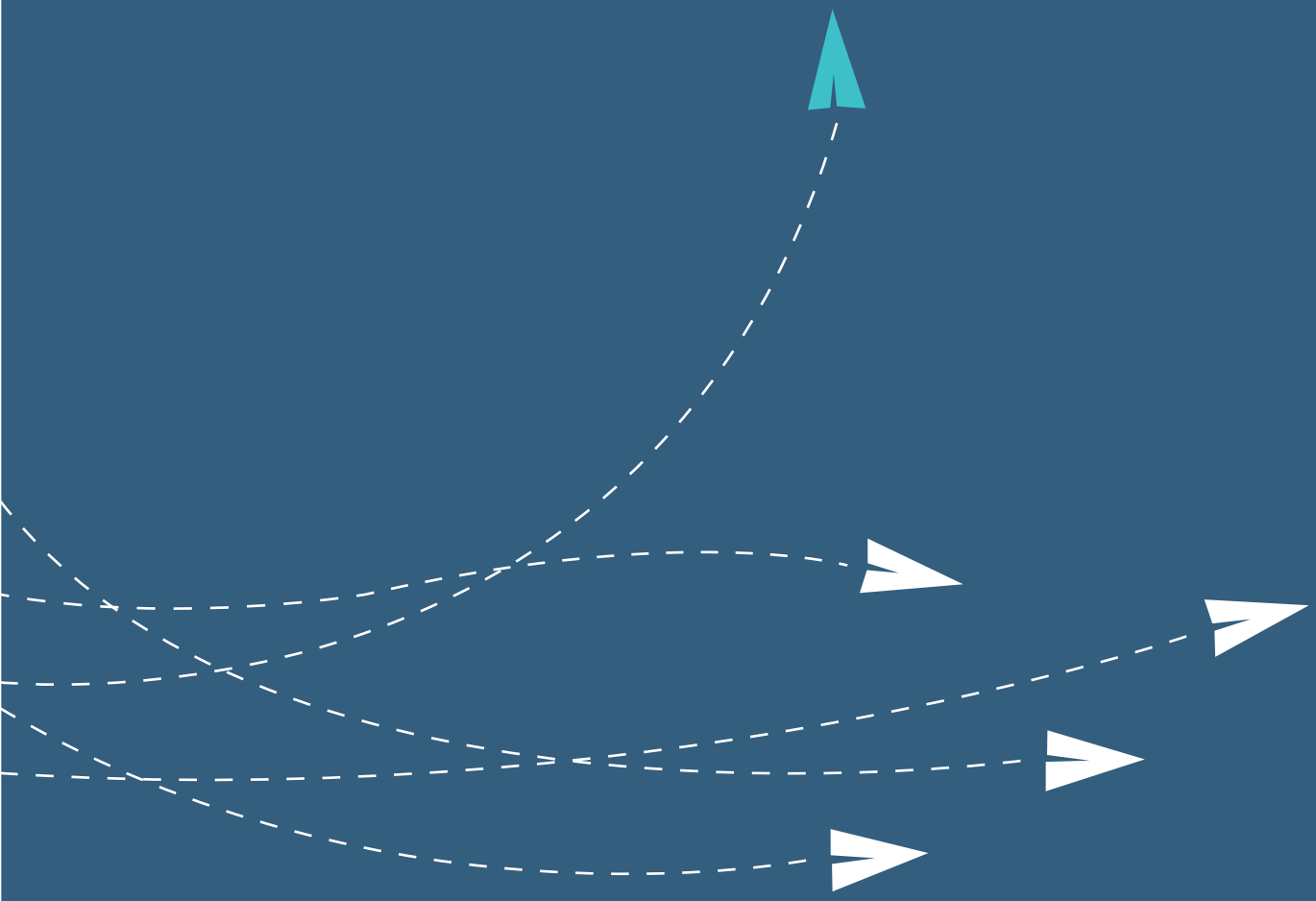
YOUTH HOMELESSNESS:
Making a difference!

Submission

Inquiry into homelessness in Australia

House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Social Policy and Legal Affairs



Contact:
Associate Professor David Mackenzie
Director Upstream Australia
University of South Australia
[redacted]

COVER LETTER

7 September 2020

Dear members of the House of Representatives Legal and Social Issues Committee,

This submission has been submitted by a coalition of organisations that have a common interest in reform and who hold the view that without significant change in the way by which we go about addressing homelessness, it will remain a troubling social problem into the future requiring ever increased funding despite a failure to achieve significant outcomes – that is, if the status-quo of service delivery remains largely unchanged.

Realistically, change cannot happen overnight. Sustainable change does not succeed unless there is a long-term vision for what that change might look like, and how it can be realistically be achieved. As we explain in this submission, the problem of youth homelessness was recognised in Australia well before other countries such as the US, UK or Canada, but, despite several inquiries and plenty of media attention, the response to youth homelessness in Australia has been under-delivered. Have we drifted into simply managing the problem of youth homelessness while issuing a positive rhetoric of concern and action? Is the status-quo of homelessness and other cognate programs designed to actually reduce the number of young Australians who experience homelessness every year? Obviously, these are rhetorical questions!

The focus of our submission are young people who experience homelessness, who have developmental and support needs relevant to their stage in the life course, however, the principles of system change addressed in this submission are more generally applicable. The challenge of reform is that there are established ways of thinking and operating that undermine reform by holding onto the status-quo. Some of this inertia rests with the community sector, but on the other side, government departments work almost congenitally within their departmental silos and in terms of specific targeted programs. Rolling out a new program with a new announcement is a typical modus operandi along with concerns to not duplicate other programs; coordination is constantly called for but more often than not poorly or inefficiently achieved; cross-sectoral cooperation is weak and not seen as successful sustainable integrated cross-sectoral strategies?

The state and territory governments have the major responsibility when it comes to homelessness and youth programs and educational provision throughout Australia. Our submission specifically considers what the Commonwealth Government could usefully and appropriately do to facilitate and support a reformed service system for vulnerable young people and families.

Our offer is to work with the Commonwealth Government on reform, particularly imperative as we begin to recover from the COVID-19 health crisis. It is beyond dispute that young people will be the hardest hit cohort in the Australian population. The most disadvantaged young people including young people who experience family breakdowns and homelessness as well as loss of their educational opportunities will require more support than before and we would argue that the previous status quo of siloed targeted services needs to be reconfigured on a place-based community basis. We cannot continue to tolerate the poor outcomes of the service system status quo that young people currently have to put up with. There are a heap of urgent albeit costly measures that are needed at this time, however, this is the time to think in terms of innovation and begin to invest in innovation. We need to be creative about what needs to change and how that might best be implemented and we need to make some smart decisions that will carry us forward over the next decade or two.

Sincerely

[redacted]

Associate Professor David Mackenzie
on behalf of the organisational partners supporting this submission

SUBMISSION PARTNERS

The following are brief introductions to the partners responsible for this submission to the Inquiry into Homelessness in Australia. We, along with other individuals and organisations, are committed to the emerging reform agenda that is not just about good new ideas that might work better, but is a real-life grass-roots effort to build a reformed system for vulnerable youth and their families. We are available to provide argument and evidence to the Inquiry about how the existing status-quo of support services available to vulnerable youth and their families can be changed to achieve significantly greater outcomes. Much of the responsibility for the changes we propose rests with the state/ territory governments, but in terms of a Commonwealth Government role, how can reform be achieved nationally? What can the Commonwealth do to drive innovation and necessary change?

UPSTREAM AUSTRALIA

Upstream Australia (a partnership between the University of South Australia and Youth Development Australia Ltd) is a new form of bridging organisation that provides systemic collective impact backbone support to communities undertaking change around the COSS Model via research and development that uses data in real-time to inform practice at the community level, the management and coordination of the data collection and data sharing on behalf of, and as a partner in, the Community of Schools and Services (COSS) community collectives. Upstream Australia facilitates the Upstream Community of Practice Network of practitioner leaders, early intervention workers, researchers, and community stakeholders contributing to collective learning and community development.

Associate Professor David MacKenzie - Director Upstream Australia/ UniSA.
[redacted]

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA LTD

Youth Development Australia Ltd (YDA) is public benevolent institution created in 2005 by a group of leading thinkers and practitioners in the youth field as a platform for change for young people especially those most disadvantaged by family or community circumstances. YDA was formed as a way of exploring, developing, and implementing innovative youth development initiatives. YDA has a foundational commitment to disadvantaged young Australians by (a) creating and trialling innovative and pioneering projects for young people; (b) informing policy debate though think-tanks, conferences, and National Youth Commission Inquiries on youth issues of national significance; and (c) by providing opportunities for young people to develop creative ideas and achieve their full potential.

Keith Waters - CEO, Youth Development Australia & Convenor of the National Youth Commission into Youth Employment and Transitions -
[redacted]

BARWON CHILD, YOUTH & FAMILY (BCYF) – THE GEELONG PROJECT

Barwon Child Youth & Family is a leading not-for-profit community organisation in Geelong, Victoria, and the broader Barwon region supporting children, young people and their families to be safe, connected and empowered to live well. BCYF offers a broad and diverse range of services that provide a meaningful community-based response for families and young people to the increasing range of complex community needs and issues. This supports the BCYF vision for a community where people are safe, connected and empowered to live well. BCYF is the lead agency of the innovative Geelong Project.

Ms Colleen Cartwright - The Geelong Project Coordinator
[redacted]

A WAY HOME AUSTRALIA

A Way Home Australia is a newly emerging coalition of organisations and individuals committed to reducing and ending youth homelessness formed in 2019. It is not a peak body that represents its member organisations but rather represents the lived experience of homeless young people and harnesses the collective expertise of a range of stakeholders and advocates. The A Way Home Australia coalition operates from the premise that youth homelessness cannot be prevented or ended simply by the efforts of the homelessness service sector alone. What young people need has not been achieved by traditional forms of advocacy. New thinking and a new agenda for change is required - a radical shift from programmatic responses to a cross-sectoral system change approach, that can be achieved through place-based 'collective impact' reforms.

Dr Tammy Hand – Convenor, A Way Home Australia.
[redacted]

GEELONG REGION LOCAL LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

The Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network (GRLLEN) is an incorporated not for profit entity operating across the Local Government Areas of Greater Geelong, Surf Coast, Queenscliff and Golden Plains (Southern) Shires established in 2001. The core business of the Geelong Region LLEN is to facilitate the development of a regional integrated education and employment ecosystem that supports the community to make informed careers decisions leading to appropriate training and skills development into sustainable employment in the regional economy. The Geelong Region LLEN has an additional mandate to support young people and community members living in disadvantaged areas.

Wayne Elliott – CEO GRLLEN
[redacted]

YES UNLIMITED – THE ALBURY PROJECT

Yes Unlimited is a not-for-profit, community-based organisation that has been delivering a range of services and supports in Albury and surrounding areas for more than 35 years. YES stands for investing in people and building better communities. The YES team is passionate about the community, and believe that everyone should have access to the resources, knowledge and supports they need to thrive. YES Unlimited is the lead agency of the community collective of the innovative Albury Project that brings together Albury City Council, Albury High School, Albury-Wodonga Health, headspace Albury Wodonga, James Fallon High School, Murray High School, and Upstream Australia that pioneering the systemic early intervention COSS Model for young people at-risk of homelessness in Albury and its surrounds in NSW.

Di Glover - CEO YES Unlimited.
[redacted]

THE BRIDGE YOUTH SERVICE – THE SHEPPARTON YOUTH INITIATIVE

The Bridge Youth Service, the lead agency for the Shepparton Youth Initiative, supports young people and families across Mitchell, Murrundindi, Moira and Strathbogie shires as well as the City of Greater Shepparton. The Bridge Youth Service operates a range of DHHS and DET programs including Specialist Homelessness Services and Navigator, through its offices in Shepparton, Seymour and Wallan and does outreach to Cobram, with a staff complement of about 35 staff supporting between 1000-1200 young people every year.

Melinda Lawley - CEO The Bridge Youth Service/ The Shepparton Youth Initiative
[redacted]

WESTERN HOMELESSNESS ACTION GROUP – HOMELESSNESS RESEARCH GROUP, VICTORIA UNIVERSITY: 'WESTERN SUBURBS EARLY INTERVENTION PROJECT'

The Western Homelessness Action Group - Homelessness Research Group(VU) consisting of homelessness researchers, politicians, and local service providers, has formed to tackle the homelessness crisis in the west of Melbourne. Based on the community of schools and services (COSS) architecture, the Initiative Group is developing a multi-layered, school-based preventative program connected and tailored to, and owned by, the local community. Currently there are no early intervention youth homelessness programs in western Melbourne. The program will reduce youth homelessness by locating early-detection and early intervention within schools, identifying and flagging students and potential problems before they escalate and result in homelessness and/or the need for crisis services. The priority is an Initial pilot project and evaluation in a small number of schools, followed by systemic expansion in the west of Melbourne.

Dr Peter Gill – Convenor, Homelessness Research Group.
[redacted]

JUNCTION SUPPORT SERVICES - THE WODONGA PROJECT

Junction Support Services is a Community Service Organisation operates a range of early intervention and specialist homelessness support case management programs for children, young people and families. Junction provides support throughout Ovens Murray and Goulburn Valley regions but the main office is located in Wodonga. Junction as Wodonga's leading youth agency, supports young people aged 15-25 who are experiencing or who are at-risk of homelessness; has operates the Wodonga Youth Refuge; assists young people to re-engage with education; and has five residential houses in Wodonga for young people who cannot live with their families or in foster or kinship care. Altogether, Junction operates 28 programs, with 150 staff, and 60 volunteers and is an important and embedded part of the Wodonga community and communities right across north-east Victoria. Junction Support Services is the lead agency for the establishment of a Wodonga-based Community of Schools and Services Model (COSS).

Ms Rachel Hapgood - Wodonga Project Coordinator.
[redacted]

MURRAY MALLEE LLEN – 'THE SWAN HILL PROJECT'

The Murray Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network (MMLLEN) facilitates and brokers a range of projects and programs with local education providers, industry and community to provide better pathways and support for young people and their families in Swan Hill and its surrounding districts. The MMLLEN is a facilitating partner for the Better Together collective that includes the Local Logic Place consultancy, Mallee Family Care, and representatives from Health and Housing as well as local government and State Government. The Collective has supported work in Woorinen Primary School on how identification of risk can be achieved and what early intervention can be done prior to secondary school. The collective is now committed to a trial of the COSS Model at the secondary level in Manangatang P-12 School. The Better Together Collective has strong community support for its work and is united around a vision to 'understand and act to be the difference our community needs' and to 'ensure this difference is equitable, lasting and systemic'.

Deborah Quin – CEO Murray mallee LLEN.
[redacted]

BRISBANE YOUTH SERVICE

As a leading youth service in Queensland, Brisbane Youth Service (BYS) works with homeless and vulnerable young people (aged 12 to 25 years) and young families in Brisbane and surrounding areas providing housing, physical and mental health services and specialist programs for young women and young families, to assist them to overcome challenges of their crisis and achieve the goals of a sustainable independent life. Brisbane Youth Service is committed to pioneering early intervention in South-East Queensland.

Annemaree Callander - CEO of Brisbane Youth Services.
[redacted]

YFOUNDATION

Yfoundations is the NSW peak organisation representing young people at-risk, and experiencing homelessness, as well as the services that provide direct support to vulnerable young people. Yfoundations is committed to creating a future without youth homelessness by providing a voice for young people experiencing and at-risk of homelessness. To achieve this yfoundations works collaboratively with service providers, NGOs, government departments and community members to provide research, sector development and policy advice, health projects and services for young people. Yfoundations activities are built on five pillars: Safety & Stability, Home & Place, Health & Wellness, Connections & Participation, and Education & Employment.

Pam Barker – CEO yfoundations
[redacted]

YOUTH COALITION OF THE ACT

The Youth Coalition is the peak youth affairs body in the ACT, responsible for representing and promoting the rights, interests and wellbeing of the estimated 78,000 young Canberrans aged 12-25 years and those who work with them. The general activities of the Youth Coalition fall under four key themes: policy; sector development; advocacy and representation; and, projects that respond to ongoing and current issues. A key role of the Youth Coalition is the development and analysis of ACT social policy and program decisions that affect young people and youth services. The Youth Coalition facilitates the development of strong linkages and promotes collaboration between the community, government and private sectors to achieve better outcomes for young people in the ACT. The Youth Coalition has been actively working with Capital Region Community Services to plan the development of a place-based COSS Model approach to early intervention in possibly two locations in Canberra.

Justin Barker – CEO of Youth Coalition of the ACT.
[redacted]

MY FOUNDATIONS YOUTH HOUSING COMPANY

My Foundations Youth Housing Company is an Australian and world-first specialist youth community housing provider. The organisation exists to provide an increasing supply of affordable and social housing for young people in need and in a way the attends to the developmental needs and issues as well aspirations. MFYH was established in 2014 and is registered and regulated by the NSW Registrar of Community Housing and is a charity registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) and thus receives GST concessions and income tax, duty and FBT exemptions. Over the first five years, MFYH has gone from three staff, an operating revenue of $300,000, 74 properties and 100 tenants, to 15 staff, an operating revenue of $4.8 million, 300 properties under management and 450 young tenants accommodated with a range of supports available for those young people who want and need such assistance.

Rebecca Mullins – CEO My Foundations Youth Housing Co. Ltd.
[redacted]

KIDS UNDER COVER (KUC)

Kids Under Cover is a charitable NGO organisation dedicated to preventing youth homelessness that was founded in 1989 by Ken Morgan OAM, a well-known Melbourne businessman who felt strongly about responding to the findings of the HREOC Inquiry into Youth Homelessness (the 'Burdekin Report'). KUC supports vulnerable young people between the ages of 12 and 25 years who are either already homeless or at risk of homelessness by delivering a unique combination of studio accommodation and educational scholarships as a practical and proven early intervention strategy for preventing homelessness. The agency has developed an innovative social enterprise for reclaiming old automobiles that operates around Australia that provides additional financial support for KUC operations. Early intervention and prevention are arguably the most cost effective way of addressing youth homelessness, and KUC contributes an important element of effective early intervention.

Jo Swift – CEO Kids Under Cover.
[redacted]

WAYSS – CARDINIA-DANDENONG

Wayss Ltd is the first point of contact for people experiencing, or who are at risk of, homelessness and / or family violence in Melbourne's Greater Dandenong, Casey, Cardinia, Mornington & Frankston LGAs. This includes assisting young people aged 16 to 25 years who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless. Wayss provides young people a range of integrated responses including supported crisis accommodation, transitional housing with support and brokerage funds. Wayss is united by a fundamental belief that safe, secure and affordable housing is a human right and is committed to supporting people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, and people who have experienced family violence, to access safe, secure and affordable housing.

Stephen Nidenko – Manager Outer South Homelessness Services.
[redacted]

SOCIAL FUTURES – NORTHERN RIVERS, NSW

Social Futures is a regionally based not-for-profit that supports people to thrive and communities to grow stronger, with a service footprint reaches across more than 50 per cent of NSW. For more than 40 years, the organisation has been creating positive social change by promoting genuine participation for people with disability, providing homelessness and housing support, youth and family services and community sector leadership. Social Futures works with individuals, families and young people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, to achieve long-term housing goals by delivering a suite of early intervention and prevention programs for children and young people around mental health and wellbeing, drugs and alcohol, reconnection to their families, education and communities as way of breaking the cycle of homelessness.

Tony Davies – CEO Social Futures.
[redacted]

SALVATION ARMY

The Salvation Army is an international Christian church and faith-based provider of social services across Australia. In all capital cities, many country towns and regional centres, the Army works with the elderly, families, young people and with people of all ages and backgrounds who experience homelessness. The Army is one of the largest providers of Specialist Homelessness Services in Australia. Apart from its service to the community, the Army is known for its advocacy for the most disadvantaged, seeking justice and adequate social welfare for all. On the Bass Coast, Salvocare Eastern Gippsland has played a leading role in facilitating a community of schools and local services to intervene early to prevent youth homelessness.

Shane Austin - State Manager Homelessness Victoria
[redacted]

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Youth homelessness, and homelessness more generally, is a life experience not a characteristic of individuals; some people experience a relatively short period of homelessness, others a much longer period; some people experiencing homeless have high and complex needs but many do not (Section 9.2 Appendix 1).

2. Children and young people are a significant cohort of the total homelessness population in Australia, either as young people on their own, or as young parents with children, or children accompanying parents older than 25 years. Adolescents tend to become homeless due to family issues; young people leaving care are particularly vulnerable; young adults (mainly women with children) tend to become homeless due to domestic violence. In general, young people do not become homeless due to a housing problem, but if their homelessness cannot be averted, they definitely do have a housing problem (Section 9.3 Appendix 1)

3. Over the past two decades, the number of young people aged 15-24 years on their own (not in a family group) seeking assistance from the Specialist Homelessness Services [SHS] system has increased from 32,000 in 2000-2001 to 43,000 in 2017-2018. The youth population for that age range has increased as well over that time, but correcting for that, the rate of youth homelessness was 12.3/1000 young people in 2000-2001 increasing to 14.4/1000 in 2017-2018 or a 17 per cent increase over that period, which is more than what can be accounted for by the population increase (Section 9.3, Appendix 1).

4. Australia recognised 'youth homelessness' earlier than other comparable Western countries and homelessness has been understood as broader than 'rooflessness' including a wide range of temporary sheltered situations (Section 10 Appendix 2).

5. The Australian homelessness services system (formerly Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program or SAAP now the Specialist Homelessness Services system or SHS) is a diverse deployment of mainly crisis and transitional accommodation and supports across some 1500 funded agencies and outlets (Section 9.1 Appendix 1; Section 10 Appendix 2).

6. Funding flows through to homelessness services and programs via a National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) signed between the Commonwealth Government and the states/territories in July 2018, followed by bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and state/territory jurisdictions but there is no national strategy as a long-term reference point (Section 11 Appendix 3).

7. Children and young people are a priority cohort and early intervention and prevention are a key but there is no guidance on how priority can be established or what a commitment to early intervention and prevention should conceivably focus on.

8. Across the states and territories, the homelessness services response is diverging somewhat, with some states seriously beginning to implement 'early intervention' while in others, a reversion to a greater emphasis on 'rough sleeping' is evident. National coherence of policy and programs in this field is weakening somewhat (Section 11 Appendix 3).

9. Social issues such as 'homelessness' are addressed by a crisis-oriented homelessness services system; educational issues, like the large number of young people leaving school early, is framed as a school problem – siloed policy and programs – whereas in the lives of adolescents, especially at the early stage, these issues tend to be intimately connected (Sections 12.1, 12.2, 12.3, and 12.4 Appendix 4).

10. A large body of research evidence supports the contention that about two-thirds of the factors that relate to educational underachievement are not school factors but family, neighbourhood, community and social structural factors.

11. The youth support system, in all states and territories is largely crisis-oriented with relatively little prevention and early intervention at the front-end and major problems of rapidly rehousing homelessness young people in appropriate youth housing options at the back-end (Section 12 Appendix 4).

12. Early interventions directed to ameliorating issues for adolescents necessarily must address whatever incipient issues are evident and the support for vulnerable young people must be family-centred and community-based (Section 13.2 Appendix 6).

13. Deploying new programs while leaving legacy programs of dubious effectiveness in place undermines efforts to efficiently build more effective local systems of support.

14. There is a growing body of evidence that suggest the coordination challenge which is so often not met, could be overcome by a new place-based approach that focuses on changing local service systems on the ground, using data to identify risk and monitor the support delivered to young people through school and beyond until they are well and truly on a sustainable employment pathway – a shift towards community-led 'collective impact' approach.

15. The current homelessness services system is a set of funded services for people at-risk of homelessness or who are experiencing homelessness. However, if young people's needs are to be at the centre then a more meaningful way of thinking about the 'system' is as a community eco-system of institutions, programs, services and schools that young people interact with and which interreact with young people (Section 6).

16. A system rethink along these lines leads to conceptualising an ecosystem of what happens before homelessness (front-end), what happens during homelessness (i.e. Specialist Homelessness Services) and what happens after homelessness (back-end) – flows in and out of homelessness as shown in the stock and flow diagram (Figure 1 in Section 6.1).

17. Another way of analysing the ecosystem is to think about causes and effects and the relationships between various factors as shown in Figure 2 in Section 6.2. This shows how intimately youth homelessness and early school leaving are related. Students who experience homelessness are highly likely to leave school early and students who leave school early experience a high level of disadvantage in the labour market and are more likely to experience homelessness at some point(s) in their lives.

18. The status quo of homelessness service system is the predominant weight of crisis responses by comparison with prevention and early intervention and the housing options for young people who have experienced homelessness and need to move on to independent living. A rebalanced service system would need to have much more prevention and early intervention at the front-end and much more and better housing options for young people recovering from an experience of homelessness at the back-end, relative to the crisis services which remain an essential component in any homelessness system (Section 6.3).

19. A rebalanced and redesigned homelessness service system for young people would have at the front-end an effective system-wide early intervention response, youth entry points to provide a more efficient access into the support system for young people and a fully-developed support for all young people leaving the Care system at 18 years at least until they turn 21 years . At the back-end, social housing needs to be accessible for young people exiting homelessness, foyers need to more closely connected to homelessness services and supplementary support is required for young people who receive CRA under a reformed program (Section 6).

20. Australia is a federation and that necessarily means different levels of government. A major issue for the Australian federation is the high Vertical Fiscal Imbalance. What should the role and

responsibilities of the Commonwealth Government? What should the role and responsibilities of the state and territory governments? What should local government do? Efforts to reform the current arrangements via a Senate Select Committee (2010) and the PM&C Taskforce (2014) have achieved something close to a consensus about the problem, but not a consensus about solutions. In any foreseeable future, the various levels of government will need to cooperate despite party political differences. Working the long game is a particular challenge and no more so than for the issue of homelessness and housing affordability (Section 2.1).

21. A consistent national strategic approach – There is a broad consensus that a Commonwealth initiative is needed on this front. The following priority action need to be considered:

    - Convene a Commonwealth-states/territories taskforce to develop a National Strategy to End Youth Homelessness as part of the recovery response to the COVID-19 crisis;
    - Support a collaborative project to develop a National Strategy for Ending Youth Homelessness;

INEFFECTIVE AND INEFFICIENT SILOED PROGRAMS AND SHORT-TERM MEASURES

22. Ineffective and inefficient siloed programs and short-term measures – Given the long-standing problem of departmentally siloed social programs for youth, there needs to be a major effort to shift to a place-based 'collective impact' approach to service delivery. The states/territories administer and deliver most of the services in both the community sector and education, but the Commonwealth could directly facilitate and support the development of a place-based infra-structure.

    - Develop a place-based community infrastructure initiative that uses something like the Victoria Local Learning and Employment Networks [LLEN] model to facilitate and support youth transitions between school and employment within communities and regions;
    - Review the Victorian Regional and Metropolitan Partnerships model for mobilising grassroots communities around their social, educational, and economic needs and priorities for action, in terms of the potential for national replication;
    - Fund a project that examines the problem of siloed programs and explores possible options for a more integrated system of homelessness service delivery;
    - Fund pilot/demonstration initiatives that can show how 'collective impact' might work as a more effective alternative to the status-quo;
    - Support R&D that focuses on developing model contracts and MOU templates suitable for place-based inter-agency collaboration and integrated service delivery.

MANAGING CHANGE AND REFORM LONG-TERM

23. Change processes require support and take time; governments change within the time frames of significant policy change; how can the Commonwealth facilitate and support change processes that span the short-term political cycles?

    - Fund and develop a place-based infrastructure designed to support young Australians navigate the transition from school to sustainable employment modelled on the Victorian Local Learning & Employment Networks [LLENs];
    - Support systemic backbone support for the development of community-based early intervention to prevent youth homelessness and other related adverse issues for young people;
    - Support national conferences on early intervention and housing options as a dissemination of innovation and good practice around a place-based approach to redressing youth homelessness.

DIRECT SERVICE PROVISION BY THE COMMONWEALTH?

24. Should the Commonwealth fund Commonwealth social programs such as Reconnect? This is the broader issue of Commonwealth and states/territories fiscal relations and if and when it is appropriate for the Commonwealth to provide ongoing funding and administer certain social programs, when it is realistic for state/territory governments to assume responsibility. In general, the answer to the above questions is 'no', but there are a load of caveats.

    - Negotiate the transfer of the Reconnect 'early intervention for youth' program to the states and territories on the basis of a commitment to expand place-based early intervention as part of the state/territory's homelessness strategy or plan;
    - Support innovative pilot projects that can demonstrate significant innovation and outcomes for reducing youth homelessness and/or moving youth experiencing homelessness out of homelessness more quickly (i.e. Housing First for Youth).

HOUSING OPTIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

25. Housing for young people is a major problem area. Young Australians cannot access social housing to the extent they need, and the low levels of welfare benefits means that about two-thirds of young people who do receive Commonwealth Rental Assistance are in Housing Affordability Stress.

    - Require each state/ territory to report on how they are implementing the priority of children and young people as a priority cohort;
    - Increase Youth Allowance and Newstart levels for young people that would then improve their position vis a vis CRA;
    - Make changes to the existing CRA to remove the share rate and raise the level of subsidy for the higher rental levels;
    - Require reports from the states/ territories on young people aged 15-24 years of age as main tenants of social housing (i.e. public and community housing).

CLIENT DATA IS FRAGMENTED, ABOUT CONTRACT ACCOUNTABILITY, MORE OUTPUTS THAN OUTCOMES FOCUSED, AND NOT ABOUT PRACTICE AND IMPROVED OUTCOMES

26. What can be done to improve the data collected for SHS clients and social housing residents to more explicitly inform outcomes/ outcomes improvement and practice as well as supporting community collectives implementing place-based collective impact models?

    - Support a project to investigate how cross-sectoral data can be matched and integrated at the community level, and government levels;
    - Support a project that investigates how privacy considerations can be observed while shifting to a more integrated data regime involving data sharing and matching;
    - Develop a youth outcomes research and development project that examines the achievement of outcomes across departments delivering youth-related services, including schooling;
    - Support a project on Michael Barber's 'deliverology' methodology trialled in each state/territory jurisdiction as an outcomes monitoring and improvement initiative; and
    - Review homelessness and housing data collections to ensure that geo-variables such as postcode and/or LGA are collected to support geographical data alignment.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Our contention is that defaulting to action on the crisis homelessness response which is largely what Specialist Homelessness Services deliver can never reduce and end homelessness. Our emphasis is on early interventions and post-homelessness housing options and support pathways for young people recovering from an experience of homelessness.

While the general argument for reform may apply to all cohorts in the homeless population, the specific pathways and interventions will differ. Our submission contributes to many of the terms of reference but not all of them (see Section 8).

Our submission is based on the decade of experience developing *The Geelong Project* as well as some system change and developmental planning work undertaken by *Upstream Australia*. The AHURI report, *Redesign of the homelessness service system for young people* (released on 16 April 2020) provides a research base for our thinking about reform; *the Report Card on Youth Homelessness* considered by the National Youth Homelessness Conference (18-19 March 2019) provides a sober assessment of what has been done, or not done, in the past decade around youth homelessness. A considerable amount of developmental work has already been done, based on a rigorous logic and the latest empirical data. Further work is underway reviewing the science of implementation in order to to plan how systemic change might be accomplished, working with government but by bringing community responsibility, creativity, and capacity to the fore in order to achieve 'collective impact'.

2. A TEMPLATE FOR REFORM

The main focus of this submission is 'youth homelessness' – adolescents (12-19 years) and young adults (20-24 years) on the understanding that 'children and young people' have been designated a priority cohort under the current National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA).

2.1 WHAT SHOULD BE THE ROLE OF THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT?

The challenge for this Commonwealth Inquiry is to creatively conceive initiatives that the Commonwealth Government could take that would conceivably improve the delivery of a response to homelessness, importantly including prevention and early intervention as well as support and housing options for people recovering from an experience of homelessness.

Australia is a federation and that necessarily means different levels of government. What should the role and responsibilities of the Commonwealth Government? What should the role and responsibilities of the state and territory governments? What should local government do? Efforts to reform the current arrangements via a Senate Select Committee (2010) and the PM&C Taskforce (2014) have probably achieved something close to a consensus about the problem but not a consensus about solutions.

A major issue for Australia is the high Vertical Fiscal Imbalance (VFI) compared to other federations whereby the Commonwealth Government raises more in taxes than this level of Government needs to directly expend and the states/territories spend more on services for which they are constitutionally responsible than the taxes they raise in their own right. Tax reform is almost necessarily part of the solution, but how can Australia mobilise a consistent national response to an issue which Commonwealth Government's tend to want, without agreement on several levels. This is described as the problem and challenges of multi-level government (MLG). The idea that the roles and responsibilities of each level of government should largely operate independently of each other is an elusive and unrealistic idea.

Unavoidably, there has to be negotiation and compromise; there have to be mechanisms for achieving a reasonable degree of coherence nationally while allowing for adaptability to community contexts; and when

serious reform is required how can that challenge be addressed successfully. When issues are regarded as a high priority requiring action, national strategies and reporting against progress processes are put in place. Examples are a *National suicide prevention implementation strategy* or the *National Drug Strategy 2017-2026* or the *National Plan to reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* which is accompanied by the Fourth Action Plan 2019-2022 or the *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020* , and the rather thin *National Strategy for Young Australians* in 2010. There is even a *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020* endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments in April 2009. Last example is the *Indigenous Advancement Strategy* (IAS) launched in 2014. The existence of social policy strategies is evidence of a priority given to an issue, apart from whether the strategy is competently operationalised and implemented.

In 1999, the Australian Government did launch a *National Homelessness Strategy* (NHS), designed to provide 'leadership in developing approaches for the prevention and reduction of homelessness' and promoted more 'integrated service delivery' to people who are at-risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness. In summary, the NHS was supposed to:

- Provide a strategic framework that will improve collaboration and linkages between existing programmes and services, to improve outcomes for clients and reduce the incidence of homelessness;
- Identify best practice models, which can be promoted and replicated, that will enhance existing homelessness policies and programmes;
- Build the capacity of the community sector to improve linkages and networks; and
- Raise awareness of the issue of homelessness throughout all areas and levels of government in the community.

In May 2000, the Government released an updated strategy document outlining the key themes of the strategy as:

- Working Together in a Social Coalition
- Prevention
- Early Intervention
- Crisis Transition and Support

A further effort along these lines was made in 2008, with the release of the White Paper, *The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness* that did represent the outline of some clear strategic directions with a stated goal of 'halving homelessness by 2020' and three key themes (1) 'turning off the tap' or early intervention and prevention, (2) improving and expanding services that envisaged homelessness services better connected with mainstream services, and (3) breaking the cycle, that highlighted the supply challenge for affordable housing and specialist supported housing models.

With the advantage of hindsight in 2020 and the experience of how little was done to achieve the goals of the 'strategy' and implement change under the espoused 'key themes' in these documents on homelessness (circa 2000), this would have to be regarded as at best a political embarrassment and at worst a terrible waste of time – 20 years – during which so much could have been done if there had been a systematic and strategically planned implementation with attention to targets related to goals, and reliable and better data on what was being done on the ground.

We appeal to the members of this Inquiry to reflect on how we must wean ourselves off the political temptation to favour only data that bears good news and the risk-adverse frame of mind that fears data that suggests that measures are not working so well, that can be a springboard for learning and innovation and significant achievement.

Our assessment, which is the basis of this submission, is that the status-quo is not good enough and it carries some unacceptable weaknesses that need to be redressed and could be realistically overcome. We are arguing that if this Inquiry is to make a significant contribution then it should advise the government to act along the themes outlined below. Various possible options for action have been suggested.

2.2 ISSUES/ ROLES/ ACTIONS

The following are seven key areas where the Commonwealth Government could conceivably play a leading role while not administering homelessness and other youth programs including education and schools. There is a strong argument that a national strategy to end homelessness and some evidence-based guidance on how to implement reform and priorities would over time make a difference.

2.2.1 A consistent national strategic approach?

Issue/ question	The states and territories' plans for addressing homelessness are diverging somewhat – how does the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement get more consistently translated into balanced state and territory plans?
Role for Commonwealth?	Lead/support the development of a *National Strategy for Ending Youth Homelessness* as a guide to the states/ territories as to the balance of early intervention, crisis services, and post-homelessness housing options and support.
Specific actions	• Convene a Commonwealth-states/territories taskforce to develop a National Strategy to End Youth Homelessness as part of the recovery response to the COVID-19 crisis; • Support a collaborative project to develop a National Strategy for Ending Youth Homelessness; and • Consider intermediate documents or inter-governmental-sector processes that would assist the translation of the NHHA into state/ territory plans and strategies and operationalise the priorities and key cohort emphases in the NHHA.
References	• MacKenzie, D. 2018. Some Reflections on the Policy History of Youth Homelessness in Australia. *Cityscape*, 20(3), pp.147-156. • Gale, N. & Halligan, J. 2020, yfoundations Submission: Inquiry into Homelessness in Australia, yfoundations, Sydney. • Homelessness Taskforce, FAHCSIA 2008. *The Road Home: A National Approach to reducing Homelessness*, Australian Government, Canberra. • Homelessness Australia 2017. A national Strategy: Why we need it: Strengthening the service response to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, Homelessness Australia, Canberra https://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/sites/homelessnessaus/files/2018-11/2017%20HA%20Position%20Paper%20-%20FINAL_0.pdf • WAAEH 2018. The Western Australian Strategy to End Homelessness: Together we can make a difference – a whole of society response, Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness, Perth. https://www.csi.edu.au/media/Version_1.0_WA_Strategy_to_End_Homelessness.pdf

2.2.2 Ineffective and inefficient siloed programs and short-term measures

Issue/ question	The current status quo of targeted siloed programs has not produced significantly improved outcomes for the most disadvantaged, at-risk youth and families.
Role for Commonwealth?	Facilitate a paradigm shift to a place based 'collective impact' approach to service delivery. The states/territories administer the delivery of services in both the community sector and education, but the Commonwealth could directly support the development of a place-based infrastructure.
Specific actions	• Fund a project that examines the problem of siloed programs and explores possible options for a more integrated system of service delivery; • Fund pilot/demonstration initiatives that can show how collective impact might work as a more effective alternative to the status-quo; • Develop a place-based community infrastructure initiative that uses something like the Victoria Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLEN) model to facilitate and support youth transitions between school and employment within communities and regions; • Review the Victorian Regional and Metropolitan Partnerships model for mobilising grassroots communities around their social, educational, and economic needs and priorities for action, in terms of the potential for national replication; and • Support R&D that focuses on developing model contract and MOU templates suitable for place-based inter-agency collaborations and integrated service delivery.
References	• Gleeson, B. and Rozo, M., 2013. *The Silo Mentality: How to Break Down the Barriers*. Forbes. http://www.forbes.com/sites/brentgleeson/2013/10/02/the-silo-mentality-how-to-break-down-the-barriers/#2189c93e5f3e • Andrews, R. and Entwistle, T., 2010. Does cross-sectoral partnership deliver? An empirical exploration of public service effectiveness, efficiency, and equity. *Journal of public administration research and theory*, 20(3), pp.679-701. • Ennis, G. and Tofa, Matalena 2018. Collective Impact: A Review of the Peer-reviewed Research, *Australian Social Work*, 73(1):32-47. • DHS, Victoria 2011. *Human Services: The case for change*, Victorian Government, Melbourne https://www.thelookout.org.au/sites/default/files/1_iwas_human_services_case_for_change_0412.pdf

2.2.3 Managing change and reform long-term

Issue/ question	Change processes require support and take time and governments change within the time frames of significant policy change. How can the Commonwealth facilitate and support change processes that span beyond the short-term political cycle?
Role for Commonwealth?	Apart from contract management, the Commonwealth should invest in backbone support and place-based infrastructure as well as seed funding a series of significant pilot initiatives to show how change makes a difference in communities.
Specific actions	• Fund and develop a place-based infrastructure designed to support young Australians navigate the transition from school to sustainable employment modelled on the Victorian Local Learning & Employment Networks (LLENs); • Support systemic backbone support for the development of community-based early intervention to prevent youth homelessness and other related adverse issues for young people; and • Support national conferences on early intervention and housing options as a dissemination of innovation and good practice around a place-based approach to redressing youth homelessness.
References	• Weaver, L. 2016. Possible: Transformational change in collective impact, *Community Development* 47(2):274-283. • Westley, F. et. al. 2014. Five Configurations for Scaling Up Social Innovation: Case Examples of Nonprofit Organizations from Canada. *The Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, 50(3): 234-260. • Lawson, H. 2016. Categories, Boundaries and Bridges: The Social Geography of Schooling and the Need for new Institutional Designs, *Education Sciences* (32) [https://res.mdpi.com/d_attachment/education/education-06-00032/article_deploy/education-06-00032-v2.pdf • Kania, J. and Kramer, M., 2013. Embracing Emergence: How Collective Impact Addresses Complexity, *Stanford Social innovation Review*: 36-41. • Turner, S., Merchant, K., Kania, J., and Martin, E. 2012. Understanding the value of backbone organizations in collective impact: Part 1. *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (July 17, 2012) • MacKenzie, D. and Hand, T. 2019. *The COSS Model: Systemic Backbone Support*, Upstream Australia, Melbourne.

2.2.4 Rebalance of early intervention, Crisis/SHS services and Housing options

Issue/ question	What is the right balance between early intervention/prevention, crisis responses (largely the exiting SHS), and post-homelessness housing options?
Role for Commonwealth?	A major rebalance of the components of a system wide response is needed but that will need to stretch over at least a decade. The Commonwealth should articulate the argument for rebalancing in terms of a national and strategic response to youth homelessness – more investment in early intervention and rapid rehousing (Housing First for Youth) and in social housing for youth and foyer-like models.
Specific actions	• Review/ evaluate the national plans and strategies in terms of the weight given to early intervention, crisis responses, and housing options for people exiting from SHS services; • Directly fund community infrastructure for youth transition support in terms of clusters of LGAs to facilitate place-based early intervention and pathways to employment for youth; • Facilitate measures that support the development of social housing and specifically a youth housing sector consisting of youth-specific and youth-appropriate social housing, 'mandatory inclusionary zoning' with a defined youth housing component, foyers and student housing as part of TAFE colleges; and • Support a research and development project that links school data, data on risk of homelessness, SHS homelessness data, social housing data and data on the private rental market to map the geographical patterns that would inform a place-based reorientation of youth policy and programs, especially youth homelessness.
References	• MacKenzie, D., Hand, T., Zufferey, C., McNelis, S., Spinney, A. and Tedmanson, D. 2019 *Redesign of a homelessness service system for young people*, AHURI Final Report 327, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, http://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/327 , doi: 10.18408/ahuri-5119101. • Spinney, A., Beer, A., MacKenzie, D., McNelis, S., Meltzer, A., Muir, K., Peters, A and valentine, V. 2020 *Ending Homelessness in Australia: How can the homelessness service system be redesigned and implemented to be effective for different groups across the life course?* AHURI Final Report ###, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne. [forthcoming] • MacKenzie, D. and Hand, T. 2020. Redesign of a Homelessness Services System for Young People: A place-based Agenda for System Change, *Parity* 33(3): 41-44. • Hand, T. and MacKenzie, D. 2020. A Clarion Call for Youth Homelessness System Reform, *Parity*, 33(3): 32-36. • MacKenzie, Waters, Hand et al. 2020. *YOUTH HOMELESSNESS: A Reform Agenda for Supporting Vulnerable Youth and Families*, Submission to the Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria: Parliament of Victoria. https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/SCLSI/Inquiry_into_Homelessness_in_Victoria/Submissions/S394_-_David_Mackenzie_Redacted.pdf

2.2.5 Direct service provision by the Commonwealth?

Issue/ question	Should the Commonwealth fund Commonwealth programs such as Reconnect? This is the broader issue of Commonwealth and states/ territories fiscal relations and if and when it is appropriate for the Commonwealth to fund and administer certain social programs.
Role for Commonwealth?	In general - No! Social program administration ideally should be done by the states and territories, and mostly that is the case, however, where there is co-funding, how should accountability work and in what way should the Commonwealth have a say in what is done with co-funded program? Where the Commonwealth initiates and supports innovative social programs perhaps there should be a strategy for handing them over to the states/territories at some point?
Specific actions	• Negotiate the transfer of the Reconnect 'early intervention for youth' program to the states and territories on the basis of a commitment to expand place-based early intervention as part of the state/territory's homelessness strategy or plan; and • Support innovative pilot projects that can demonstrate significant innovation and outcomes for reducing youth homelessness and/ or moving youth experiencing homelessness out of homelessness more quickly (i.e. Housing First for Youth).
References	• MacKenzie, D. 2016. The future of Reconnect. *Parity*, 29(3), p.9. • Crane, P.R. 2009. Youth homelessness and early intervention: Key characteristics and challenges. *Parity*, 22(8), pp.15-16. • Daniell, K. and Kay, A., 2017. Multi-level Governance: An Introduction, in Multi-level Governance: Conceptual challenges and case studies from Australia, ANU Press, Canberra. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321276463_Multi-level_Governance_An_Introduction

2.2.6 Housing options for young people

Issue/ question	Young Australians cannot access social housing to the extent they need, and the low levels of welfare benefits means that about two-thirds of young people who do receive Commonwealth Rental Assistance are in Housing Affordability Stress.
Role for Commonwealth?	The National Housing & Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) proposes 'children and young people' as priority cohorts but there is no guidance on what 'priority' means in practical terms. The Commonwealth can lead the development of a *National Strategy for Ending Youth Homelessness* and ensure that evidence-based but non-prescriptive guidance is provided to state/territory homelessness plans and strategies.
Specific actions	• Require each state/ territory to report on how they are implementing the priority of children and young people as a priority cohort; • Increase Youth Allowance and Newstart levels for young people that would then improve their position vis a vis Commonwealth Rental Assistance (CRA); • Make changes to the existing CRA to remove the share rate and raise the level of subsidy for the higher rental levels; and • Require reports from the states/ territories on young people aged 15-24 years of age as main tenants of social housing (i.e. public and community housing).
References	• Hand, T. and MacKenzie, D. 2020. Young People and Housing Supports in Australia: Income Support, Social Housing and Post-Homelessness Outcomes, UniSA AHURI Research Centre, Adelaide. https://m.library.unisa.edu.au/contentassets/c7cd69c367ef4d81a0107477a6dac704/handmackenzie_2020_young-people-and-housing-support-in-australia_final.pdf • Hand, T. and MacKenzie, D. 2020. Missing Out: Young People and Social Housing, *Parity*, 33(7). • CHIA 2019. National Plan for Affordable Housing: How can we meet the challenge of housing affordability? Community Housing Industry Association, Melbourne. • MFYH 2019. *My foundations Youth Housing Prospectus* 2019. My Foundations Youth Housing, Sydney. • Gaetz, S. 2019. *THIS is Housing First for Youth: Europe. A Program Model Guide*. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press. https://www.homelesshub.ca/HF4Y • MacKenzie, D., Hand, T., Zufferey, C., McNelis, S., Spinney, A. and Tedmanson, D. 2019. *Redesign of a homelessness service system for young people*, AHURI Final Report 327, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne. https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/327

2.2.7 Client data is fragmented, about contract accountability, more outputs than outcomes focused, and not about practice and improved outcomes

Issue/ question	What can be done to improve the data collected for SHS clients and social housing residents to more explicitly inform outcomes and outcomes improvement?
Role for Commonwealth?	A collective impact model of service provision has shared data as one of five core defining characteristics. This approach requires the locus for data management, monitoring and outcomes measurement to be vested in communities. Embedded outcomes evaluation of this kind needs to be managed formally by the community collaborations. Accountability is still important, but the more important role of data is informing practice.
Specific actions	• Support a project to investigate how cross-sectoral data can be matched and integrated at the community level, and government levels; • Support a project that investigates how privacy considerations can be observed while shifting to a more integrated data regime involving data sharing and matching; • Develop a youth outcomes research and development project that examines the achievement of outcomes across departments delivering youth-related services, including schooling; • Support a project on Michael Barber's 'deliverology' methodology trialled in each state/territory jurisdiction as an outcomes monitoring and improvement initiative; and • Review homelessness and housing data collections to ensure that geo-variables such as postcode and/or LGA are collected to support geographical data alignment.
References	• Hand, T. and MacKenzie, D. 2019. Data matters: using data in a collective impact research and development project and the backbone role of Upstream Australia. *Parity*, 32(7), p.16. • Chen, D. and H. Zhao, H. "Data Security and Privacy Protection Issues in Cloud Computing," 2012 *International Conference on Computer Science and Electronics Engineering*, Hangzhou, 2012, pp. 647-651, doi: 10.1109/ICCSEE.2012.193. • Reamer, F. 2016. *Eye on ethics: New NASW Code of Ethics standards for the digital age*, Rhode Island College – James P. Adams Library Digital Commons website, [retrieved on 28 August 2020 https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/facultypublications/472/ • NHMRC 2018. *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*, National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Government, Canberra. • MacKenzie, D. and Hand, T. 2019. Research matters: Between knowledge and policy. *Parity*, 32(7), p.26. • Barber, M., Kihn, P. and Moffit, A. 2011. Deliverology: From idea to implementation. *McKinsey on Government*, 6, pp.32-39.

3. YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

- Youth homelessness was recognised early on as an emerging social problem in Australia, but the response has always fallen short of what is needed to be done. In the field of youth policy more generally, various youth issues have been responded to separately and in the form of targeted crisis responses.
- Youth homelessness and homelessness more generally is a life experience not a characteristic of individuals. Some people experience a relatively short period of homelessness, others much longer period; some young people experiencing homeless have high and complex needs, but many do not.
- Children and young people are a significant cohort of the total homelessness population in Australia, either as young people on their own or as young parents with children or children accompanying parents older than 25 years. For young people, couch-surfing is the most common situation for those experiencing homelessness.
- Over the past two decades, the number of young people aged 15-24 years on their own (not in a family group) seeking assistance from the Specialist Homelessness Services [SHS] system has increased from 32,000 in 200-1 to 43,000 in 2017-18. The youth population for that age range has increased as well over that time, but correcting for that, the extent of youth homelessness was 12.3/1000 in 2000-2001 increasing to 14.4/1000 in 2017-2018 or a 17 per cent increase over that period, which is more than what can be accounted for by the population increase.

4 AUSTRALIAN POLICY CONTEXT

- Australia has been a leader amongst developed countries in the response to homelessness. Unlike the US, where the homeless are counted as only those sleeping rough or in shelters (some 550,000 people), in Australia a broader definition is used that recognises temporary shelter and insecure accommodation as situations of homelessness. Using the US definition, the number of homeless people in Australia would comprise only 21,000 individuals.
- Australia operates a diverse national support and accommodation program known as the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) system of some 1500 funded agencies and outlets.
- Homelessness policy and funding does suffer to some extent from competing agendas such as loud claims to focus on rough sleepers, or that elderly individuals are the fastest growing group in the homelessness population.
- Over the decades since the formation of a national homelessness program in Australia, the issue of ‘homelessness’ has remained bipartisan and not highly political. The existing homelessness services system - the Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program (SAAP) and its successor the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) system – have been supported by both sides of politics and both sides of politics have contributed to Australia’s positive response to homelessness.
- The COVID-19 Pandemic crisis adds a new dimension to this problem. For health reasons, individuals sleeping rough in the CBDs have been placed in secure hotel accommodation and it looks like they will be supported to remain there until it is safe for them to be at large in the community. Whether these people will be supported to move into safe and secure housing rather than back into homelessness remains to be seen. We should be concerned that the recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic crisis will have some disproportionate impacts on young people and an increase in youth homelessness may well be one of the unfortunate outcomes in the near future.

5. A CRITIQUE OF THE EDUCATION AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICE DELIVERY STATUS-QUO FOR YOUTH

A core premise of this submission is a critique of the existing system of service provision which supports an argument that a significant improvement in the outcomes will require 'thinking differently' and trialling a new community-focused approach to service delivery and school improvement.

- Social outcomes, except within a school context, and educational outcomes, which apply in a school context, are generally thought of as separate and unconnected – siloed – whereas in the lives of adolescents, social and educational outcomes tend to be intimately connected.
- A large body of research evidence supports the contention that about two-thirds of the factors that relate to educational underachievement are not school factors. The implications of this premise are largely avoided in current approaches to 'break the link between disadvantage and student outcomes'. The issue is framed as basically a 'school problem'.
- The youth support system, in all states and territories is largely crisis-oriented with relatively little prevention and early intervention at the front-end and problems of rapid rehousing of homelessness young people in appropriate youth housing options due to a lack of supply at the back-end.
- Early interventions directed to ameliorating issues for adolescents necessarily must address whatever incipient issues are evident and the support for vulnerable young people must be family-centred and community-based.
- Deploying new programs while leaving in place legacy programs of dubious effectiveness undermines efforts to build better local systems of support.
- There is a growing body of evidence that suggest the coordination challenge which is so often not met, could be overcome by a new place-based approach that focuses on changing local service systems on the ground, using data to identify risk and monitor the support delivered to young people through school and beyond until they are well and truly on a employment pathway to sustainable independent living – a shift towards community-led 'collective impact' approaches.

The data on social and educational outcomes does not suggest that the current mix of programs and approaches are sufficient nor necessarily highly effective.

On the other hand, the way forward is already being demonstrated through on the ground innovation already being pioneered and trialled in certain places. There is a fledgling movement for reform that is not driven by self-interest but rather on the basis of a creative and constructive discontent with the status-quo. This is the community-driven movement for change that represents the key to better outcomes for young Australians.

6 SYSTEM THINKING IS THE BASIS FOR THE REFORM AGENDA

The term 'system' has entered into the everyday discourse about service provision. We talk about an education system, which apart from Department of Education and Training policies and some programs, is mainly about schools; we talk about a homelessness services system, which apart from departmental policies and some programs, is basically funds to agencies to provide assistance and support accommodation to people seeking help due to homelessness issues.

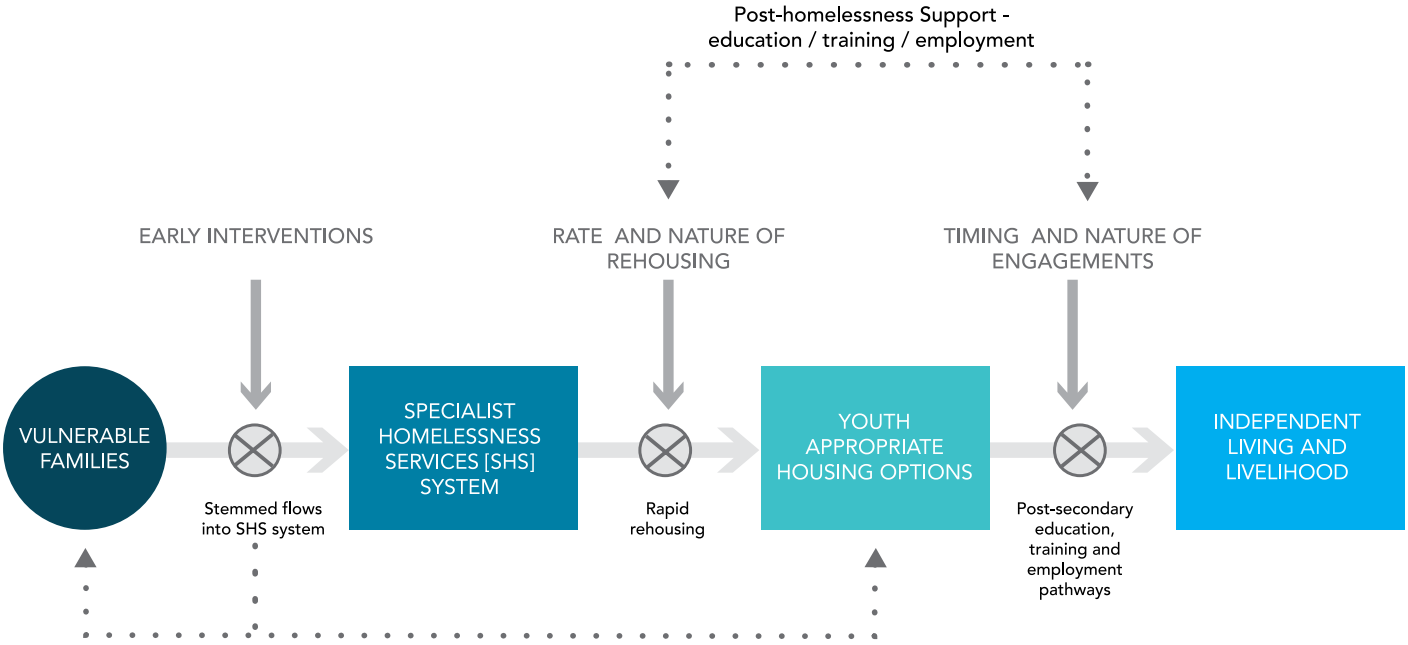
In the recently released AHURI report, *Redesign of a homelessness service system for young people* (2020), the 'system' or more specifically the homelessness service system for young people is conceptualised as the interacting parts of the 'system' - interventions, programs, and institutions that affect young people and in turn are affected by young people – i.e. where actual interactions happen.

The system is the local community systems including various services and institutions such as schools and services that are funded to provide support and/or accommodation to young people who are homeless or for whom homelessness is imminent. This perspective ultimately solves a number of problems in how to more effectively address youth homelessness.

6.1 BEFORE AND AFTER YOUTH HOMELESSNESS – STOCKS AND FLOWS

A useful way of representing systems is a stock and flow diagram that shows the young people who are homeless (i.e. the stock) as well as the flow of young people into homelessness (i.e. inflow) and the flow of young people recovering from an experience of homelessness (i.e. outflow) as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Stock & flow diagram of the homelessness service system for youth



Source: MacKenzie, Hand et.al. (2020), p20.

This way of conceptualising how systems work is particularly useful because it directs us to think about before and after homelessness.

Front-end perspective: The possibilities of reducing 'the flow' of young people in homeless – who are they; why do they become homeless and how; and what measures could begin to reduce the number becoming homeless?

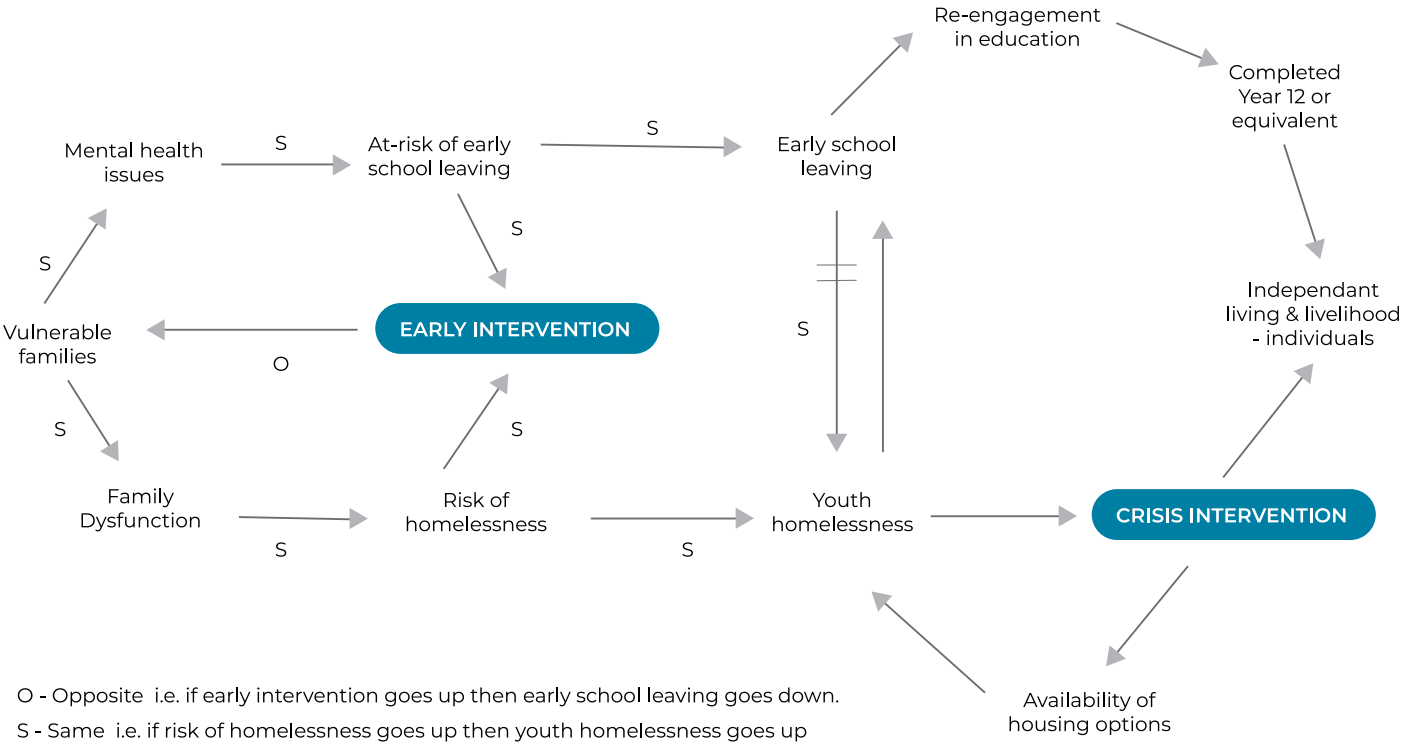
Back-end perspective: how to effectively and efficiently move young people who have become homeless and sought help from the Specialist Homelessness Services system into a situation where they are no longer homeless? If returning home with family members is not an option, then moving as quickly as possible into a sustainable housing situation is imperative.

6.2 SYSTEMS AS PATTERNS OF CAUSAL INTERACTIONS

Another way of conceptualising systems is a Causal Loop Diagram that maps out causal links between variables to think about which variables seem to produce positive or negative changes in other variables.

The following Causal Loop Diagram (Figure 2) examines the relations between early school leaving and becoming homelessness

Figure 2: Adolescent homelessness – a Causal loop Diagram



Source: MacKenzie, Hand et.al. (2020), p20.

When a Causal Loop Diagram is created for youth homelessness what becomes apparent is that early school leaving and youth homelessness are intimately related issues. If a student in school becomes homeless and attempts to resolve their issues preventively fail then they are highly likely not to complete secondary school; conversely, students who leave school early, even where homelessness is not an issue at the time, experience subsequent disadvantage and are more likely to experience homelessness later on.

It seems obvious that this is what happens, but if it is so obvious why do we treat youth homelessness as a problem addressed by the Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) by means of a homelessness service response and frame 'early school leaving' as a purely education problem that requires schools to do better or in terms of specialised Department of Education & Training (DET) programs such as the Victorian Navigator program?

6.3 THE KEY ELEMENTS OF REFORM

Many workers in the SHS system are often unable to respond to the daily high demand for services. This is their everyday experience and it is common for front-line crisis workers to call for more crisis services. However, from a system perspective, simply investing more and more in crisis services can never possibly reduce and end homelessness. A counter-intuitive systems thinking perspective arrives in a different place - arguing that what is needed is early intervention to reduce the flow of young people into homelessness and rapid rehousing and a major expansion of housing options with appropriate supports for young people who will have developmental issues. The Canadians associated with the *Homeless Hub* and *A Way Home Canada* have been advocating strongly in their country for the same agenda.

The current largely crisis-oriented homelessness service system comprising crisis and transitional services funded through bilateral agreement that sit under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement – the Specialist Homelessness Service system. Figure 3 depicts the existing balance amongst prevention and early intervention, emergency response, and post-homelessness housing and support options.

Figure 3: The status quo – the current homelessness services system

Source: MacKenzie, Hand et.al. (2020), p46

By contrast, a reformed service system, rebalanced with much greater early intervention and housing options for youth within a place-based approach would look like something like Figure 4 with much greater weight given to prevention and early interventions at the front-end and youth housing and support at the back-end.

Figure 4: A rebalanced future reformed youth homelessness response

Source: MacKenzie, Hand et.al. (2020), p46

In an article in **The Conversation**, MacKenzie and Hand (2019) argued that 'if we are serious about reducing homelessness in a sustained way, counterintuitive thinking and action are required, not a simplistic "common sense" approach of increasing crisis services'. An argument for such systems thinking was also advanced in a 2020 **The Conversation** article, *6 steps towards remaking the homelessness system so it works for young people*.

Pouring more public funds into crisis accommodation simply treats the symptoms of the problem (The Conversation, MacKenzie & Hand 2019). It does not contribute to a reformed service system that can begin to make serious inroads into reducing the problem. This largely explains why so little impact has been achieved in actually reducing youth homelessness (**National Report Card on Youth Homelessness**).

6.4 AN ARCHITECTURE FOR LOCAL SYSTEM REFORM

Following the research undertaken as part of the AHURI Project, *Redesign of the homelessness service system for young people*, the following front-end (prior to homelessness) and back-end (after experiencing homelessness) measures are highlighted as significant initiatives that are implemented in some form already in Australia, and therefore readily available for a broader implementation.

Figure 5: Policy development options for reducing youth homelessness

Source: MacKenzie, D. & Hand, T. (2020) 'Redesign of a homelessness service system for young people: A place-based agenda for system change', Parity, 33(3):41-44.

Rethinking the system in a way that actually puts young people and their needs at the centre refocuses planning and funding and services on an ecosystem around young people that extends beyond the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) system and includes schools and other specialist services and community-based stakeholders. The overarching reform is to shift from the status-quo of a siloed targeted programs approach to service delivery to a place-based 'collective impact' local system of supports and services.

> *Place-based approaches seek to reform the usage and implementation of the resources available to a community to address specific social issues in that community, such as youth homelessness. Place-based approaches do not aim to focus primarily on targeting individuals or groups according to program criteria, but rather, on bringing a community together to reform local systems to better redress issues such as youth homelessness (MacKenzie and Hand, 2019a)*

VCOSS has boldly advocated this same paradigm shift in its publication, *Communities Taking Power*:

> *Place-based approaches can be the key that unlocks the great power communities hold to develop and deliver innovative local solutions that help overcome entrenched poverty and disadvantage (VCOSS, 2016).*

Such far-reaching change seems hugely challenging and it is. System change is not easy. There have been notable failures when top down efforts to effect some reform of service systems such as the NSW *Going Home Staying Home* process have been attempted. The political blow-back was heavy and forced the Government to advance restoration funding to the losers of the retendering process. Some changes were achieved but hardly a significant reform of the system. Without an active engagement with workers and organisations on the ground in communities, system change is unlikely to be significant nor sustainable. However, it is possible and practical to reform what happens community-by-community, beginning with the readiest communities. A place-based approach leads to consideration of new ways of joining up services and linking homelessness service providers with mainstream agencies, such as schools and educational programs. The focus becomes local programs, not centrally managed discrete siloed programs. Also, within a pre-crisis early-intervention framework, risk of homelessness and homelessness as experienced by young people is more evidently linked with other emerging adverse issues in young people's lives, such as early school leaving, family issues, mental health issues, or drug and alcohol issues. In practical terms, community-level early intervention works across issues and thus needs to be a cross-sectoral project.

The six priority front-end and back-end reforms (see Figure 5) ideally should be implemented together within a community rather than scattered across the state in an uncoordinated way that is typically how different programs are deployed.

Invest in early intervention and prevention - there is a clear policy imperative to implement 'early intervention' to reduce the flow of young people into homelessness. The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) explicitly identify 'children and young people' as a priority cohort and 'prevention and early intervention' as a key focus. The most promising evidence-based approach is the 'Community of Schools and Services' (COSS) Model, implemented as part of local system reform along collective impact lines.

Extend state care support until at least 21 years of age - the disturbing relationship between Out of Home Care (OOHC) and homelessness has been understood since the mid-1990s; good practice knowledge about after-care support is well-developed—yet the net national effort to prevent this cohort of young people from entering homelessness has been inconsistent and remains inadequate. Victoria has adopted the Home Stretch objective for 250 young people over five years – this response should be reviewed in terms of adequacy, but post-care support should be available for every young person leaving care in Australia.

Improved access through community-based Youth Entry Points - as practical structural and organisational reform, this potentially offers an efficiency dividend. Entry points (Opening Doors) are an established feature of the SHS system in Victoria, although not elsewhere in Australia. Local entry points serve to simplify contact with and access to homelessness services although most areas have general entry points rather than youth entry points - however, the significance here is that the entry points are local community-based entry points and not state-based entry points which do not offer the same efficiency. Expanding the number of local youth entry points could usefully be considered for implementation across Australia to improve young people's access to services.

Invest in youth-specific social housing for young people – there is a case for rethinking social housing as an option for young people, not necessarily as a life-time housing destination but as a transitional housing option. The formation of the innovative My Foundations Youth Housing Company (MFYH) in NSW, but ultimately as a national provider, has demonstrated how youth-specific social housing can be provided despite low financial margins. An innovation within the innovation is Transitional Housing Plus, a support model premised on a gradual preparation of young residents for independent living in private rental properties. MFYH has probably achieved more in five years than the youth sector has done with boutique housing projects over forty years. An approach has been made to the Victorian Government for consideration of an investment in youth social housing, but no decision has yet been made. MFYH is one attractive option, although there are also well-established social housing providers. What incentives or changes could increase the proportion of young people as residents in mainstream social housing is not clear, but if funding for youth housing were to flow to mainstream providers, those properties would need to be specifically and permanently quarantined or reserved for young tenants and then there is the issue of how to provide appropriate support on a needs-basis as outlined under the Housing First for Youth framework and guidelines.

Integrate Youth Foyers into the exit pathways for young people leaving Specialist Homelessness Services - the Youth Foyer model has been favoured as a housing model for at-risk or homeless young people as it addresses their education, training and employment support as a condition for access to this type of supported accommodation – now about 15 foyers with 500 residents. However, Youth Foyers are a relatively expensive model, and there are some critical questions that need to be asked:

- Should foyers strictly provide a pathway for young people recovering from homelessness, or should they be free to take in a wider population of 'at-risk' youth?
- Should foyers necessarily be congregate facilities—as is typically the case currently—or would a dispersed set of units in a community connected to a nearby community hub be a more cost-efficient option?

In terms of the place of Youth Foyers in a redesigned homelessness service system for young people, their contribution to post-homelessness ('breaking the cycle') outcomes would be strengthened if intakes were restricted to the cohort of young people exiting the SHS system - which is not the current practice for all Youth Foyers.

Enhanced support attached to Commonwealth rent assistance - private rental remains an housing option for many homeless young people who cannot live with family members and who leave SHS accommodation and need independent housing. Commonwealth Rental Assistance remains a major part of the social policy mix that is relevant to the response to homelessness. Apart from the financial assistance, which is at too low a level, young people need more support than just what Commonwealth Rent Assistance provides. A promising initiative coming out of NSW is the Rent Choice Youth program that provides additional support to participate in education and training and encouragement to gain employment with the goal of eventually affording private rentals without assistance. The AHURI report 2020 provides an extensive discussion of these options and the evidence underpinning their priority.

6.5 WHAT COULD A PLACE-BASED APPROACH LOOK LIKE?

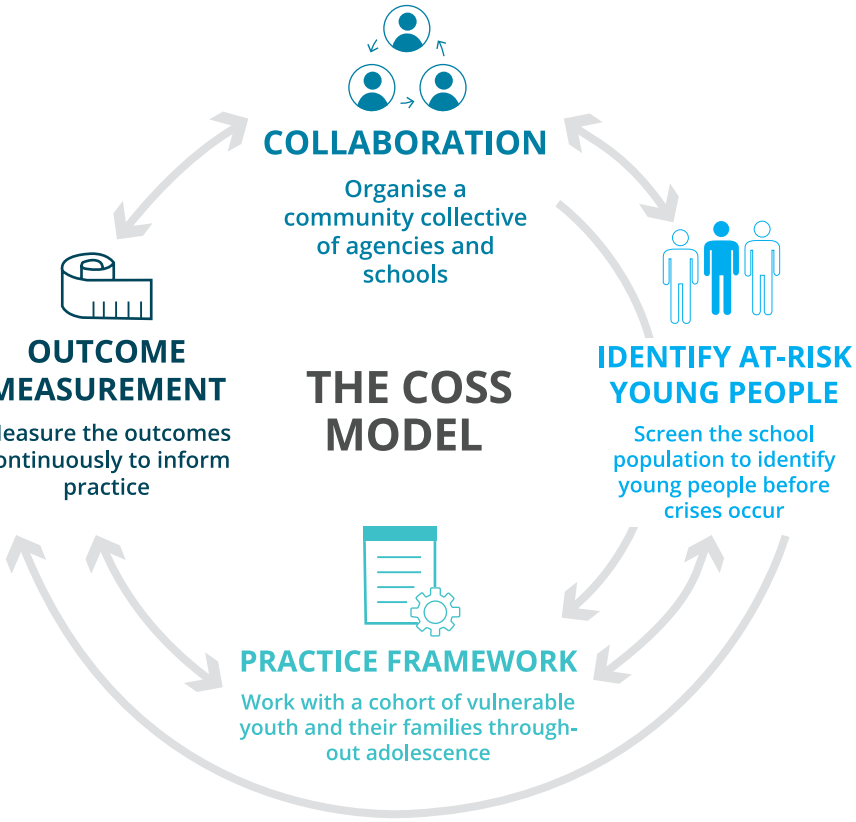
Alongside the current program deployment, there has been innovative developmental work done to explore how a more integrated system could be created on the ground. This is the 'community of schools and services' model of early intervention (The COSS Model) – see Figure 6 below - and best known by the name of its exemplar pilot site (The Geelong Project). The COSS Model is now being trialled in NSW and soon in Queensland, while international recognition has led to new COSS sites in Canada, the United States, and Wales in the UK, with possible implementation in New Zealand in the near future.

The architecture of the COSS Model includes close working collaborations between the secondary schools in a community with the community agencies, such as the lead agency(ies) that provides the youth and family work. It requires a staged development and intensive backbone support in the initial years. Data plays a crucial role in monitoring outcomes in near real-time (or reaching that point is a key objective to be achieved).

The AHURI report, *Redesign of a homelessness service system for young people*, found that the most promising early intervention initiative which achieves significant outcomes for young people is the Australian Geelong Project, implementing the 'community of schools and services' (COSS) Model which includes population screening for risk using an Australian Index of Adolescent Development instrument (AIAD) enabling proactive, not reactive, interventions with young people and families. Supports are delivered to the entire identified at-risk cohort, but flexibly over time through secondary school and ultimately beyond.

Over three years, the implementation of the model has reduced adolescent homelessness in the City of Greater Geelong by 40 per cent and early school leaving by 20 per cent in the three most disadvantaged schools in Geelong (MacKenzie, 2018). In the Victorian May 2018 budget, $2.8m has been invested over two years to expand the implementation of the COSS model in Geelong. In NSW, the 2018 NSW Homelessness Strategy earmarked $4.7m for two pilot COSS sites, including funding for *Upstream Australia*, to provide change agency support as well as data management/data matching and outcomes measurement support to the local community collectives. In Queensland, the Government commissioned the Queensland Youth Housing Coalition [QYHC] to undertake a consultation on the prospects for the COSS Model of early intervention in South-East Queensland. The consultation report made positive recommendations.

Figure 6: The COSS Model



The Commonwealth Government would not necessarily provide direct funding for support services under this model or any other, however, the broader policy question for reform is shifting to place-based 'collective impact', and how the Commonwealth Government could act to lead, drive, or facilitate such reform and the backbone support required for the change and processes through which such changes could be efficiently achieved, would be a legitimate and important Commonwealth contribution.

A developmental approach including screening for risk, systemic and local backbone support and local system change is critical to the success of the COSS Model approach to early intervention. A developmental approach and a commitment to 'collective impact' is a significant change from how programs are tendered and managed currently, and a Prime Provider model might be the most appropriate way for the early years development to be supported appropriately. A Prime Provider model should be considered under conditions of significant innovation and development wherein the innovation leader is the bearer of the knowledge and expertise required for successful implementation.

One way to think of changing the funding regime would be to fund community collectives or consortia of key stakeholders and services, rather than funding only programs and agencies. However, funding would flow through a lead agency of the consortium or collective and would be against a detailed developmental plan and specified outcomes to be achieved.

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8 SUBMISSION – INQUIRY INTO HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTRALIA

8.1 CROSS-REFERENCING THE INQUIRY TERMS OF REFERENCE AND SUBMISSION CONTENT

1. The incidence of homelessness in Australia	✓ Section 9.3
2. Factors affecting the incidence of homelessness, including housing-market factors -	✓ Sections 9.1, 9.2
3. The causes of, and contributing factors to, housing overcrowding -	✓ Sections 9.1, 9.2
4. Opportunities for early intervention and prevention of homelessness	✓✓ Sections 2.2.3, 2.2.4, 2.2.5; Section 9.4
5. Services to support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including housing assistance, social housing, and specialist homelessness services -	✓ Section 6 lays out a case for reform and the evidence for a reform agenda that would make a significant difference
6. Support and services for people at particular risk of homelessness - a. women and children affected by family and domestic violence; b. children and young people; c. Indigenous Australians; d. people experiencing repeat homelessness; e. people exiting institutions and other care arrangements; f. people aged 55 or older; g. people living with disability; and h. people living with mental illness;	✓ Focus of entire submission
7. the suitability of mainstream services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness -	✓ Appendix 6
8. examples of best-practice approaches in Australia and internationally for preventing and addressing homelessness -	✓ Appendix 5 (especially 13.2 and 13.3); Appendix 6; Section 2.2.6
9. the adequacy of the collection and publication of housing, homelessness, and housing affordability related data -	✓ Section 2.2.7
10. Governance and funding arrangements in relation to housing and homelessness, particularly as they relate to the responsibility of Local, State, Territory and Federal Governments	✓✓ Appendix 3, 4; Sections 2.1 and 2.2

9 APPENDIX 1: THE NATURE OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

9.1 THE HOMELESS POPULATION IN AUSTRALIA IS DIVERSE – YOUNG PEOPLE, FAMILIES, SINGLE ADULTS, LGBTQI PEOPLE AND INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

During the 1950s and 1960s, the homeless population was a marginalised population of mainly men, who moved in and out of the labour force, and who often had alcohol issues and/or PSTD. The American term 'skid row' for this group was used as well in the Australian context, carrying judgmental and pejorative connotations.

However, in Australia, quite early on, it was recognized that homelessness was increasingly being experienced by a diversity of groups—women escaping domestic violence, families, and of course, young people. Indigenous young people and Indigenous Australians are significantly over-represented in the cohort of clients assisted through the homelessness services system.

The SAAP-funded homelessness services in the 1980s through the 1990s until 2009 remained largely oriented to crisis accommodation and a response for people experiencing homelessness, doing little to prevent homelessness in the first place.

Again, advocacy from the youth sector was influential in the formation of SAAP and a significant proportion of youth services was part of SAAP (about 34 per cent of 1300 agencies in 2005–2006). On the other hand, the transition of young people from crisis accommodation to affordable social or private rental housing or supportive housing, which hardly existed, has remained a continuing problem.

9.2 THE DYNAMICS OF HOMELESSNESS

The idea that homelessness is not a characteristic of individuals but an experience that individuals may go through, seems an obvious point, but thinking about the dynamics of homelessness came late. The first Australian work was the notion of a homeless career developed by MacKenzie and Chamberlain. As an ideal type, the concept of a homelessness career drew attention to a succession of experiential stages or phases and recognised that different cohorts within the homeless population traverse different career pathways. Three 'homeless careers' were abstracted from the diversity and complexity of individual cases - the 'youth career', the 'housing crisis career', and the 'family breakdown career'. The career typology is useful for framing interventions - early intervention involves different forms of practice on each pathway. For young people, early intervention must occur when they are at the 'in-and-out' stage, before they have made a permanent break from family. For adults experiencing housing crisis, early intervention is about providing assistance to people before they lose their accommodation. The family breakdown career commonly involves domestic violence, so although early intervention may involve family reconciliation, in many cases it involves supporting victims of domestic violence to move to alternative, secure accommodation (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 2006).

Another contribution that developed the utility of pathways analysis came out of the Project i research project led by Dr. Shelly Mallett. This work examined the relationship between homelessness and drug use, identifying four pathways whereby drug usage was implicated in homelessness, as either the main critical factor, a factor or a result of becoming homeless, but in all cases family conflict was the significant contributing factor.

Other research by Martijn and Sharpe identified five pathways in and out of homelessness, emphasising 'trauma' resulting from abuse rather than family conflict.

There is now a significant body of literature discussing pathways into and out of homelessness and the 'processes and dynamics at work in relation to the housing careers and life trajectories of individuals and households who experience homelessness at some point in their lives' (Anderson, 2000).

9.3 SIZE OF THE PROBLEM – HOW MANY HOMELESSNESS YOUTH?

The size of a social problem – i.e. the number of people who experience homelessness – matters! Much of the debate about the number of homeless people or the size of particular homeless cohorts are arguments about priority and ultimately the call on resources for a particular group and the agencies that work with that cohort(s).

Original research and development work was done in Australia to estimate the incidence and prevalence of the homeless population (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 2009).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics collects official statistics on the homeless population on Census night. Overall, 116,396 individuals were estimated to be homeless in Australia in 2016. Another source of data on homelessness in Australia is the ABS General Social Survey in 2014. About 1.4m people said that they had experienced at least one episode of homelessness in the past decade and about one third of these people (315,000) reported an experience of homelessness in the past 12 months. The main reason given was issues with family relationships but then the housing market and financial problems were cited.

Three points should be noted:

- Inevitably, there is some undercount or underestimate of the number of homeless individuals particular those who may be sleeping rough or in boarding houses;
- The category of people defined as 'homeless' because they are living in severely overcrowded dwellings includes 8929 individuals or one third (36%) of the homeless population. While this group may have a housing problem due to an overcrowded situation, critical researchers have argued that to classify this group as homeless is misleading and unsupportable on empirical grounds – large households with many children may live under severely overcrowded conditions but be a perfectly functional family group; new arrivals from overseas countries often gather together with friends from the same cultural background for social support and come from cultures where people typically live in much closer quarters than is common in Australia, so a classification of 'homelessness' is arguable not warranted; and in some households that show up as severely overcrowded some of the people in the household are a family group that owns the house or are paying it off, whereas other people may be temporary residents and possibly couch-surfers (?).
- Young people who may be couch-surfing are significantly undercounted and this much is admitted by the ABS: (https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/7d12b0f6763c78caca257061001cc588/f5c6fe033f916d93ca257a7500148de8!OpenDocument). Various research studies and testimony from front-line workers reports that couch-surfing is a very common situation of homelessness for young people.

The ABS Census count/estimate as a point in time figure does not and cannot reveal whether someone's experience of homelessness will be short-term or much longer. The General Social Survey data suggests that for about 60 percent of Australians who experience homelessness, it is a relatively short-term duration, but for the other 40 per cent, it lasts longer than three-months.

Some people experience homelessness but have sufficient family and social support networks and resources available to them to never need to present at a Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS). On the other hand, others do not have that social support available, and they face a serious predicament. Young people who sooner or later have to seek help from the SHS system are the expressed demand for services and support.

Homeless youth and children are one of the largest cohorts using Specialist Homelessness Services - 43 per cent of clients of the Specialist Homelessness Services system or 124,393 men, women, and children are under the age of 25 years. However, this statistic is somewhat misleading unless unpacked and explained.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Report on Homelessness Services (2017-18), some 43,200 young people aged 15-24 years present alone when they approach a homelessness service for assistance (15% of the SHS annual client throughput).

There are 47,682 children aged 0-9 years who are accompanying a parent(s) and 17,887 children aged 10-14 years who are, with a few exceptions, also with a parent(s), which leaves 15,624 individuals, the majority of whom are either young parents or an adolescent accompanying a parent(s). So, 81,193 young adult parents and children present for assistance as family units, mostly single parents with accompanying children (28% of the SHS annual client throughput). The latter requires a family friendly and appropriate response, whereas the former youth cohort requires an individual response. The historical pattern of youth homelessness across Australia is revealing as shown in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7: Young people on their own helped through SHS, 2000-2017

Over the past two decades, the number of young people aged 5-24 years on their own (not in a family group) seeking assistance from the SHS system has increased from 32,000 in 200-1 to 43,000 in 2017-18. The youth population for that age range has increased as well over that time, but correcting for that the extent of youth homelessness was 12.3/1000 in 2000-2001 increasing to 14.4/1000 in 2017-2018 or a 17 per cent increase over that period which is more than what can be accounted for by the population increase.

There are two reasonable interpretations of this pattern. One is that this is part of a long-term upward trend and that over the next five to ten years the number of young people presenting alone to the SHS is likely to be closer to 50,000 per year. That is possible. The other interpretation is that over the past decade the number of young people (15-24 years) entering the SHS on their own has more or less plateaued. Perhaps some of the early intervention work via Reconnect and some changes in homelessness services has contained further increases. However, the significant point here is that more young people experience homelessness now and over the past decade than in the years before that!

9.4 THE COST OF HOMELESSNESS AND DISADVANTAGE

A compelling argument for early intervention is that intervening early saves money in the long run while at the same time averting the consequences for many young people.

A study by MacKenzie, Flatau et al. (2016) the **Cost of Youth Homelessness in Australia** (CYHA) followed some 400 homeless and unemployed young people over three years to determine which health and justice services they used over that time. The average costs per person per year due to homeless was $14,986 in health and justice costs alone—which amounted to an annual cost to the community of $626m, which was more than the $619m spent each year on providing homeless services in Australia for all people using these services. These costs are apart from the cost of providing support and accommodation through the SHS system.

Another important study of the costs of disadvantage is Lamb and Huo's (2015) **Counting the costs of lost opportunity in Australian education**, which calculated the fiscal and social costs of early school leaving in Australia. Young people who experience homelessness are a significant cohort within the larger cohort of young people who leave school early. However, we do know that early school leavers are more likely to experience homelessness at some point. The annual costs per disengaged young person was $10,300 fiscal and $27,600 social costs, making a fiscal cost of $470.7m and $1.26b annually and $18.8b fiscal and $50.5b social costs over a lifetime.

A social return on investment calculation for youth homelessness reduction in The Geelong Project found that for every one dollar spent on the program there was a net benefit of about $5.00.

10 APPENDIX 2: THE STORY SO FAR … YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTRALIA

Australia has led the world in responding to youth homeless and in terms of the public profile accorded to 'youth homelessness' since the early 1980s. However, a careful review of what has been done to actually address youth homelessness comes up well short of what is needed to reduce and ultimately end youth homelessness. There are probably a range of reasons that may in part contribute to this historical shortfall. One is to simplify the complexity of homelessness to simply a housing problem. The vast majority of adolescents do not become homeless because of a housing problem. Family conflict which includes a host of possible issues within a family is what causes young people to leave their home; if they can't return to that situation then they certainly do have a housing problem. Another simplification is to revert to a response to rough sleeping which is the most visible circumstance of homelessness especially in the CBD of Australia's capital cities. Governments are prone to this reversion when embarrassing publicity erupts around rough sleepers in the city. A third factor is the tendency of many agencies funded to provide crisis services to advocate for more crisis services. In this case, the narrowness of their self-interest is constantly reinforced by the everyday lived experience of their workers and managers. The following are brief references to significant milestone inquires, activities, and events to the present day.

HOMELESSNESS IN THE POST WAR PERIOD – 'SKID ROW'

During the post-war period into the seventies, the homeless population was largely male, including many former World War II veterans, commonly with alcohol and/or mental health issues, and in some cases PTSD, though this was not recognised at the time. These people had a marginal attachment to the workforce even during a period of full employment but relied on boarding house accommodation or the inner-city shelters operated by large charities such as The Salvation Army in Melbourne and Sydney City Mission in Sydney. In the seventies, this picture changed, and the homeless population started to include a diversity of different groups who became homeless for somewhat different reasons.

YOUNG PEOPLE TURNING UP AT HOMELESS SHELTERS – LATE 1970S

In the seventies, it began to be noticed that young people were turning up at homeless shelters although in relatively small numbers. There were several state reports on youth homeless in the late 1970s and various small-scale community initiatives to create houses where shelter and support could be provided to adolescents who were out of home due to family dysfunction, conflict, and intra-familial violence. Australia, notable amongst Western countries, identified the homelessness of young people very early and responded. In 1978, at a Conference of Welfare Ministers, the state ministers urged the Commonwealth Government to provide funding for emergency accommodation for homeless adolescents. In 1979, the Commonwealth Government established the pilot Youth Services Scheme (YSS) over three years, and by 1982, there were 52 youth refuges and 23 other services throughout Australia.

THE SENATE REPORT ON YOUTH HOMELESSNESS (1982) – 'YOUTH HOMELESSNESS' IS OFFICIALLY RECOGNISED AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM IN ITS OWN RIGHT.

As part of this response to 'youth homelessness', the first Australian Government inquiry was the ***Senate Standing Committee on Social Welfare's Report on Youth Homelessness*** in 1982. The Senate report had very little public impact, but it did serve to draw the issue of youth homelessness to the attention of policymakers. During the 1980s, there was vigorous grassroots community advocacy around the problems of homeless young people, accompanied by a lot of media coverage of 'street kids'. The main outcomes from this Inquiry were an evaluation of the YSS, and a decision in 1983 to bring all Commonwealth supported accommodation programs together under one act, the Supported Accommodation Assistance Act that was passed in 1985.

AUSTRALIA'S HOMELESSNESS SERVICES SYSTEM – THE SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION & ASSISTANCE PROGRAM OR SAAP (1985-2009) – NOW SHS.

The Australian response to homelessness, including youth homelessness, was the formation of the *Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program* (SAAP) in 1985. SAAP stood as the signature national program response for homeless Australians for 25 years. The diversity of service responses was one of its strengths. Beginning in the early 1990s, the large inner-city shelters were redeveloped into supported accommodation with individualised units for the homeless residents. In 2009, SAAP was changed into the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) program operating under a joint Commonwealth-States/Territories *National Affordable Housing Agreement*, and then most recently, the *National Housing and Homelessness Agreement*. After 2009, the homelessness services were designated as the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) program.

THE BURDEKIN REPORT – OUR HOMELESS CHILDREN – THE FIRST HREOC INQUIRY (1989-1990)

A major milestone was the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's (HREOC) 1989 Inquiry into Youth Homelessness headed by Commissioner Brian Burdekin that served to bring 'youth homelessness' into the national consciousness (Fopp, 2003). The HREOC was established in 1986 as a statutory authority under an act of parliament. Brian Burdekin was the foundation Human Rights Commissioner and his Inquiry into youth homelessness was the first Inquiry of the newly formed Human Rights Body. Over 9 months, 20 hearings were held; with evidence from 300 witnesses and 160 written submissions; visits were made to 20 youth refuges and services, and the Inquiry commissioned seven special reports. The main HREOC report, *Our Homeless Children*, was wide-ranging and thorough (see https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights/publications/our-homeless-children, HREOC, 1989) and it received a huge amount of media that stimulated interest and raised awareness in the community (Fopp, 1989).

RESEARCH ON YOUTH HOMELESSNESS DURING THE 1990S

In the wake of the Burdekin Report, despite only a small cadre of Australian researchers focused on youth homelessness, there was a significant body of research undertaken. This included a National Census of Homeless School Students, Project i, Counting the Homeless, the Cost of Youth Homelessness in Australia, and a report on at-risk youth by Batten and Russell among others.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY AFFAIRS REPORT ON ASPECTS OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS (1995)

The House of Representatives inquiry into *Aspects of Youth Homelessness* known as the Morris Report after the chairman of the committee was originally particularly interested in examining the Youth Homeless Allowance (YHA) due to a stream of misguided criticism that the YHA was causing young people to leave the parental home and become homeless. There was no evidence for that. What the Morris report did notably was bring 'early intervention' to the attention of those concerned with homelessness.

RECONNECT – WORLD FIRST EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM FOR HOMELESS YOUNG PEOPLE (1997)

After the Federal election in 1996, the incoming Liberal Government set up a *Prime Ministerial Taskforce on Youth Homelessness*, chaired by Major David Eldridge from the Salvation Army. The Taskforce report forthrightly advocated 'early intervention' and fielded a pilot program of 26 pilot projects to explore how early intervention might be achieved using family mediation and reconciliation. This was an important innovation and the first explicit early intervention program in the homelessness sector, possibly a world first. The Reconnect program was launched in 1997. By 2003, at 100 sites, Reconnect was working with at-risk young people and their families to address incipient homelessness. Some 23 years on, the Reconnect program continues a Commonwealth Government program to this day.

NATIONAL YOUTH COMMISSION INQUIRY INTO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS - NYC (2008)

The independent National Youth Commission (NYC) Inquiry into Youth Homelessness in 2007–2008 was modelled on the Burdekin Inquiry and conducted some 20 years after Burdekin. The NYC report, ***Australia's Homeless Youth***, together with the ethnographic feature documentary, *The Oasis*, was an important milestone in revivifying a focus on youth homelessness. Hearings were held all around Australia, collecting evidence from 319 people and 92 written submissions, producing a 400-page final report with 80 recommendations and a graphic booklet with a Roadmap of 10 key reform propositions. This body of evidence and policy thinking generated considerable community interest and informed subsequent government activity.

HALVING HOMELESSNESS BY 2020? - THE ROAD HOME (2008)

The incoming Federal Government in 2007 declared that homelessness would be one of its highest priorities. The subsequent Government's 2008 White Paper, ***The Road Home***, drew liberally on the NYC's advice. The White Paper proposed a strong strategic framework linked to the long-term objective of halving homelessness. As one of the three core strategies, the metaphor of 'turning off the tap' colourfully expressed the idea of early intervention. The importance of mainstream institutions and programs in the early intervention policy frame was raised but not given much in the way of detail.

NATIONAL YOUTH HOMELESSNESS CONFERENCE: 18-19 MARCH 2019

Despite leading the way in the 1980s and a series of official inquiries with episodes of media attention, the youth sector struggled to ensure that the needs of young people who are highly disadvantaged, many of whom experience homelessness, are adequate met. There had not been a national conference on youth homelessness for at least 20 years. The National Youth Homelessness Conference held on 18-19 March 2019 in the Melbourne Town Hall was attended by some 700 individuals over the two days. Launched by Minister Richard Wynn, the conference had an impressive line-up of speakers such as Professor Brian Burdekin, the former HREOC Commissioner who headed the landmark 1989 Inquiry; Ms. Megan Mitchell, the National Children's Commissioner; Professors Paul Flatau and Guy Johnson and the Rev. Tim Costello, among others. The first public airing of the film documentary *Life after Oasis* was shown and **a strong communiqué proposing four strategic reforms – early intervention, rapid rehousing, engagement and extending state care** – was issued.

A REPORT CARD ON YOUTH HOMELESSNESS (2019)

The ***National Report Card on Youth Homelessness*** (Mackenzie & Hand, 2019) was presented to the National Youth Homelessness Conference as an assessment of how much progress had been made since 2008 against the National Youth Commission's Roadmap's ten 'must do' strategic areas for action – 'a review of responses to youth homelessness over the past decade from a national perspective'. The Roadmap imagined a strategic homelessness response, not just more crisis responses and Band-Aid measures, a national effort that would begin to reduce and ultimately end youth homelessness in Australia. Arguing that 'in order to steer a strategic course for the future, we have to understand where we have been and face up to what we have, or have not, done', the Report Card offered the sober assessment that 'the past decade began well with some promise. However, the early promises made have only been partially delivered' and 'as a nation, we cannot be satisfied with a less than average response to youth homelessness – at best a two-star rating: 'developing – some progress underway' (**The Conversation, 18 March 2019**).

11 APPENDIX 3: A SUMMARY OF COMMONWEALTH AND STATE/ TERRITORY HOMELESSNESS POLICY

In general, homelessness policy and programs have been an area not plagued by highly contested partisan politics. Both sides of politics have contributed to Australia's homelessness response. The world-first early intervention program Reconnect was launched under the Howard Government in 1997. The Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program (SAAP) was supported and expanded as necessary by successive governments from 1985 until 2009 when it was renamed the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) program. The development of the national data collection on the clients of homelessness services began in the mid-1990s but was substantially improved from 2009 under the SHS. The Commonwealth and States/territory joint agreement(s) on housing and homelessness were simplified in 2008 and that reframing has continued. The Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA) and several other existing Commonwealth housing and homelessness assistance programs were consolidated into a National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA).

A new agreement, the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) has replaced the NAHA for the period 2018-2023 with an option for further terms of five years (Australia. CFFR 2018a).

Homelessness policy in Australia is still substantially shaped by the Commonwealth Government White Paper, The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness (Australia. FaHCSIA 2008) despite several changes of government in the years since and many different responsible ministers. The White Paper proposed a strategic framework linked to the long-term objective of halving homelessness, and three core strategies – 'turning off the tap' a colourful way of expressing the idea of prevention and early intervention; 'improving and expanding services' or upgrading and improving the current homelessness service system; and 'breaking the cycle' or support and housing options for the most vulnerable people to ensure that their experience of homelessness does not reoccur.

The report recognised that redressing homelessness required policy reforms beyond the narrow purview of the system of Specialist Homelessness Services. The importance of mainstream institutions and programs in the early intervention policy frame was raised but not explicated in any detail despite advocacy around early intervention since the mid-1990s.

In terms of homelessness, the NHHA requires that States/Territories develop a strategy that:

- addresses the priority homelessness cohorts;
- sets out reforms and initiatives that will contribute to a reduction in the incidence of homelessness; and
- incorporates the homelessness priority policy reform areas … where appropriate to its needs.

Of six national priority homelessness cohorts, 'children and young people' are one priority cohort while 'people exiting institutions and care into homelessness' are another. In terms of State-specific priority policy reform areas, the NAHA focuses on three key areas for reform:

- Achieving better outcomes for people, setting out how the desired outcomes for individuals will be measured (may include a focus on priority groups, economic and social participation);
- Early intervention and prevention, including through mainstream services, setting out actions being taken through homelessness services and mainstream services (may include a focus on particular client groups or services); and

- Commitment to service program and design, that is evidence and research-based, that shows what evidence and research was used to design responses to homelessness and how responses/strategies will be evaluated (Australia. CFFR 2018a, p.17).

STATE AND TERRITORY-LEVEL POLICY AND STRATEGIES

Various strategy documents and plans have been issued by the States and Territories. The following is a brief summary and critical comment on the current strategies and plans.

VICTORIA

The current strategy document from the Victorian Government is *Victoria's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan* (Victoria. DHHS 2018), an effort criticised as being less of a homelessness strategy and more a refocus on inner-city 'rough sleeping'. However, though the Action Plan was clearly a response to the abortive street protests about homelessness in the CBD in 2016, the broader Victorian approach to homeless is more nuanced, balanced, and substantial. The key policy directions are 'intervening early to prevent homelessness', 'providing stable accommodation as quickly as possible', 'support to maintain stable accommodation' and 'an effective and responsive homelessness service system'. The Action Plan referenced significant funding for a range of initiatives including $2.8m to expand The Geelong Project from four to seven schools in Geelong. Victoria has adopted the Home Stretch agenda for supporting a cohort of 250 young people leaving care.

NEW SOUTH WALES

New South Wales has issued several documents, *Foundations for Change* (NSW Government 2016) followed by the *NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023* (NSW Government 2018) which emphasises a commitment to early intervention. The NSW Strategy is focused on three key areas:

- Prevention and early intervention – 'Build a mainstream service system that is able to intervene early to prevent homelessness and break disadvantage';
- Better access to support and service – 'Increase access to supports, including housing, that prevent homelessness and re- entry into homelessness'; and
- An integrated person-centred system – 'Create an integrated, person- centred service system'.

Children and young people are an identified priority group – 'Ninety per cent of young people experiencing homelessness have witnessed violence in their home, 60 per cent have been in out of home care (OOHC), and 50 per cent have a reported mental health issue. Young people leaving OOHC who left school in Year 9 or 10 are 32 per cent more likely to access SHS compared to those who completed Year 12' (NSW Government 2018 p.9).

The NSW Strategy has provided $4.7m of funding for two pilot COSS Model sites over four years – The Albury Project and The Mt Druitt Project – under what is called the Universal Screening and Support Project.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

South Australia's *Homeless to Home: South Australia's Homelessness Strategy 2009-2013* (South Australia. Department for Families and Communities 2011) has been largely superseded by the Adelaide Zero Project, a plan involving 30 organisations committed to a 2020 target to achieve functional zero homelessness in the CBD of Adelaide – 'working to end street homelessness in Adelaide' (Adelaide Zero Project 2018). This South Australia project is modelled on the city ending homelessness plans in the USA and heavily influenced by leading US advocate Roseanne Haggerty. A discussion paper issued in August 2017 (Tually, Skinner et al. 2018), highlighted the fact that Haggerty, who had been the 2005 Thinker in Residence, had in 2016 'effectively issued the challenge to Adelaide to end street sleeper homelessness by application of the Functional Zero approach in the local context' (p.10). This was represented as a first step toward ending all homelessness in Adelaide and ultimately SA. Reducing the number of people sleeping rough in the CBD is not the same as reducing homelessness especially when homelessness is understood, as it is in Australia, as a much broader range of situations than just rooflessness. Other concerns about the Adelaide Zero Project are (a) that a sprawling suburban city such as Adelaide is modelling its response to homelessness on the street sleeping response on US mega-cities with large populations living in the city; (b) the fact that homelessness is defined more narrowly in the US than Australia; (c) that a focus on rough sleeping in the CBD is conceptually blind to a broader ecosystem approach to the problem of homelessness that includes a major effort on prevention and early intervention; and (d) that homelessness is not just a problem of housing. Well-organised and strongly supported though the Functional Zero project appears to be, it is out of step with much of what is being planned in other jurisdictions. More recently, SA has issued the *Our Housing Future 2020-2030 Strategy*, with five key strategies: 1) creating conditions of a well-functioning housing market that meets the housing needs of all South Australians; 2) Reduce housing stress through 20,000 affordable housing solutions; 3) create housing pathways to enable people to access housing and services as their needs change; 3) Prevent and reduce homelessness through targeted and tailored responses; and 5) Modernise the social housing system and reposition it for success.

QUEENSLAND

Queensland's current plan, *Partnering for Impact to Reduce Homelessness in Queensland* (Queensland. Department of Housing and Public Works 2018), as a component of the Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027, emphasises 'early intervention' and supportive housing initiatives as central tenets. The Government promised that 'beyond our commitment to five-year funding, we will consolidate and expand efforts towards homelessness prevention and early intervention, supportive housing and improving pathways out of homelessness'. In terms of housing options for young people, two new foyers are planned for the Gold Coast and in Townville, while the existing Logan Youth Foyer will be expanded. The other proposition of relevance to youth homelessness is the commitment to 'trial a place-based case management approach across schools, youth services and homelessness services to support young people at risk of homelessness' (Queensland. Department of Housing and Public Works 2018 p.5). The consultation funded by the Queensland Government and undertaken by the Queensland Youth housing Coalition (QYHC) in South-East Queensland to determine the readiest communities for implementing the COSS Model has been completed and recommended at least one pilot site.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

In Western Australia, the Department of Communities is leading a process for developing a whole-of-community 10-year strategy plan to address homelessness in that state. The summary report (WA. Department of Communities 2019) highlights service providers responses to an online survey which includes their call for increased crisis accommodation and outlines the three 'focus areas' that require high-level of change over the life of the upcoming Strategy: creating sustainable pathways out of homelessness, which includes an increase of crisis and short-term transitional accommodation; prevention and early intervention, which will consider supporting the Home Stretch agenda; and transforming the existing homelessness service system to create an integrated, person-centred system.

A SUMMARY OF HOMELESSNESS POLICY IMPLEMENTATION ACROSS THE STATES AND TERRITORIES

While there is commonality among these States, there is also a disturbing extent of divergence amongst the jurisdictions – commitments to early intervention are evident in some State and Territory plans, but barely mentioned in others where rough sleeping has been given a greater focus. The overall national response to homelessness would be hugely strengthened by working to an agreed national strategy, as is done in other high priority areas of social policy (Report Card, MacKenzie & Hand 2019).

THE ROLES OF THE COMMONWEALTH AND STATES/TERRITORIES

There has been considerable debate around COAG, amongst some public administration academics and through several parliamentary inquiries about how Commonwealth State relations might be reformed. In September 2010 the Senate established a Senate Select Committee on the Reform of the Australian Federation to inquire into and report on the 'key issues and priorities for the reform of relations between the three levels of government within the Australian federation' including the distribution of powers and responsibilities, financial relations, the cooperation between the different levels of government and how regional services might be improved. Much of the debate around these issues and advocacy focused on tax reform. A major problem is Australia's high Vertical Fiscal Imbalance compared to other federations whereby the Commonwealth Government raises more in taxes than this level of Government needs to directly expend and the states/territories spend more on services for which they are constitutionally responsible than the taxes they raise in their own right. Various transfers of money from the Commonwealth to the states in the form of Commonwealth grants or special purpose payment serve to redress the Vertical Fiscal Imbalance but without solving the problem more fundamentally. There is a consensus that there is a problem but not a consensus about solutions.

In 2014, the Abbott Government set up a Taskforce in PM&C to produce a White Paper and in the lead up to that, five issues papers: Overview and key issues (paper 1); Housing and Homelessness (paper 2); Health (paper 3); Education (paper 4), and Financial Relations (paper 5). The Terms of reference set down six design principles for considering how the roles and responsibilities of the different levels of government could be assessed. These were:

- accountability for performance in delivering outcomes, but without imposing unnecessary reporting burdens and overly prescriptive controls;
- subsidiarity, whereby responsibility lies with the lowest level of government possible, allowing flexible approaches to improving outcomes;
- national interest considerations, so that where it is appropriate, a national approach is adopted in preference to diversity across jurisdictions;

- equity, efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery, including a specific focus on service delivery in the regions;
- durability (that is, the allocation of roles and responsibilities should be appropriate for the longer-term); and
- fiscal sustainability at both Commonwealth and State and Territory levels.

These design principles are relatively straight-forward with the exception of 'subsidiarity' that can be defined as 'that responsibility for particular areas should rest with the lowest form of social organization capable of performing the function effectively', however, in the Australian context this concept has proven difficult to operationalise. Constitutional change is not deemed a fruitful course to take and by most stakeholders not considered likely. The idea that the different levels of government should raise the bulk of the money needed for their expenditure responsibilities which was an implied position of the Abbott Government seems unrealistic. Raising taxes, especially the GST, kicked off a fraught and acrimonious debate between various states and the Commonwealth. Finally, financial transfers are too often politicised by whichever party forms the federal government which injects a degree of instability into fields of service delivery such as community services and unnecessary issues into legitimate arguments about accountability, equity, efficiency, and effectiveness.

Education was embroiled for a lengthy time in consideration of how Commonwealth and state funding of Education should be conceptualised and arranged and ultimately how to calculate levels of funding to offset horizontal disadvantaged. The Gonski debate did not quite achieve a solid consensus but it did reach a relatively calm and pragmatic equilibrium through negotiations between the Commonwealth and the states.

The paper on Health provides a good overview of the major debate about how the Australia's universal health and medical system, with both public and private components, can be funded and organised to be more efficient and effective.

Issues Paper No. 5 on *Housing and Homelessness* is directly relevant to 'homelessness' and the terms of reference of the Inquiry. The Paper provides excellent summaries of policies and programs across housing and homelessness together with some questions about could be reformed to improve outcomes. Joint funding of housing and homelessness takes place under one of the consolidated Commonwealth-state agreement, in this case the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (2018).

Federal systems of government involve some complex issues of power and resource distribution between the different levels of government. These are the issues and challenges of multi-level governance [MLG]. For debate in Australia, a major reference is to what has been tried and practiced in the EU, and although each federal context has its own profile of features, there are similarities as well. The reality of multi-level governance is 'continuous negotiation amongst nested governments at several territorial tiers' (Marks 1993:392)

The questions that have framed the issues do open up some of the key questions in the important areas of Education, Health and Housing and Homelessness as well as the problem of fiscal imbalance. However, in terms of housing and homelessness, what is missing is a critical commentary about what the options are or what possible answers there might be.

The following diagram from the Issues Paper summarises the roles and responsibilities of the Commonwealth and the states and the extent to which they currently overlap.

Figure 8: Summary of Commonwealth and State/territories roles and overlaps

Area	State and Territory role	Commonwealth role	Overlaps
Policy	*Shared lead* Oversee policies that directly affect the housing market (land release, zoning, land taxes). Social housing and homelessness policy.	*Shared lead* Oversees policies that indirectly affect the housing market (migration, tax settings, financial services regulation). Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) policy. Influences national social housing, homelessness and Indigenous housing policy.	*High* Both levels of government share responsibility for policy to address housing affordability pressures.
Funding	*Shared lead* Fund social housing and specialist homelessness services. Funds grants and concessions for first home buyers.	*Shared lead* Provides funding to States and Territories for social housing and homelessness services. Funds the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS). Funds CRA. Funds Commonwealth homelessness programmes.	*High* Both levels of government jointly and separately fund housing assistance and homelessness programmes.
Delivery	*Lead* Oversee delivery of housing and homelessness services (often provided by non-government organisations).	*Secondary* Typically not involved in delivery of housing services. Delivers CRA payments to individuals. Limited direct involvement in homelessness services.	*Low* Limited overlap in delivery of individual programmes.
Regulation	*Lead* Regulate housing (community housing, tenancy management, planning, land release and zoning). Local governments also regulate residential planning and construction.	*Secondary* Regulates NRAS.	*Low* Little regulatory overlap.

Key

Who leads: Lead, Secondary, Shared lead

Level of overlap: High, Medium, Low

Source: Reform of the Federation White Paper – Roles and responsibilities in housing and homelessness, Issues paper No2, December 2014.

The area of shared policy is weak. While the states and territories have responsibility for the administration of homelessness services, the funding for these services comes under the overarching national Housing and Homelessness Agreement. There are some articulated priority cohorts and issues in the agreement but little guidance on what a strategic approach might look like or what the balance might need to be between prevention/early intervention and crisis services. The fact that the different state and territory jurisdictions vary so much in what they are doing is perhaps a result of this looseness. The point is not to be prescriptive rather it is about what strategies should be implemented and in what ways to yield effective outcomes. The White Paper, *The Road Home* (2008) issued by the Rudd Government was an influential policy framework that still shapes and informs policy thinking in Australia. However, a policy framework is not a developed strategy for reducing and ending homelessness in Australia.

12 APPENDIX 4: A CRITIQUE OF THE PRESENT HOMELESSNESS SERVICES SYSTEM

There has been some commentary about why homelessness is not being adequately addressed; why the number of homeless people continues to increase and why the cost of responding to homelessness continues to rise. It has been said that 'homelessness is the failure of other support systems' – this is partly true; also, that 'homelessness is caused by structural factors and we don't change these factors so homelessness continues' – also partly true; or that 'homelessness is because there is not a sufficient supply of affordable housing' – again partly true; or 'our crisis service every night is forced to turn away people seeking assistance' – a fact, but what does this mean in a larger context? There is not a lot of disagreement about these problematic issues but the challenge is what to do about them – that is where we have failed, a failure by governments of both political persuasions and over a long period of time and a failure by the community sector to actively press for a reformed system of service delivery.

12.1 SERVICE SYSTEMS OPERATE IN DEPARTMENTAL SILOES WITH SEPARATE TARGETED PROGRAMS

Over many years, commentators from the community sector, researchers and public servants have pointed out the endemic problem of Australia's siloed service systems.

- Bromfield and Holzer (2008) commenting on the problems of child protection service systems in Australia, concluded that the problem is not only because of a lack of services for children and families, but because the service system is designed as completely separate organisations and agencies, in effect, 'silos' and 'a siloed service system further compounds disadvantage and exclusion'.
- Rebecca Fry, the Manager of Service System Innovation at the Centre for Community Child Health, Royal Children's Hospital argues that 'One of the major challenges for Australia today is to make the change from traditional models of 'siloed' service delivery, which no longer serves the needs of children and families, to a stronger, more integrated system of support services for families' (Laidlaw et. al. 2014).
- The Smith Family, in its submission to the Productivity Commission's Inquiry Report, Introducing Competition and Informed User Choice into Human Services: reforms to Human Services, commented that the 'issues faced by disadvantaged people and communities are complex and people needing service support can be involved with multiple parts of the service system to achieve an outcome. Family and community services can often not be separated from the broader service system, each part of which works to a set of separate, siloed outcomes. At present, our service system is characterised by erratic and often incoherent approaches to policy, service design and data collection and analysis across levels of government' (Field 2019).

12.2 THE HOMELESSNESS SERVICES SYSTEM IS PREDOMINATELY CRISIS-ORIENTED

This is a general observation which applies as much to services for homeless young people as any other services that provide assistance and supported accommodation to people who are homeless or about to become homeless.

- The AHURI report, Redesign of a homeless service system for young people, draws the picture of a 'homelessness service system (that) is largely crisis-oriented, made up of crisis and transitional services funded through bilateral agreements that sit under the NHHA – the SHS system' (MacKenzie, Hand et. al, 2020, p.76). Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) are agencies funded to provide assistance

to people, adults and children who seek help due to the fact that they are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless.

- This is also true in Canada and the USA as in Australia, as highlighted by the Homeless Hub:

> *Currently in Canada, emergency response is the prime focus of homelessness services in most communities. These emergency services include homeless shelters, drop-ins, meal programs, outreach services and other activities provided by municipalities, non-profit and community organizations and faith communities. One of the consequences of this, however, is that people become trapped in homelessness for an extended period of time. Services that were meant to provide short-term and temporary "band-aids" to a problem become institutionalized, long-term solutions to the crisis of homelessness. (Homeless Hub https://www.homelesshub.ca/solutions/emergency-response)*

The key point is that crisis services and an expanded crisis/emergency services system cannot possibly reduce and end homelessness. There will always be a role and a need for crisis services, but unless there is a focus on both prevention/early intervention and post-homelessness support and housing which are more beneficial and cost effective, the rolling back of the problem will not occur.

12.3 SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION FOR YOUTH IS NOT STRONGLY LINKED TO PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION/TRAINING AND/OR EMPLOYMENT

- Young people who become homeless while still at school are highly likely to leave school early before completing Year 12. Young people who leave school early may experience long-term even lifelong disadvantage and are more vulnerable to homelessness later on.
- About one quarter of Australia's 19-year-olds have not completed Year 12 or its equivalent. Adults aged 25-44 year-olds from 2001-2014, who left school without Year 12 or equivalent, and who had not managed to recover their education by the age of 24 years, remained disadvantaged for the rest of their lives (Lamb & Huo 2017).
- Some six to seven out of every ten Australians who ever need to seek help from Specialist Homelessness Services, left school before completing Year 12 and never recovered their education (MacKenzie et al. 2016).
- Early school leaving has been and largely still is framed as 'a school problem' while youth homelessness is framed simplistically and erroneously by many as purely 'a housing problem'.

12.4 THE PROBLEM OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS FOR DISADVANTAGED YOUTH, INCLUDING HOMELESS YOUTH

There have been programs targeting support to young people who need help to re-engage in education and training and get on a pathway to employment. However, in Australia, the link between education, training and employment pathways, and supported accommodation and youth housing has been relatively weak and poorly developed.

A fundamental premise of all support programs for vulnerable young people is that whatever support is delivered should include a commitment to ensuring that young people remain engaged on an education/training pathway that leads to some viable vocational outcome and ultimately employment.

12.5 THE ADVOCACY AND DEVELOPMENT OF FOYERS IN AUSTRALIA AS A HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE

In 2008, the National Youth Commission into Youth Homelessness (NYC 2008) explicitly proposed the funding of Foyers, as one promising model for linking education, training, and supported pathways to employment with supported accommodation. In France and the United Kingdom, Foyers were developed as an employment/unemployment response, whereas in Australia, Foyers have been advanced as a homelessness/youth housing response.

- Over the past decade, Foyers have been established in most jurisdictions and there are now some 15 Foyers or Foyer-like projects which have been developed to support about 500 16-25 year olds at-risk of homelessness or recovering from homelessness.
- The singular architectural advantage of the Foyer model is the strong commitment to education/training and/or an employment pathway as a primary criterion for deciding which disadvantaged, at-risk, or homeless young people are selected as residents. Historically in Australia, the provision of homelessness services (formerly SAAP) has been separate from programs designed to re-engage young people in education, training and/or employment.
- One issue is whether Foyers should be constructed as congregate facilities or a dispersed set of units connected to a nearby community hub? Also, can the foyers be scaled-up to become a substantial part of the youth housing and support sector, given that foyer projects depend on special project funding and are an expensive option (Steen and MacKenzie, 2014). The agencies operating foyers are strongly advocating for more investment in foyers.
- Another issue is whether Australian Foyers should strictly provide a pathway for young people recovering from homelessness or take in a wider population of at-risk youth. The Australian Foyers do not appear to be strongly linked to Specialist Homelessness Services as young people leave supported accommodation.
- There is not a great deal of evidence from evaluations to conclude that Foyers are highly effective models for homeless young people leaving homeless services. A serious attempt at evaluating the efficacy of a foyer model is a longitudinal study of the Education First Foyer (Coddou et.al. 2019, p.1), although questions have been raised about claims that the Education First Foyer 'substantially improves participants education, housing and health and wellbeing outcomes and that these improvements are largely sustained a year after exist' (MacKenzie, Hand et.al. 2020).
- Critical support for the Foyer model argues that foyers should be closely linked to young people leaving homelessness services if funding for foyers remains a part of the homelessness response in Australia.

12.6 EARLY INTERVENTION TO STEM THE FLOW OF YOUNG PEOPLE INTO HOMELESSNESS IS UNDER-DEVELOPED

Early intervention in relation to youth homelessness was first raised in the mid-nineties and was highlighted in the Morris Report (1995), adopted as a key theme by the Prime Minister's Youth Homelessness Taskforce in 1996, which subsequently produced the Reconnect Program. In 2008, the Commonwealth Government White paper, *The Road Home*, advanced 'turning off the tap' as one of three key policy perspectives – a metaphor for early intervention. Yet virtually nothing was done to turn off that tap. Reconnect continued but little attention was given to what early intervention might mean for different cohorts within the homeless population. The theme of early intervention remained in state and territory policy documents, again with little attention to making a significant investment in early intervention measures. There has been some promising community-level experimentation notably *The Geelong Project* and *Kids Under Cover*, both Victorian initiatives, and mounting advocacy for more action around early intervention. It should be noted though that there appears to be belated interest from several Australian governments to do something about early intervention and turn policy rhetoric into practical initiatives.

12.7 THE PROBLEM OF YOUTH HOUSING OPTIONS

Most adolescents do not become homeless due to a housing problem, rather it is typically problems within their family that can be complex but often involve conflict, abuse, and violence. However, if a young person becomes homeless and there is no practical and realistic way of achieving an early intervention and a return to their family of origin or another member of the extended family, then they certainly do have a housing problem. Entering the labour force after leaving school early is also an issue because young people who need employment to be able to afford to live independently are competing with a large number of post-secondary students, who are not facing homelessness, but who need to work casually or part-time. Overlaying these issues is the general fact that young people have needs that relate to their stage of life development and maturity. This is one of the reasons that many young people who have to exit the Care and Protection system at 18 years of age have problems achieving an independent lifestyle and estimates of the proportion who experience homelessness after leaving care varies from 30-60 per cent.

Young people, aged 15-24 years, who receive assistance from the Specialist Homelessness Services each year comprise about 16 per cent of all clients, and yet make up about 3 per cent of main residents of social housing properties.

Commonwealth Rental Assistance is available for young people on Newstart or Youth Allowance or a Disability Support Pension. According to the 2019 Productivity Commission report into Government Services, there were 122,416 individuals or couples receiving rent assistance but nearly 6 out 10 (57.4%) were in 'housing affordability stress', which is more than any other age cohort or special needs group. This in large measure reflects the lower levels of Newstart and Youth Allowance benefit payments compared to age or disability support pensions (https://www.ahuri.edu.au/policy/ahuri-briefs/why-are-young-people-on-commonwealth-rent-assistance-experiencing-housing-affordability-stress). Rent assistance does provide some financial support but it does to address the other needs of young people who are attempting to live independently. Specialist Homelessness Services provide support while someone is experiencing a homelessness crisis and assistance to move into a situation where they are not homeless, but for young people, the ongoing life-stage support that they need is problematic.

The concept of Housing First is that people experiencing homelessness should be rapidly rehoused and other issues resolved subsequently through the provision of support for their needs.

13 APPENDIX 5: BUILDING BLOCKS OF REFORM? – SOME KEY INNOVATIONS

There is a trend towards place-based service delivery, although there is wide variation across Australian jurisdictions. In terms of what this submission argues, the reform would be more than a few tweaks or simply a new program; it would be a paradigm shift from the status quo of siloed programs to a place-based approach based on community collectives and collective impact. However, there are innovations already tried and tested that can be harnessed in this system change process.

13.1 REGIONAL AND METROPOLITAN PARTNERSHIPS VICTORIA

The Regional Partnerships initiative (November 2015) was designed to harness the input and local understanding of issues and need to the Governments decision-making processes. The thinking embodied in the initiative was firstly giving communities a voice 'about the aspirations and goals they have for their regions' and a genuine sense of being 'empowered to improve their region … (feeling) … confident that the actions they drive are delivering the results they desire'.

The case for change documented in the Regional Review responded to expressed views that regional actors did not see 'a clear pathway into government decision-making for the priorities and problems they identified'. Also there was a recognition that 'there were some limitations in the ability of the current governance arrangements to deliver better outcomes for regional communities' and that needed to change, but how?

The new approach was designed to 'enhance regional leadership' and give 'regional communities more say and build stronger connections with government' by:

- Connecting regional priorities and regional investment opportunities directly with the Victorian Government's decision-making processes.
- Ensuring all ministerial portfolios across government – from education to transport, health, justice and planning – are addressing rural and regional problems, with a strong focus on creating jobs and tackling disadvantage.
- Creating opportunities for local communities and individuals to have a greater say about the issues of importance to them.
- Bring(ing) together representatives from local business, education, social services and community groups with the three tiers of government.
- Build(ing) on the work already done by existing regional leadership groups, including Regional Strategic Plans.

The objective is for regionally identified priorities to have 'a direct and clear pathway into the resourcing decisions made by departments and Ministers' with a view to collaboratively working with government to design new policies and program initiatives.

From 1 July 2016, Regional Partnerships were formed in nine regions of rural and regional Victoria, and in 2019, the model was extended to Metropolitan Partnerships following community assemblies in 2017 and 2018.

These changes wrought via the Regional Partnerships initiative can be regarded as a part of 'a broader shift in thinking across government' towards a place-based approach to service delivery, whereby the public service is not the only or even the major provider of services and programs.

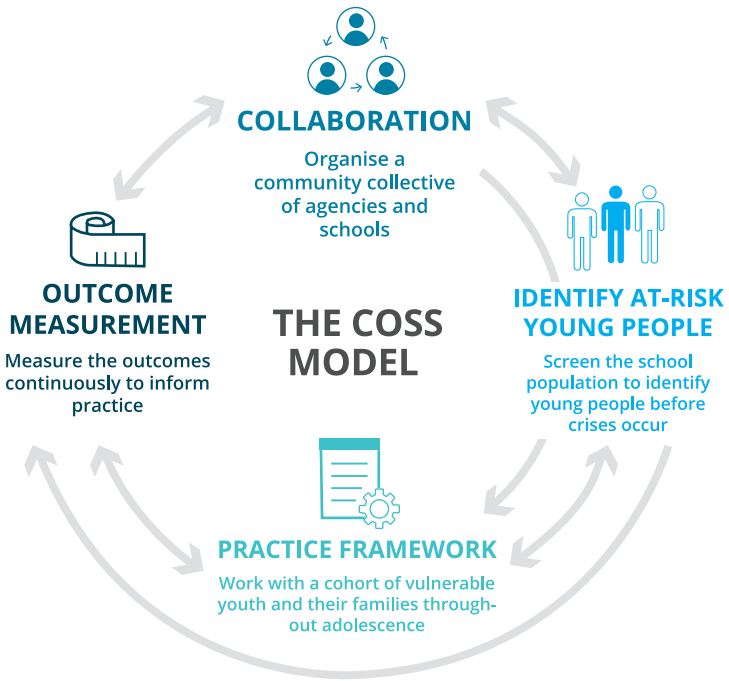
13.2 THE COSS MODEL – 'THE GEELONG PROJECT'

The Geelong Project is an exemplar of collective impact achieving significant early intervention outcomes for disadvantaged, at-risk, and homeless young people.

The COSS Model is a place-based model for supporting vulnerable young people and families to help where family issues are heading towards a crisis and possible homelessness and to reduce disengagement from education and early school leaving as well as other adverse possible outcomes. The results achieved by The Geelong Project of a 40 per cent reduction in adolescent homelessness, and at the same time, a 20 per cent reduction in early school leaving has demonstrated what a place-based approach is capable of achieving and this is what has generated interest nationally and internationally (MacKenzie, 2018).

The COSS model of early intervention is an exemplar of what is being called 'collective impact' in which key local stakeholders collaborate deeply on a common vision and agenda, with shared data, a new form of governance and operational organisation as well as a backbone staffing for the community collective (Hand & MacKenzie 2019; MacKenzie 2018). A key innovation of the model is population screening for risk and then working efficient and systematically with the entire at-risk cohort through secondary school and beyond until a pathway to employment has been firmly established (Hand and MacKenzie, 2019).

Figure 9: COSS Model – community of schools and services model of early intervention



COLLABORATION: The COSS Model builds a community collective of schools and services;

IDENTIFY AT-RISK YOUNG PEOPLE: There is an innovative methodology for identifying risk and incipient issues;

PRACTICE FRAMEWORK: The practice framework is flexible and tiered so that what support is delivered is both an effective use of resources and more efficient;

OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT: There is an embedded strong component of data monitoring within the collective and an embedded evaluation of outcomes.

The success factors of the COSS model seem to be:

- Local community leadership in one of the participating key stakeholders, ideally a lead agency able to deliver a crisis response but also responsible for the early intervention support work;
- The construction of a formalised community collective through a community building process – a community collective of key stakeholders;
- A population screening methodology and early intervention practice that proactively can identify vulnerable youth and families prior to the onset of crises;
- A flexible practice framework that can efficiently manage proactive support to at-risk youth and their families, while still able to be effectively reactive when crises do occur;
- A single-entry point into the support available through the local service system for young people in need;
- A data intensive approach to risk identification, monitoring, and outcomes measurement (using Sir Michael Barber's 'deliverology' (Barber, Kihn et al. 2011); and
- A strong adherence to the five core tenets of Kania and Kramer's model 'collective impact' framework.

In May 2018, the Victorian Government invested $2.8m to expand The Geelong project from three to seven schools. The COSS Model has attracted major media attention in Australia and overseas, as well as international interest and collaboration under the collective rubric 'Upstream'. Developmental work is underway in Canada, the United States, and Wales in the UK. There are three COSS sites under development in Canada and two funded sites in the US, in Seattle and Minnesota with interest for a third in the San Francisco Bay area. In Wales, the Minister announced a £10m investment in 'early intervention' referencing The Geelong Project and work is underway within this funding envelope to build a full implementation of the COSS Model.

13.3 SOCIAL HOUSING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE – MY FOUNDATIONS YOUTH HOUSING CO. – HOUSING FIRST FOR YOUTH – INNOVATION IN NSW

Individual young people comprise about one-fifth of all clients of homelessness services in Australia, and yet they occupy less than three percent of the social housing tenancies in Australia.

The provision of social housing for young people has been a major failure in social policy in Australia. What is needed is a rethink of social housing and a move away from social housing as 'welfare' housing – and major social housing investment and policies such as taxation reform and mandated social housing as part of all private housing developments.

A key change would be not to reject bringing disadvantaged young people into social housing on the ground that they should not be in social (i.e. welfare) housing, but see social housing more as a form of transitional housing for young people rather than a lifetime destination, and not as residual 'welfare housing'.

The formation of the My Foundations Youth Housing (MFYH) company in NSW, as potentially a national provider, is a break-through, although a relatively small player at this point-in-time in the social housing marketplace. Major government investment will be needed to create a significant youth-specific and youth-appropriate housing sector throughout Australia.

The concept was the development of a youth-specific social housing provider – a property manager, the My Foundations Youth Housing Company working in partnership with youth agencies that provide support to the company's social housing residents in the community. This stock includes a pilot program known as Transitional Housing Plus, a support model premised on a gradual preparation of young residents for independent living in private rental properties. Rents are increased over a five-year period to the market rent in the community of residency (Interview with MFYH CEO article, MacKenzie and Hand, 2020).

Over the first five years, MFYH has gone from three staff, an operating revenue of $300,000, 74 properties and 100 tenants to 15 staff, operating revenue of $4.8m, 500 properties under management and 650 tenants 'housed with support available for those who want and need it'. Nearly all residents (95%) are engaged with support services and about 85 per cent are engaged in education and training and/or employment. The company was created to eventually expand Australia-wide, but for to happen requires continued government investment through public housing stock transfers and a realistic share of new social housing investment funding, as well as private co-investors willing to partner with MFYH.

Over the past decade, there have been a series of foyer projects built in Australia. The signature value of this model is that accommodation and support is linked with a commitment to education, training and employment pathways. Unfortunately, the unit cost of the model, as it has been currently implemented, is high and it is not clear that the foyers have strictly admitted young people leaving homeless services. If Foyers are to make a more significant contribution to Australia's homelessness response, then lower cost models of dispersed units around a community hub would be a more attractive option and foyer intakes would need to be more strictly connected to young people leaving crisis and transitional homelessness services.

A priority is the development of a youth-specific and youth-appropriate social housing sector as both a preventative measure, but also as a way of delivering rapid rehousing for young people who have become homeless. All youth housing and homelessness hubs should be 'foyer-like' and supportive of education, training and employment pathways. The Housing First for Youth model proposed in Canada is close to MFYH social housing.

13.4 OPENING DOORS – ENTRY POINTS INTO THE SHS SYSTEM - VICTORIA

In the Victorian system, The Opening Doors Framework, also called just 'Opening Doors', provides a limited number of access points into the Specialist Homelessness Service system in each region. The aim is a more coordinated response that after assessing needs, prioritises and connects people to the appropriate services and resources. Each region has an access point and most of the 19 Victorian transitional housing managers, or THMs, are an access point. In addition, there are some specialist entry points in some regions for women, youth, or Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples. The entry points operate within Local Area Services Networks, or LASNs. At entry points, Initial Assessment and Planning (IAP) Workers make an assessment of housing and support needs and have the capacity to pay for emergency accommodation or rent arrears or make a referral to the most appropriate or available Specialist Homelessness Service in the area. IAP workers are able to provide advice on housing options, assistance to material aid, help with applications for private rental or public housing and generally advocate on behalf of homeless and at-risk individuals with government agencies or real-estate agents consumers (for example, with Centrelink, the Department of Health & Human Services, or real estate agencies). There is some variation in how the Opening Doors Framework works across the regions, but generally the access system is well established and accepted.

There are only a few community-based youth entry points. The Youth Entry Point operated by Barwon Youth Child & Family (BCYF) in Geelong has been incorporated into a broader system change around early intervention. The lead agency of 'The Geelong Project' operates the Geelong Youth Entry Point and this is regarded as an asset for the development of the 'community of services and schools' (COSS) model of early intervention. In Shepparton, the regional social housing provider, Beyond Housing, is responsible for the youth entry point in Shepparton and this is generally regarded as working well. The Bridge Youth Service operates a range of programs and the transitional housing for young people and The Salvation Army operates the crisis refuge in Shepparton.

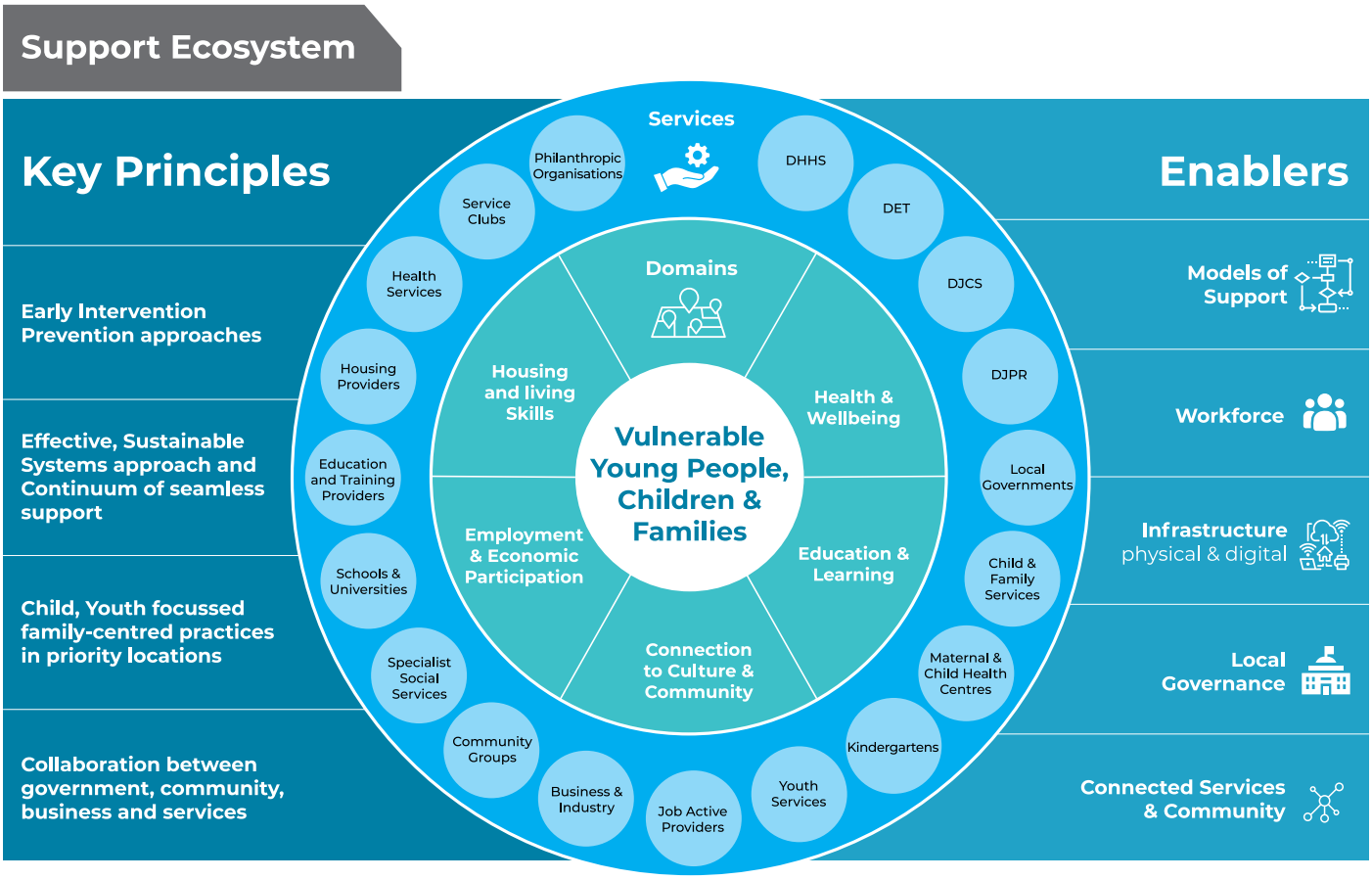
The community-based youth entry points in Victorian must be acknowledged as a successful innovation that has been operating since 2008. Most other state and territory jurisdictions have not developed local entry points. In terms of youth homelessness, a small network of entry points linked to crisis services, COSS Model responses and local social housing accessible by young people would be an element of systemic reform (Department of Human Services, Victoria 2008).

13.5 THE VICTORIAN LOCAL LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT NETWORKS – A PLACE-BASED ASSET

Another well-established Victorian innovation are the Victorian Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) which is a state-wide network of 31 incorporated associations established in 2001 by the Victorian Government to support pathways for young people through the education and training sector into employment. The goal of each of the Victorian LLENs is to improve outcomes for young people, by increasing opportunities for their participation, attainment, and successful transitions in education, training, or employment. The Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN) have two core aims:

- to engage in community building through cooperative approaches to community renewal and coordination of service delivery; and
- support and build shared responsibility and ownership for the transition of young people through their formal years of schooling to their post-school destinations which are likely to comprise a mix of ongoing education, training and employment

Figure 10: Continuum of Support for Vulnerable Youth & Families 'Continuum of Support'



Source: Barwon Regional Partnership Social Outcomes Working Group

LLENs have a particular focus on young people who are at-risk of disengaging, or who have already disengaged from education and training and are not in full time employment. LLENs bring together employers, schools, training organisations, and others, to help the complex process of ensuring that all young Australians are supported to aspire to, and achieve, the best possible education, training, and employment outcomes. The base funding for a Victorian LLEN is about $390,000 per annum.

The Geelong Region LLEN has played a very important role in the Barwon Regional Partnership work that has been engaged in advancing the reform agenda that is the subject of this submission. The building of a community consensus around concepts such as the Continuum of Support and the Ecosystem of key partners has had a seminal significance.

The above figure represents the Geelong community collective's representation of how the Geelong Ecosystem can be understood as it works to support the transition journey of vulnerable children, young people and families. The key principles show how deeply the developmental work has been influenced by the idea of a collective impact. The enablers point to some of the engineering work that has been involved so far, including:

- evidence-based models of support strongly influenced by the social determinants of health;
- workforce development;
- new structures and processes of collective governance;
- infrastructure such as youth housing options; and
- digital capability to support a more complex cross-sectoral ecosystem in which services are connected as collaborating participants in the community collective.

The LLENs have endured over time, with modifications to their focus based on the changing needs of their communities and the agendas of governments, but they remain an important asset if Australian jurisdictions are to go down the reform path advocated by this submission.

13.6 PRIME PROVIDER MODEL – A DIFFERENT WAY OF SUPPORTING AND MANAGING INNOVATION AND SYSTEMIC DEVELOPMENT

The following information on prime provider models is taken from the Brotherhood of St Laurence report 'The Prime Provider Model: An opportunity for better public service delivery' (May 2014).

Prime provider models operate in a range of health and welfare sectors. In Australia, a prominent lead provider model is the Communities for Children (CfC) initiative operating in 45 disadvantaged communities across Australia. Other examples of prime provider approaches in Australia include headspace and Partners in Recovery. The Brotherhood of St Laurence has been involved in developing innovative service models that operate within a prime provider framework.

The prime provider models in Australia tend to be locally based, partnership-type approaches delivering services to a specific client group. Many have been initiated by community or not-for-profit organisations rather than being driven by government. In contrast, internationally, prime provider models have been driven by government and developed as large-scale, commercial contracts that have attracted significant interest from large, for-profit companies. For example, the estimated cost of the UK Work Programme is £3 billion to £5 billion over five years (Finn, 2013).

The perceived benefits of prime provider models for government include greater coordination of local specialist providers, reduced administrative costs and enhanced opportunities for innovative service delivery resulting from economies of scale. The challenges for government in these approaches relate to the hollowing out of capabilities and provider or market failure. In addition, prime providers themselves are faced with challenges relating to managing potential risks and liabilities as well as contract and performance management.

From the experience of the Brotherhood of St Laurence, some of the perceived benefits of prime provider models for the not-for-profit sector include the capacity to scale up innovative programs, opportunities for partnerships and collaborations with other organisations and communities, and enhanced capacity to garner community support and involve volunteers and service users in delivery. The challenges for the not-for-profit sector lie particularly in reputational risk, the potential squeezing out of smaller not-for-profit providers in larger, commercial contracts that require a high level of capital, and managing changing expectations from government when public servants struggle to adapt to a new regime wherein knowledge gathering and service monitoring is predominantly undertaken by the prime.

There are precedents for this model in Australia. The prime provider models so far introduced in Australia tend to be smaller scale, more community-based, partnership models focusing on specific sub-groups of the population:

- **Communities for Children**, focused on families and children and funded through the Department of Social Services http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/programs-services/family-support-program/family-and-children-s-services
- **Headspace** for young people experiencing mental health issues, funded through the Commonwealth Department of Health http://www.headspace.org.au/about-headspace/what-we-do/what-we-do
- **Partners in Recovery** for people with severe and persistent mental illness with complex needs, funded through the Commonwealth Department of Health https://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-pir

The examples of Australian prime provider models of funding and implementation are also variously described as consortia models, partnership approaches or local service franchises.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) has led the way proposing and successfully operating three innovative service models funded by Commonwealth and state governments and delivered through BSL as the prime provider. These are:

- **Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)**: a home-based parenting and early childhood enrichment program that develops the foundations for learning in the home during children's crucial early years, contributes to successful school participation and offers parents a supported pathway to employment and local community leadership
- **Work and Learning Centres**: a place-based approach aimed at improving participation in the labour market for disadvantaged jobseekers, particularly those living in public housing
- **Saver Plus:** a matched savings program developed by Brotherhood of St Laurence and ANZ that aims to assist people on low incomes to build their financial knowledge, establish a long-term saving habit, and save for their own or their children's education.

The BSL report provides detailed case studies of the prime provider models applied in the three examples above with some discussion of the potential benefits, challenges and possible dis-benefits.

An important learning from COSS sites The Geelong Project and The Albury Project is that success depends on communities organising for change and that a change process is developmental and not something that can be imposed on a community. This is rather different from how programs are typically rolled out even when the roll out is staged. A community has to be ready and organised prior to being funded to implement the COSS Model and deploy 'youth and family workers' to undertake the interventions that may be required. Efficient development requires a considerable input of backbone support. How do we move from the entrenched existing system to a community-based 'collective impact' approach as demonstrated in *The Geelong Project*?

An important premise of this proposed place-based collective impact agenda is the creation of a change agency or bridging organisation to support change outside of government programs, while working in close cooperation with governments. System change requires change agency to be delivered external to the communities and organisations undertaking the change. The formation of Upstream platforms in Australia, Canada and the USA is based on the premise that change agency work needs to be delivered over an extended period and removed from the exigencies of politics and electoral shifts.

14 APPENDIX 6: CONCEPT BRIEFS

UPSTREAM AUSTRALIA

CONCEPT BRIEF

2019

A 'COMMUNITY OF SCHOOLS AND SERVICES' MODEL OF EARLY INTERVENTION [THE COSS MODEL]

DAVID MACKENZIE AND TAMMY HAND

Too many young Australians leave school early and early school leavers comprise a significant disadvantaged cohort within the Australian population. Poor educational outcomes and early school leaving impacts future employability and employment options and increases the risk of homelessness. These outcomes have life-long consequences for young people across the areas of health, housing, education, employment, services, and other opportunities.

This is not 'just a school problem' and most factors that negatively affect young people's risk for early school leaving and/or homelessness are factors outside of school, mainly factors concerned with family characteristics.

Many current projects and programs are not achieving significant outcomes for at-risk cohorts of young people and agencies are often hindered by agency-centric thinking which limits meaningful system change. The current youth service system is also biased heavily towards crisis intervention which does not work to reduce or prevent issues, such as youth homelessness.

Another problem of the service system, including schools and education, is that certain activities and services are funded and delivered strictly within departmental silos. Cross-sectoral cooperation is difficult and talk of a whole-of-government approach remains largely at the level of rhetoric. There is growing interest in the potential for locality-based approaches to achieve better outcomes through an overhaul of many of the existing support systems.

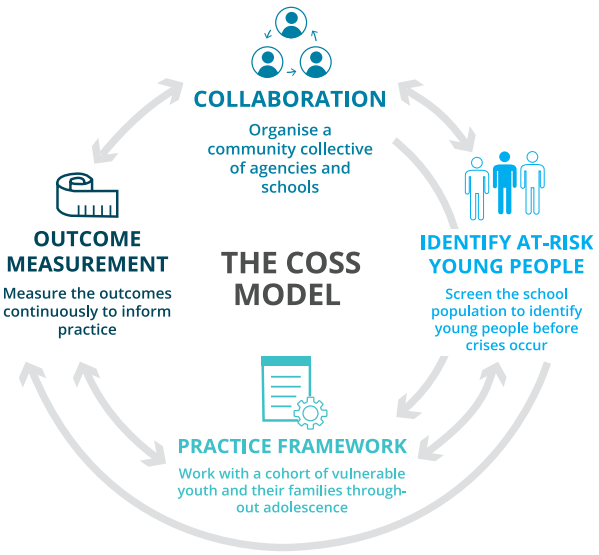
THE COSS MODEL

The 'Community of Schools and Services' (COSS) Model is an innovative early intervention service-delivery and reform-orientated model for addressing and supporting vulnerable young people and their families to reduce disengagement from education and early school leaving and to help where family issues are heading towards a crisis and possible homelessness as well as other adverse outcomes (MacKenzie 2018).

The COSS Model takes a place-based systems approach for maximum efficiency (MacKenzie & Hand 2019) and represents a raft of innovations to realise a more effective early intervention system for addressing vulnerable youth.

The COSS Model, set out in Figure 1, consists of four foundations: community collaboration; early identification; the practice framework and early intervention support work with families; and a robust, embedded longitudinal monitoring and measurement of outcomes. These foundations comprise a significant reform of the local service system of support available for vulnerable young people and their families.

Figure 1: The COSS Model



THE COSS MODEL FOUNDATIONS

Community Collaboration

The first foundation is 'community collaboration' or collaborative referral decision-making by school welfare staff and early intervention workers through a single point of entry. While there is formality involved in making referrals, as far as possible the decisions about making a referral and what level of support might be appropriate are made jointly. Referral decisions are data and evidence driven.

Achieving collective impact depends on local service systems change. New agency relationships, governance structures, and processes are required to formalise the community collaboration through Memorandums of Understandings (MOUs) and Terms of Reference. Schools and youth agencies may be funded through different departments and operate in different sectors, yet through a process of community development and supported by the systemic backbone support offered by Upstream Australia (Hand & MacKenzie 2019), it is practically possible to overcome the barriers of siloed programs on the ground.

The term collaboration is widely used to describe any kind of cooperative behaviour, whereas it should be reserved for the highest level of cooperation possible and this is what is required for genuine collective impact, as required under the COSS Model. Importantly, establishing community collaboration is a necessary condition for being able to change the local support system available for vulnerable young people and families.

Identification of at-risk young people: population screening for risk

The second foundation of the COSS Model is population screening for risk using a series of indicators on the Australian Index of Adolescent Development (AIAD) survey instrument combined with local knowledge from schools and a brief screening/engagement interview. This methodology allows risk to be rigorously assessed and a pre-crisis response appropriately delivered.

All students participate in the screening process not just a select 'at-risk' group. This enables hidden populations of risk to be identified and then supported.

The present youth service system is primarily crisis-oriented along with cognate post-crisis programs. Effective early intervention for vulnerable young people needs to be able to reach at-risk young people and their families before the onset of crises.

Practice Framework

A flexible and responsive practice framework is the third foundation of the COSS Model with three levels of response - 'active monitoring', 'short term support', and 'wrap around' case management for complex cases. Casework support is not required for every young person where family issues are evident and where there is a level of risk of homelessness or early school leaving. What support is needed varies from one point in time to another. The flexibility of the local COSS early intervention platform is a key to achieving efficiencies.

The effectiveness and efficiency of the actual support work with vulnerable young people is what ultimately achieves the outcomes possible under the COSS Model. Family dysfunction, which can cover a wide range of complex issues, means that working with a young person also involves working with their family members. When case work is required, it is a youth-focused and family-centred case management approach for those who need major support involving the young person, their family, schools, and agencies working together from the same care plan. The capacity of a COSS early intervention platform to operate flexibly and longitudinally is a key to achieving service delivery efficiencies and well as improved outcomes.

Outcome Measurements

Embedded longitudinal outcomes monitoring and measurement is the fourth foundation of the COSS Model. A strong approach to the measurement of outcomes is central to the model. Remediating family dysfunction may serve to avert early home leaving and the onset of homelessness, but at the same time, addressing family issues contributes to reducing early school leaving and the amelioration of other problems as well. Family factors contribute in large measure to poor educational outcomes. Current approaches within education to addressing disadvantage are unable to significantly affect these family factors, which may explain why school completion rates have shifted very little since the late 1990s (Victorian Auditor-General Office 2012).

A whole of community approach to outcomes for young people looks at the entire community cohort of vulnerable young people and monitors what has been achieved over time. This contrasts with the current agency-focused approach which assesses agencies against putative targets and often with a weak approach to meeting the need in a community overall.

LOCAL ENGINEERING AND SERVICE SYSTEM REFORMS

It is not so much that many communities have insufficient resources. Some do, but in others which are well provisioned with services, it is the way the current system works, or more to the point does not work, that is the main issue. The service delivery framework and methods of the model outlined above are underpinned by some important 'engineering' and local service system reform in place or under development.

There is also a large body of evidence on school dropout or early school leaving where students leave school before completing secondary education. In terms of what can be done to overcome educational disadvantage, the policy focus has largely been on framing the issues as a set of educational problems that require schools to adopt a range of effective strategies. Even when it is conceded that family issues contribute a major amount to the problem, the advice on parents tends to be what schools might do better. In terms of improved educational outcomes, the COSS Model requires school improvement but also a major reform in how support is provided to vulnerable young people and their families - hence the forming of new local, place-based, institutions of schools and services that inter-links schools and agencies through effective collaborative governance structures, formal community partnering, and hybrid practices. This is deep collaboration around a common vision and agenda, with shared data and decision making - not an agency-focus or a program-focus but a community-focus.

Data sharing and an 'e-Wellbeing cross-sectoral data base' that provides shared 'real time' information and tracks young people's progress longitudinally through secondary school and even beyond – under development. No vulnerable young people fall through the cracks.

Integrated inter-professional development and training. This is school staff and community sector workers learning from each other and learning together to realise a collaborative culture. Collaboration on the ground between workers and teachers as well at higher levels.

A strong sophisticated approach to outcomes measurement. A core foundation of the COSS Model is a strong measurement of outcomes longitudinally and across the community in which young people live, go to school, or seek employment. This is how to measure whether we are 'making a difference' as opposed to the more simplistic program-focused way that outputs and outcomes are usually reported.

The COSS Model requires a process of community development by local stakeholders to reform the local 'on the ground' support system for vulnerable young people, not just a plug-in new program.

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UPSTREAM AUSTRALIA

CONCEPT BRIEF

2019

COSS: ACHIEVING COLLECTIVE IMPACT

DAVID MACKENZIE AND TAMMY HAND

Complex or 'wicked' social problems in Australia or elsewhere cannot be solved through traditional models of service-based program delivery. The proof of this proposition is that so little change in terms of real outcomes has been achieved despite to expenditure of large amounts of public money. Collective impact initiatives are better able to deal with complexity - working to address wicked social problems.

WHAT IS COLLECTIVE IMPACT?

Collective impact (CI) was first articulated by Kania and Kramer in their seminal 2011 article as "the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem". While the goal of collaboration in the human services sector is not new, CI initiatives are distinctly different from the status quo of programs, by having a "centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants" (Kania & Kramer 2011:36-38).

Collective impact is derived from current knowledge about the most effective way to address complex social issues. Theory and evidence from related fields suggests that 'collective impact' is a promising approach to addressing complex, or 'wicked' social problems, that potentially address change at several levels. Kania and Kramer (2013:9) articulate the five core defining conditions of collective impact:

1. Common Agenda: all participants have a shared vision for change including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed actions.

2. Shared Measurement: Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensure efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable.

3. Mutually Reinforcing Activities: Participant activities must be differentiated whIle still being coordinated through mutually reinforcing plan of action.

4. Continuous Communication: Consistent and open communication is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.

5. Backbone Support: creating and managing collective impact required a separate organization(s) with staff and a specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and coordinate participating organizations and agencies.

As with many newer concepts in the community services, various claimants have popped up espousing 'collective impact', apparently having been doing collective impact all along. If only that were so.

However, most of these so-called collective impact initiatives fail to implement the five core conditions rigorously and do not incorporate a strong measurement of outcomes, and thus have not contributed to producing a rigorous evidence base

to support its effectiveness.

THE COSS MODEL ACHIEVES COLLECTIVE IMPACT

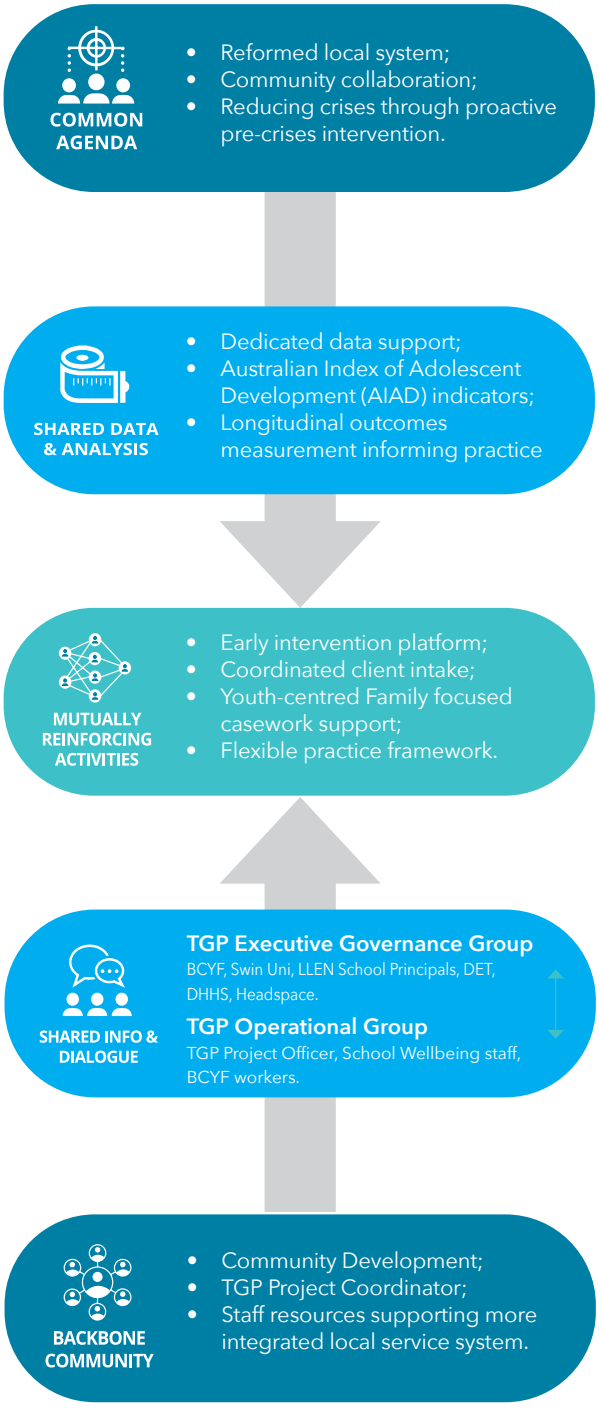
The 'Community of Schools and Services' (COSS) Model of early intervention is an innovative and reform-oriented approach to addressing youth disadvantage – addressing social and educational outcomes for young people – via a service-delivery approach (MacKenzie 2018) which takes a place-based systems approach for maximum efficiency (MacKenzie & Hand 2019).

The COSS Model is a leading exemplar of a collective impact initiative in which a community's support resources work collaboratively to a common vision and practice framework using the same data measurement tools. The COSS Model requires two levels of backbone support - at the local level, backbone support is provided by a dedicated project coordinator whose role is to support the operation of the community collective locally, with Upstream Australian providing the systemic backbone support to all COSS communities, both funded and initiative groups, at local, regional, national, and international levels (Hand & MacKenzie 2019).

Unlike other so-called collective impact initiatives, the COSS Model meets all five key conditions, as outlined in the diagram below using The Geelong Project as the specific COSS initiative. Implemented rigorously and fully, collective impact represents a new paradigm for service delivery and support in the community, a major shift away from the current status quo of targeted and siloed social and educational programs.

ACHIEVING COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Five Core Conditions of Collective Impact: The Geelong Project



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UPSTREAM AUSTRALIA

CONCEPT BRIEF

2019

THE COSS MODEL: SYSTEMIC BACKBONE SUPPORT

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BACKBONE SUPPORT IN COLLECTIVE IMPACT INITIATIVES

Collective impact (CI) was first articulated by Kania and Kramer in their seminal 2011 article as "the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem" and outlined the five core defining conditions of collective impact (Kania & Kramer 2013:9), as summarised below.

While the goal of collaboration in the human services sector is not new, CI initiatives are distinctly different from the status quo of programs, by having a "centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants" (Kania & Kramer 2011:36-38). Collective impact initiatives are better able to deal with complexity - working to address wicked social problems, such as youth homelessness.

Collective impact is not able to flourish in practice without backbone support. Backbone support is a person and/or an entity that functions independently of the service provision team(s) to sustain the CI initiative, and to support the collective efforts. Backbone support organisations are one of the five core conditions for collective impact and require staff with specialised skills to be able to support the community collective (Kania & Kramer 2011).

The necessity for backbone support lies in the difficulties of creating and managing CI initiatives as time and resources are needed to effectively coordinate several groups towards working on a shared goal. Collaboration without backbone support can be dire: "The expectation that collaboration can occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most frequent reasons why it fails" (Kania & Kramer 2011:40).

SHOULD BACKBONE SUPPORT BE PROVIDED BY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS?

Another issue is whether systemic backbone support could be provided authentically through departmental programs. Departments manage contracts and provide a range of support particularly within an accountability framework. Managerial power and accountability working within the rules that departments must adhere to, cannot at the same time provide backbone support, which needs to be open, agile, and capable of doing 'whatever it takes' to support the development of a

community collective. Ultimately collective impact moves beyond a suite of programs inserted (by departments) into communities and this implies two areas for change - a cross-sectoral approach to funding and new methods of monitoring outcomes (Hand & MacKenzie 2019).

SYSTEMIC BACKBONE SUPPORT UNDER THE COSS MODEL

The 'Community of Schools and Services' (COSS) Model of early intervention is an innovative and reform-oriented approach to addressing youth disadvantage – addressing social and educational outcomes for young people – via a service-delivery approach (MacKenzie 2018) which takes a place-based systems approach for maximum efficiency (MacKenzie & Hand 2019).

In the COSS Model, at one level, backbone support is provided by a dedicated project coordinator whose role is to support the operation of the community collective locally. But, if a 'community of schools and services' model of early intervention, which implies major change in how local service systems work, is to be implemented systemically, another level of backbone support is needed over the duration of the system change process.

To provide this systemic level of backbone support, Upstream Australia (a consortium between Youth Development Australia Ltd and the University of South Australia), was created to undertake the research and development activities, and to manage and coordinate the data collection and data sharing on behalf of, and as a partner in, the COSS community collectives. The role of Upstream Australia is a research role that is embedded in a movement for change – very applied research - not a university research centre or a service delivery agency, but a new kind of bridging organisation designed for research and development that uses data in real-time to inform practice at the community level (Hand & MacKenzie 2019).

Specifically, Upstream Australia provides backbone support to funded COSS sites, including data management, data matching, and outcomes measurement, and community developmental aid to initiative groups in communities working to build COSS collectives. Altogether, as well as data management and outcomes measurement, the backbone support to all COSS initiatives includes administrative, logistic, strategic, and planning activities to enhance fidelity, gain access to funds and resources, reporting, and activities required to build and support the extended community of practice. Upstream Australia is an ex-officio collaborative partner in the community collectives but bound by the ethics and requirements of collaboration.

Turner et al (2013) argue that in order for backbone organisations to successfully achieve their vision and function, they need to pursue six activities to "support and facilitate collective impact which distinguish this work from other types of collaborative efforts":

1. Guide vision and strategy
2. Support aligned activities
3. Establish shared measurement practices
4. Build public will
5. Advance policy
6. Mobilize funding

The systemic backbone support provided by Upstream Australia traverses these six activities as demonstrated by the range of flexible and responsive activities undertaken which operate to support and build the local COSS collectives and their capacities, not impose topdown authority.

Note: This document draws from Hand, T. & MacKenzie, D. (2019) 'Data Matters: Using data in a collective impact research and development project and the backbone role of Upstream Australia', *Parity*, 32(6).

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