

# Throwing out the rulebook

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Collaborative innovation  
for the unfolding  
Education First Youth Foyer model

Joseph Borlagdan and Deborah Keys  
2015



The Brotherhood of St Laurence is a non-government, community-based organisation concerned with social justice. Based in Melbourne, but with programs and services throughout Australia, the Brotherhood is working for a better deal for disadvantaged people. It undertakes research, service development and delivery, and advocacy, with the objective of addressing unmet needs and translating learning into new policies, programs and practices for implementation by government and others. For more information visit <[www.bsl.org.au](http://www.bsl.org.au)>.

Hanover, a leading independent Melbourne-based agency which supported people experiencing homelessness or housing crisis, joined forces with HomeGround on 1 July 2015 to form Launch Housing, making it one of Victoria's largest providers of housing and homelessness support services. Launch Housing provides flexible specialist services that directly assist and improve the lives of more than 20,000 men, women, young people, children and families experiencing homelessness every year. For more information visit <<http://www.launchhousing.org.au/>>.

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## Summary

This report addresses the question:

*What can be learned from the collaborative effort of government, community and other organisations in the initial developmental phase of an innovative model—Education First Youth Foyers—to address homelessness among young people?*

It covers the initial planning and development stage of the Education First Youth Foyer (EFYF) model, from post-election funding to the opening of the first EFYF at Holmesglen TAFE. Drawing from interviews with community agency CEOs and managers, public sector managers and staff, TAFE staff and the chair of the Interagency Steering Committee, this report explains how reconfigured relationships and roles between government and community sector enabled the modification of existing practices and the creation of new approaches.

Developed by the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Hanover Welfare Services (now Launch Housing), with funding from the Victorian Government, the Victorian Education First Youth Foyers (EFY Foyers) are an innovative student accommodation and education model for young people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. Students participate in education and training while at EFY Foyers to gain skills to transition to independent living and employment. They also receive housing and integrated forms of support for up to two years.

The EFY Foyers represent a new model and practice approach to working with young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Departing from deficit-based welfare models, the EFYF model is designed to provide mainstream opportunities that enable and develop young people's capabilities. It is predicated on the core assertion that educational attainment can provide a route out of disadvantage for young people experiencing homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

The EFYF model was not an 'off-the-shelf' model with its own template. It required the creation of new policies and practices and new ways of working between government and the community sector. The primary challenge in the early development stages was:

*How do government and community agencies go from **thinking differently to working differently** to address homelessness among young people?*

The EFYF model signals not only a programmatic shift, but an avenue to broader policy reform. This report identifies the key factors that ensured the development of a model that could transform youth homelessness service design and practice. Innovation of this kind required:

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<sup>1</sup> For more detail refer to the *EFYF Practice Framework*

- **trust between government and community partners.** Trust across horizontal and vertical lines of governance is vital for innovation. Trust is not inherent in collaboration. It is built on reputation, demonstrated sector expertise and evidence, and open and responsive discussion between contracting partners. Government must have confidence in the governance structures and processes of the community sector partners
- **high-level authority to overcome challenges.** An authorising environment begins with leadership and the ‘right people’ at the governance table. People working on an innovation must have an appetite for risk and be authorised to ‘throw out the rulebook’ and adapt to changing circumstances
- **co-design between government departments, community agencies and other organisations.** Co-design requires recognition of each other’s expertise, access to networks and willingness to learn. Flexibility helps to navigate tensions between sectors, and recognition of opportunities and constraints can propel innovation forward
- **commitment to model integrity and investment in model development.** Developing innovative models requires an investment in time and personnel to think creatively.

## Key learnings

### Innovation is built on trust

The EFYF is a relatively large-scale innovation that departs from standard delivery of services to young people experiencing homelessness. Trust built between government and community agency partners enables innovation at this level and degree. The community agencies leveraged their ‘trustworthiness’ or reputation in the community and their expertise in the homelessness sector to secure government commitment to the EFYF model. Other dimensions of trust—open communication and goal alignment between the partners—were also necessary to facilitate the model’s ongoing development as an innovative pilot.

### High-level authority drives innovation

High-level authority and representation from government and community agency partners created space for the development of new policy and practice. By definition, innovation departs from customary ways of working. At all levels, people working within bureaucracies and hierarchies must be authorised to ‘throw out the rulebook’. In spite of political support for the model, ministerial authority was needed to overcome early resistance to the model from some branches of the bureaucracy. Equally the authority of the CEOs in both community agencies was vital to address staff resistance in the community agencies. This allowed practitioners and bureaucrats to work across traditional jurisdictional boundaries and depart from existing practice.

### Co-design brings multiple sectors together to address complex problems

Youth homelessness is a 'wicked' problem requiring multisector collaboration to develop an innovative solution. Positing education as a route out of precarious housing necessitates, at the very least, collaboration between those in the housing and homelessness sector and those in the education sector.

Multisector collaboration to develop the EFY Foyer model involved intensive co-design between the community, business, housing and education sectors at departmental and institutional levels. Co-design of the model spanned from the building design brief to the educational content of the Certificate 1 in Developing Independence.

Co-design started early in the model development, drawing upon the expertise and resources of each sector. The community agencies work across multiple policy and program fields, united around the goal of addressing disadvantage and creating social inclusion. They brought research and sector knowledge and 'on-the-ground' experience working with young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Business partners, community service organisations, education providers and the Education Department provided the project with perspectives from the mainstream rather than the welfare sector. Most importantly, co-design with the education sector enabled an informed teaching and learning expertise.

In addition to harnessing cross-sector expertise, co-design with the government sector resulted in timely identification of policy and other bureaucratic constraints. Through this process a shared understanding of the flexibility required to realise the EFY Foyer model was developed. Negotiating the level of flexibility necessary to enact innovation across sectors inevitably involved a degree of tension; however the tension was productive when it was resolved through the input from multiple partners and perspectives.

### Innovation requires commitment and investment in model development

Developing an innovative model takes substantial resources. It requires an investment of time, the nurturing of relationships across sectors, and research and development. The scope of investment in the service development of the EFYF model is evident in the undoing and creating of over 60 policies and procedures. Moreover, the sustaining of commitment relied upon passion and persistence of key individuals in government and community sectors.

The tendency to revert to the status quo threatened to compromise the integrity of the model. Clarity of purpose among ministers, community agency CEOs and senior managers centred around the necessity to develop innovative approaches to youth homelessness. This helped to overcome the threat of maintaining the status quo and facilitated divergence from existing practice.

The compressed time frame for development presented its own challenges. Under the pressure of a looming opening date, close working relationships between partners and between service development and research teams required extra commitment. While the deadline was met, scope remains for leveraging the mutual benefits of cross-sector and service development-research relationships.



## 1 Introducing the Education First Youth Foyer project

In response to a proposal by Hanover and the Brotherhood, the Victorian Coalition Government, in its 2010 election platform, committed to investing \$30.1 million over its next term to establish three purpose-built, 40-unit Education First Youth Foyers on TAFE land in metropolitan and regional Victoria. The three EFY Foyers represent an innovative cross-government approach to enabling young people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness to successfully participate in mainstream education, training and employment (Mallett et al. 2014).

This initiative was led by then Victorian state Minister for Housing (the Hon. Wendy Lovell), in collaboration with the Minister for Education (the Hon. Peter Hall), and the Brotherhood of St Laurence (the Brotherhood) and Hanover Welfare Services (Hanover).

Two government departments, the Department of Human Services (DHS)<sup>2</sup> and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), have collaborated from the early stages of drafting the model through to the establishment of the first two EFY Foyers. Holmesglen EFY Foyer in Glen Waverley was the first to open in May 2013, with the Kangan EFY Foyer in Broadmeadows following in June 2014. A third EFY Foyer is under construction in Shepparton at GO TAFE.

An extensive evaluation of the EFY Foyer model, comprising process, outcomes and financial evaluation components, was funded at the inception of the project.

### A brief history of Youth Foyers

Youth Foyers originated in France in the late 1800s to provide accommodation for young people who needed to travel away from friends and family to seek work. They were subsequently adopted in the United Kingdom in the early 1990s to address the needs of young people experiencing homelessness (Quilgars & Anderson 1997). There are now some 135 UK foyers, ranging in size from 5 to 200 beds and housing over 10,000 young people. Each provides up to two years of supported accommodation for homeless young people while also linking them into education and employment.

In Australia, the UK foyer model was initially adapted in the early 2000s by the Live 'N' Learn Foundation in Miller, western Sydney; Southern Youth and Family Services and the Illawarra Youth Foyer in Wollongong; and Melbourne City Mission with its Youth Transitions Model. By 2014, there were at least 14 youth foyer or foyer-type services in Australia, consisting of a variety of accommodation models, facilities, and dispersed housing and networked or mixed accommodation options (Mallett et al. 2014, p. 4). The

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<sup>2</sup> DHS became part of DHHS, the Department of Health and Human Services, in 2015. In this report DHS is used, as the name that matches the initial developmental stage covered.

Education First Youth Foyers which are the subject of this report are an adaptation of the UK foyer model.

## Education First Youth Foyers: a distinctive approach

The EFY Foyer model expands upon the original concept of UK foyers by emphasising 'education first'. This emphasis is demonstrated by the location of the EFY Foyers on the sites of tertiary education institutions. EFY Foyers also adapt the 'Open Talent' approach developed by the UK Foyer Federation (the peak body)<sup>3</sup> and partially implemented in selected UK foyers. This approach departs from many approaches to young people experiencing homelessness by assuming that all young people have capacities and agency to be independent yet connected adults with sustainable livelihoods (Mallett 2014). Without access to opportunities, resources and social networks these young people's capacity to realise their talents would be limited.

EFY Foyers are designed for young people who have the ambition and motivation to engage in education and training but have been unable or limited in their ability to do so due to a range of structural, institutional and personal barriers. To address these barriers in practice requires new ways of working across education, housing and welfare support sectors, enabled by a broader shift in policy.

## Developing a collaborative innovation project

The Brotherhood and Hanover drafted a proposal for a new education-focused approach to address youth homelessness, centred on an innovative adaptation of the Youth Foyer model. The proposal was informed by practice expertise and available research evidence.

Recognising the value of this new approach to youth foyers and youth homelessness service provision, the government facilitated the innovation by commissioning the community agencies to lead the development of the EFYF model. This leadership included developing and documenting the EFYF service model and practice approach, establishing three EFY Foyers on TAFE land and undertaking a longitudinal evaluation of the EFYF model. The Brotherhood and Hanover also had leadership roles on the Interagency Steering Committee overseeing the development and implementation of the three foyers, operational management of one of the three foyers, and the evaluation.

Three factors associated with the way the foyers were commissioned by government critically influenced the EFYF development:

- Commissioning followed rather than preceded the conception of the model by the two community agencies
- Collaborative governance was a feature of the commissioning approach
- The community sector agencies were given a mandate to create an innovative service model.

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<sup>3</sup> See <<http://foyer.net/>>

## Community–government collaboration under a different form of commissioning

Definitions of commissioning vary (APSC 2007; Considine & Lewis 2012), but broadly encompass the cycle of ‘needs assessment to service delivery and outcome evaluation’ (Dickinson 2014, p.15). More specifically, Woodin (2006, p.277) defines commissioning as the ‘set of linked activities required to assess the ... needs of a population, specify the services require to meet those needs within a strategic framework, secure those services, monitor and evaluate the outcomes’. By contracting to non-government agencies, governments seek greater flexibility, efficiency and cost effectiveness in service delivery. In the United Kingdom, the push for greater community–government collaboration is outlined in the National Programme for Third Sector Commissioning. Hosted by the Office of the Third Sector, this program promotes the contribution of community agencies’ specialist knowledge and their capacity to engage with local communities as a resource worthy of investment in the commissioning process (Bovaird, Dickinson & Allen 2012).

While the language of commissioning has gained traction in the United Kingdom, it is less commonly used in Australia; and in the case of the EFY Foyers, it has taken on some subtle differences. As with other commissioning approaches, the EFYF project reflects key features of new public management regimes. These include government leveraging the capacity of NGOs to engage with local community, working with NGOs to identify needs and tailor services to disadvantaged groups, and investing in the third sector’s capacity to work with ‘hard-to-reach’ groups (Bovaird, Dickinson & Allen 2012).

However, the characterisation of government’s role in commissioning as enablers ‘steering’ rather than actively ‘rowing’ or doing service provision (O’Flynn et al. 2014) fails to capture the hybrid forms of governance emergent in the EFYF model. In this case, the community agencies developed the original project idea and brief, and led service development in collaborative fashion with an external steering committee that included government representation.

Refining the metaphor, it would be more accurate to describe the community agencies presenting a broad blueprint to government for the development of a vessel. Government then commissioned and steered the development of the vessel. But this steering role was shared by the Inter-Agency Steering Committee.

Once commissioned, the vessel itself was co-designed, by the lead community agencies working together with TAFE and specialist providers and government partners. The community agencies with TAFE and specialist partners then rowed the vessel, by operating one of three EFY Foyers<sup>4</sup>, maintaining an ongoing service development role and undertaking the EFYF evaluation.

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<sup>4</sup> Hanover operated Holmesglen and Kangan EFY Foyers during their establishment phases. It will continue to operate the Kangan Foyer. The operation of both Holmesglen and GO TAFE Foyers will be opened to tender.

The lead community agencies coordinate and manage the other providers and work closely with two Victorian Government departments, the Department of Human Services (DHS)—primarily the housing sections— and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). Both departments continue to be involved in the governance of the first two EFY Foyers at Holmesglen and Kangan TAFEs.

### Collaborative governance

Under the collaborative governance model, the roles of and relationships between government and community partners were reconfigured. As O’Flynn (2014) notes, collaborative modes of governance, while not suitable for all contractual arrangements, may be appropriate for innovations that address complex problems and seek broader policy reform. At face value, the respective roles and responsibilities of government and community agencies in these collaborations can be complementary in ways similar to those identified for government and philanthropy:

[Philanthropic] foundations offer the flexibility, creativity and assets for innovation that government lacks (Leat, 2005) while the public sector provides the resources, technologies and licence to diffuse innovative approaches and to make them sustainable. (Almog-Bar & Zychlinski 2014, p. 202)

The benefits and challenges associated with collaborative partnerships provide important learnings for an increasingly relevant but uncommon mode of commissioning and contracting between government and the third sector.

### Education First Youth Foyer (EFYF) as an unfolding model

How do you transform theoretical concepts into demonstrable policy implementation? That’s one of the great challenges in public policy. (IASC Chair)

Rather than funding an ‘off-the-shelf’ program, the government enabled community agencies to develop a model based upon the key principles and core components of the UK foyer model. It was originally envisaged that it would take 12 months to develop the EFYF model and ensure its innovative focus on education within the Australian context. However, this time frame was shortened when newly completed student accommodation at Holmesglen TAFE became available. The government imperative to accommodate homeless young people as soon as possible brought forward the delivery schedule of the EFYF model. Consequently, this report reflects upon a partially implemented model, with the full model due to begin in 2016.

The unfolding EFYF model continues to be refined and adapted. Damschroder and colleagues (2009) emphasise that interventions should be adaptable to their contexts. Adaptability also helps to ensure that interventions continue to be embraced by those delivering and receiving them.

While the EFYF builds upon core elements of UK and other Australian foyer approaches, there is little evaluative documentation on the planning and development of these other

foyers. This report therefore details some of the challenges in operationalising the innovative core elements of the EFY Foyers, including:

- an emphasis on ‘education first’ by situating EFY Foyers on the sites of tertiary educational institutions
- moving away from welfare models of support for young people towards supporting them through mainstream education and services
- an Open Talent approach founded on ‘Advantaged Thinking’, which builds skills and capacities
- a financially efficient model that supports 40 young people in student accommodation
- genuine reciprocity (‘The Deal’)
- multisector collaboration and partnerships across government departments
- an evidence-informed model supported by a rigorous process, outcomes and financial evaluation.

The primary challenge in the early development stages was: **How do government and community agencies go from thinking differently to working differently to address homelessness among young people?**

In this sense, the EFYF model is not just a programmatic development, but an avenue for broader policy reform.

## 2 About this report

### Scope of this report

This is the first of a series of evaluative reports on the EFY Foyers, and will provide context for future process, outcomes and financial reports (see Figure below).

**Figure 2.1 Reporting schedule**

2015	2017	2018
This report	Final Process report	Final Outcomes report
Interim progress report		Final Cost Effectiveness report
Interim Cost Effectiveness report		Final Cost–Benefit report

This report covers the initial developmental stage of the project, from inception to the opening of the first EFY Foyer. It documents the shift from the *EFY Foyer Funding Model* to the *EFY Foyer Base Model* (see Figure 2 below).

### Purpose of the report

This report addresses the question:

*What can be learned from the collaborative effort of government, community and other organisations in the initial developmental phase of an innovative model—Education First Youth Foyers—to address homelessness among young people?*

Drawing on accounts provided by key actors, this report:

- 1 describes the relationships, interactions and mechanisms between key government and non-government organisations
- 2 identifies key factors that enable innovation specific to EFYF, that may be applicable to other settings
- 3 identifies the resources (time, human capital, social capital) used to develop the EFYF model from idea to implementation.

The report presents a case study of a distinct form of commissioning, with community-led innovation facilitated by the government. In this approach, commissioning generates novel collaborative approaches across sectors and hierarchical structures.

The report does not outline the conditions necessary for replicability, as the resources and key components discussed are particular to the political and economic context in which EFYF was initiated. However, learnings from developing a model within enabling

and constraining structures provide broader insights into the nature of commissioning and collaboration in a developmental context.

## Report outline

The *Initial development and governance structures* section of this report provides a brief history of the development phase of the EFY Foyers, including a timeline and an overview of the iterations of the developing model. It is followed by the findings sections: *Innovation is built on trust*; *High-level authority drives innovation*; *Complex problems demand co-design*; and *Innovation requires commitment and investment*.

## 3 Method

This report draws upon interview data, a limited file review of project documents and key documents informing the Process Evaluation of the EFY Foyers.

Initial data was collected in 2013–14 to address broad research questions about the Holmesglen EFY Foyer start-up and operations. Semistructured interviews were carried out with key partners in the development from government, community agencies, TAFE and the Interagency Steering Committee:

- Brotherhood and Hanover general managers (n=2)
- Holmesglen EFY Foyer managers (2)
- Holmesglen EFY Foyer staff (6)
- Holmesglen TAFE staff (2).

A second round of data collection between January and April 2015 focused on what could be learned about the collaborative effort of government, community and other organisations. Semistructured interviews were carried out with:

- the chair of the Interagency Steering Committee
- public managers and bureaucrats from DHHS (formerly DHS) and DEECD (n=4)
- Brotherhood and Hanover CEOs (2)
- Brotherhood and Hanover general managers (2)
- Brotherhood and Hanover service development team member.

Interview data was imported into an NVIVO database and analysed thematically.

## 4 Initial development and governance structures

### Project inception

The EFY Foyers are the product of a long gestation. The CEO of Hanover, Tony Keenan, and the CEO of the Brotherhood, Tony Nicholson, estimated that seven or eight years elapsed between the first conversations they shared about a new education-focused response to young people experiencing homelessness and the opening of the first EFY Foyer at Holmesglen TAFE in 2013.

Long backgrounds in education and homelessness services informed the two CEOs' understanding that assisting young people to make a better life required more than shelter and support, that it required an education response necessitating policy reform. Senior managers from the two community sector agencies also contributed cumulative understanding, corporate knowledge and on-the-ground experience from prior trials and interventions in the youth homelessness field.

After researching international approaches, they found merit in the foyer model widely adopted in the United Kingdom and agreed that this model could be adapted to work in the Australian context (Mallett et al. 2014). Hanover and the Brotherhood developed a business plan that took the existing foyer model to the next level, and took it to both political parties in the run-up to the 2010 Victorian election. Then Shadow Minister Lovell recognised the capacity of the community sector agencies to drive the innovation and the Coalition committed to support the new EFY Foyer model if elected.

Upon winning the election, Minister for Housing, Wendy Lovell, quickly demonstrated her strong commitment to the EFY Foyer model with its proposed paradigm shift for youth homelessness policy and programs. She established a collaborative commissioning approach, enlisting the support of the Minister for Education and adopting a governance structure that reported directly to her.

The timeline (Figure 4.1) documents the progress from the inception of the model to the opening of the first EFY Foyer at Holmesglen.



## Making it happen

**Figure 4.1 Initial development timeline**

2010	Early collaboration and advocacy
Mar 2010	Hanover and Brotherhood CEO collaboration on the need for Education focused Foyers in Victoria
Jun 2010	Rationale developed
	Foyer Business Case draft developed to inform advocacy
Oct 2010	Victorian State Coalition election commitment to establish three EFY Foyers with BSL and Hanover as leads
Nov 2010	Victorian election: Coalition win
2011	Planning and funding model development
	<b>Building:</b> Functional architectural design brief completed for Kangan Foyer Design brief informed modifications for existing Holmesglen building
	<b>Partnerships:</b> MOU preparation. Brotherhood, Hanover, and Kangan TAFE partnership established
May 2011	<b>Governance:</b> Inter-Agency Steering Committee (IASC) first meeting
Jun 2011	<b>Service development:</b> Collaboration with Colin Falconer (UK Foyer Federation) re model
Sep 2011	Victorian Youth Foyer Proposed Model document (funding model)
	Research Evaluation Design drafted
Oct 2011	Project Control Group with DHS, DEECD, Hanover, Brotherhood, and architects established
2012	Building on the foundations
	<b>Building:</b> Location scoping and building design consultation
	<b>Partnerships:</b> Hanover and Brotherhood MOU signed. Heads of Agreement between DHS, DEECD, Hanover and Brotherhood signed
	<b>Governance:</b> IASC operating and providing oversight
	<b>Service development:</b> Research design and tools developed for EFY Foyer evaluation Open Talent adopted as 'DNA' of the model
	<b>Education offer:</b> Developing Independence course v .1: design, accreditation, first pilot
Dec 2012	Availability of Holmesglen Foyer building prompts partnership with Holmesglen TAFE
	Hanover, Brotherhood, and Holmesglen TAFE partnership established
2013	Preparing to open first EFY Foyer
	<b>Building:</b> Fit-out and furnishings of Holmesglen building
	<b>Partnerships:</b> Additional key partnerships secured (Melbourne Rotary, Maddocks, Geelong Grammar) Engagement with local community services and neighbourhood
	<b>Governance:</b> Foyer Management committee established
	<b>Service development:</b> Practice framework under development
	<b>Education offer:</b> Intensive collaboration with Holmesglen TAFE Certificate1 Developing Independence: modified version post piloting
	Holmesglen, Brotherhood, Hanover MOU signed
May 2013	<b>Holmesglen Foyer opens</b>

## Governance

The Employment and Youth Support Initiatives Inter-agency Steering Committee (IASC) was instituted in 2011 by the Minister for Housing. The committee had an independent chair—Rob Knowles, a former Minister for both Housing and Aged Care, and Health—

who reported directly to the Minister. The IASC was initially resourced by the Youth Foyer Development Working Group<sup>5</sup>. Membership of the IASC included representatives from the Victorian departments of Human Services, Premier and Cabinet, and Education and Early Childhood Development; the Australian Industry Group, the Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and the CEOs of Hanover and the Brotherhood. Administrative support was provided by the Brotherhood.

The IASC had three main purposes:

- 1 to oversee the implementation of the project including research and evaluation, model development and the opening of the three EFY Foyers
- 2 to provide a means for the integration of the activities of the key partners
- 3 to troubleshoot any policy and program roadblocks.

As the EFY Foyer project progressed a comprehensive governance structure was developed (see Appendix).

### Key partnerships and mechanisms

In late 2010, Hanover and the Brotherhood consolidated their EFYF partnership through an MOU signed by the boards of both agencies.

Partnerships between DEECD, DHS, Kangan TAFE and the two community agencies were established in 2011. Formal agreements, including a Heads of Agreement between DEECD, DHS, Kangan TAFE, the Brotherhood and Hanover, and MOUs between major partners, were finalised in 2012–13 to foster collaboration and accountability.

Two working groups were created in 2011. The Project Control Group which had oversight of the design and build of the foyers, was led by DHS, Hanover and the Brotherhood and included the TAFE directors, DEECD representatives and the project architects (Williams Boag). Secondly, an Operations Group comprising community agency and Melbourne Rotary representatives was formed to work on service development, with a dedicated Service Development Team initiated to resource it in 2012. A Research and Evaluation Group, comprising representatives from both community agencies, was formed in early 2013.

At the community agency level the two CEOs of Hanover and the Brotherhood had oversight of the project, liaising with the Minister for Housing, the IASC Chair and, when necessary, the Minister for Education. Project management was shared between two senior managers, one from each agency.

The research and service development teams at Hanover and the Brotherhood worked closely together to develop the foyer model and the foyer evaluation, with each aspect of work informing the other. These teams had complementary skills, and were able to comment constructively on each other's core work.

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<sup>5</sup> The IASC also had oversight of the Brotherhood's Work and Learning Centres.

### Defining the scope of the work

The scope and allocation of responsibility for the model development work was influenced by key actors in the genesis of the project—the CEOs and the minister. Both DHS and the two community agencies made substantial financial contributions, including provision of significant staffing resources.

In these early stages this model work included:

- establishing and maintaining governance arrangements
- research (including research design and needs assessment)
- securing government support
- location scoping for the foyers
- community engagement (neighbourhood information and advocacy; sector and youth consultation)
- building design and development
- developing partnerships, including TAFE, community and business partnerships
- service development (e.g. tenancy arrangements, intake and assessment processes)
- staffing (e.g. devising the staffing model and staff recruitment).

Throughout the initial period of model development and implementation, multilayered consultations and negotiations took place (see Figure 7.1, on p. 26).

### From Funding Model to Base Model to Full Model

An incremental approach is considered a useful strategy to manage complexity and promote adaptability in innovative models (Damschroder et al. 2009). In the case of EFYF, this is evident in the three successive iterations of the model (shown in Figure 4.2).

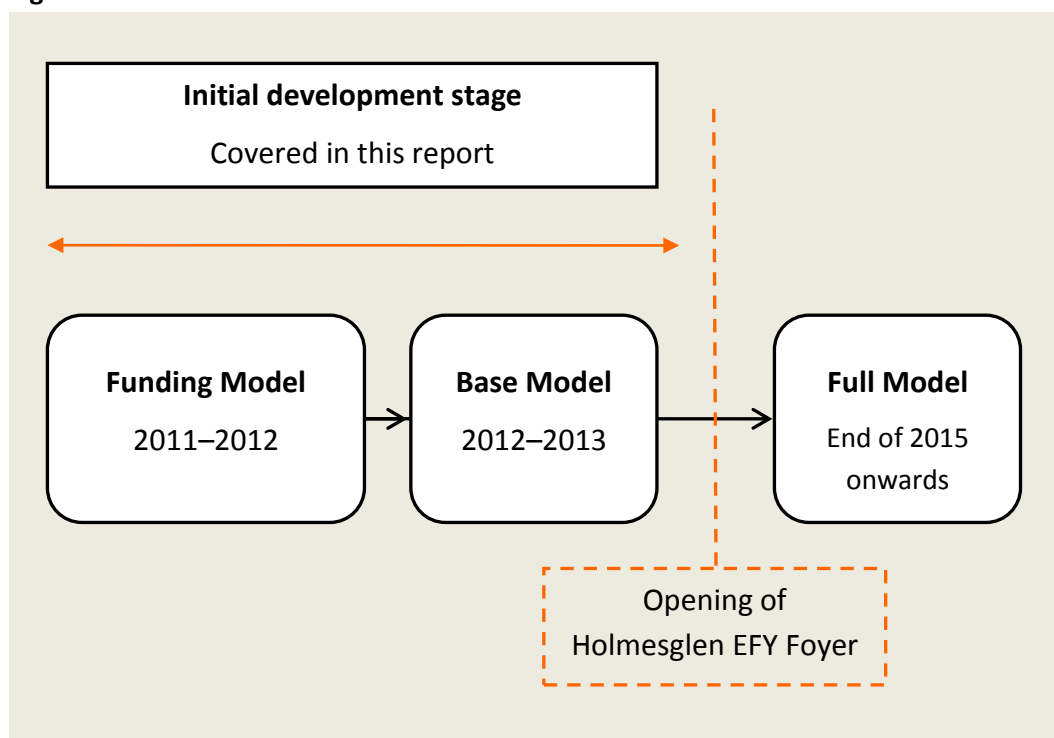
The seeds of the 'Funding Model' can be traced back to 2010 prior to the state election, when the community agencies outlined a business case that included capital and recurrent funding for the foyers. The capital costings proposed by the community agencies were based on current commercial rates for building tertiary student accommodation. Although initially disputed by departmental housing staff, these costings were later proved to be accurate.

The first formal documentation of the model, the *Victorian Youth Foyer Proposed Model* (September 2011), was written by staff based in the two community agencies with extensive input from DHS and DEECD. It outlines the key aims and components of the EFY Foyers and served as a basis for funding. We now refer to this as the 'Funding Model'.

During 2012 and 2013 the Hanover and Brotherhood service development team, with oversight from the IASC, fleshed out the Funding Model. At the time of the opening of

the first EFY Foyer, a partial version—the Base Model—was rolled out. Since then the service development team has continued to develop the model under the auspices of the IASC; and in 2014 they documented the Full Model in the EFY Foyer Practice Framework document. Individual conceptual frameworks and practice tools for the six service offers will be completed by the end of 2015, with the Full Model rolled out in 2016.

**Figure 4.2 Model iterations**



### The Funding Model

The Funding Model for EFYF proposed a fully integrated approach to support young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to re-engage with education and employment by providing affordable and stable supported student accommodation.

It had a clear focus on students’ goals and outcomes, and a Deal outlining student and Foyer reciprocal responsibilities, including students’ mandatory participation in education or training.

Community connections and partnerships with employment, education and health services were essential elements.

The education component, delivered in partnership with local education providers, included living skills and foundational learning, vocational pathway planning and preparation for mainstream education, along with personalised support. The accommodation would be located close to education and training facilities and would be staffed 24 hours a day.

### The Base Model

By the time Holmesglen Foyer was opened, the Funding Model had been further developed into the Base Model. An important addition was the incorporation of the Advantaged Thinking and Open Talent approaches that were embedded in all new policies, procedures and processes.

The Base Model involved student accommodation on a TAFE campus and included mandatory student participation in a Certificate 1 Developing Independence course designed and delivered in partnership with TAFE. The model was structured around three phases (pre-foyer, foyer and after foyer), six service offers (yet to be fully developed) and five key partnerships (with businesses, etc.). Few partnerships, other than those with TAFE, were well established and the practice framework was still in development. 'Bottom-up' components of governance were less developed, so student participation in decision-making was limited.

The practice approach included regular one-on-one meetings between students and their Youth Development Workers to facilitate identification and achievement of goals and access to 'inreach' health services and Foyer-led activities.

### The Full Model

In the Full Model of the EFYF, young people's engagement in education and training remains the priority of the EFY Foyer, with stable accommodation and support the means to facilitate it. The Open Talent approach is applied in the building design and all practices, approaches and tools. A multidisciplinary staff team providing 24-hour support work to coach and develop young people rather than taking a traditional case management approach, and mentoring is provided by community partners.

A detailed Practice Framework outlines the model components and provides a guide for daily practice. It is also the foundational document for further service development.

Three phases of service activity (pre-foyer, foyer and after foyer) support young people through their journey to establish independent yet connected lives.

Six interconnected service offers—education, employment, health and wellbeing, social connections, civic participation, and housing and living skills— are provided to assist students to develop their talents, skills and qualifications and build the foundations of a sustainable livelihood. Each offer includes a conceptual framework as well as activities and tools.

The key driver for the education offer is the purpose-built and accredited Certificate 1 Developing Independence course, with its own training guide and tools.

Engagement with mainstream education, employment and the community is prioritised. Partnerships between the EFY Foyer and community, business, philanthropy, government and services enable collaboration in the development and delivery of services to students.

**Table 4.1 EFYF model iteration key components**

Components	Iteration		
	Funding Model (proposed components)	Base Model	Full Model
Education First	Provide accommodation to support engagement in education and training	Piloting Developing Independence	Developing Independence
Partnerships	TAFE and local learning centres Government departments and services Community health, leisure and employment services	TAFE Government departments and services Community health, leisure and employment services Business and service organisations	TAFE Business, government departments and services, specialist services, mainstream community resources and philanthropy
Open Talent and Advantaged Thinking	Strengths-based approach	Advantaged Thinking	Open Talent and Advantaged Thinking applied in all policy and practice
Service offers	Six offers identified as outcome areas	Six offers providing focus for activities and partnering	Six offers with fully developed conceptual frameworks, resources and tools. All six offers rolled out with partners
Staffing	Multidisciplinary 24/7 team Position outlines	Multidisciplinary 24/7 team Induction training for Holmesglen EFY Foyer staff	Multidisciplinary 24/7 team Comprehensive induction training package for all EFY Foyers
Practice framework		Under development	Fully developed
Phases of service	Plan to include post-foyer transition support	Pre-Foyer and partial Foyer	Pre-Foyer, Foyer and Post-Foyer
Governance	Top-down/bottom-up	Top-down	Top-down/bottom-up

## 5 Innovation is built on trust

### Key points

- **Trust built between government and the community agencies enabled the departure from existing practice.**
- **Initially, multiple dimensions of trust provided the foundation for the government and community agency partnership.**
- **The community agencies also fostered trust by demonstrating strong community ties.**
- **Trust between government and community agencies was maintained by aligning goals and open discussions about the innovative EFYF model.**

### Initiating trust and leveraging reputation

A 'trustworthy' reputation is a vital form of capital in the not-for-profit sector (Brown, Potoski & Van Slyke 2007). This was evident as the community agencies' reputation, expertise and demonstrated capacity enabled them to gain initial support from the state government for the EFYF model. Hanover and the Brotherhood have built their reputations through many years of service delivery, research and policy work in the fields of homelessness and youth disadvantage. Trust in the governance arrangements of the two community agencies and the government's perception of the personal integrity of the community agencies' leaders also provided a platform for the CEOs to present a new model and approach to addressing homelessness among young people.

### A proposal built on evidence

While reputation opens the door to government, trust in the capacity of the community agencies to develop and deliver an innovative model helped to secure political commitment to the EFY Foyers. The agencies leveraged their reputation in their initial proposal of the EFYF model to government. They also demonstrated their capacity and trustworthiness by investigating and presenting the available evidence from the literature:

We had done a lot of work building the evidence and providing a solid evidence-based proposal and a solid costed proposal ... We were seen as responsible partners, not as noisy 'gimme gimme', so we were presenting them with solutions. [There was] a high degree of trust and a respect of each other's roles. (Community agency CEO)

### Reform rather than empire building

Trust was also established because the community agencies were clear that they were primarily interested in program and policy reform rather than developing a bigger service footprint. The CEO quoted above noted that neither of the community agencies was ‘about empire building, it was about outcomes’. The community agencies’ priority has been to develop the EFYF model and manage the start-up phase for the first two EFY Foyers. Research demonstrates that for government this kind of trust can offset the risk of contract partners pursuing self-interest beyond contract parameters (Brown, Potoski & Van Slyke 2007).

### Commitment to rigorous evaluation

The community agencies were also able to build trust with government by proposing a rigorous evaluation of the EFYF model. This was reinforced by the former minister chairing the IASC:

You get a lot of good ideas but they tend to be built around individuals or particular circumstances, whereas this was a model developed to be trialed in different sites and with a sufficient consistency around that model that if it works it can be replicated. From a good public policy perspective that becomes something that you are prepared to take a risk on, because there is a rigorous independent evaluation [that] will actually point out what works and what doesn’t (IASC Chair)

The willingness to ‘take a risk’ on an innovative model is aided by the incorporation of an evaluation of the EFYF model. In this sense, initial trust in the innovative EFYF model was not open-ended, but circumscribed by the need to demonstrate the model’s effectiveness and its replicability.

From the outset, then, multiple dimensions of trust—organisational reputation, expertise, adherence to project parameters and service delivery and evaluative capacity—provided the foundation for the initial government and community agency partnership.

### Building trust over time

Reputation may be earned over decades of service delivery and research, but trust within collaborative governance must also be continually demonstrated through strong community ties, open communication and goal alignment.

### Trust built from community ties

Community agencies enhanced their reputation by demonstrating their ties to the local community. In the interviews, their CEOs highlighted ensuring that services were relevant to, and supported by, the local communities. This was evident when the CEOs canvassed community support for the Shepparton EFY Foyer. A public sector manager provided the following description of this work:



The ability of the two CEOs—so very senior people in very highly regarded community service organisations—actually going out and engaging with the community ... was just great to see ... To do door-knocking around Shepparton, I think that sort of thing's made a difference. (Public sector manager)

This echoes research into government and community agency partnerships that suggests public sector managers are more trusting of community agencies with strong ties to the community (Lamothe & Lamothe 2012).

### Emerging goal alignment

As the EFYF model developed, other dimensions of trust such as goal alignment strengthened the relationship between government and community agencies at the managerial level.

The connection between shared goals and trust was emphasised by a community manager: 'There was a trust established that we're all here for the same reason and that was around effecting change in practice and models'. Research literature indicates that as trust builds over time, monitoring is less formal, with government partners becoming less control-oriented and hierarchical (Brown, Potoski & Van Slyke 2007). In the case of the EFY Foyers, community agency managers mentioned that the trust that flowed from goal alignment made the process of model development easier. It also enabled public sector managers to be open to innovative ideas:

You didn't end up having to have the same kind of contractual agreements, you could have the conversation and then have an exchange of emails about what the next pieces of work were and how much they were going to cost and so that kept the work going. (Community agency manager)

Community agency managers noted that their counterparts in the public sector were 'open to ideas about what can be changed', and as a result gave them 'a lot of rope' to innovate. Also the Open Talent approach gave public sector managers a 'sense of relief to abandon the risk [and] vulnerability' framework and instead 'embrace possibility and potential'.

Compared with their agency counterparts, public sector managers tended to underplay the extent of goal alignment. When asked whether they considered themselves to be champions of the EFYF model as suggested by the community agency managers, they spoke of working under the clear government directive to implement the EFYF model. At the same time, however, they 'thought the model had a lot of value' and were enthusiastic about the innovative aspects of the model:

I think that the opportunity to try something different for homeless young people ... that's focused on education as the primary agent, lever, outcome rather than dealing with homelessness and perhaps all the other complex issues that young people might be facing, and *then* talk about education I think I found particularly exciting and worth being part of. (Public sector manager)

### Inspiring an 'us' rather than 'us and them' attitude

Community agency managers sought to create an 'us' rather than 'us and them' attitude to the process. To do this, community agency managers felt they had to keep government stakeholders 'inspired by the idea' because people can quickly 'move on'.

### Open dialogue with 'no surprises'

While government housing and education departments and community agencies share the goal of improving services to young people, each organisation has its own imperatives and agenda. In practice, agreement can be difficult to achieve (Huxham & Vangen 2005). To find common ground to drive innovation, open dialogue between the partners was needed.

Community agency managers echoed the value of being honest and open in their communication with government:

There was some honest dialogue about the things that were working, about the things that weren't working, about the ambition, even the self-interest of the agencies in it; there was a real degree of honesty in it. I think that created the basis for trust which then created the basis for a better working relationship.  
(Community agency manager)

The community agency managers also ascribed their strong relationships with key public sector contacts to sharing the necessary information to avert or respond to issues in a timely way. They referred to a 'no surprises' principle in their ongoing communications with government. This exchange of information enabled public sector managers to meet procedural and bureaucratic demands:

Having easy, open, honest access between ... us meant that if I ever came up against something that I needed to get approved I could just call them and get the information I needed and put it in and that was pretty critical. (Public sector manager)

For their part, the public sector managers felt that the level of trust between them and the community agency managers enabled them to balance departmental bureaucracy with the innovative aspects of model design. For example, one public sector manager explained that when she was unable to include certain innovative elements of the model in departmental documentation due to bureaucratic constraints, the agency general managers trusted that these elements were not being rejected outright but could be incorporated in the future:

There was enough trust that it wasn't the department saying 'No, we reject that element of the program design'. It was just saying 'We just need to do this so it matches up with these other processes that go on but we'll keep that on the agenda and we'll keep working towards that in the future'.  
(Public sector manager)

Trust, in its many guises, has provided the foundation for the EFYF project. It helped to initiate the EFYF model. In the formative stages of the proposed model, reputation and demonstrated expertise and capacity helped secure government commitment to explore new policy and practice options to address homelessness among young people. The interviews confirmed, however, that trust alone is not sufficient to circumvent the roadblocks that government-commissioned innovations can encounter. The role of high-level authority in facilitating innovation is explored in the following section.

## 6 High-level authority drives innovation

### Key points

- **Innovation at this level and to this degree required high-level authority and representation from the partners to overcome constraints and resistance within both government and community agencies.**
- **People working within bureaucracies and hierarchies must be authorised to ‘throw out the rulebook’.**
- **Having the ‘right people’ from the partners at the table enabled decisions to be made and networks to be utilised.**
- **While innovators had a vision of wider systemic change, innovative models are often subject to shifts in the policy environment. High-level authority enabled flexibility to adapt to unforeseen structural changes and policy shifts, while the core principles of the model were maintained.**

### Higher level authority: creating space to innovate

Authority from state ministers and high-level governance structures were needed to overcome initial resistance from departmental bureaucrats and community agency staff to the innovative EFYF model.

Once in government, ministers were keen to pursue the community agency CEOs’ vision of an education-focused model of addressing homelessness experienced by young people. Each party recognised the need to depart from existing policies and practices to enable an Open Talent approach. In the early stages, however, some bureaucrats and community agency staff were unwilling to depart from standard procedures. With the EFY Foyer development at risk of stalling, high-level authority enabled the department to collaborate more innovatively with the community agencies.

### ‘Throwing out the rulebook’ and freeing up bureaucracies

The collaborative governance approach required willingness from all parties to let go of established ways of working. However, undoing institutional practice is challenging. As Damschroder and colleagues (2009, pp. 56–7) point out, the greater the departure from the status quo, the greater the complexity:

Radical interventions require significant reorientation and non-routine processes to produce fundamental changes in the organization’s activities and reflects a clear departure from existing practices.

For example, a community agency CEO described the early challenges of gaining buy-in from some staff in his organisation about the Foyer concept. He recalled how some

people were resistant to the notion of elevated employment and education expectations of young people experiencing homelessness. He referred to the entrenched concern with keeping young people engaged in 'meaningful activity', which fell short of the Foyer approach of providing a mainstream education and employment offer.

The EFYF model also required a departure from standard government practice. While a design brief was for a purpose-built EFY Foyer, in the case of the first (Holmesglen) Foyer the existing student housing that became available needed to be adapted to incorporate EFY Foyer design elements. This runs counter to standard government practice, where building is circumscribed by established regulations and specifications:

Normally with government they take the lead on design and running of the project because government normally has their own brief and basically third party providers such as Hanover and the Brotherhood sit passively until the project or the capital projects and building is finished and it gets handed over to the client. (Departmental bureaucrat)

Due to the innovative EFYF design, bureaucrats could not implement an 'off-the-shelf' building for young homeless people. At an early stage, this departure from standard practice produced tensions between the bureaucrats and the community agencies. Some public sector managers thought that the community organisations had underestimated the cost of building EFY Foyers, estimates that were later shown to be correct. Exercising her authority, the minister replaced the initial bureaucratic team with a more supportive one that was willing to implement the model. One of the bureaucrats tasked with replacing the initial working team recounted the early reluctance to develop an innovative EFYF model:

Resistance was about everything—the funding model, the capital model, how the design was done, the procurement process. Everything was against [the department's] procedure. (Departmental bureaucrat)

### A mandate to innovate

In their Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research, Damschroder and colleagues (2009, p. 58) note that 'one explanation for why so many of these initiatives fail centers on the failure to change less tangible organizational assumptions, thinking, or culture'. The EFYF demands a novel approach to youth homelessness, which can lead to tensions as organisations, or in this case, departments, resist shifts to their own assumptions and existing practices.

The mandate to work outside existing frameworks was necessary to overcome the initial resistance from some of the government departments. Bureaucrats were empowered by the minister to 'throw out the rulebook' in relation to building design:

I guess we threw out that rulebook, so anything to do with the design of the building was not to DHS specifications, which we were very, very adamant

about because we didn't want it to look like a DHS office. (Departmental bureaucrat)

Of course, within government or the community sector, one does not 'throw out the rulebook' unless authorised to do so. The EFYF model was developed in an authorising environment that freed departments from standard bureaucratic practice.

In another example of innovative practice, one public sector manager recalled consulting with 'end users', including university students, to inform the design of the student accommodation. To his knowledge, this was not a standard procedure.

### Governance with the 'right people' creates an authorising environment

Innovation requires people with the ability to forge connections, authorise decisions and initiate change:

An effective strategy starts with the governance. It starts with having people at the table and creating a sense of shared commitment. (Community agency manager)

The authorising environment created through the IASC was described by the chair as follows:

Because you kept the focus on the higher level, it meant that those doing the legwork at the coalface knew that ... their bosses were overseeing this project and had a commitment to it. (IASC Chair)

Crucial to project success is having the 'right people' around the table, drawn from government departments and community and business partners. Here the 'right people' refers to those from the relevant jurisdictions with seniority and the required skill set and expertise. Additionally, the connections of the right people within their own organisation helped to progress development of the EFYF model. This was particularly important with the IASC's direct line to the minister.

High-level government representation meant the IASC was able to make and authorise decisions, troubleshoot and resolve any barriers that arose and explore new ways of working and fast-tracking bureaucratic processes. Community agency managers stated that the overall EFYF model would have been compromised without the shared vision and leadership of the committee. The managers also acknowledged the committee's ongoing role in instigating broader policy reform.

### Authority for bureaucratic flexibility

#### Smoothing a path through 'colliding models'

While the EFYF model challenges existing support structures for young homeless people by prioritising education, it is always working within an existing education and training sector and a fluctuating policy environment that can enable and constrain innovation. At

times, the collision of an innovative model with a changed policy context was only partly resolved through makeshift solutions. For example, new TAFE funding rules, limiting students to two course commencements in one year, two enrolments at the same level in their lifetime, and only two courses at the same time, meant that students could be disadvantaged if required to undertake the Certificate 1 Developing Independence course delivered as part of the TAFE's mainstream vocational offer. At the same time, TAFEs lost market share in the training sector, resulting in budget cuts that impacted on their ability to support the EFYF model. The implications of these changes were outlined by a public sector manager who was asked to identify the most significant challenges to the EFYF model development:

It's something bigger than this project. I think that what happened was you've got a project that assumed that the mainstream delivery of vocational training and all of the cost structures associated with that, the eligibility of access, would remain stable. It did not remain stable, and so there was a strong change —it was a system-wide change that a small ... set of people had to respond to. So you've got a big system-wide change influencing a particular program that was reliant on mainstream system delivery.

These challenges to EFYF model delivery remain, with the partners trying to 'smooth a path' in a changed policy environment and sector. The response has entailed a makeshift solution, creating an 'exceptional program' outside mainstream delivery, which the public sector manager noted differed from the principle of a mainstream offer that underpins the EFYF model. The push-and-pull between an innovative model and broader policy is ongoing as the partners negotiate how core model elements are translated in a shifting policy environment.

## 7 Complex problems demand co-design

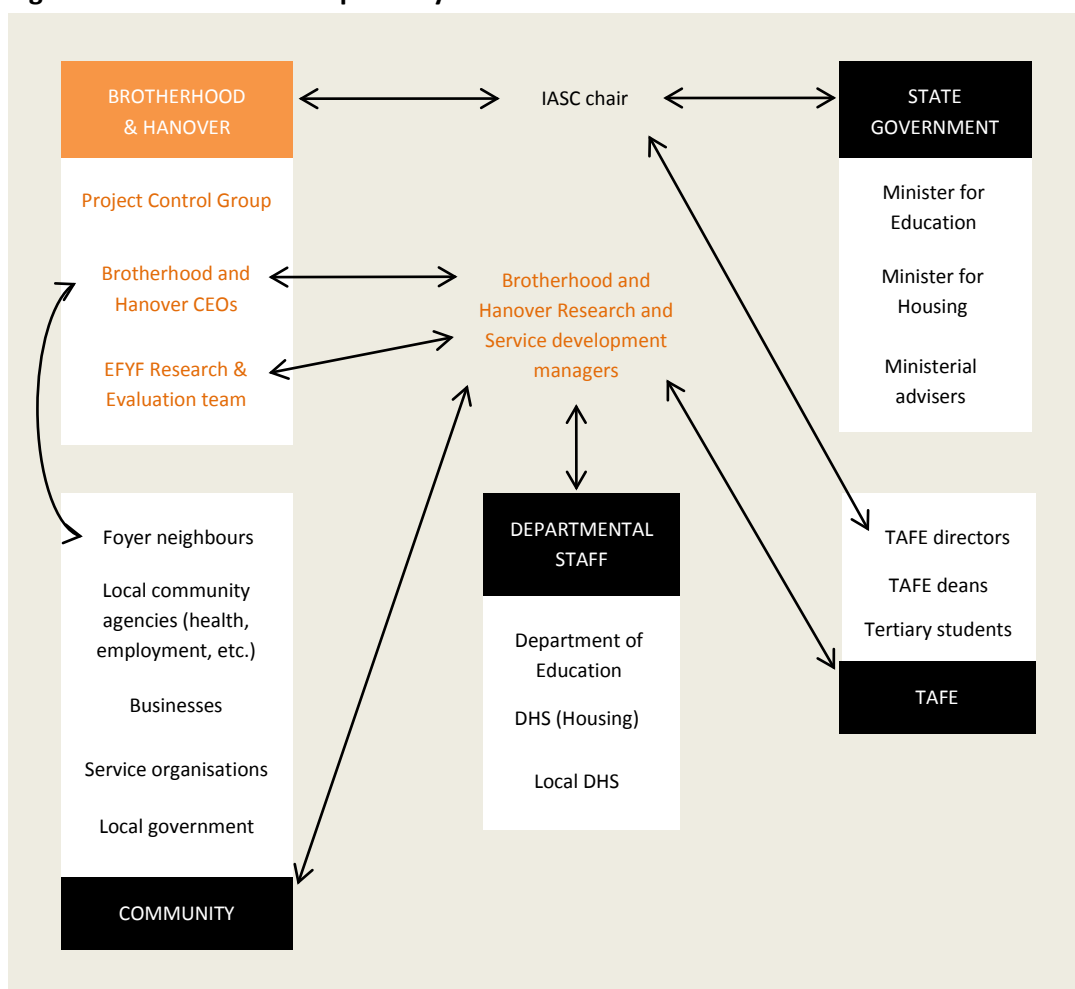
### Key points

- **Innovation that involved co-design across sectors (not just information sharing) harnessed the breadth of relevant knowledge and resources, pooled capabilities and fostered shared responsibility.**
- **The community agencies brought research and practice knowledge; the departments brought sector and policy knowledge and expertise in project management; and the TAFEs and business partners brought expertise, access to valuable networks and expectations that EFY Foyer students would be able to meet mainstream education and work demands.**
- **Achieving innovation depended on partners being able to identify areas of policy and program flexibility while recognising immovable constraints.**
- **Innovative co-design across sectors resulted in a degree of tension that was productive in combating complacency and achieving change.**
- **Cross-sector co-design assisted compliance with sector and institutional regulations.**
- **Good collaborative relationships at all levels of the participating institutions facilitated the establishment of an innovative model.**

### Harnessing the expertise of each sector to maximise the potential for an effective model

The cross-sector approach of the EFY Foyer model, the commissioning method and the nascent stage of the model development necessitated collaboration among project partners on a scale not undertaken previously by them. This degree of collaboration accords with the definition proposed by Keast and Mandell (2014, p. 9): ‘a distinctive form of working together, characterised by intense and interdependent relationships and exchanges, higher levels of cohesion (density), and requiring new ways of behaving, working, managing and leading’ geared towards changing existing systems of operation and service delivery. Much of this working together took the form of co-design of the model (shown in Figure 7.1).



**Figure 7.1 Collaboration pathways**

### Going beyond shared talk to shared work

A DEECD manager reported that working with DHS is relatively common for them but that the EFY Foyers initiative differed in its large scale, high profile and concrete nature. She described it as ‘actually having to deliver something and be part of something rather than perhaps just discussing issues or sharing ideas’. Keast and Mandell (2014) would classify information sharing as ‘cooperation’, with little risk and the retention of individual goals; and a deeper level of engagement as ‘collaboration’. Thus, the housing department’s investment in a building on Department of Education land accords with the level of joint work that Keast and Mandell call collaboration. Since the EFYF model required a high degree of co-design, the DEECD manager noted that ‘having something concrete to work on probably strengthened our relationship’.

### A new level of co-design between government and community sectors

The greatest collaboration occurred between departments and community agencies, and TAFEs and community agencies. Collaboration between DHS and the community agencies was unparalleled in both breadth and depth. One CEO noted a key strength of the co-design process:

So this was a very, very different way of working. It's in sync with any basic theory of management. If Toyota and businesses developed cars under [a standard government contracting model] they would be complete failures. The whole principle of co-design in industry is that you develop and refine and improve quality with people on the ground who are delivering product. (CEO)

The co-design process facilitated by the method of commissioning provided opportunities to pool department and community sector knowledge and aided departmental openness to new approaches informed by 'on-the-ground' experience.

Because it's not one person defining the specifications—which is usually government, right?—and saying that's what we want and if the provider thinks 'Well in actual fact the chair that you've asked for should have five legs and not four, that would make it so much better'. Often the reaction from the [government] purchaser is 'Oh for heaven's sake I can't have a fifth leg, I haven't got the money for it, I don't really understand it. Why are you changing what I wanted, I always wanted a four-legged chair'. Whereas I think the opportunity to actually go 'Hey what about five legs?' and 'What would that look like?' and 'Maybe that might be better' and 'Why haven't we done that before?' I think that is a different relationship. (Public sector manager)

The analogy of the 'five-legged chair' illustrates the way in which the community sector's entrepreneurial capacity can lead government to re-think existing practice. The community sector brings a deep understanding of the needs of the targeted cohort gained through research and service delivery. This is complemented by the departments' knowledge of the policy enablers and constraints that must be navigated to shift practice.

The valuing of the knowledge held by the community agencies was mirrored by agencies' acknowledgement of departmental expertise. The Education Department, like the housing department, was involved from the foundational stages of the project. Collaboration with DEECD was essential in crafting a new approach that moved away from the welfare focus on providing shelter and support to a focus on engaging young people in mainstream education and universal services and providing the opportunities to flourish. Most of all, the commitment of the Education Minister to the project enabled the establishment of purpose-built or modified student accommodation on TAFE land, access to TAFE staff knowledge and teaching services, and student access to TAFE facilities and services. Early collaboration with the Education Department ensured the model's fit within the education sector. DEECD involvement also provided guidance for the accreditation of Certificate 1 Developing Independence, the mandatory course for all EFY Foyer students.

### Leadership and an appetite for risk: collaborating with TAFE

Collaboration with DEECD provided a broad foundation but further co-design was needed with the TAFE partners to consider how the model would operate on campus. Working with disadvantaged groups is the core business of community agencies but

education for disadvantaged cohorts is just one of the many roles of the TAFE system. However, one CEO reported that TAFEs were looking for ways to stop student drop-out and they 'got' the EFY Foyer model approach 'from day one'. The IASC Chair stated:

One of the critical factors was the leadership of the TAFE colleges understanding what was being attempted, because there are some risks. [...] You need a college and college leadership that understand and want to do that. Holmesglen TAFE had a history of trying to create pathways back into education so they understood the risks and wanted to be involved. Kangan TAFE and GO TAFE in Shepparton had a similar culture.

He noted that there were risks for the TAFEs associated with housing 40 young people on campus, many of them dealing with considerable challenges, but there was the greater risk of having DHS build and commission an untested service on TAFE land.

### Recognising and learning from each sector's expertise

The TAFEs brought vital resources to the EFYF project, with sector knowledge, skills and networks regarded by the service development team as equally important as material resources. For example, the Acting Dean of Holmesglen TAFE brought essential pedagogical and curriculum expertise about engaging disengaged learners. As one CEO noted:

Where does the knowledge in the community lie about re-engaging disengaged learners? It's in that TAFE sector ... It's about accessing their expertise and our expertise in accessing the housing. (CEO)

The exposure to TAFE sector knowledge and skills through the co-design process had benefits for the community agencies beyond the EFY Foyer project:

Our organisation has automatically had an insight into what TAFE does and how it can be of benefit for our clients [and gained] understanding into how to access that whole system. (CEO)

The TAFEs benefited from access to policy makers in DEECD through the project. Additionally, the EFY Foyer Management Committee, which comprised senior TAFE and Foyer staff, worked to enhance the response to all young students at Holmesglen, a campus that primarily serves adults.

Co-design of the building was a major focus of the collaboration and illustrates 'throwing out the rulebook'. The Project Control Group, which included the architects, put together a design brief for a purpose-built EFY Foyer. A pillar of the EFY Foyer model is a living space that enables a young person to thrive. Achieving this environment includes creating a building with sufficient communal space, easy student access to staff and amenities that are equal to mainstream student housing (Mallett et al. 2014).

In this process the Brotherhood and Hanover had been active with Kangan TAFE ... and sat with them from day one on the design, on the functionality of the

building and had a lot of input even to the colours and materials, which is something very, very new and foreign to DHS, because DHS had a standard building code or specifications. (Public sector manager)

As mentioned earlier, significant challenges associated with co-design under the new commissioning approach were overcome early in the project; however multiple building specifications needed to be defined and reaching agreement was not always easy. For example, the new approach differed from traditional thinking in the matter of the separation of staff and student space. One CEO noted that the EFY Foyer approach was predicated on treating the young residents as students; and therefore creating a separate secure space for staff, though standard in residential welfare housing, would be counterproductive. A compromise ensued, with a large staff area designed with an open counter clad in vertical wooden slats at the Kangan Foyer; while convertible to a secure area if necessary, it does not immediately advertise itself as one.

It's interesting over time we still couldn't get people to conceive that you didn't have to have a secure area for staff. If you go out to Kangan Foyer that's not used as such. They shut the door for 20 minutes for handover and students just walk in and out freely. (CEO)

### Employers and community service organisations bring unique perspectives

The involvement of business, service and community sector partners is central to the EFY Foyer model not only for what they can offer students once the Foyer is operating but also in the design phase. Several partners came on board soon after the government departments and Kangan TAFE, and made a considerable contribution to the model. The Rotary Club of Melbourne were particularly important. They shaped the Certificate 1 Developing Independence course, giving a 'real world and not a welfare perspective, on its value and potential to be effective with young people' (Community agency manager). Rotary later assisted with staff recruitment and helped connect the Foyer team with links to employers outside the welfare sector.

Other important early partners were Scalzo Food Industries and Maddocks law firm. Partnerships with trusts, foundations and donors have also been essential; key partners have been the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund, which supported the development of Certificate 1 Developing Independence, and Rosie's Kids, which made possible the employment of a partnership broker.

These partners brought an understanding of young people that was not shaped by the deficit view predominant in the welfare sector, and a new perspective on how to approach the problem of assisting young people to overcome disadvantage. Early collaboration had the additional benefit of securing business, service and community partners' longer-term investment in the project.

## Identifying constraints and areas of adaptability

Co-design allowed the development of a workable model by identifying policy, compliance and practical constraints that the community agencies might not have known. The departments' knowledge of their sectors and relevant policy was invaluable in identifying barriers to implementation and scope for flexibility. Despite one community agency CEO's view that they understood 'the real limitations, around politics, working with communities [...] the cost limitations, the limitation that the model had to deliver', a public sector manager noted that the community agencies could have blind spots about:

... what's a really big boulder that you can't push over and sort of where things are ranked in terms of government policy. I think when it's your initiative, and you're very passionate about it there is a belief that everyone else will just fall in. And maybe that doesn't always happen and there are other pressures on government that mean that they will make decisions that they believe in that may have consequences for their other initiatives but they're willing to wear that.

The involvement of a research team from the two community agencies early in the program development and planning stages also helped to identify 'potential barriers and facilitators ... from the perspective of the individuals and organizations involved in the implementation' (Damschroder et al. 2009, p. 62) . Researcher involvement can also add a nuanced understanding of contextual factors at the developmental phase of service delivery that subsequently impact upon participant outcomes (Patton 2011). Similarly, program manager and service development team involvement in the research and evaluation design was essential to ensure an informed research design for the evaluation.

The ongoing partnership between research and service development had multiple facets and phases.<sup>6</sup> Early in the project, researchers engaged in consultations with DHS and Department of Treasury and Finance, and conducted data mapping and literature reviews. Researchers also led or contributed to the development of the program logic, the theory of change document, the practice framework and the vision, goals and defined outcomes of the Foyer model. The researchers assisted the service development team to define assessment criteria for EFY Foyer applicants' 'readiness' to join the move into a Foyer.

## Productive tension

Negotiating within the bureaucratic and institutional environments was a point of tension, with community agencies pushing for their vision of a new way of thinking and working and public sector managers having to hold firm on some non-negotiable matters. A public sector manager observed that at times she felt they were 'being put on

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<sup>6</sup> While briefly discussed here, the contribution of research to service development and the collaborative relationship between Research and Service teams will be the focus of a future paper.

the spot to defend education policy'. This is a productive tension and an important aspect of innovative co-design; it indicates a level of collaboration in which each sector is truly contributing. As one community agency manager noted:

The other thing is I don't expect that partnerships will be conflict or tension free. I think probably they need to have some degree of tension, then you really know that you're alive and that you're thinking through issues and you're not being complacent. (Community agency manager)

### Navigating compliance in co-design

Co-design with TAFE was necessary to ensure the innovative EFY Foyer model could be embedded in the TAFE system and accommodated at the particular TAFE campuses. The practical integration presented challenges. For example, the EFYF approach entailed a high level of adaptability that did not always fit with TAFE's regulated and compliance-driven environment. A TAFE staff member reflected:

I think that the community sector was surprised how many procedural requirements that we had and the level of compliance ... so that we tended to have to sort of meet in the middle somewhere, to ensure that the education sector was meeting its requirements of compliance as well as the welfare sector meeting its compliance. We're governed by certain rules and we are audited constantly on those rules and we cannot find a way around them, we just have to comply. That's just the way it is. (TAFE staff member)

### Collaboration through the levels

As the partners prepared to open the first EFY Foyer, intensive collaboration between Holmesglen TAFE and the community agencies was required to jointly overcome the obstacles that arose. Matters such as governance, the roles of the TAFE and its staff in the education offer, provision of access to Foyer students to facilities and support services, and Foyer access to facilities and utilities (garbage collection, IT, security, maintenance) were formalised in an MOU. However, a service development team member emphasised that building and nurturing relationships with key academic, corporate and support services staff was as important as the corporate relationship outlined in the MOU. A community agency manager noted that:

The entire program can be derailed without establishing a good collaborative working relationship with TAFE. (Community agency manager)

The innovative aspects of the EFY Foyer require significant adaptability not only at the department and institutional management levels but also at the TAFE operational level.

For example, collaboration and co-design took place around the security of the building, including deciding upon fence height, developing protocols for the use of security swipe cards and weekend access to buildings. Risk management was a key issue. TAFE and community agency personnel worked together to anticipate issues likely to affect security staff and to enable these staff to understand the Foyer approach. It was

important to ensure that any security issues involving students would be managed in accord with Advantaged Thinking, as 'heavy-handedness' in managing a critical incident could undermine the culture of the Foyer and negatively impact upon EFY Foyer student attitudes to the TAFE. Any security staff concerns about having 40 young people living on campus had to be allayed, and preconceptions about the types of young people who would be living at the EFY Foyer needed to be altered.

## 8 Innovation requires commitment and investment

### Key points

- **A clear purpose of innovating approaches to youth homelessness helped to overcome challenges that threatened model integrity.**
- **Clarity of purpose enabled public sector managers to be willing to depart from existing practice.**
- **The passion and persistence of community agency champions of the EFYF model were vital in progressing an innovative model to implementation.**
- **Innovation was resource-intensive as it involved undoing and creating policies and procedures.**
- **Under the pressure of a compressed time frame, close working relationships between partners and between service development and research teams required extra commitment. While the deadline was met, scope remains for leveraging the mutual benefits of cross-sector and service development-research relationships.**
- **The scope and degree of investment required for the service development of the EFYF model was underestimated.**
- **Investment in research and evaluation was beneficial at the early stages of innovation, even when working in ‘productive tension’ with service development teams.**

### Upholding innovation through a ‘clarity of purpose’

Commitment to the integrity of an innovative approach is complicated by an unfolding model. As research suggests, shared commitment to change is more likely to occur when there is ‘consistent leadership messages and actions, information sharing through social interaction, and shared experience’ (Weiner 2009, p. 3). Interviews with the community agency CEOs revealed a shared sense of why a new approach to youth homelessness was needed. Both spoke of concern about standard services not making headway into addressing the intractable problem of youth homelessness and the marginalisation of young people outside mainstream and universal services. In response, the CEOs stressed the importance of mainstream education for young people experiencing homelessness.

From the outset, ministers and community agency CEOs shared what several interviewees described as ‘clarity of purpose’. This clarity of purpose was necessary given a bureaucratic tendency to preserve the status quo: work is typically divided along departmental lines and follows entrenched bureaucratic procedures. From the interview



material, it appears that ‘clarity of purpose’ helped to foster a vision for an innovative model.

In the case of the EFYF model, the purpose is broad and ambitious. As one CEO described:

[It’s about] understanding that EFY Foyer wasn’t just three buildings running education services, EFY Foyer was a much broader policy construct that has been very, very important. It’s really building a policy position that enables disadvantaged and homeless young people to be educated. The Minister and the Chair understood that, [they] had a clarity of purpose and wouldn’t be deviated from that, so that when people were saying they’re not sure that’s able to be achieved, there was an attitude of ‘Well we’re here to achieve it, let’s work out how to achieve it’. (CEO)

### ‘Why not?’

Early in the project, this clarity of purpose was tested when some departmental staff resisted the notion that housing department funds could be used to build an asset on Department of Education land. According to the community agency CEOs and the IASC Chair, the proposed EFYF model raised concerns over jurisdiction and ownership:

There were occasions when we had to intervene early on because the concept was to use Department of Housing funds to build at TAFE colleges which were on Education Department land. There was apparently a bureaucratic argument as to who would own the resource, all of the things that are really important to bureaucrats, but in the overall scheme of things it was a public asset, at the end of the day it belongs to the people of Victoria. (IASC Chair)

Ministerial intervention was needed to resolve this issue. In describing this action, a community agency CEO remarked:

Thankfully both the Education Minister of the day and the Housing Minister of the day said ‘why not?’ and they enabled that to happen. (CEO)

For a developing model, commitment to an innovative approach is, at times, a matter of asking ‘why not?’ Of course, this question has more authority when asked by a minister. With this clear purpose and openness to innovation, ministerial intervention helped to overcome the tendency to revert to ways of working that maintain departmental boundaries.

A further example of ‘clarity of purpose’ was the IASC adhering to the core principles of the EFYF model when identifying suitable sites. A key tenet of the EFYF model is that it provides young people experiencing homelessness with a ‘mainstream offer’ of education. On this basis, two potential sites were discounted as unsuitable because the students would not be located on the main TAFE campus.

Based on learnings from UK foyers, the EFYF model consists of 40 beds per foyer, to take advantage of economies of scale, allow for 24-hour staffing and enable a diverse mix of students. However, as one CEO recalled, there were a number of criticisms of the proposed model:

[They said] ‘You can’t put 40 vulnerable young people together, they’ll kill each other’, ‘They’re too vulnerable to work’, ‘You’ll be cherry-picking’. No evidence to it. I think that now that they have seen it, I think they are on board with it. But the size thing that was the biggest argument to prosecute and it was fundamental to the model.

Despite these criticisms, a clear purpose centred upon innovation allowed public sector managers, community agency CEOs and public sectors managers to diverge from their existing practices and create new approaches to young people experiencing homelessness.

### Clarity of purpose woven through the levels of project management

The ‘clarity of purpose’ displayed at the highest levels of EFYF project governance flowed through to the middle management, with interviewees citing the significant individual commitment required to drive the project. Community agencies noted that individual public sector managers were committed to the novel elements of the EFYF model. One manager described the bureaucrats as having gone ‘the extra mile’ and being exceptional in terms of ‘grasping what we’re trying to do and enabling us to do it’. Likewise, several public sector managers noted that the enthusiasm and persistence of community agency champions were crucial to maintaining the integrity of the EFY Foyer model:

If it wasn’t for leadership of community agency CEOs and managers, it wouldn’t have happened because most other people would have caved in to DHS and if that was the case we wouldn’t be getting what we see now. The model would be different, the building would look different, the way it would have run would have been different. So it’s testament to the four of them that they were persistent and passionate. (Public sector manager)

One CEO commented on the importance of ensuring that the practice matched the model, noting that ‘the risk was always that of creating a youth refuge but with nicer taps’.

### Resource-intensive innovation

An innovative model and approach involves undoing and creating new policies and procedures. Even in ideal conditions, this kind of work is resource-intensive. In the case of the EFY Foyer, the difficulty of developing an innovative model was compounded by a compressed time frame. The sudden availability of student accommodation meant that the time for research and service development was shorter than originally planned.

Fleshing out the bare bones of the EFY Foyer concept as outlined in the Base Model required substantial resources from the community agencies. While government committed to the EFYF model, the investment in service design and development was underestimated:

I think the lessons learned are that you need a lot of start-up dollars to do the service development work as well as the staff training and I think we've had start-up dollars and we've needed all of those start-up dollars to do that ... I think financially as well that we should have factored in an ongoing service development role. And what I now know, which I didn't know at the time we were doing the development of it, is that the UK foyers have all had a dedicated service development role within them. (Community agency manager)

While the Open Talent approach had been developed by Colin Falconer of the UK Foyer Federation, there was scarce documentation on putting it into practice. Furthermore, UK foyers adopted Open Talent as an add-on<sup>7</sup>. In the case of the EFY Foyers, Open Talent was built into the 'backbone' or 'DNA' of the model. Integrating Open Talent to this degree required significant resources. Similarly, considerable effort was required to operationalise the principle of reciprocal accountability between Foyer and Foyer student. Outlined as 'the Deal' in the Funding Model, this compact set out the mutual accountabilities of Foyer student and Foyer staff and the ways these would be managed in practice.

The amount of work involved in undoing and re-making existing sector and agency procedures for the EFYF model should not be underestimated. The team redeveloped existing organisational policies and created new EFY Foyer policies so that they embodied Open Talent. In all, about 60 new policies, procedures and practice tools had to be developed, including key documents such as the Practice Framework and the Education Offer.

The compressed time frame prioritised the refinement of intake criteria and processes. Extensive research and consultation were required to identify indicators of readiness for engagement in education and readiness for independent congregate living with 39 others. The service development team defined 'readiness' and developed a readiness form in accordance with the principles of Open Talent. They sought legal advice about what questions could be asked about young people's capabilities and experience.

While future EFY Foyers will benefit from this groundwork, each will need to adapt these tools to their own specific sites and organisational policies. Nevertheless, at least one DEECD interviewee considered that the scope of the developmental work was not fully recognised:

While the department did fund some aspects of that work, I don't think that what the department funded would in any way come close to what was spent in

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<sup>7</sup> The Open Talent approach is described at <<http://foyer.net/what-we-do/projects-initiatives/open-talent/>>

terms of staffing resources. So I think that for future—for governments to be realistic about what co-design means—we need to recognise the resources that go into that program development. (Public sector manager)

In addition to creating tools that reflect an innovative approach, community agencies directed substantial resources towards managing external relationships. As one of the community agency managers stated, they were ‘not just dealing with a model ... or a place on its own, you’re dealing with a whole service system’. During the initial development stages, community agencies forged partnerships with local business and community services. However, the integration of the EFYF model with existing TAFE practices remained a priority. With only six months between selection of the Holmesglen site and the opening of the Holmesglen EFY Foyer, TAFE staff worked intensively with the community agency service development teams to be ready for student intake. The TAFE Acting Dean, who oversaw the integration, approached the task with goodwill and determination to make the new model work despite the short time frame:

We learned as we went along. It’s not like there was background reading to start with, we just went bang and we were in. We jumped in the deep end and had to swim.

Because of the compressed time frame, some collaborative opportunities between the TAFE and the community agencies were not fully explored. With more lead time, TAFE partners could engage with the vision and ambition of the Foyer approach, participate earlier in the co-design and be better placed to anticipate practical hurdles to integration on the ground.

Similarly, the research and service development teams worked more closely with one another under the spotlight of a looming Foyer opening deadline. Community agency CEOs and the IASC Chair spoke to the importance of involving researchers from the outset:

And I think the third big challenge was making sure that we actually got the resources for an independent rigorous evaluation. That’s always hard. So much government evaluation is at the end of a project and it tends to be around ‘how was the money spent?’, rather than ‘how do you measure the outcomes?’ And to do that you really need to start at the commencement of a project. (IASC Chair)

However, the developmental nature of the Base Model did not lend itself to a straightforward process evaluation. For example, the service development team drafted numerous revisions of the EFYF model. Community agency managers noted that the research team’s insistence on rigour and definition during this process led to a ‘productive tension’ with the service development team’s creativity and flexibility. Both rigour and creativity are needed in service development, but ensuring that they work in complementary fashion was more challenging in the compressed time frame.

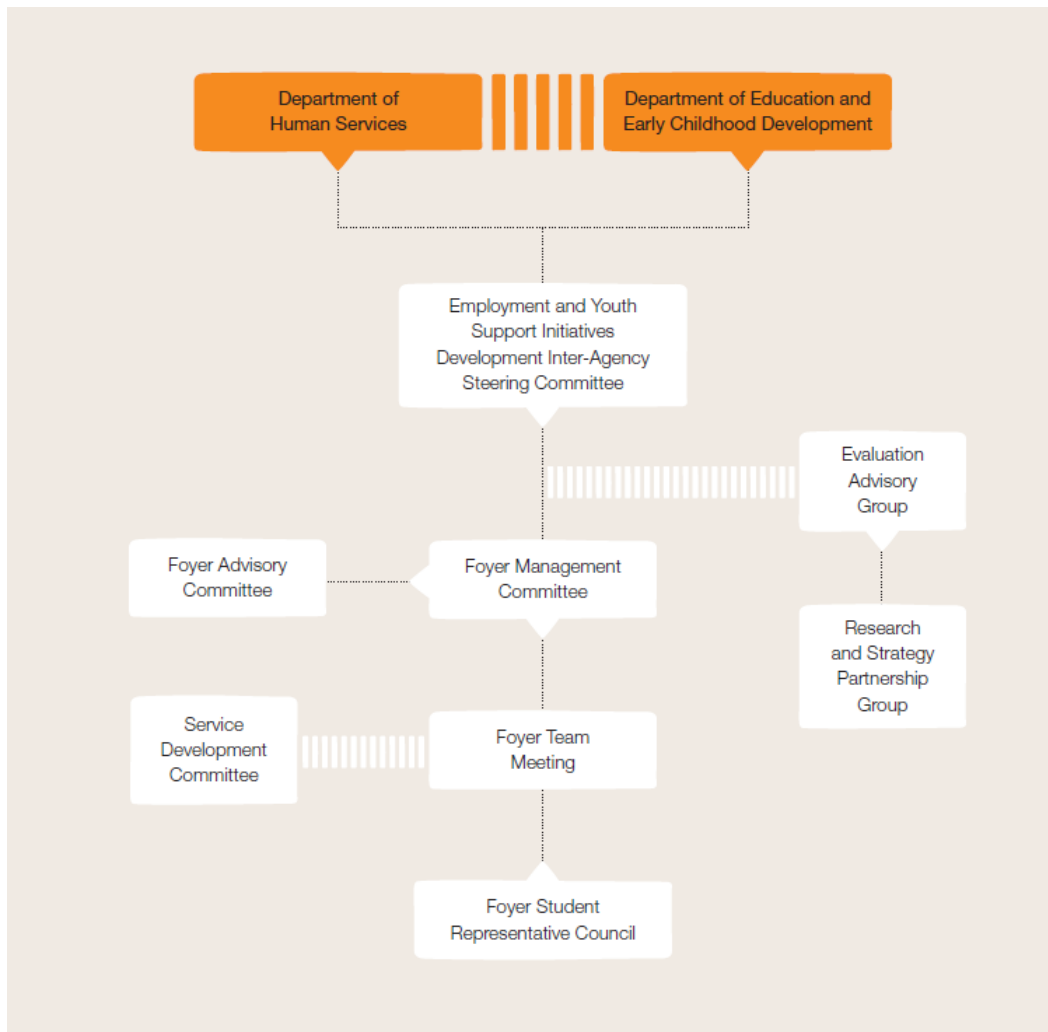
## 9 Implications

Uprooting apparently intractable ‘wicked problems’ such as youth homelessness requires a break from sector mechanisms that maintain the status quo (Head & Alford 2013). While much has been said about the turn towards collaborative forms of contracting and governance (Almog-Bar & Zychlinski 2014; Ansell & Gash 2008; Bryson, Barbara & Stone 2006; Lamothe & Lamothe 2012; Mosley 2014; O’Flynn 2008; O’Flynn 2009), the evidence on how these partnerships deliver innovative policies and programs is still in its infancy (Keast & Mandell 2014; Mosley 2014; Sørensen & Waldorff 2014).

By examining the initial development stage of the EFY Foyer model, we have identified some of the critical factors required to overcome barriers to innovation. However, this is not innovation for its own sake. While the EFYF model shows promise in departing from existing practice and maintaining the integrity of an innovation, it remains to be seen whether it improves the housing, education and employment circumstances of young people experiencing homelessness. This will be explored in subsequent evaluative reports.

## Appendix

### Governance structure (Mallett et al. 2014)



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