system’ (p.19). In any case, the Agenda does not single out youth as a priority group except within families, or if they are at risk of homelessness, disabled or mentally ill, Indigenous or living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood. An explicit social inclusion agenda for young Australians is yet to be released.

The 2010 National Strategy for Young Australians (NSYA) draws together existing policy and future directions across education and employment, health and wellbeing, voice and participation. The aims of NSYA are to empower young people to ‘build their own lives’ and ‘learn to take responsibility for their actions’ as well as to build resilience and a ‘healthier, safer and more productive Australia (OFY 2010, p.3). The strong emphasis on individual responsibility is significant. In describing the diminishing role of the state in the late modern era, sociologist Ulrich Beck’s maintains that individuals are increasingly required to provide ‘biographical solutions to systemic contradictions’, socially-produced risks and uncertainties. However policy emphasis on the individual is not necessarily an indication of the withdrawal of state support for individuals but can signal a redirection of effort. For example, contemporary policy is concerned with investment in human capital. Increasingly, and in accordance with Sen’s capabilities approach, policy is concerned with the holistic needs of individuals and resourcing them to lead productive lives.

NSYA’s eight priority areas are:

- improving the health and wellbeing of all young people
- equipping young Australians to shape their own futures through education
- supporting young Australians within their families

- empowering young Australians to take part and be active in their communities
- equipping young Australians with the skills and personal networks they need to gain and be successful in employment
- enabling young Australians to participate confidently and safely online
- strengthening early intervention with young Australians to help prevent any problems from getting worse and help young people get their lives back on track
- establishing clear-cut legal consequences for behaviour that endangers the safety of others (OFY 2010, p.3).

However, while listing youth-oriented programs in one document is helpful, the overall impression is of service fragmentation. The strategy lacks a coherent, national vision for integrated services for young Australians.

Despite this shortcoming, the NSYA does acknowledge the need for new approaches, such as more flexible learning beyond the classroom, innovations in addressing the personal barriers to employment, integrated health services, and giving young people a voice. A common thread is the focus on place-based, individual-centred and more integrated approaches. Evidence of these trends will be discussed under the subheadings of education, employment, health and wellbeing, voice and participation.

### Education

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions (2009) has implications for youth service provision. The agreement increases the school leaving age to 17, offers an education or training entitlement to 15–24 year olds and makes full time participation in education, training or work compulsory until the age of 20 as a precondition to receiving Family Tax Benefit Part A or Youth Allowance (COAG 2009). This government obligation, combined with the youth participation requirement, is referred to as the Compact with Young Australians, and informally as an ‘earn or learn’ policy.

To make this policy work, especially for disadvantaged young people, integrated support services are needed to address barriers to earning and learning (e.g. health, housing), provide flexible options for education and training, and career pathway support.

Many of the Government’s current education reforms are heavily focussed on schools<sup>1</sup>; literacy, numeracy, teacher quality, buildings, Internet provision and (school-based) trade training centres, rather than on the relationship between academic achievement and broader factors which might require other types of support. The Smarter Schools National Partnerships does include funding for schools in low socioeconomic areas (see ‘extended schools’ in under the subheading, Victoria). The Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program aims to increase low SES university enrolments but much of the policy focus is on traditional educational institutions.

The need for flexible forms of education that recognise non-academic skills was confirmed in the 2009 National Conversation, a consultation with youth people. It found that ‘most schools are not good enough at engaging those who are struggling’ and that ‘there should be different learning options and settings for those young people’ (OFY 2010, p.17). In fact, a key finding was that:

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<sup>1</sup> Building the Education Revolution, Digital Education Revolution, Smarter Schools National Partnerships

Pathways into education, work and training should be flexible enough to cater for different people's needs and allow young people a way back if they make mistakes and change their mind (OFY 2010, p.9)

Significantly, the NSYA acknowledges the link between student wellbeing and their ability to learn, along with the challenges associated with making education flexible, responsive to different learning styles and 'multiple learning pathways'. Practical outcomes include the establishment of School Business Community Partnerships Brokers to 'extend learning beyond the classroom', and tailored case management and support for youth at risk of disengagement through the Youth Connections program (COAG 2009, pp.8–9). Future policy directions include increasing access to information about education and training providers and 'finding out what works to increase student wellbeing so that health risks can be reduced and learning outcomes improved' (OFY 2010, p.17). As indicated in the UK policy discussion, one possible answer to this question is the roll-out of youth centres with support services and broad-based activity programs. The Sporting Chance Program (OFY 2010, p.29) which seeks to engage Indigenous Australians in school through their love of sport, makes the connection between broader enrichment activities and learning outcomes.

### Employment

Given the likely impact of the global financial crisis on employment, notably on young people, some 20 employment regions and 29 remote areas at risk of disadvantage have been identified as part of the Social Inclusion Agenda. A place-based response, this combines the Keep Australia Working Strategy, the employment of 20 Local Employment Coordinators, the Jobs Fund (job and skill development), and the Innovation Fund (for disadvantaged job seekers) in addition to the Family-centred Employment project, establishment of Children and Family Centres and the Communities for Children initiative (Office for Youth 2010).

A further development of co-located services in relation to training and employment is the pilot of Local Connection to Work services at selected Centrelink Customer Service Centres (CSCs). Based on New Zealand's Community Link model, the pilot sites – Frankston (Vic.), Campsie (NSW), Ipswich (Qld) and Elizabeth (SA) - will provide a client-centred integrated service for young adults. Government and non-government service providers located at these CSCs will include Youth Connections, housing, employment assistance, health and financial assistance services. The degree to which these services and case management will provide an integrated Australian service is unclear. In New Zealand, integration has taken the form of shared systems and procedures including a single reception and shared calendar system, broad-based or 'whole of life' assessment tools and shared case management (Horn 2010).

### Health and wellbeing

Interventions to address educational disengagement, risk taking behaviour, mental and physical health problems are identified as priority areas in the NSYA. In the National Conversation, young people affirmed the need for tailored approaches that meet the needs of the individual person and called for 'a single point of access for support services'.

One response to this need is 'headspace' (formally Communities of Youth Services). Established in 2006 by the National Youth Mental Health Foundation, it assists 12–25 year olds through 30 one-stop-shops. Funding of a further 10 centres in the May 2010 Budget brings the total to \$78 million (Headspace 2010; OFY 2010). The centres bring together local youth mental health, drug and alcohol, primary care and education, training and support agencies to provide holistic services, increase access to general practitioners, psychologists and psychiatrists, promote early

identification of mental health and related problems, and encourage help-seeking by young people and their carers. An evaluation identified a number of challenges in relation to sustainability, youth engagement and service delivery, but also found that headspace facilitated improvement in young people's mental health, social wellbeing and participation in education, training and employment. Positive outcomes were achieved through early intervention with 12–17 year olds through youth-friendly services. Headspace engagement with services and government was found to have improved local referral pathways, and increased state and federal knowledge, awareness and commitment to addressing youth mental health (Muir et al. 2009).

Some \$48 million has also been invested in the Reconnect program which provides holistic services to homeless young people and their families through counselling, group work and mediation as well as individualised assistance with mental health, education and employment (OFY 2010, p.29). In 2003 there were 98 Reconnect services Australia-wide, with an evaluation finding they produced significant outcomes, particularly in improving the stability of young people's living situations and achieving reconciliation by increasing family communication and ability to manage conflict (FaCS 2003).

While not a national program, the Turnaround program in the ACT, based on the US Wraparound approach, is a noteworthy example of service integration for young people with complex needs. Turnaround provides a centralised referral system for young people who require child protection, disability services, accommodation assistance, youth justice, out-of home care, alternative education / educational support and health services (including drug and alcohol services). A management committee and fortnightly panel meetings administer client intake, assessment, referral and exit from the program. A two-year evaluation completed in 2006 indicated the program was reaching its target group, although the mixed progress of clients suggested a longer time frame was required to realise lasting change. The evaluation found Turnaround increased young people's access to needed services, including some services from which they had previously been excluded. While this increased costs in the short term, it pointed to the potential for substantial savings in the longer term through stabilising clients' lives, decreasing criminal justice and crisis support costs, as well as unused school places. However, while the centralised referral system assisted interagency collaboration, no major policy and practice reform or investment in Turnaround or Wraparound training has been undertaken by local agencies (RPR Consulting 2002; Wyles 2007).

Finally, future directions identified in the NSYA in relation to the area of 'prevention' are relevant to thinking about integrated youth services. These directions include building partnerships with young people, community services, government, health experts and law makers. The aims of these partnerships include increasing access to existing services and implementing a 'no wrong door' approach, providing holistic responses and developing best practice. The partnerships will also seek to 'reduce and prevent homelessness with early interventions including wrap around services to connect individuals to education, employment and counselling' (p.30).

### Voice and participation

Another dimension of holistic services is allowing young people a voice to identify their own priorities. The National Conversation found that participants wanted to be respected at school, on public transport, in shopping centres and within their families. It also identified the 'need for more safe and youth friendly spaces', with one obstacle to community involvement being 'a lack of positive social experiences outside of school' (OFY 2010, p.20).



Current policy addressing these includes the Australian Youth Forum (AYF) and the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (a peak body). The Youth Development and Support Program and the Prime Minister's AYF Challenge seek to increase youth engagement in their communities, with a National Volunteering Strategy signposted. The government is also creating virtual youth spaces by funding 10 community-based websites or Online Community Youth Spaces. More substantially, \$10 million has been allocated to the creation of five Arts, Business and Community Centres to 'connect young people with employment, community and useful personal networks'. These centres stem from an idea shared at the 2020 Youth Summit held in 2008 and will be located in priority employment areas. Local Employment Coordinators will support the projects which are to be collaborations between community, government and business (DEEWR 2010a). However, with five \$2 million centres to be shared among eight states and territories, it is not quite at the scale of the UK's 'myplace' youth facilities, even if it is a promising development. So too, is the commitment to work with non-government organisations 'in line with the National Compact with the Third Sector, to deliver a range of services that enhance the wellbeing of children, young people, families and communities' (OFY 2010, p.12, 21).

## Victoria

Given the combined Commonwealth and state responsibility for youth services, attention must also be paid to state developments.

A study of youth services gaps in 2006 for the Victorian Council of Social Service and Youth Affairs Council of Victoria highlighted a lack of generalist or prevention / early intervention services such as holiday, recreation, homework, arts and leisure programs that support participation, engagement, leadership skills and enhance 'protective factors'. Identifying the value of integrated youth services—such as through 'one stop shops' combining health, counselling, recreational, homelessness supports and Centrelink—the report described Victorian provision as fragmented.

In Victoria, there is currently no formal integrated, comprehensive youth services system. While there are many highly effective youth services across the state, there is no coherent framework incorporating clear principles and measures. This results in inconsistency of service delivery and access to support for young people, and means that the needs of young people are not appropriately or adequately addressed nor do young people have every chance to reach their potential (Rose & Atkins 2006, p.25).

The report's primary recommendation was that the state government develop a locally based, integrated youth service system to provide services from prevention and early intervention through to secondary and tertiary, or crisis, youth services.

Victorian integrated responses to youth service includes the Extended School Hub pilots, flexible learning options, Primary Care Partnerships, Better Youth Services and responses to youth homelessness.

### Extended School Hub pilots

As a component of the National Partnership for Low Socio-economic Status School Communities, four Extended School Hubs are being piloted as partnerships between schools, business and community organisations (in Bendigo, Corio and Norlane, Frankston North and Wyndham). The hubs will offer before, during, and after-school hours care including learning and extra-curricular activities (e.g. homework clubs, sport and music), as well as programs helping parents support their child's learning. They will 'provide opportunities for co-location, integration of services, cross-

sectoral collaboration, cooperation across schools in a network and increased community use of school facilities' (DEECD 2009p. 32).

The academic, social, personal, family or community benefits of learning support (that is, assistance with study and skills development outside school hours) has been widely documented (Bond & Horn 2009, pp.4–6; Horn & Fewster 2007). An evaluation by Pate (2008) indicated further benefits of learning support including improved interest in learning, confidence and behaviour, reducing disengagement. Pate observed that:

Most students who participate in LSPs are from disadvantaged backgrounds. These students attend LSPs because, by and large, the education system is not able to meet their needs. Without community support, they are at risk of leaving school early and falling into low-skilled, part-time jobs with poor job security and little or no prospect of future advancement (Pate 2008, p.1).

Preliminary findings from an Australian study of economically disadvantaged young Australians indicate the need for learning support and broader recreational activities. The study found that by 15 years of age 'some young people's participation habits and learning orientations have already been adversely affected by repeated experiences of limited access to services, opportunities and supports' and that cost was a barrier. The study identifies a role for government in increasingly accessibility and providing more affordable participation opportunities for young people (Skattebol & Griffiths 2010).

### Flexible learning options

Flexible learning options (for example in a non-school setting, applying adult learning principles) may also be a way of meeting the educational and personal needs of young people facing multiple disadvantage. While a recent education department consultation paper canvassed such options, highly targeted enrolment criteria with a focus on 'at risk' students can stigmatise such programs, if they are not recognised as viable mainstream options (BSL 2010a). Evidence of the need for this reform includes the finding that up to 26 per cent of Year 7 students enrolled in government schools do not complete Year 12 and the recognition of the:

increasing numbers of children and young people who are failing to thrive in school settings or are being excluded, capacity issues in some regions, as well as a lack of options for children and young people to access (KPMG 2009, pp.1-2).

Enrolment figures also demonstrate increasing demand for 'adult' and 'applied' learning options. Senior secondary enrolments in the Victorian Certificate in Applied Learning (VCAL) rose from 14,093 in 2007 to 17,699 in 2009 (VCAA 2010). Enrolments in vocational education and training diploma qualifications increased by 17% from 2008 to 2009 and Certificate IV qualifications by 15% (NCVER 2010). These shifts support the need to move flexible learning from the margins and into the mainstream.

### Primary care partnerships

The Victorian health department's Primary Care Partnerships 'Service Coordination Strategy' provides practical guidelines and tools for service integration (DHS 2001, p.1).

These policy trends are reflected by the Banyule and Nillumbik Youth Services Network's 2003 plan to integrate local youth services and the Western Metropolitan Region (WMR) Primary Care Partnership which seeks to deliver to primary health and community service users a 'consistent experience of coordinated and integrated care' (Banyule and Nillumbik Youth Services Network

2003; Smith 2007; WMR 2002). The WMR partnership uses the following definition of ‘functional integration’:

Under functional integration the services ... will continue to operate within their existing organisational and structural arrangements and simultaneously work in a cohesive and coordinated way so that consumers experience a seamless and integrated response to needs (WMR 2002, p.xviii).

### Better Youth Services pilots

Better Youth Services pilots have been funded by the Victorian Department for Planning and Community Development to inform the Vulnerable Youth Framework. The pilots operated in Frankston, Wyndham and Bendigo to develop a ‘whole of community approach’ by coordinating local services of government and community organisations including schools and primary health providers, through regional integrated youth plans. Anticipated outcomes from the pilots were a more holistic approach to planning youth services, efficient use of resources and improved youth entry through single intake points, common processes of assessments and referral (DPCD 2010; Parliament of Victoria 2009; The Smith Family 2010).

### Addressing youth homelessness

A variety of youth homelessness interventions seek to provide integrated services in Victoria.

Frontyard youth services was founded in Melbourne in 1984 (then as Info Deli) by Melbourne Citymission, Melbourne City Council, the Department of Human Services and other government departments and agencies. A common operating platform was developed to deliver individually tailored, integrated services for 13–25 year olds experiencing or at risk of homelessness, family breakdown, early school leaving, abuse, mental or developmental difficulties or social isolation. Youth workers link young people with services as appropriate. Frontyard has eight co-located services including Melbourne Youth Support Service, Centrelink, Young People’s Health Service, Job Services Australia, the ‘Youth Law’ legal centre, the ‘Reconnect’ early intervention program, Family Reconciliation Mediation Program and Melbourne Citymission Pastoral Care. Four other services visit Frontyard, which is networked with schools, training and tertiary education providers, youth refugees, emergency services and neighbourhood houses. The service is also well known in the community, offering opportunities for young homeless people to be heard, for example through digital storytelling and guided walking tours of the city. In 2008–09, 1875 people accessed Frontyard services, predominantly for crisis assistance with housing, food, money, health and legal issues. These young people were later referred to developmental services which provide pathways out of homelessness (Cameron 2009).

YP<sup>4</sup> was initiated by Hanover Welfare Services in partnership with the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Melbourne Citymission and Loddon Mallee Housing Services and in collaboration with the support of state and federal governments in 2004. The program aimed to provide sustainable employment for homeless young people in conjunction with a living wage and a housing guarantee. Personal support, employment assistance, and access to other services occurred through case management (Horn 2004). Conducted in Victoria over a three-year period as a randomised controlled trial, YP<sup>4</sup> involved an experimental group who received client-centred, ‘joined-up’ services with intensive and sustained case management and a control group who received standard services. The trial found that clients who had greater contact with their case managers experienced significantly improved outcomes in relation to housing, employment, education, training, health and wellbeing (Marty & Gill 2008).

‘Youth foyers’ represent an integrated approach to service provision for young people that includes temporary housing. Established in France to provide housing for a broad social mix of young people, the model was adapted in the 1990s by the UK and US to target young people at risk of homelessness. Foyers provide temporary housing, training in independent living skills, assistance finding education, training or employment and support locating permanent accommodation<sup>2</sup>. Victorian foyers include the Ladder project located in Richmond, an initiative of the Australian Football League and the DHS Division of Housing & Community Building; the ‘Step Forward’ model which is part of the Support for Young People that Really Counts program; and the Creating Connections Capital Project.

The Step Ahead program operated by Melbourne Citymission and Melbourne Affordable Housing in North Fitzroy provides a further example. Some 98 per cent of Step Ahead participants achieved sustainable independence within 18 months (Cameron 2009, p.4). Best practice elements identified from the evaluation included long-term case management; a stable ‘home’ for the program and residents; planned achievements across several life domains with a sustained focus on education, employment and training; flexible, long-term resourcing to enable a holistic approach; and partnership with multiple service providers (DHS 2010). Other international and Australian evaluations of foyer approaches indicate significant positive outcomes for young people in relation to housing, skills, safety and participation in education and employment (Hanover Welfare Services & Brotherhood of St Laurence 2010 (unpub.), p.24; Illawarra Forum 2008).

Clearly there are examples of place-based, holistic and integrated approaches in Victoria. Similar signs exist within the federal setting. However, as the rather fragmented nature of this chapter indicates, there is a need for a joining up of policies both horizontally—across government departments representing health, education etc.; and vertically—from local councils (which play an important role but have not been discussed in this review) to state and federal levels. This would require strong national leadership and the development through COAG of a youth agenda which explicitly encourages and rewards collaboration and integration in the design and operation of youth services.

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<sup>2</sup> Foyers located elsewhere in Australia include: Miller Live ‘N’ Learn, Western Sydney; Oasis Youth Support Network, Sydney; Garden Court Foyer; and Wollongong (NYC 2008).

### 3 Service delivery through youth centres

Having previously examined movements toward the development of integrated youth policy, the potential of youth centre approaches will be explored. This section considers their target populations; the role of place; the services, programs and activities delivered; underlying models; governance; youth involvement and management; financial resources and relationships. Ranging from the modest providers of one or two activities through to major hubs of integrated programs and services, they are known by a variety of names, including ‘resource and lifestyle centres’ and ‘hubs’. Some centre names are purpose-oriented reflecting the provision of activities such as music or outdoor adventure programs or of open venues for events. In Australia, ‘youth enterprise’ or ‘innovation centre’ alludes to the education, training and employment functions of centres, while those located within larger community facilities have names such as ‘youth annexe’.

Several of the key studies relevant to this chapter were conducted or sponsored by local governments: Banyule and Nillumbik, Victoria (Banyule and Nillumbik Youth Services Network 2003); Parramatta, New South Wales (Rossiter 2007, 2008); and Tea Tree Gully, South Australia<sup>3</sup> (Paterson 2008). There was not scope within the review of government policy (Section 2) to detail the role of local government. However, these publications, and the case studies in Section 4, highlight the contribution of local government to both the field of knowledge and the financial and in-kind support of youth centres.

Other relevant studies include reports for Frontyard, Melbourne Citymission (Cameron 2009); the Agora Think Tank (Agora Community Infrastructure Working Group & Department for Victorian Communities 2007); and the UK’s National Youth Agency (2008).

#### Target population

##### Age

The target population of youth centres is typically young people aged 12–24, although there are a few exceptions with some centres extending the age to 28 via social programs. In the UK, some centres include children from the age of 10 for the purpose of early intervention. Some are co-located with (younger) children’s centres, while others are co-located with all-age community centres. Dedicated youth centres often rent space out for adult community activities also.

A perceived advantage of a multi-age site is the potential for intergenerational activity. Young people are seen to benefit from interaction, for example, with older adults. In the UK, such activities are promoted as increasing community understanding of youth and enhancing youth visibility and image. However, a shortcoming of multi-age sites is that younger people may feel the premises are ‘dominated’ by adults or that their use of the space is restricted. For example, rooms rented to community groups cannot be used for permanent displays and required more neutral décor. Other restrictions apply when youth and children’s centres co-locate. For example, brochures about sexual health cannot be displayed.

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<sup>3</sup> The City of Tea Tree Gully, South Australia, completed a very detailed business planning case for a Youth Enterprise Centre which would provide pathways for young people through accredited training, enterprise and employment, recreation and youth participation. Their extensive study informed this paper even though the Centre is not yet operational.

## Universal v. targeted programs and services

Youth centres provide universal and/or targeted programs and services, most offering a combination of the two. Universal services may include careers advice, health services, extracurricular social activities (e.g. drama, sport) and community volunteering. Some youth centres focus on universal provision to ensure all young people have a comfortable place where they can go to seek support and participate in activities. This includes highly functioning, disengaged or 'at risk' young people and the group coined as the 'excluded middle'. These centres refer young people experiencing major difficulties to offsite specialist programs (e.g. young offender, anger management). They invite participation by diverse young people and try to avoid domination by specific groups. This approach has been observed to increase interaction between genders and ethnic groups that otherwise would not mix (The National Youth Agency 2008).

Targeted provision, on the other hand, seeks out young people deemed at 'at-risk' on the basis of socioeconomic disadvantage, disengagement from school, training or work, homelessness, anti-social and or criminal activity, poor health outcomes (e.g. mental health, substance abuse), teen pregnancy, etc. Some programs are about early intervention, services are more intensive, and may include case management. While some activities may be similar to universal programs (e.g. drama, sport), others are concerned with the reduction of specific risks. Youth foyers present one example of provision targeted for young people experiencing homelessness.

Youth centre programs and services are guided by models of prevention, early intervention and tertiary or crisis care. A prevention model seeks to avert problems and aligns well with universal provision. The UK's myplace initiative, in which all young people have access to youth centres and activities, is an example. Early intervention models identify 'at risk' young people or seek to reduce the harm of risky behaviours and may be implemented in the early onset of problems (Chamberlain & Johnson 2003; Mallett 2009). Early intervention is an example of targeted provision. Many youth centres combine prevention and early intervention. Finally tertiary, and crisis care models are another example of targeted services, and involve more intensive programs and multiple services, usually with case management for young people experiencing major difficulties, e.g. homelessness.

## Place

'Place' is a broad umbrella term embracing a myriad of concerns. These include issues of social planning and strategic aims, access to services and activities, and the physical space where services operate.

### Social planning and strategic aims

Most youth centres are a response to a community need. In established communities, centres respond to gaps in existing services or to social problems (e.g. low school retention, unemployment, street crime). Centres can be one component of a larger program of community regeneration in a low socioeconomic or public housing areas, such as Neighbourhood Renewal<sup>4</sup>.

In growth corridors, youth centres respond to the relative absence of services and provide social activities for isolated young people. In communities of young families with children rather than teenagers, the early establishment of youth centres may be perceived as a preventative measure.

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<sup>4</sup> Victoria's Neighbourhood Renewal projects are long-term community development initiatives in public housing areas. They aim to bring together residents, business, government and community groups to address long-term disadvantage and develop a community action plan to improve the neighbourhood.

Master-planned communities or new housing estates represent a ‘greenfields’ situation. Progressive property developers recognise the importance of both ‘hard’ (facilities) and ‘soft’ (programs and activities) infrastructure. Both are required to enable the relationships and networks that build community strength. Some youth centres are established by developers in partnership with state and local governments, and community agencies. From a marketing perspective, community wellbeing is essential to attract homebuyers and businesses to the area.

### The meaning of place: schools and community settings

The meaning of place for young people warrants consideration. Some youth centres and hubs are located at school premises, either during or after hours. Benefits of this include the availability of skilled staff, specialist buildings such as computer labs, gyms and art rooms, and equipment. After-hours school programs maximise the use of these resources, provide familiar environs for young people and offer an opportunity to engage parents in the school community.

However, for some young people who have already spent a day in the classroom, remaining after the bell may not be appealing. For others, school is not a positive place where they have experienced success. For those who have disengaged from school, it is a place to be avoided. For this reason, youth centres that have a separate identity and are located away from school are more likely to attract these groups. Programs such as Youth Connections can provide assessment, support and advice to these young people, while Community VCAL and vocational training can help to ensure that disengagement from school does not equate to disengagement from education or training.

### Access to services and activities

Ensuring that all young people have access to support services and social activities is a further concern. To allow easy and fast access by public transport, some UK regions have determined that young people should not need to travel for more than 10 minutes by bus or more than two miles (3 km). While this requirement would prove challenging in areas of low population density such as those in Australia, the underlying principle is dispersion of services, with a distinction made between large youth centres offered in towns, hubs in regional areas and mobile service (by large buses) in rural areas.

Other issues include the ability to access the centre and obtain referral to other services (such as through a free-call number), and later opening hours that suit young people including weekends.

### The physical space

Youth centre facilities must be appealing and of high quality if they are to send the message that young people are valued. This is perceived to increase youth patronage (The National Youth Agency 2008). Beyond initial construction, regular refurbishment must be budgeted to ensure facilities remain fresh and appealing.

Having a welcoming, youth-friendly reception has been identified as a critical factor. While centre models vary, the reception was perceived as the common entry point. Youth centres typically include some of the following: a space for specialist services (e.g. counselling, health care, training), a café, a kitchen (which can be used for training), chill-out areas (e.g. with TV, Wii, Xbox), creative arts spaces (for music, video, radio, dance), computers, smaller spaces for group work and specialist activities, multi-purpose spaces, provision for sports activities and outdoor spaces. Centres serving homeless people include showers and laundry facilities.

Important considerations in design include environmental sustainability (new centres are often built with a 5-star rating, but no carbon-neutral buildings were identified in this review), IT infrastructure

(e.g. wireless internet, Bluetooth capability), disabled access (for young people with mobility, hearing and vision difficulties) and facilities for parents. Many studies noted the importance of separate access to sensitive specialist services such as health clinics to ensure that embarrassment does not impede access.

## Services, programs and activities

Youth centres house a wide array of services, programs including:

- health and counselling
- family mediation
- housing services, or on-site housing as provided through the youth foyer approach
- Centrelink
- education (study/homework support, literacy and numeracy programs, Year 11 and 12 equivalents, accredited vocational training)
- employment (work experience, careers advice, traineeship and social enterprise opportunities)
- social and recreational activities (creative arts, sport and recreation, holiday programs, community volunteering including certificate programs, e.g. Duke of Edinburgh Award)
- community activities.

When co-located with other community facilities, youth centres may neighbour libraries, leisure and aquatic centres, schools, children's service centres, family support and/or programs for older people.

While seeking to deliver a range of services, many youth centres specialise, for example by offering music or media programs. Some offer dual-purpose programs, for example combining sport with literacy and numeracy. Cultural appropriateness must also be considered. For example, one centre offers a homework program in part because it is deemed an acceptable activity by the parents of Islamic girls. Another provides a girls-only gym session. Many centres organise community or intergenerational activities such as concerts, bingo, bowling and parties for older residents.

## Models

A distinguishing feature of youth centre models is whether they aim to *co-locate* or *integrate* youth services and programs. In a co-located model, multiple services and programs operate independently at one building or site, but there can be benefits in terms of sharing administration costs and resources. The increased visibility of these services may create synergies between agencies and increase referrals, especially if communication processes foster this. These processes may occur through informal channels, formal periodic meetings or planning days. However, multi-agency engagement may require formal agreements or obligations to undertake joint planning lest organisations view themselves merely as tenants.

Co-location is advantageous for service users. Having multiple services at the one site is convenient and it reduces their need to travel. The physical presence of other services they may not have used before may also increase access and uptake. However, co-location alone does not provide a single gateway for the assessment and referral of young people's needs.



Service fragmentation means that young people and their families must navigate complex service systems with numerous entry points, long delays and the risk of falling through the cracks. They require multiple assessments by different local services, and are often asked to provide the same information several times. Services sometimes fail to respond in a friendly or timely manner. There is often poor coordination across the system and a lack of data on regional needs and service gaps.

Integration, on the other hand, is a ‘no wrong door’ approach to service delivery in which standard intake, assessment and referral protocols are established. The youth centre reception is managed by a qualified worker who ensures that a holistic approach is taken during the intake and assessment process linking clients to all of the appropriate services. Integrated sites also require a central database to enable the collection and secure transfer of information between service providers.

Integrated services promise benefits for clients such as timely access, improved needs assessment and appropriate referral. For service organisations, integration enables greater coordination of programs, avoidance of duplication, resource sharing and cross-sectoral understanding of needs and gaps. However, integration is labour-intensive, time-consuming and costly, given the need for extensive partnership building, interagency consultation and agreement, the alignment of administrative processes (e.g. forms, procedures), training of staff, development of community information (e.g. brochures, single access telephone number) and investment in IT systems.

## Governance

Many youth centres are formed as partnerships that include government (local, state and federal), community organisations, resident and voluntary associations, universities and business. However, one issue identified is the unequal nature of partnerships, given the power imbalance that can exist; for example, when community organisations are contracted to deliver programs and services for government.

One approach to governance has been to establish a trust with a board including representatives from stakeholder organisations. Another is through an incorporated body. Other centres are governed by local councils solely or in conjunction with a large community service organisation.

## Youth involvement/management

A central aspect of the UK’s policy is that young people must be given genuine influence over the local services. The government has set up schemes to provide youth leadership opportunities inspecting local services, as youth consultants, on media projects and on other projects and festivals.

The Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds (funded £220 million to extend myplace through 2010–11) enable panels of young people to approve grants for new activities, and requires that local authorities devolve 25 per cent of their youth activity budgets to young people for positive activities by 2018. There is debate about what is meant by putting young people ‘in the lead’. Some projects exclude young people from boards on the grounds that they cannot be involved in complex planning, legal and financial issues. However many youth centre projects include young people on management committees; while on some they must form a majority. One observation was that rather than needing to rein in young people, it was necessary to encourage them to think big (The National Youth Agency 2008). In this context, centres move beyond seeking ‘consumer feedback’ from young people, toward democratic participation. Youth may also be encouraged to participate as centre volunteers with opportunity for progression into a paid position, as a means of ‘growing’ staff.

While in Australia democratic youth participation is developing, there is a lack of government policy to ensure it occurs. Nonetheless, many centres seek youth participation in decisions about programs via committees, and in program evaluation. Higher level participation on boards making budgeting and financial decisions is deemed inappropriate by some adult stakeholders.

A risk of youth involvement highlighted from the UK experience was that it takes years to plan and establish a youth centre. Over this period, young people may experience disillusionment, grow beyond target age range and thus cease to be beneficiaries, or simply move on. Once established, however, youth centres can become venues that engage young people in discussing the issues that affect them and formulating solutions through forums, festivals and special events such as Anti-Poverty Week and Refugee Week.

## Financial resources

The establishment of youth centres requires a considerable capital investment in buildings, typically from a partnership involving federal, state and local governments, community organisations, business including property developers, and philanthropic organisations. In addition, considerable resources are required to secure a centre's financial sustainability and continued maintenance.

Many of the community organisations located within youth centres operate government-funded youth services and programs. Further funding may come through business sponsorship and one-off philanthropic grants. Often office space is leased to specialist youth services including one or two 'anchor' tenants with longer leases, e.g. five years. Similarly, many centres rent meeting rooms to community groups. One centre proposed to self-fund through the construction of co-located, multi-storey housing flats. While this was denied planning approval, a housing mix including some social housing for young people is a key feature of youth foyers.

Some youth centres host fundraising events and seek donations from the community. Others house community enterprises such as cafés and cycle shops to both generate income and provide training opportunities for young people.

Some UK centres charge small entry or membership fees, on the basis that this minor contribution encourages young people to value the centre. Given that local areas have a statutory requirement to provide some free learning and recreational activities for disadvantaged young people, it is assumed that fees for those students are waived.

## Relationships

While design, governance and the other items discussed in this section are important, possibly the most critical aspect of youth centres is the people and the relationships they foster. These include relationships with youth workers that are positive, respectful and trusting; with peers including young people from different socioeconomic backgrounds, faiths and cultures; with older generations; and the broader community.

## 4 Australian case studies

This section presents case studies of several community centres or hubs with a strong focus on young people and learning. These sites were chosen to present different models from around Australia.

### Case study 1: Pathways Enterprise Centre

The Pathways Enterprise Centre is located at North Lakes, Queensland in a master-planned community, 25km north of Brisbane. In 2004, 40 per cent of the North Lakes population was aged under 25, with a 'mature' population of 22,000 and 13,000 new job opportunities forecast for 2016.

The centrepiece of North Lakes community is a \$30 million facility called the Foundation Building which provides a range of community facilities. It incorporates a library, leisure centre with basketball courts and a swimming pool, community centre, multifunction meeting space, coffee shop, community garden and a village green.

The Pathways Enterprise Centre, which opened in 2004 to integrate learning within broader community social and recreational infrastructure, is located within the Foundation Building. Project partners leveraged seed funding of \$3.8 million, together with external grant funding and third party contributions. Developers involved since its establishment include Lend Lease, Lensworth and Stockland. The Centre is an initiative of the Moreton Bay Regional Council and The Hornery Institute, a philanthropic foundation. Other partners include a TAFE college, an adjacent secondary college, various state departments, the federal Department of Education, Employment and Training, a job placement agency, local businesses and a Stakeholder Advisory Committee.

The purpose of the Centre is to provide training to assist young people and disabled adults to enter employment in the retail, office and information technology industries. The Centre provides mainstream schooling and vocational training, VCAL equivalents, pre-apprenticeships and TAFE certificates. It includes a job placement agency and a 'business incubator'. School holiday programs are being planned.

In 2006, the Centre was visited by 5000 students. Some 15 organisations including businesses and state government departments regularly use the premises for staff training and development.

Lessons from the first two and a half years of operation include the importance of research, early and ongoing consultation and collaboration with stakeholders, the development of vision and leadership by champions, marketing to and sponsorship by the corporate sector, in addition to partnerships with chambers of commerce, developers, local and state government. The Pathways CEO observed:

...if community organisations try to develop and build partnerships on theories and on supposition, then it's really tough to sell. But if you've got some really hard concrete evidence on what the community really needs ... you've got a good case to go into x, y, and z government departments, corporate organizations (Cameron 2004, p.2).

A further lesson was the importance of developing a sustainable funding strategy that avoids reliance on government funding, and accounts for administration costs.

**Sources:** Agora Community Infrastructure Working Group & Department for Victorian Communities (2007); Cameron (2004); Growth Areas Authority (2008); Hornery Institute (2008); Rossiter (2007)

## Case study 2: Visy Cares

Visy Cares is an initiative of paper and recycling company, Visy Industries, and the Pratt Foundation. Current Visy Cares projects are based at Shepparton, Meadow Heights, Reservoir, Sunshine and Laverton (this site housing a school-based transition program for young people). Together with the Dandenong Regional Youth Committee, Visy previously developed and operated a co-located youth service centre in Dandenong. This section describes the model established at Dandenong, which was later implemented in Sunshine.

### Dandenong Centre

Local employer, Visy, in 1996 helped to raise the \$1 million needed for capital construction of the Dandenong Centre, obtained through corporate and community donations, grants from the Victorian Government Community Support Fund and the City of Greater Dandenong (which also supplied the land). The centre operated as a 'not for loss' incorporated association called Youth Assist Inc. according to private sector principles accepting philanthropic support and corporate sponsorship, and was guided by a strategic reference group.

The centre building includes a kitchen, laundry and shower for homeless young people. In 2003, the centre co-located 18 youth specific agencies in a 'one-stop-shop' to provide integrated and holistic services for young people aged 12–25 and their families. It hosted:

- health services, e.g. drug and alcohol, sexual assault, depression and suicide
- education including accredited programs for at-risk young people and TAFE courses (e.g. music, dance, VCAL building and automotive)
- employment including 'Work for the Dole' and enterprise schemes (e.g. carwash, café)
- housing services
- legal services and court programs
- family mediation, parents' programs and support, including a food-bank
- services for Koori and migrant young people
- sport and recreational activities and holiday programs
- meetings of other community organisations.

The centre aimed to provide young people with a 'place of acceptance', easy access to a broad range of services in a non-judgemental setting, and hope for the future. It also aimed to develop effective regional networks, more efficient and cost-effective youth services and advocacy in areas of unmet need. The Youth Assist Inc. manager assisted services to work more effectively together and coordinated quarterly and annual half-day meetings. In 2003, the centre had 20 full-time and 20 part-time staff, of whom 16 attended the centre as part of other organisations' outreach activities. Monthly in-person contacts with young people averaged 2000 with a further 3000 phone contacts, and clients from more than 40 postcodes. Youth participation was fostered through consultations about the programs delivered. The Visy website states that by 2008 the centre served more than 50 postcodes and was in contact with more than 25,000 young people per year.

An initial challenge for the centre was the movement from co-location and collaboration to full integration so that young people perceived services to come from a single, efficient organisation. To achieve this, it was noted that agencies must see themselves as partners in addressing young

people's needs, rather than merely as tenants. The lack of a central client intake process or database and a single entry point or pathway to access services was identified as a further challenge. A later study in 2008 indicated that the centre had overcome these challenges and had achieved a more integrated model using a central database.

An evaluation in 2000 found evidence that the centre helped young people in need. It also established benchmarks for performance and customer service and satisfaction and recommended a minimum and maximum centre size. The evaluation indicated the value and high regard given to the 'Youth Assist Inc.' management model, with those involved hoping that the Visy Cares Centre would be recognised as a national model for integrated service delivery (Dix 2003).

In 2009, Visy ceased sponsorship of the Centre, which is now operated by the City of Greater Dandenong and renamed Youth Stop (Ystop). The services provided and the centralised intake and referral system remain unchanged.

## Sunshine

In 2007 a Visy Cares Hub opened in Sunshine close to the railway station and buses, the library, shopping centre and cinema.

Based on the Dandenong model of a co-located and integrated youth service, the hub is managed by Youth Junction Inc. and assists 12–25 year olds in the western suburbs. The Youth Junction Inc. website (2010) states:

The Visy Cares Hub aims to make a contribution to each young person that comes into the facility, which will further build their capacity to connect their life choices and chances, through the development and facilitation of sustainable pathways back into their community, family, education and/or employment.

Agencies located at the site include Ardoch Youth Foundation, Brimbank Youth Services, YMCA, Centre for Multicultural Youth, Centrelink, 'headspace' Western Melbourne, Melbourne Citymission, Robert Stary Lawyers, Sunshine Youth Housing, Sunshine Youth Legal Centre, Victoria University and Visy Cares Hub. The centre also hosts festivals and events. Programs listed on its website include media, drama and arts, 'homework help', sport and social recreation. The hub also provides access to computers and the Internet. A report by the City of Tea Tree Gully (Paterson 2008) stated that the Sunshine Centre did not offer accredited training.

Capital funding for the hub was provided by Visy Cares and the federal, state and local (Brimbank) governments. However, hub operations are independent of government grants or subsidies. Operating according to 'not for loss' principles and with deductible gift status, it receives funding for the programs it offers and generates income through leasing space and fundraising activities.

An advocacy group enables young people to have input into programs, and university research has been conducted to identify local needs.

**Sources:** Banyule and Nillumbik Youth Services Network (2003); The Link Centre (2010); City of Greater Dandenong (2010); Paterson (2008); Dix (2003); Visy Cares (2008); Youth Junction Inc. website (2010)

### Case study 3: Reynella Enterprise and Youth Centre

Reynella Enterprise and Youth Centre is located in an established area 20km south of Adelaide, South Australia. Reynella is one of three youth centres which form Onkaparinga Youth Services, a partnership between Mission Australia and the City of Onkaparinga. Funding comes from the City of Onkaparinga, state and federal governments, philanthropic organisations and community and business. Through Mission Australia, the Centre holds deductible gift recipient status. Mission Australia's corporate partnerships nationwide (\$7–8 million nationally) also enhance funding and partnership opportunities.

The building features some elements of sustainable/environmental design and is located near a restaurant, gym, employment agency and fast food outlet. It is open 9 am to 5 pm on weekdays and provides services, information and referral for disadvantaged youth aged 12–25.

The Centre focuses on recreation and youth programs and seeks to engage young people in a stigma-free environment. Stigma and embarrassment can be a risk, for example, if waiting areas such as sexual health or anger management are located near recreation areas such as pool tables, so the Centre model is one of partnerships and referral rather than co-location.

The Centre offers personal development, life coaching and leadership programs for young people. It also runs school holiday activity programs, skate and other recreational programs. In staff interviews for a study by the City of Tea Tree Gully (Paterson 2008, p.145), it was stressed that:

Arts and recreation are legitimate tools for engagement and development. Recreation is not just something youth workers do with young people for fun but rather in utilising an element of youth culture to engage, connect and work with young people to address their needs.

Music-related programs and events are a strong component of the centre, providing young people with event management and performance opportunities, accredited training (Certificate II and IV in music), Work for the Dole and work experience opportunities. The Centre has a casework program for 12–14 year olds who are not attending school regularly and an alternative Year 11 and 12 qualification with support for young parents. Accredited hospitality training is also provided in the kitchen. A sharing space project hosting all-age community events at a skate park is a further initiative to build intergenerational relationships.

Events are promoted through mass text messages to the Centre's database, with sponsorship by Vodafone. Young people participate in program surveys and on committees and steering groups. However, they are not included on the board of management, in budget or business decisions.

In 2010, staff advised that the Reynella Enterprise and Youth Centre was to be closed with Mission Australia restructuring its youth services. Some programs were to conclude at the end of their contract while others were to continue at a new site (Armour 2010).

**Source:** Paterson (2008)

## 5 Final remarks

This paper scans international and Australian policy, research and practice, in relation to services for young people across the spheres of health, education, employment and social participation. From this wide-angle view, critical thinking on effective youth service provision is characterised by five key themes.

### 1. Prevention

A primary service model based on ‘prevention’ and delivered through universal provision of basic services. ‘Early identification’ complements the main model to target ‘at risk’ groups and those showing early indications of difficulty. The intent is to dramatically reduce that the need for ‘crisis’ services.

### 2. Partnership

Building relationships and establishing partnerships between the government, community and business sectors, grounded in a shared vision. These partnerships share resources in the form of knowledge (policy and administration, business acumen, professional best practice, community/local knowledge) and finances to produce sustainable and ‘joined-up’ responses.

### 3. Service integration

The practical integration of services and providers to improve access, streamline intake and assessment and assist inter-agency referral. Benefits should include long-term service cost savings, increased and more timely access and effective intervention.

### 4. Holistic care

Services that address the needs of the whole person, including housing, health, productivity (education and employment), and broader social and spiritual wellbeing. Holistic services would overcome the current fragmented approach to wellbeing.

### 5. Strengths-based participation

An assets-based approach that identifies individuals’ aspirations and strengths, engaging them as the agents of change and solutions in their own lives. Similarly, the capability approach is concerned with maximising human potential or achievement. At a macro level this participatory approach is expressed as the democratic engagement of young citizens in voicing their needs, defining services and shaping their world.

These themes are observable overseas in legislative frameworks and major policies within schools and education, health and broader community services. In the UK, they are reflected in Extended Schools and myplace measures to increase access to health, social and study supports, recreational activities and the democratic participation of young people. In the US, they are reflected in Full Service Schools, after-hours programs, One Stop Career Centres and integrated care models such as Wraparound.

In Australia, approaches to youth services are fragmented and lack the visionary policy and supportive legislation to deliver substantive and holistic integrated services.

Positive movements toward more integrated youth services may be seen in the Extended Schools Hubs being piloted in a limited number of low socioeconomic areas through the COAG Smarter Schools National Partnerships and in Victoria's Better Youth Services pilots to develop regional integrated youth plans. However, institutional reform is required to break down traditional divides, such as that between school and community. Service structure and funding must become more flexible to enable appropriate responses to complex individual needs, and additional resources for programs in 'gap areas' must be made available. In the absence of broader structural reform, small-scale initiatives are at risk of simply re-arranging or re-badging existing youth programs and services.

Other signs of integration include the ACT's Turnaround program for young people with complex needs, and the growing number of foyer approaches which offer housing and social supports in conjunction with vocational training and employment assistance to promote the independence of young people at risk of homelessness.

Youth centres are a further example, delivering a variety of universal and or targeted programs and services, with operational models ranging from co-location to integration. As place-based approaches, they address the needs of young people in a community setting, while working in partnership with schools, training providers, employers and community organisations. Youth centres provide a fresh venue away from schools in which all young people can access social, recreational and educational activities as well as broad support services as part of a prevention strategy. Unlike school-centred approaches, they are accessible by non-school attenders, and can provide flexible, vocational and community-based options to ensure that disengagement from school does not equate to disengagement from learning. Youth centres can provide prevention and early intervention services, with scope to add crisis services and even housing through a foyer approach.

As noted, clear policy trends for effective youth services emerging from this review of Australian and international literature are prevention, partnership, service integration, holistic care and strengths-based participation.

To bring about change, vision, leadership and federal support are required, such as through the development of a National Strategy for Integrated Youth Services.

Given the state delivery of many services, such a strategy would need to be presented at the Council of Australian Governments, with a call for a whole of government commitment to service integration to address the broader wellbeing of young people.



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