

EDUCATIONfirstYOUTHfoyer

Civic Participation Offer Conceptual Framework



Brotherhood of St Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty



IT'S TIME TO END
HOMELESSNESS





On the cover

'Six Degrees of Separation' by Miss Christinaray Nadya Weetra
(Warumungu, Arrernte; b. 1992, Darwin, NT)

'Just like the meaning of the painting's name I wanted to show how everything around us is connected to each other, how we go to the same places as the people before us. That's why I did children, women and men sitting around the meeting ground, in each and every place, to represent a type of cycle we all go through.'

EDUCATIONfirst**YOUTH**foyer

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Emma Cull
Diane Brown
Shelley Mallett
Sally James

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The Education First Youth Foyer Civic Participation Offer Conceptual Framework has been developed in partnership by the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Hanover Welfare Services, which in July 2015 merged with HomeGround Services to form Launch Housing.

A downloadable PDF of this Conceptual Framework is available @ efyfoyers.org.au.
Printed copies are available from:

Brotherhood of St Laurence

t +61 3 9483 1183

f +61 3 9417 2691

e info@efyfoyers.org.au

w www.bsl.org.au

Authors Ms Emma Cull, Ms Diane Brown, Dr Shelley Mallett and Ms Sally James @ BSL

Managing Editor Jane Yule @ Brevity Comms

Design and print management Svetlana Andrienko @ [stuartpettigrewdesign](http://stuartpettigrewdesign.com)

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The Education First Youth (EFY) Foyer’s practice approach, including the Civic Participation Offer, has been greatly inspired by the work of Colin Falconer, Director of Innovation and Strategy at the United Kingdom (UK) Foyer Federation. An extraordinarily innovative and creative thinker, Colin shared his ideas in a spirit of great generosity, openness and dialogue. His ideas have inspired Hanover Welfare Services (now Launch Housing*) and the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) to seed and develop a uniquely Australian version of Open Talent, in collaboration with the UK Foyer Federation, which is embedded in each of the 6 Service Offers (see opposite page).

The EFY Foyer Civic Participation Offer also draws on the PERMA model (see p. 4) developed by Professor Martin Seligman (2011) and adopted and modified by Geelong Grammar School (GGS) into a Positive Education framework. PERMA is drawn from extensive and diverse research in the broad field of

positive psychology. In the GGS context it is embedded into the pedagogy and school culture. Reflecting this influence on our thinking, the EFY Foyer’s description of PERMA draws on the extensive and comprehensive work of GGS.

We would also like to extend our thanks to the Education First Youth Foyer Service Development team and those staff who attended meetings, engaged in discussions and provided feedback on the content of this conceptual framework.

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**Please note:* Hanover merged with HomeGround Services in July 2015 to form Launch Housing. This publication, and subsequent published material related to the EFY Foyers, will refer to Launch Housing rather than Hanover.

Abbreviations

BSL	Brotherhood of St Laurence	EFY Foyer	Education First Youth Foyer
CRIL	Certificate of Recognition of Informal Learning	GGS	Geelong Grammar School
DI	Developing Independence	TAFE	Technical and Further Education
DHS	Department of Human Services (Victorian Government)	VCAL	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
		YDW	Youth Development Worker

About the EFY Foyer 6 Service Offers Conceptual Frameworks

A key component of the Education First Youth Foyer Model is the provision of 6 Service Offers in the areas of:



Education

Creating a bridge to mainstream education for young people



Employment

Providing young people with access to real-world work experience and job opportunities



Health and Wellbeing

Focusing on developing young people's capacity to thrive



Social Connections

Encouraging thriving relationships that support young people to achieve their goals



Civic Participation

Facilitating young people to give back to their community



Housing and Living Skills

Assisting young people to access and sustain housing

The inclusion and development of these 6 Offers in the EFY Foyer Model is grounded in research and practice evidence that highlights the role of these domains in facilitating young people's successful transition to adulthood.

Conceptual frameworks have been developed for each of the 6 Offers, which provide an addendum to the EFY Foyer Practice Framework.¹ They detail the different components and processes of each Offer, the rationale for their development and delivery, and demonstrate how the Offers link to each other and to the broader EFY Foyer Model and the Open Talent (OT) approach currently being used in the EFY Foyers.

As such, they provide a more detailed understanding of the rationale behind the development and delivery of the Service Offer components of the model and the evidence base upon which they are built.

This conceptual framework for the Civic Participation Offer also outlines the practice model, the operational approaches and some of the tools that can be used to implement this particular Offer. It is designed for use by EFY Foyer practitioners, educators, those developing and delivering youth services and other stakeholders, including government and non-government agencies, businesses and philanthropists.

¹ S. Mallett, S. James, N. McTiernan & J. Buick 2014, *Education First Youth Foyer Practice Framework*, Hanover Welfare Services and Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL), Melbourne.

The EFY Foyer Model

Developed by the BSL and Launch Housing, with funding from the Victorian Government, the EFY Foyer Model is currently being piloted in three Victorian EFY Foyers – at the TAFE (Technical and Further Education) campuses of Holmesglen, in the eastern Melbourne suburb of Glen Waverley, at Kangan, in the northern suburb of Broadmeadows, and at Shepparton in central Victoria.

The Model has a number of key features that differentiate it from other Foyers in Australia and overseas:

- 1 Education First** – Engagement in education and/or training is the priority. Stable accommodation and support are the means to facilitate young people's engagement in education and employment.
- 2 An Open Talent** approach – EFY Foyers embed an Open Talent approach in all practices, processes and tools from the development stage. Founded on advantaged thinking this approach promotes and builds young people's skills and capacities.
- 3 A multidisciplinary, 24/7 staff team** – Who work to coach and develop young people rather than adopting a traditional case management approach.
- 4 Mainstream** – EFY Foyers prioritise engagement in mainstream education and services, as demonstrated by:
 - their location on TAFE campuses, which ensures they are comparable to other university-style student accommodation
 - their engagement with the 6 Service Offers.
- 5 Viable Model** – With student accommodation for 40 people, EFY Foyers have sufficient scale to ensure:
 - the financial viability of the Model
 - the potential for replication and reform to programs for youth in transition
 - the ability to attract philanthropic and corporate funding, resources and opportunities.

6 Evidence informed – Developed, implemented, reviewed and evaluated with reference to available evidence on the experience, needs and good practice models for young people.

7 Governed through 'top-down and bottom-up' partnerships – This includes essential government departments: Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Department of Human Services (DHS), community service agencies, education and training institutions, employer bodies, local government, business, service clubs and philanthropy, and community programs. These partnerships are underpinned by key, signed-off agreements.

Key terminology

Why language matters

How we view and value young people in the wider society influences the way we work with them, which in turn influences their ability to access opportunities and resources. If we consider engagement in education, employment and independent housing as critical achievements for transitioning young people, then service offerings designed to realise these outcomes are crucial –and changes to public perceptions about young people will follow. Conversely, if we define young people as at risk, provide crisis management and report on crisis interventions, this provides wider society with a very different view of them.

The following key terms provide an overview of some of the terminology used by those involved with the EFY Foyers to develop and promote the capacities, talents and potential of young people.

Advantaged Thinking

Advantaged Thinking is a shift in the way we think about, and respond to, young people experiencing disadvantage and exclusion. It is a shift away from deficit, disadvantaged or problem-saturated thinking and acting, towards identifying, developing and, most importantly, investing in the skills, capabilities and assets of these young people.

Through the EFY Foyer's 6 Service Offers young people's skills are identified, developed and invested in to enable them to build sustainable livelihoods. The goal is to build young people's capacity to make positive decisions in their lives and to think and act on their own behalf. It is reflected in the language that EFY Foyer staff use when having conversations with, and describing, the young people with whom they work.

Open Talent

The Open Talent approach was developed by Colin Falconer of the Foyer Federation in the UK and is founded on the understanding that everyone has talents and abilities – not just those people in elite sporting, artistic or academic programs – and that not all of these talents are recognised or valued in the same way. For some, especially those struggling to transition to adulthood, there has been little or no investment in building their talents or skills. Open Talent asserts that instead of investing in these young people's problems, the community needs to re-direct investment to building and nurturing their abilities and harnessing them for personal as well as social good.

Service-connected

To avoid the language of disadvantage, a key term introduced in this document is 'service-connected'. This term is used to describe young people who, as a result of disadvantage, are clients of the State and/or are supported by the community services system (e.g., DHS, Centrelink and/or Department of Justice).

This term is considered to be a more accurate and positive descriptor of a young person than terms like 'disadvantaged' or 'disconnected'. It is a temporary descriptor as it is the aim of the EFY Foyer for students to transition to independence so that they will no longer be 'service-connected' but 'independent young people who are connected' to mainstream community resources, their peers, places of employment and/or institutions of learning.

Family-connected

The term 'family-connected' is used across the 6 Service Offers to differentiate between young people who are service-connected and supported and those who are primarily connected and supported by their families. Family-connected young people represent the majority of youth in Australia – they have 'good enough' support and are largely independent from the welfare system. They have a safe and stable family home, at least one parent, guardian or relative on whom they can rely and turn to for support, a social and/or professional network they can utilise if required and relative economic security.

Mainstream services

The term 'mainstream services' refers to services that are available to the general community and typically designed, delivered funded and/or regulated by government. This includes health services such as hospitals and GPs, as well as specialist mental health services, State schools, TAFEs and public universities, national job service agencies and careers curriculum delivered in schools and available on careers websites.

Mainstream education

'Mainstream education' includes both compulsory and post-compulsory education. It includes those opportunities that are State regulated, government supported, and designed for the educational development of young people. For example, both primary and secondary State schooling are regulated by the Victorian Department of Education, funded by the Victorian Government and designed specifically for children and young people aged 5–18.

Mainstream education also includes post-compulsory, tertiary opportunities that are government supported and facilitated by formal, accredited educational institutions, for example, TAFEs, universities and apprenticeships/traineeships, but not private colleges.

Co-design

Each of the 6 Service Offers has been co-designed, peer reviewed and delivered in partnership with key community or business partners. 'Co-design' refers to a collaborative development and design process to ensure that the proposed initiatives and outcomes are realistic and tangible.

Shared delivery

The 5 Key Partnerships of the EFY Foyer Model – Business, Government, Services, Community and Philanthropy – provide the foundations for shared-delivery of the EFY Foyer program to, and good outcomes for, students. Developing quality, purposeful and sustainable partnerships is core to the EFY Foyer model, and this is actualised by actively sharing delivery of services and outcomes.

The aim of a shared-delivery model is to ensure that students are included and engaged in mainstream services and programs, as opposed to being relegated to community-delivered alternatives. It is therefore critical that the EFY Foyers and staff do not provide and deliver all of the requisite activities, services and programs to students, but rather that a number of key external partnerships are developed to share their delivery across each of the 6 Service Offers. This will serve to broaden students' networks, increase their social and personal capabilities, and work against welfare or service dependency.

PERMA (Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Achievement)

PERMA is a Positive Education framework that is drawn from the positive psychology movement, in particular the work of Martin Seligman.² The EFY Foyers have adopted a version of PERMA based on the Geelong Grammar School (GGS) model,³ which focuses on six key domains for optimal wellbeing: positive emotion, positive engagement, positive health, positive purpose, positive relationships and positive accomplishment. The EFY Foyer has adapted this GGS model and created its own key domains – the 6 Service Offers.

Flourishing

Flourishing is the end goal of the PERMA model, with the six associated domains of PERMA central to the promotion of flourishing. Quite simply, flourishing refers to feeling good and doing good; it is the sense that life is going well, even in the face of difficult emotions, circumstances or experiences.⁴ At EFY Foyers, students should be flourishing when they are happy, have strong social relationships, can identify and reach their goals, are confident and valued by others, and can give something back to their community and others.

Health

The World Health Organization defines health as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'.⁵

Wellbeing

Wellbeing is defined as the experience of good mental, physical, emotional and social health, and the 'ability to have a good quality of life'.⁶ Wellbeing is a subjective experience that is related to experiencing good health.

² M. E. P. Seligman 2011, *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Wellbeing – And How to Achieve It*, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, London.

³ Geelong Grammar School (GGS) 2013, 'Model for Positive Education'. Available at: <http://www.ggs.vic.edu.au/School/Positive-Education/Model-for-Positive-Education>.

⁴ Seligman 2011, op. cit.

⁵ World Health Organization (WHO) 1946, *Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization*, WHO, Geneva.

⁶ R. Anderson 2012, 'What is health and wellbeing?', *Training Journal*, May:28–32

Introduction to the 6 Service Offers

Purpose of the 6 Service Offers

Each of the 6 Service Offers are stand-alone programs within the Education First Youth Foyer Model, but are all also interconnected. Through their engagement with the Offers, Foyer students will build the foundations for a sustainable livelihood through:

- developing their talents, skills and qualifications to further their personal goals and aspirations
- accumulating an Address Book of contacts and networks that builds their social capital and social connection
- developing the understanding, skills and capacities needed to thrive.

Each of the Offers invests in structural and individual level interventions to achieve these aims. This includes access to training, activities, opportunities, networks and resources that are flexibly delivered and tailored to each student's needs and aspirations over their time in the EFY Foyer and after they leave.

Common features of the 6 Service Offers

The 6 Service Offers are all structured around the key components of the EFY Foyer Model and, as such, each share the following features.

Underpinned by an Open Talent and Advantaged Thinking approach

The OT and Advantaged Thinking approaches articulate a new way of working with young people who have experienced disadvantage. Both approaches invest in the potential of young people by providing opportunities that foster the development of their talents and abilities.

In the EFY Foyers, OT and Advantaged Thinking are operationalised through the 6 Service Offers. The Offers focus on developing young people's assets, on co-creating solutions, and on providing real jobs, real education and real community connections.⁷ The 6 Offers integrate individual, familial, communal and structural ways of working to achieve sustainable outcomes for young people.

Providing real-world and mainstream opportunities

Each of the 6 Service Offers is grounded in providing 'real-world' and 'mainstream' opportunities. 'Real-world' opportunities are those that are readily available to young people who are family-connected, but which are often denied to those who experience homelessness and disadvantage. Many young people who are estranged from their families are also excluded from mainstream services. The EFY Foyer connects these young people to mainstream services and opportunities including, but not limited to: mainstream education delivered at expert and high-quality institutions; informed careers advice, work experience and meaningful employment; and physical health and recreation activities (e.g., gyms, sporting teams, specialist classes). These opportunities are considered vital to enabling young people to thrive.

⁷ Mallett et al. 2014, op. cit.

Co-designed, shared delivery and facilitated by 5 Key Partnerships

Diverse, strong and effective community connection and partnerships are essential for the Foyer to deliver real-world opportunities to students through each of the 6 Service Offers, and to leveraging access to resources, extended networks and services. The 5 Key Partnerships of the EFY Foyer model – Business, Government, Services, Community and Philanthropy – provide the foundations for the development and shared delivery of services and outcomes to students.

In addition to the provision of resources and opportunities, these partnerships are critical to the design and delivery of each of the Offers, which are co-designed, peer reviewed and delivered in partnership with an expert institution, organisation or business.

Fostering mutual accountability

Together, the 6 Service Offers constitute a program of activities and opportunities at the EFY Foyer that are formalised in a reciprocal ‘something for something deal’ between students and the EFY Foyer staff. ‘The Deal’ is an agreement between the young person and the EFY Foyer that activates the rights and responsibilities of both parties. Students are primarily accountable for remaining engaged in education, training and employment, contributing to the wider community and for responsibly maintaining their accommodation within the Foyer. The EFY Foyer is responsible for promoting a safe and secure environment that gives students access to opportunities, resources and networks to enable them to use their talents and to make personal change.

The reciprocity inherent in ‘the Deal’ expresses shared ownership of the Foyer program. By holding high expectations of the students, ‘the Deal’ demonstrates that young people are valued citizens with something to offer the community. It also provides them with opportunities to advocate for policy and program change. As such, ‘the Deal’ aims to empower students and promote the transition to independence.

Providing a core skill set

In addition to opportunities, networks and resources, young people need key skills, assets, attributes and character capabilities to make the transition to adulthood and to flourish. These skills are needed to participate in education, in work and in the broader community. Through engagement with the 6 Service Offers, students will develop core personal and social skills, as well as capabilities that foster agency. A range of practical skills relevant to each particular Offer will also be developed. Each of the Offers will contribute to, and reinforce, the development of particular skills while also demonstrating their use in a range of contexts.

Education First Youth Foyer Key Partnerships

B Business

S Services

P Philanthropy

G Government

C Community

Part 1: Overview and Rationale of the Civic Participation Offer

This conceptual framework outlines a new Civic Participation Offer geared towards young people who are experiencing disadvantage. It sits alongside the five other Service Offers, all of which have been created with the voices and needs of service-connected young Australians front and centre.

The concept of civic participation is closely related to ideas about both active and social citizenship. It has been defined as ‘individual or collective actions in which people participate to improve the wellbeing of communities or society in general and which provide opportunities for reflection’.⁸

Feedback from young people suggests that participation can reframe the way that they see their communities and their worlds. For example, one young Indigenous man’s reflection on his community illustrated an increased sense of pride and ownership:

I ride past the skate park and see it and think, ‘I was on the youth council that organised to build it!’ (Townsville, male)⁹

It has also been noted that civic participation includes ‘the exercise of rights and responsibilities as well as some concern for the state and shared fate with one’s fellow citizens’.¹⁰ Fundamentally, youth civic participation is ‘characterised by agency on the part of young people, as well as collective action towards social change that is youth-led and directed’.¹¹

Although political engagement is an element of civic participation, it is no longer limited to traditional forms

of involvement, such as membership of a political party. Current perspectives on civic participation, particularly among young people, reflect innovative ways of questioning and engaging with conventional forms of politics. One no longer has to be directly engaged in politics to be politically active, rather, engagement is seen as anything from voting to signing an online petition.¹²

Young people today are participating as citizens in new and non-traditional ways. Social media and new technologies have transformed how young people access information about the world and social issues, as well as the way in which they take action. For example, one young woman who was concerned about ‘immigration, and definitely the greenhouse effect and about water; our drought is really a big issue’ found it helpful to discuss these issues with other young people from different countries in a chat room:

I like to go into these debating forums, and those are really good because they’ve got people from all over the world, so we can see how they do it like in England and all that, we’re still seeing some very good input on homosexual and gay marriages. That was really interesting. (Sally, 18, Monash)¹³

⁸ Innovations in Civic Participation 2010, *Youth Civic Participation in Action: Meeting Community and Youth Needs Worldwide*, Innovations in Civic Participation, Washington, DC, p. vi.

⁹ A. Vromen & P. Collin 2010, ‘Everyday youth participation? Contrasting views from Australian policymakers and young people’, *Young: Nordic Journal of Youth Research*, 18(1):97–112, 106.

¹⁰ A. Shaw, B. Brady, B. McGrath, M. Brennan & P. Dolan 2014, ‘Understanding youth civic engagement: Debates, discourses, and lessons from practice’, *Community Development*, 45(4):300–16.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 302.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ A. Harris, J. Wyn & S. Younes 2010, ‘Beyond apathetic or activist youth: ‘Ordinary’ young people and contemporary forms of participation’, *Young: Nordic Journal of Youth Research*, 18(1):9–32, 26.

Social media is used for activities such as raising awareness about issues or causes, generating debate within the broader media, raising money through mediums such as crowd funding and expressing political views.

Young people today want to be engaged with their communities on a local, national, international and global level and are finding new ways of becoming involved and connected. It is critical that they are able to determine their own ways of participating and that these are recognised, acknowledged and supported.

“ Social media and new technologies have transformed how young people access information about the world and social issues...” ”

1.1 Overview of the Civic Participation Offer

Vision

The Civic Participation Offer supports all EFY Foyer students to engage in community activities and to become active and valuable members of their community so they can develop a positive purpose in their own lives and contribute to improving the lives of others and the broader society in which they live.

Purpose

The purpose of the Civic Participation Offer is to facilitate young people's active participation in their community. This is vital if they are to build social capital and connections, but it will also provide them with an understanding about the social, civil and political mechanisms of society. EFY Foyer students are supported to advocate on their own and others' behalf, and to recognise themselves – and to be recognised – as an active and valuable member of the community with rights and responsibilities. In addition to contributing to a socially inclusive society, civic participation contributes to creating a positive purpose in the lives of EFY Foyer students and gives them agency over their own lives and the communities in which they live.

Rationale

In the past decade, there has been a widely held perception that young people are increasingly 'apathetic' and 'disengaged', and that their engagement in civic and community life has declined significantly. This perception is held even more strongly for those young people at the margins of society who are often perceived to have 'opted' out, and are viewed not only as disengaged but as disaffected and even actively antagonistic towards civic society.

While there have been some attempts at a policy and program level to engage young people as citizens, much of this effort has been delivered either through the mainstream schooling system, sporting clubs or after school activities. Consequently, young people experiencing homelessness or disadvantage are often excluded from accessing these activities, not necessarily by choice, but because they have left school early, lack the necessary financial resources and/or have poor social connections and social capital. Furthermore, rather than being encouraged to become active citizens, those at the margins are often compelled to participate in society in ways that are not of their choosing; for example, pre-determined compliance 'community' activities that are linked to welfare payments.

This Civic Participation Offer encourages service-connected young people to engage in the community by facilitating self-directed opportunities that enable them to understand their rights and responsibilities within the community, and to develop a positive sense of purpose.

The Civic Participation Offer is based on evidence that:

- **All young people have equal rights to access opportunities provided by mainstream and universal services** – including education, employment and community resources – regardless of their background.
- **Young people experiencing disadvantage often have limited access to community or family resources**, which can affect their ability to access services, to secure an education and economic livelihood, and to engage as active and valued citizens. As a consequence, they can become trapped in a cycle of isolation and exclusion.
- **Engagement in community activities for the benefit of others can foster a positive purpose in life**, by providing young people with a central vision or mission and a sense of directedness. Having purpose has also been linked with positive physical and psychological health outcomes.

- **Empowering young people to become advocates for themselves and others** helps create understanding about the social, civic and political mechanisms of society and engagement in its processes.
- **Building young people's capacity for social, civic and economic participation** helps to promote a more efficient economy, an inclusive and thriving society and individual wellbeing.

Supporting civic participation through a shared delivery model

The Education First Youth Foyers aim to link service-connected young people to resources and opportunities from business, government, services, the community and philanthropy so that they can build the skills and experience needed to become engaged citizens.

The Civic Participation Offer will provide opportunities that help these young people to develop an understanding of the social, civic and political mechanisms of society through linking them to government, services and community groups – not just as consumers or clients, but as active participants, volunteers and advocates.

EFY Foyer students will be encouraged to advocate for themselves and others in these settings. They will also be provided with opportunities to participate in fundraising and volunteering activities and community events. This will include participation both in self-determined projects and causes, as well as linking with and participating in existing business and community service groups that contribute to their local communities.

1.2 Why a new civic participation offer is needed

Civic participation has been shown to provide young people with a range of psychosocial and physical benefits including:

- *positive identity and development;*
- *enhanced self-confidence and self-esteem;*
- *improved social, communication, and critical thinking skills;*
- *greater educational/academic achievements and career aspirations;*
- *lower risk of addiction and problematic behaviours;*
- *good physical health; and*
- *heightened civic and service interest.*¹⁴

Civic participation has also been touted as a vehicle among young people for fostering a sense of belonging to something wider than their individual selves. This has been shown to have benefits both for individual health and wellbeing – through enabling the development of trust, safety and support networks – and for the broader society through engendering in young people a greater sense of belonging or of having a stake within society.¹⁵

Civic participation is not only beneficial for young people on a personal development level, but also in a practical sense through facilitating connections, experience and networks that can be leveraged to assist them in gaining employment. Civic participation activities are, therefore, often seen as essential for a young person's employability skills and experience, and undertaken expressly for this reason. For young people with high levels of family support, and/or who are engaged in a stable schooling environment, the encouragement and opportunities to engage in these kinds of activities are largely delivered through family connections and the school environment.

Young people with limited family or school support, however, seldom have access to the networks that can provide these types of opportunities or the emotional and/or financial supports that can help facilitate their participation. Rather than connecting to the broader community for experiential reasons, service-connected young people often occupy the role of recipients of community or government services, where they are often treated as passive and excluded from decision-making processes about their own lives. This can have broader implications around exclusion. As recipients of services, these young people are not always provided with opportunities or expected to contribute to their community. As a result, they often lack self-efficacy and are less likely to have a sense of agency about their own lives or to believe that their participation will be taken seriously.

Furthermore, many of the current discourses around youth civic participation have been criticised for their normative approach to what constitutes 'appropriate' civic behaviours and values. Civic participation for young people can be dominated by 'adulthood', in which there is a tendency for the forms of engagement for young people to be controlled by adults, designed to replicate adult institutions and based on adult notions of how young people should participate. These normative assumptions need to be replaced with a youth-centred approach, with young people the central actors in designing and determining what meaningful civic participation is for them.¹⁶

Young people, particularly those with limited or no family support, need new service offerings that link them in with their communities and provide them with the opportunities, supports and expectations to engage as active participants.

¹⁴ Shaw et al., op. cit., p. 309.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 307.

¹⁶ Shaw et al., op. cit.

Service-connected young people and civic participation

[Public policy in Australia] increasingly conflates all young people as a single subset of society, assuming and transmitting a homogenised conception of 'youth' that obscures the significance of increasing inequalities between groups of young people.¹⁷

The view that young people are increasingly apathetic or disengaged from their communities is, therefore, often read as a 'condition of youth' or as a characteristic pertaining to the 'youth of today'. But for some young people, it is the result of persistent exclusion or the consequence of structural and systemic inequalities that impact on their ability to participate in civic life. Where distinctions between groups of young people are made, it is usually to single out those who are on the margins of society and are perceived to have chosen to withdraw from or oppose civic engagement – rather than to have been excluded from it. Policies directed at improving young people's civic engagement often involve compulsory activities that are linked to social security payments or justice orders, instead of opportunities for self-directed engagement.

For service-connected young people, the availability of opportunities to engage in civic society are severely limited, and the costs of participating in civic life are significantly higher than for those from more advantaged backgrounds. Young people experiencing homelessness, poverty, family conflict or intergenerational joblessness are often forced to prioritise compliance activities, the care of other family members or general survival over participation in the broader social and economic life of their community.

In addition to impacting on their available time and resources, these factors can also have serious cyclical effects leading to their disconnection from mainstream networks and deeper and prolonged forms of social exclusion.

Youth homelessness

Almost 4000 young Victorians experience homelessness on any given night.¹⁸ In the July–December quarter 2012 just over 10,000 18–24 year-olds (and 2500 15–17 year olds) used Specialist Homelessness Services in Victoria.¹⁹ Young people experience homelessness for a variety of reasons – for example, anxiety and depression, drug or alcohol use (their own or that of another family member) or the desire for independence.²⁰ Invariably these factors interact with and compound each other with cumulative effects on self-esteem, motivation and social capital.

Poor social and community connections not only contribute to young people becoming homeless, but are also a major consequence of homelessness. As noted in the Australian Government's White Paper on homelessness, *The Road Home* (2008), 'Homelessness removes stability and connection in people's lives'.²¹ People who become homeless often lose contact with their family, friends and local community. As a result, their connections to supportive relationships and networks are disrupted and opportunities to restore these connections become difficult.²²

Young people in their developmental years require supportive family arrangements, including stable and safe housing, in order to make a successful transition into adulthood. Family breakdown or conflict and parental incapacity or chronic ill health can also

¹⁷ R. Black 2011, 'Student participation and disadvantage: Limitations in policy and practice', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 14(4):468.

¹⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2011, *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness 2011*, Cat. 2049.0, ABS, Canberra. Available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2049.0>.

¹⁹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2013, *Specialist Homelessness Services: 2012–2013*, Cat. No. HOU 270, AIHW, Canberra.

²⁰ S. Mallett, D. Rosenthal, D. Keys & P. Myers 2006, *Moving out, Moving on: Young People's Pathways in and through Homelessness in Melbourne, Key Findings*, Key Centre for Women's Health in Society, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne.

²¹ Commonwealth of Australia 2008, *The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*, Homelessness Taskforce, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, p. 10. Available at: http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/the_road_home.pdf.

²² R. Scutella & G. Johnson 2012, *Locating and Designing 'Journeys Home': A Literature Review*, Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne.

disrupt the development and wellbeing of children with subsequent adverse impact on their accumulation of the skills, experience and capabilities essential for full social and economic participation.²³

Those who leave home at a young age are also more likely to exit education early and unlikely to return to it. Along with family, schools are one of the main avenues by which young people can gain access to careers counselling and work experience placements. The absence of family or school support, therefore, means that young people experiencing homelessness are also highly likely to remain long-term unemployed and welfare dependent.²⁴ Research also shows that ‘around 11,000 Victorian young people leave school each year without any kind of qualification even though they have limited job prospects’.²⁵

Many young people who become homeless end up cycling through the homelessness service system. Over time they risk becoming long-term homeless and unemployed and high users of the mental health, drug and alcohol and criminal justice systems, at significant cost to themselves, the government and the wider community.²⁶ Linking young people into their communities, building their networks and providing them with the skills to advocate for themselves and others is critical if they are to become independent, yet connected, adults.

A new civic participation offer is needed to look beyond families, schools and welfare as the sole sites of enabling access to networks, resources and opportunities. Young people need to be given opportunities to develop the skills and experiences needed for them to become active participants in their own and their community’s futures.

1.3 The ‘standard civic participation offer’

Traditional measures of civic participation include voting, volunteering and religious observance. However, particularly when young people are the focus of the study, a broader approach is required. Youth civic engagement takes place in both formal and informal contexts, via activities at the local grassroots level through to the national and even international levels. The US Innovations in Civic Participation²⁷ organisation has usefully grouped together the main types of contemporary civic participation:

- community service and volunteering
- mutual aid – support to others within the same community or social group
- advocacy and campaigning – raising public consciousness, working to change legislation, and representation to government consultation bodies
- youth media – forms of media production by young people
- social entrepreneurship – creating innovative solutions to social problems
- leadership training and practice – mechanisms for learning and exercising leadership skills.

Writing about social capital and different forms of participation, Australian sociologist Eva Cox suggests also including a range of measures that refer to levels of sociability, including people’s engagement in informal and formal groups, their participation rates in local activities and through measures such as adherence to rules and how often they follow the news.²⁸

²³ D. Efron, Royal Children’s Hospital Melbourne & Hanover Welfare Services 1996, *Can We Stay Here? A Study of the Impact of Family Homelessness on Children’s Health and Well Being*, Hanover Welfare Services, Melbourne; M. Horn & L. Jordan 2007, *Putting Children First: Improving Responses to Family Homelessness*, Melbourne Citymission, Melbourne; Commonwealth of Australia, op. cit.

²⁴ Mallett et al. 2006, op. cit.

²⁵ Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) 2003, *Promoting Young People’s Mental Health and Wellbeing through Participation in Economic Activities: Key Learnings and Promising Practices*, VicHealth, Carlton South, Vic.

²⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2011, *Young Australians: Their Health and Wellbeing 2011*, AIHW, Canberra. Accessed on 27 February 2014 at: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=10737419259>.

²⁷ Innovations in Civic Participation, op. cit.

²⁸ E. Cox, 1998, ‘Measuring social capital as part of progress and well-being’, in R. Eckersley (ed.), *Measuring Progress: Is Life Getting Better?*, CSIRO, Collingwood, Vic., pp. 157–67.

She also includes negative phenomena such as the extent to which people feel angry or depressed, behave aggressively (e.g., road rage) or opt out of society via substance abuse. Obviously not all these forms of civic participation are desirable or can even be *facilitated* through a mainstream 'offer', but they do point to the importance of education around civic engagement. This currently happens predominantly in a school context, as outlined below, but also through experiential opportunities delivered through family connections, local sporting groups and community and government services.

Mainstream education

Mainstream schooling is currently 'the primary locus for the development of young people's participation', reflecting the dominant positioning of schools as 'institutions that both transmit social norms and develop young people's ability to participate in them'.²⁹ The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians was signed and released by all Australian Education Ministers in December 2008. The Declaration outlines two national goals for young people's education, with part of the second goal being that 'all young Australians become active and informed citizens' who 'participate in Australia's civic life... work for the common good (and) are responsible global and local citizens'.³⁰

According to the Declaration, the primary strategy for achieving this is developing strong partnerships between 'students, parents, carers and families, the broader community, business, schools and other education and training providers' to maximise student engagement and achievement. Such partnerships will 'provide opportunities for young Australians to connect with their communities, participate in civic life and develop a sense of responsible citizenship'.³¹

School provides a significant source of connections for many young people. When enrolled in mainstream schooling, young people are generally given plenty of opportunities to engage in recreational and social activities that are meaningful and interesting. They are usually able to participate in a variety of academic and extra-curricular activities that take place at the school (e.g., drama, sport, choir) or in a community setting (e.g., work experience placements, volunteer programs). These activities are ideal situations in which they can connect with other young people who share common interests, and with professionals who can provide such support as career advice or future employment opportunities. The connections made available within the school setting can also give young people positive sources of inspiration and influence, and access to broader networks and role models, including through friends, friends' families and teachers. This has the flow-on effect of exposing them to positive role modelling and relationship experiences, which can be additional sources of support to those provided by their family.

More specifically, Civics and Citizenship is a mandated part of the Australian Curriculum from the primary level through to Year 10. In the early years, students explore concepts such as rules, relationships and responsibilities, as well as how decisions can be made democratically. They go on to learn about the system and processes of Australia's legal and political systems and issues to do with national identity and citizenship in local, national, regional and global contexts. The curriculum 'recognises that Australia is a secular nation with a multi cultural and multi faith society' and, as such, promotes the development of understandings about concepts of equality, justice and responsibility.³²

²⁹ Black, op. cit., p. 468.

³⁰ Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) 2008, *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, MCEETYA, Carlton South, Vic., pp. 8–9.

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 10.

³² Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 2014, 'Civics and Citizenship across Foundation to Year 10: Overview', ACARA, Sydney. Accessed on 9 September 2015 at: <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/humanities-and-social-sciences/civics-and-citizenship/civics-and-citizenship-across-foundation-to-year-10>.

The aim of the Civics and Citizenship curriculum is to reinforce students' appreciation and understanding of what it means to be a citizen:

It explores ways in which students can actively shape their lives, value their belonging in a diverse and dynamic society, and positively contribute locally, nationally, regionally and globally. As reflective, active and informed decision-makers, students will be well placed to contribute to an evolving and healthy democracy that fosters the wellbeing of Australia as a democratic nation.³³

A key tenet of this aspect of the curriculum is the fostering of a strong sense of self and an understanding of how individuals can contribute to their local, national and global communities. Civics and citizenship provide a vehicle for students to challenge their own and others' views about society, and to participate formally in, and practice activities and behaviours that involve, democratic decision making.³⁴

Schools also routinely facilitate student representative groups, which provide young people with a chance to become engaged in leadership and advocacy activities. These not only provide those involved with communication, negotiation and decision-making skills, but also give the wider student body an experience

of voting and of representative democracy. Student representative groups also help foster a sense of belonging to a community.

Voting

In Australia, the compulsory voting system ensures that all eligible Australia citizens have the opportunity to participate in decision making and the democratic process. Proponents of this system argue that compulsory voting ensures that governments are forced to consider the interests and needs of the whole electorate, rather than just those who are most likely to vote. This is particularly important for young people who traditionally have proportionally low levels of participation in voluntary voting systems.³⁵

To ensure that young people's voices and interests are adequately represented then, they need to be enrolled to vote. To facilitate this, the Australian Electoral Commission, in addition to conducting Federal elections and referendums, and electoral roll management and support services, provides electoral education through a variety of programs and services. This includes free education programs and resources for teachers and students, as well as the delivery of public awareness campaigns and communication strategies to inform Australians about enrolling and voting.³⁶

“Civics and citizenship provide a vehicle for students to challenge their own and others' views about society..”

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) 2014, 'Civics and Citizenship', VCAA, Melbourne. Available at: <http://ausvels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Civics-and-Citizenship/Overview/Introduction>.

³⁵ R. Holdsworth, H. Stokes, M. Blanchard & N. Mohamed 2006, *Civic Engagement and Young People in the City of Melbourne*, Australian Youth Research Centre, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne.

³⁶ Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) 2015, 'Functions of the AEC', AEC, Canberra. Available at: http://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/AEC_Services/.

Family networks

Supportive family relationships through the developmental years is considered to be one of the primary factors associated with social inclusion for young people, with research suggesting that the ‘transmission and accumulation of civic culture and knowledge begins in the home environment’.³⁷ Families provide emotional support and social connectedness, both of which play a key role in shaping adolescent identity. Research shows that family connectedness provides a secure base upon which young people can develop a sense of belonging, trust, emotion regulation skills and self-efficacy,³⁸ all of which are critical to identity development and an understanding of who they are and what they want to be and do.

Furthermore, the family unit has also been shown to have a primary impact on young people’s political and community engagement:

*[A] nurturing family environment and supportive relationships with peers may provide a conduit in which young adults feel they have something to contribute to civic and political engagement.*³⁹

Family not only provides support and encouragement to undertake civic activities, but also connections, and financial and practical support, to participate in civic activities and social and community clubs and organisations.

Local government and community organisations

Local government and community organisations also acknowledge the importance of social and community connections by funding or delivering services that are primarily focused on connecting young people with common interests or backgrounds. Examples of these services include:

- art groups for young people to explore their creative interests together, such as painting, photography and ceramics
- sexual identity groups that give GLBTI⁴⁰ young people the opportunity to hang out, manage events and go on trips together
- music and event management groups that enable young people to access affordable music and cultural events, and opportunities to organise and perform in events
- gamers’ groups for young people to get together to play board games and video games.

A growing body of evidence indicates that not only can participation in these programs provide young people with alternatives to engaging in risk-taking behaviour, but can also have a positive impact on their healthy development.⁴¹ For instance, these programs give young people a safe space in which to form positive relationships with peers and adult facilitators, to feel a sense of belonging, to improve their self-confidence, to build social skills and relationships, and to develop abilities such as leadership and knowledge that can be transferred to other areas of life.

³⁷ P. Yeung, A. Passmore & T. Packer 2012, ‘Examining citizenship participation in young Australian adults: a structural equation analysis’, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 15(1):78.

³⁸ E. Robinson, L. Power & D. Allan 2010, ‘What works with adolescents? Family connections and involvement in interventions for adolescent problem behaviours’, *AFRC Briefing No. 16*, Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

³⁹ Yeung, Passmore & Packer, op cit.

⁴⁰ Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender or Intersex.

⁴¹ M. Gardener, J. Roth & J. Brooks-Gunn 2008, ‘Adolescents’ participation in organized activities and developmental success 2 and 8 years after high school: Do sponsorship, duration, and intensity matter?’, *Developmental Psychology*, 44(3):814–30; J. Roth, J. Brooks-Gunn, L. Murray & F. Foster 1998, ‘Promoting healthy adolescents: Synthesis of youth development program evaluations’, *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 8(4):423–59.

1.4 The results of the ‘standard civic participation offer’

Different outcomes for different groups

The mainstream civic participation ‘offer’ is facilitated for young Australians predominantly through their families and schools, but also through local sporting, social and community organisations and services. There are, however, inequities in how easily they are able to access the opportunities provided by these conduits. Evidence suggests that young people who are experiencing disadvantage

*typically demonstrate less civic knowledge than their more affluent peers, are less likely to volunteer, less likely to have faith in civic and political institutions, less likely to participate in their community in the present and less likely to have an intention to participate in the future.*⁴²

This can be attributed to a range of factors including a lack of family support, both financially and emotionally; limited access to social capital and social networks; inadequate financial assets; and poor access to information and resources.⁴³

Young people experiencing disadvantage, such as those living in Out of Home Care settings or those experiencing homelessness, typically miss out on the guidance and support provided by parents or guardians in the critical developmental stage of transitioning to adulthood. Poor family relations are also associated with poor mental and physical health and disruptive behaviour.⁴⁴ A lack of emotional support and

stability can have profound effects on the development of a young person’s identity and on their agency, both of which are crucial in formulating an understanding of, and connection to, their communities.

Young people who are linked into homelessness or welfare services typically have limited decision-making capacity over their own lives and are instead ‘managed’. Access to services is often dependent on meeting particular criteria or conditions that, rather than inspiring or empowering people to act, typically engender a culture of subordination and dependence. This necessarily impacts on a young person’s capacity and willingness to engage in the broader community. Young people with limited decision-making capacity over their own lives are much less likely to feel they are capable of influencing others or contributing to the social good.⁴⁵

There is some evidence to suggest that the process of transitioning to adulthood can in itself lead to civic disengagement; that ‘emerging adults’ may feel too overwhelmed by their new independence to engage in politics, or may experience a declining trust and/or interest in the political system.⁴⁶ A survey of Australian schoolchildren carried out by the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority in 2010 showed that at Year 6 more than half the 7000 students assessed expressed either quite a lot or complete trust in our political parties, Federal parliament and State/Territory parliaments. However, by the time they got to Year 10, the levels of trust in those civic institutions had eroded considerably.⁴⁷

For young people experiencing disadvantage, this erosion of trust is likely to be more pronounced.

⁴² Black, op. cit., p. 466.

⁴³ R. McLachlan, G. Gilfillan & J. Gordon 2013, *Deep and Persistent Disadvantage in Australia*, Productivity Commission Staff Working Paper, Productivity Commission, Canberra; W. Stone, W. Gray & J. Hughes 2003, *Social Capital at Work: How Family, Friends and Civic Ties Relate to Labour Market Outcomes*, Research Paper No. 31, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

⁴⁴ T. Paus, M. Keshavan & J. N. Giedd 2008, ‘Why do many psychiatric disorders emerge during adolescence?’, *National Review of Neurosciences*, 9(12):947–57; M. G. Sawyer, F. M. Arney, P. A. Baghurst, J. J. Clark, B. W. Graetz, R. J. Kosky, B. Nurcombe, G. C. Patton, M. R. Prior, B. Raphael, J. Rey, L. C. Whitnes & S. R. Zubrick 2000, *The Mental Health of Young People in Australia: The Child and Adolescent Component of the National Survey for Mental Health and Wellbeing*, AusInfo/Mental Health and Special Programs Branch, Canberra.

⁴⁵ C. Mason, H. Cremin, P. Warwick & T. Harrison 2011, ‘Learning to (dis)engage? The socialising experiences of young people living in areas of socio-economic disadvantage’, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 59(4):421–37.

⁴⁶ P. Snell 2010, ‘Emerging adult civic and political disengagement: A longitudinal analysis of lack of involvement with politics’, *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 25:258–87.

⁴⁷ A. Oliver 2014, *Are Australians Disenchanted with Democracy?*, Australian Senate, Occasional Lecture Series, 7 March 2014.

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu argues that political engagement is partly determined by people's class position, and maintains that those with less cultural capital often experience a sense of 'impotence and objective and subjective exclusion'.⁴⁸ Those young people linked in with the welfare sector and services, who do not have equal access to resources and opportunities, and whose lives are directly impacted upon by policies related to income support, education funding or health care access are more likely to view civic engagement as either ineffective or irrelevant, or as an obligation rather than as an opportunity.

An important part of adolescent identity formation is the questioning of authority and the status quo and the development of an individual purpose, of morals and a value system.⁴⁹ Some commentators suggest that rather than disengaging with civic life, young people are crafting new ways of engagement through the use of virtual tools, multimedia and interactive technology.⁵⁰ This new *means* of engaging leads to a different *type* of engagement characterised by consumer and Internet activism, and direct political action and support for personal interest causes, such as the environment or human rights, through petitions, letters and online protests.⁵¹

However, while Internet activism can help to promote civic participation by connecting young people and providing them with a chance to share their experiences and interests, research has also demonstrated that there is a strong class-based dimension to the extent and nature of people's engagement with social issues. This is largely because young people need to have access to the digital resources and technology required to engage in this type of activism, as well as to the social networks that promote exposure to this type of engagement.⁵²

Inequitable opportunities to participate

In addition to missing out on vital emotional and developmental supports, young people experiencing disadvantage do not always have the same access to school and government resources as their family-connected peers. Evidence suggests that 'success in the Australian education system remains largely dependent on the quality and breadth of a young person's "beyond the school gate" support'.⁵³ Thus, while civics education specifically, and networks and connections more broadly, are facilitated through mainstream schooling, many service-connected young people do not have the family supports that can help them contextualise and understand what is being delivered in the classroom. For example, work experience placements, internships and volunteering roles are increasingly being recognised as an essential developmental milestone for young people. As well as being an important networking source for future employment, they provide experiential learning opportunities to develop personal and social capabilities and aspirations for the future. However, even these types of positions are becoming the preserve of high-achieving and well-connected students, which in effect excludes disengaged young people from this experience.

Those who have not attended mainstream schooling in Australia, such as newly arrived migrants and refugees, are also not given the same access to opportunities to participate as active citizens. Research suggests that 'the ability to participate and make a contribution was found to be particularly important for young refugees' sense of belonging'.⁵⁴ This is reinforced by the findings of a survey conducted by the Centre for Multicultural Youth on active citizenship and participation. This found that those surveyed

48 P. Bourdieu 1984, *Distinction: A Social Critique on the Judgement of Taste*, trans. R. Nice, Routledge, London, p. 399.

49 Youth Support and Advocacy (YSAS) 2012, 'Youth AOD Toolbox', YSAS. Available at www.youthaodtoolbox.org.

50 S. Siggers, D. Palmer, P. Royce, L. Wilson & A. Charlton 2004, *Alive and Motivated: Young People, Participation and Local Government*, National Youth Affairs Research Scheme, Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra, p. 109.

51 R. Dalton 2009, *The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation Is Shaping American Politics*, rev. edn, CQ Press, Washington, pp. 5, 27–8.

52 C. Lombardo, D. Zaukus & H. Skinner 2002, 'Youth social action: Building a global latticework through information and communication technologies', *Health Promotion International*, 17(4):363–71.

53 J. Buick, S. Mallett & S. James 2014, *Education First Youth Foyer Education Offer Conceptual Framework*, Hanover and BSL, Melbourne.

54 I. Correa-Velez, S. Gifford & A. Barnett 2010, 'Longing to belong: Social inclusion and wellbeing among youth with refugee backgrounds in the first three years in Melbourne, Australia', *Social Science and Medicine*, 71(8):1399–408.

were highly active in the community and motivated to participate in a range of activities, both to gain new skills and experience as well as to ensure their voices were heard in decision making.⁵⁵

Many, however, also identified significant barriers to participating in their new communities, including 'not knowing what opportunities exist, not having enough time, and not knowing what is involved'.⁵⁶ Those who had been in Australia for two years or less faced additional obstacles, such as 'limited English language skills, lack of finances and transport difficulties'.⁵⁷ Both Australian and international research also suggests that a lack of understanding and knowledge about services, how they operate and how to access them – along with perceptions of widespread negative attitudes towards those who were visibly different – have posed a challenge to young refugees and migrants becoming more engaged in their new communities.

The costs of civic disengagement

The exclusion from civic engagement of young people experiencing disadvantage is not only detrimental on an individual level, but also represents a loss of their skills and contributions both to the local community and to our broader society. This is because the participation of citizens is essential to a healthy, functioning, democratic and inclusive society and economy.

An inability to participate in the social and economic life of a community can also have serious cyclical effects resulting in deep and prolonged forms of social exclusion. This can lead to significant personal costs to individuals, and as well as to considerable social and financial costs to the wider Australian society in the forms of increased welfare dependency, contact with the criminal justice system, and lost economic contributions. Disconnection from mainstream social

networks can lead to isolation or bonding with other socially excluded individuals, prompting further detachment from positive relationships and social networks and thus increased entrenchment in cycles of poverty and disadvantage or exclusion.

Comparing support: Family-connected and service-connected young people

Even when service-connected young people are able to access opportunities for civic participation facilitated by the school, local government or community organisations, the support they provide does not replace that given by one's family. In Australia, there exists an inherent assumption in the mainstream setting that young people are well supported by their families. For instance, in the Australian education system, it is believed that families can fully support their children 'beyond the school gate' to achieve at school. However, in reality the level, extent, and continuity of support that a service-connected young person has is paltry in comparison to that of a family-connected young person.

Most family-connected young people receive both 'good enough' support from their families and benefit from their extended networks, which provide them with a range of emotional, social, financial and material supports that facilitate achievement, as well as formal and informal information, advice and role modelling. Evidence indicates that family networks (including friends and relatives) play a 'crucial role' in young people's educational and social development, and are influential in helping them find employment.⁵⁸ In addition, the security and stability of a family home usually allows young people to take risks and to make mistakes, while maintaining financial and housing stability.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) 2014, *Active Citizenship, Participation and Belonging*, CMY, Melbourne.

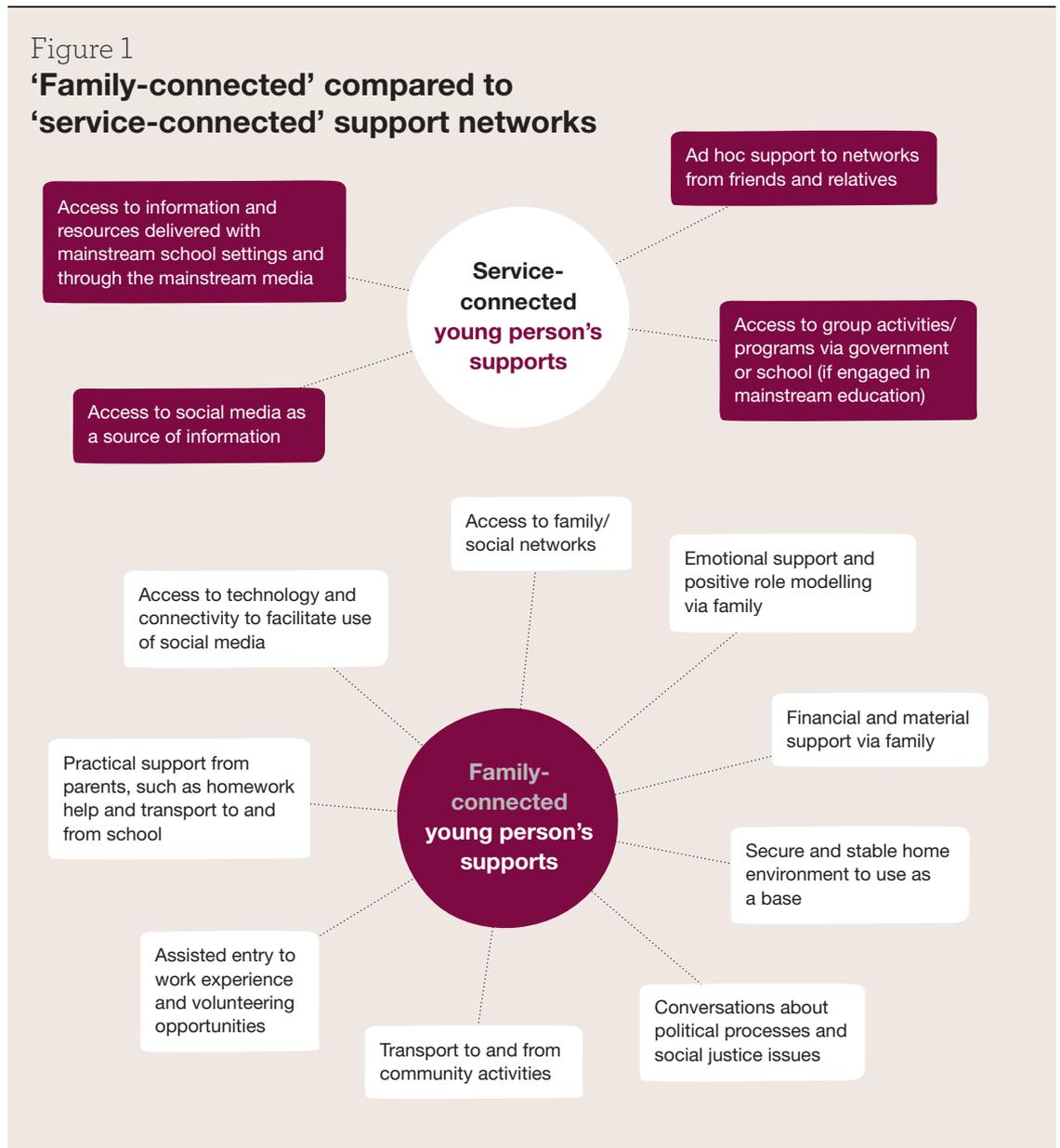
⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ D. Oliver & M. Circeci 2012, *Youth Transitions: What the Research Tells Us*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Adelaide.

By contrast, service-connected young people often lack, or have limited access to, basic supports, including safe home environments, sufficient nutrition and positive, supportive adult role models. Unfortunately, the services these young people are able to access tend to provide support that is both time and context limited.

Figure 1 below provides a visual representation of the support that service-connected young people receive in comparison to family-connected young people.

Figure 1
‘Family-connected’ compared to ‘service-connected’ support networks



1.5 Summary of the barriers to youth civic participation

Young people entering the EFY Foyer face multiple and complex barriers to participating in education and training, and in their community's social and economic life more broadly. In addition to a lack of stable accommodation, young people experiencing homelessness do not have the guidance and support typically provided by parents or guardians in the critical stage of transitioning to adulthood. This can have profound effects on their sense of self, their social and emotional development and their engagement with mainstream society.

Lack of family support

Service-connected young people rarely have access to adequate family support or connections, and often experience unstable schooling environments and early school leaving.⁵⁹ As such, they are not afforded the same practical, financial or emotional assistance required to access institutions and systems that 'aid' in getting ahead as are other young people. Evidence indicates that those who receive support from their families and their families' extended networks are more likely to have better marks at school, to complete school and to find work.⁶⁰

Many young people who have experienced homelessness or a disrupted family life have had limited opportunities to develop and enhance their sense of self and self-worth. Their personal strengths and capabilities have often not been recognised and they have had limited access to the people, opportunities and experiences that would enable them to flourish. Research has demonstrated that social connections and trust in others (particularly adults) is important to adolescent development and wellbeing.⁶¹ For young

people experiencing homelessness, the absence of reliable emotional supports and positive role models as they transition through adolescence can lead to 'identity confusion', which is characterised by delayed decision making, increased anxiety and poor choices.⁶² How young people value themselves will, in turn, influence how they relate to and participate in the broader community.

Limited access to networks and opportunities

The opportunities available to service-connected young people do not compare to those of their family-connected peers. The combination of rapid social and economic change in Australia has further weakened the capacity of many disadvantaged families to provide the level of support and nourishment needed for their children to gain the skills and personal agency to navigate the transition to adulthood. This can include having inadequate social capital to support their children's choices and decision making related to their aspirations. Such a situation can discourage young people from pursuing their aspirations, and limit the hope and agency they have over their future.

Service-connected young people have often experienced generational cycles of disadvantage, which can seriously impede their access to social networks and labour market connections. It can also limit their access to experiences, resources and information – such as exposure to organised community-based activities, due to lack of time and/or financial resources, as well as to, or even an understanding of, political discourse and activism. Young people's experiences of engaging with the social service system can influence their perception of their place in the broader society and their capacity (or lack thereof) to effect change.

⁵⁹ Shaw et al., op. cit.

⁶⁰ Oliver & Circeli, op. cit.

⁶¹ D. H. Bernat & M. D. Resnick 2009, 'Connectedness in the lives of adolescents', in R. J. DiClemente, J. S. Santelli & R. A. Crosby (eds), *Adolescent Health: Understanding and Preventing Risk Behaviors*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, pp. 375–89;

⁶² S. J. Schwartz, B. L. Zamboanga, K. Luyckx, A. Meca & R. A. Ritchie 2013, 'Identity in emerging adulthood: Reviewing the field and Looking forward emerging adulthood', *Emerging Adulthood*, 1(2):96–113.

Typically, services for young people experiencing disadvantage or homelessness do not provide sufficient support to access the same opportunities and resources available to their family-connected peers, particularly those from families with strong social capital. In fact, some of these services actively diminish young people's sense of agency, making it increasingly difficult for them to view themselves as having something valid and worthwhile to offer.

Deficit-based programs do not support self-efficacy

Many welfare services, particularly those directed at young people, do not consider young people as capable of responsible decision making or goal setting in relation to their own lives or futures. They are often perceived, and even defined or categorised, by their problems and the management of them. As Colin Falconer has pointed out:

It's as though we deny the opportunity for certain groups of young adults to live an existence beyond the deficits they pose. We invest more in controlling the problem, than we do in empowering the person. An investment in prevention is only half an investment if it is not matched by preparation for a positive life and the progression opportunities to achieve it.⁶³

Services that are not involving young people in the decisions that affect their lives are disempowering them, which in turn can undermine their sense of agency and self-worth and, ultimately, increase their dependency on the service system. This affects both how young people see themselves and how others in the community see them. Defining young people by their problems, rather than their potential, sets up a

dichotomy between service users and providers. As service users, young people are often made to feel that they have nothing to contribute to the broader community. Instead, they need to be defined by their potential, both as individuals and in terms of their potential to contribute to the social, cultural and economic life of the community.

This is something that has been recognised by the Victorian Government Department of Human Services. In its report *Human Services: The Case for Change*, DHS recommends a move away from 'a traditional welfare approach that focuses on crisis support and stabilisation, and may cause dependency', and calls instead for a focus on moving young people out of disadvantage by building on their strengths and capabilities.⁶⁴ In order to do this, and to facilitate young people's engagement and participation in the broader community, they need to be reconceptualised as part of the solution rather than as the problem.

⁶³ C. Falconer 2012, 'Open Talent: Investing in a transformational future for Britain's young adults' (unpub. ms), pp. 6–7

⁶⁴ Department of Human Services (DHS) 2011, *Human Services: The Case for Change*, DHS, Victorian Government, Melbourne, p. 5.

1.6 What young people need to succeed in civic participation

If service-connected young people are to gain greater control over their lives and become independent, yet connected, adults, they need support to develop both their core skills and capabilities and opportunities to fulfil their potential. Such support includes concerted policy and practice interventions that provide service-connected young people with opportunities to participate in, and contribute to, the broader community in ways that are meaningful to them. In addition, they need targeted assistance to overcome the systemic and structural barriers to their economic and social participation.

Core skills and capabilities

Research suggests that a positive sense of self is critical to making a successful transition to adulthood. Being valued, loved and respected by others creates a sense of self-worth that protects against feelings

of social isolation, depression and anxiety. It can also motivate and inspire young people to set and accomplish goals.⁶⁵ Establishing an ongoing sense of self is also a necessary precursor to understanding oneself in relation to society. This includes negotiating relationships, developing independent living skills, understanding one's sexual identity and deciding what one values and stands for – these are all part of the transition.⁶⁶

Thus, for young people to improve their community connections and to develop positive relationships, it is important that they have the opportunity to build a range of personal and social skills. These include the development of:

- personal skills including self-awareness and self-efficacy
- social skills including conflict resolution, communication and understanding social norms
- capabilities that foster agency including decision making and problem solving.⁶⁷

“

... it is important that service-connected young people are provided with a supportive, stable environment by the services they access – one that allows them to feel secure enough to explore, to make mistakes and learn...”

⁶⁵ GGS 2011, 'Positive Education resources'. Available at: <http://www.ggs.vic.edu.au/School/Positive-Education/Resources>.

⁶⁶ Foyer Federation 2013, *MyNav, Destination Independence – Navigating the journey to Independent Adulthood*, The Foyer Federation, UK, p. 18.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

While most people develop these types of skills in the early years of life within a supportive and stable family environment, they can be learned, cultivated and enhanced at any point. As such, it is important that service-connected young people are provided with a supportive, stable environment by the services they access – one that allows them to feel secure enough to explore, to make mistakes and learn, to engage in positive, quality relationships, and to practise and develop these skills in both formal and informal settings.

Service-connected young people also need relationships with adults who have high expectations of them and can help them to achieve these expectations. Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, in particular, often lack the social capital required to support the choices and decision-making related to their aspirations. This can discourage them from pursuing these aspirations and limit the hope and agency they feel they have over their future.

In addition, many of the youth services working with young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness tend to engage in deficit, disadvantaged or problem-saturated thinking and acting, rather than empowering these young people and investing in their skills and capabilities. Service-connected young people need supports that communicate the rights and responsibilities they have, that challenge them to take positive risks and share their talents with others, and that provide them with an opportunity to have a voice and influence. Such supports will help them to be respectful of others, to understand they are valued citizens with something to contribute to society, and to become motivated to achieve their aspirations.

Access to meaningful opportunities to participate in civic and economic life

Service-connected young people need to be provided with opportunities for meaningful participation and to make a contribution. Research shows that such engagement enhances their motivation to succeed, fosters resilience and improves their health, social relations and academic achievement.⁶⁸ However, many young people who have experienced homelessness and disadvantage have not had the opportunity to prioritise such participation, due to limited resources and opportunities. In fact, there are some in our society who argue that young people experiencing disadvantage should not be required to participate in voluntary or community service activities at all, because their energies are necessarily focused on survival rather than concerns with concepts such as the common good.

Within the EFY Foyer context, however, young people are required to prioritise participation in voluntary community activities both within and outside of the Foyer as part of their commitment to the Deal. This is because the Foyer holds high expectations of students and believes they have the capacity to offer something to the broader community. It is a significantly different approach, however, from the obligation for young people wanting to access income support to undertake mandated work experience or community service programs. Rather, young people at the Foyer will be supported to undertake activities that are an extension of their individual interests or that support the development of skills or experiences relevant to their goals. Research shows that the quality of the volunteer activity, in terms of how well it satisfies a volunteer's motives and goals, may help to determine the extent to which so-cial capital is built.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ A. A. Stukas, M. Saly & M. Cowling 2005, 'Volunteerism and social capital: A functional approach', *Australian Journal on Volunteering*, 10(2).

“ Providing young people with opportunities for self-direction and self-determination helps them to feel a sense of value, purpose and agency over their lives. ”

Self-directed projects

It is also important that young people participate in and develop activities that are relevant to their interests and aims in life. Young people’s engagement with their community is often viewed through an adult lens, with activities such as membership of a political group or community club, voting or volunteering as the only valid forms of civic participation. Importantly, many of these recognised forms of civic participation that replicate or mimic adult models are also ones that can be controlled by them.

The current mainstream offer is also limited to adult-led or adult-mimicking activities that can be tokenistic. Within the majority of schools, for example, there is a persistent preference for forums such as school councils, indicating the ‘attractiveness of a participation model that is familiar to adults and that can be

influenced or shaped by them’.⁷⁰ While these activities can be important aspects of civic participation for young people, they are somewhat limiting and often do not include youth voices.

In its *Vulnerable Youth Framework Discussion Paper*, Victoria’s DHS highlights the need for youth services to allow participating young people to contribute to the development of their activities. It argues that this has been shown to enhance levels of motivation to engage, as young people ‘felt most connected and valued when they owned and developed youth activities and programs within their communities’.⁷¹ Providing young people with opportunities for self-direction and self-determination helps them to feel a sense of value, purpose and agency over their lives.⁷² It also enables them to connect with significant adults and peers around common interests and goals.

⁷⁰ Black, op. cit., p. 466.

⁷¹ Department of Human Services 2008, *Vulnerable Youth Framework Discussion Paper*, DHS, Victorian Government, Melbourne, p. 35.

⁷² R. M. Ryan & E. L. Deci 2000, ‘Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being’, *American Psychologist*, 55:68–78.

Part 2: Theories and Frameworks

2.1 EFY Foyer theoretical framework

A core set of theoretical perspectives and approaches inform the Civic Participation Offer delivered through the Education First Youth Foyer. The theoretical framework for the EFY Foyer Model articulates a number of ideological ‘shifts’ required to break down the barriers of disadvantage and social exclusion for service-connected young people. In summary, they are:

- moving from deficit to advantaged thinking at a systems level
- investing in building young people’s abilities, developing their assets and co-creating solutions that enable them to achieve independent adulthood
- adopting an inclusive growth approach to economic development
- recognising that young people’s capacity for economic and social participation will be realised through investment in opportunities that enable them to develop the three dimensions of social capital – bonding, bridging and linking
- valuing service-connected young people as social citizens who are able and expected to contribute to the development of their own lives, as well as to the lives of others, including those in the wider community.

2.2 Civic participation theories and frameworks

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to an individual’s belief in their own capacity to affect action or reach their goals. The more that young people ‘feel their actions are likely to have an influence on the outcome of decisions, the more likely they are to engage in civic action’.⁷³ Psychologist Albert Bandura found that:

*A strong sense of efficacy enhances human accomplishment and personal wellbeing which fosters fundamental interest and deep association with activities.*⁷⁴

The development of self-efficacy skills, then, is not only an important factor in building young people’s capacity to advocate for themselves and for the wider community, but also in promoting wellbeing and self-worth. Falk suggests that

*when the individual realises ‘I can do something’, the resulting self-confidence is an enabler of learning to manage change at a personal level. And learning to manage change involves interacting with society and learning how networks, norms and trust work in the sense of power and resources.*⁷⁵

Learning self-efficacy skills, however, are dependent on both internal personal factors and experiences and the external environment. For young people experiencing disadvantage, a lack of positive reinforcement through family, and external factors such as experiences of not being able to make decisions about their own lives, can erode a sense of self-efficacy and lead to disengagement being preferable to engagement.⁷⁶

⁷³ A. Bandura 1997, *Self-efficacy: The Exercise of Control*, W. H. Freeman, New York, p. 3, quoted in Yeung, Passmore & Packer, op. cit., p. 78.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ I. Falk 2001, *Human and Social Capital: A Case Study of Conceptual Colonisation*, Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, University of Tasmania, Hobart, p. 3, quoted in *ibid.*

⁷⁶ Mason et al., op. cit.



Kangan TAFE's EFY Foyer fence, painted by students attending Indigenous Education Centre and VCAL classes

Photography Dani Burley

Social capital

Social capital is a concept with many definitions, although its fundamental tenet is that social networks have value. Colin Falconer defines social capital simply as the resources provided to an individual through the social networks they hold.⁷⁷ He notes that social capital is 'widely perceived as a means to understand how we engage as citizens', 'how we secure economic gains' and 'how communities develop'.⁷⁸

Three dimensions of social capital are commonly distinguished – bonding, bridging and linking. Bonding social capital involves trust and reciprocity in social networks within a community of people who are similar; bridging social capital refers to networks that are established across diverse communities; and linking social capital refers to connections between individuals and institutions of authority. All three are important for the construction of a civil society as well as for individual health and wellbeing – bonding social capital for social support and solidarity; and bridging and linking for providing resources, opportunities and links to institutions and systems that aid 'getting ahead'.

To build sustainable livelihoods disadvantaged young people need access to, or the opportunities to develop, all three forms of social capital, which the EFY Foyer Model provides. However, as the social citizenship literature points out, to build independent, yet connected, lives they also need to be recognised and recognise themselves as part of the community – of civil society – with rights and responsibilities to themselves and to others. Thus, disadvantaged young people need to recognise themselves as capable of acting and participating on their own and others' behalf.

Social citizenship

In his tracing of the development of the concept of national citizenship, T. H. Marshall divides citizenship into three elements – the civil, the social and the political. Civil citizenship comprises the rights necessary for individual freedoms, such as freedom of speech, liberty of the person and the right to justice, a concept that encompasses the right to exercise all your rights on equal terms with others. Political citizenship comprises the right to participate in political life though standing for office or as an elector, while the social element of citizenship refers to:

*the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards of the society.*⁷⁹

Social citizenship has been a developing and contested concept. More recently, in addition to being viewed as a matter of rights or status, citizenship has been understood as participation and practice⁸⁰ – the opportunity to 'fulfil the potential of that status'.⁸¹ Social citizenship can be described as:

*the vital ingredient that connects people to society and to the processes of government. It refers to an active relationship between persons, their communities and the state, balancing rights with obligations, plus the exploration of contexts that facilitate interconnection.*⁸²

⁷⁷ Falconer, op. cit.

⁷⁸ Falconer, *ibid.*, draws on R. D. Putnam 2000, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon & Schuster, New York; R. S. Sobel 2007, *Unleashing Capitalism: Why Prosperity Stops at the West Virginia Border and How to Fix It*, Center for Economic Growth, The Public Policy Foundation of West Virginia, Morgantown, WV; R. Gittel & A. Vidal 1998, *Community Organizing: Building Social Capital as a Development Strategy*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

⁷⁹ T. H. Marshall 1950, 'Citizenship and social class', in J. Manza & M. Sauder (eds) 2009, *Inequality and Society*, W. W. Norton & Co., New York, pp. 148–9.

⁸⁰ R. Lister 1998, 'Citizenship on the margins: Citizenship, social work and social action', *European Journal of Social Work*, 1(1):6.

⁸¹ R. Lister 2008, 'Inclusive citizenship, gender and poverty: Some implications for education for citizenship', *Citizenship, Teaching and Learning*, 4(1):9.

⁸² S. Biggs 2013, 'Social citizenship, capabilities and inclusive growth', *Brotherhood Comment: April 2013*. Available at: http://www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/BSL_Brotherhood_Comment_Apr2013.pdf.

This links the inclusive growth approach at the macro level with the capabilities approach at the micro level. As Simon Biggs of the BSL and the University of Melbourne notes:

... new forms of social citizenship emphasise the active agency of the person, as someone who has a hand in creating their own social circumstances and for whom participation and recognition are a precondition. The new social citizenship refers to the ways in which people access, maintain membership of and actively participate in society. It includes their cut of the pie, the quality and design of their environments, and the issues of personal identity.

Thus social citizenship moves the debate beyond rights and responsibilities, important as that is, to embrace multiple contributions of all social actors whatever their circumstances. It moves us from instrumental relationships to a reconsideration of what positive social interconnection might mean.⁸³

Positive Education: The PERMA model

The Civic Participation Offer draws on the PERMA model developed by Seligman⁸⁴ (Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Achievement) and adapted by Geelong Grammar School into a Positive Education framework. The EFY Foyer has adopted and adapted the GGS model, which focuses on the following six domains for optimal wellbeing:

- **Positive emotion** – Experiencing positive emotions can lead to healthy engagement with the environment and to flourishing.⁸⁵

- **Positive engagement** – Students who are engaged are curious, motivated, interested, are persistent in the face of challenges and experience, and flourishing.⁸⁶
- **Positive health** – To flourish, students need to develop and practise sustainable habits for optimal physical and psychological health.⁸⁷
- **Positive purpose** – To flourish, young people need to understand, believe in and service something greater than themselves, and deliberately engage in activities for the benefit of others.⁸⁸
- **Positive relationships** – Social relationships and connections are critical to flourishing.⁸⁹
- **Positive accomplishment** – Working towards meaningful goals, being motivated to persist despite challenges and setbacks, and the achievement of competence and success is key to flourishing.⁹⁰

Of particular relevance to the Civic Participation Offer is the positive purpose domain. Positive purpose is defined as understanding, believing in and serving something greater than ourselves and deliberately engaging in activities for the benefit of others.⁹¹ Purpose provides students with a vision of life and an understanding of what they can contribute and give back to society. Inherent in positive purpose is the notion of meaning or having a strong sense of self and where one fits in the world.

⁸³ *ibid*, pp. 1–2.

⁸⁴ Seligman 2011, *op. cit.*

⁸⁵ B. L. Fredrickson 2004, 'The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 359:1367–77; B. L. Fredrickson 2009, *Positivity*, Random House, New York.

⁸⁶ Ryan & Deci *op. cit.*

⁸⁷ GGS 2011, *op. cit.*

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ C. Hassed 2008, *The Essence of Health*, Ebury Press, North Sydney; U. Bronfenbrenner 2005, *Making Human Beings Human: Bioecological Perspectives on Human Development*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

⁹⁰ GGS 2011, *op. cit.*

⁹¹ *ibid.*

Part 3: The Civic Participation Offer Model and Practice Approach

3.1 The EFY Foyer Civic Participation Offer

Vision

The Civic Participation Offer supports all EFY Foyer students to engage in community activities and to become active and valuable members of their community so that they can develop a positive purpose in their own lives and contribute to improving the lives of others and the broader society in which they live.

Key components

Community involvement

The Civic Participation offer aims to provide students with experiences and opportunities to help them gain an understanding of the different aspects and facets of a community. Students will be supported and encouraged to help create a positive and inclusive internal Foyer community as well to become immersed in the broader community beyond the Foyer. Through participation in internal 'something for something' deals, in which students offer to provide a service or share a skill with others, they will learn to appreciate the value of their own and others' contributions to a broader group.

Students will also be supported to participate in community activities such as sporting, cultural, religious or issues-based groups outside the Foyer. This will include connecting students to mainstream services and programs – such as public schools, TAFEs and universities, local gyms, sporting teams and health services – as well as to community groups and activities run by local government and others. In so doing, it will expand their knowledge and understanding of social issues and the diversity of opinions that exist, as well as help them to build their own social connections. Through being exposed to different viewpoints and opinions, students will be able to find people or groups with whom they feel a

connection, and begin to understand their own value and place within the community. It can also give them an appreciation of the breadth of experiences the community can provide, information about broader behavioural expectations and standards, and their impact on different parts of the community as well as the community as a whole. The Offer will work to promote an understanding that young people are part of the community, rather than on the margins of it, and that through participating they are able to make their own space and place within it – for their own and for the broader community's benefit.

Self-advocacy skills

The Civic Participation Offer will provide students with an understanding about the social, civic and political mechanisms of society. This will be done through running workshops on civic systems and processes, as well as through community engagement. This serves to build students' understanding about the support services that a community has, and should reasonably be expected to provide, and their rights to access these services.

Rather than promoting welfare or service dependency, students will also be provided with information and experiences that foster an understanding of their responsibilities as citizens. This will be done through encouraging participation in EFY Foyer governance arrangements, such as student representative councils and leadership programs, and through providing information about the wider polity, e.g., enrolling to vote and how the political system and processes work. While these activities are available within mainstream settings, through schools and family networks, they are not common within a service environment or for young people experiencing disadvantage. Providing EFY Foyer students with a genuine opportunity to have a say in decisions about their own lives, and how the internal EFY Foyer community operates, will give them an experience of self-efficacy that builds their confidence and their capacity for engagement.



Kangan TAFE's EFY Foyer fence, painted by students attending Indigenous Education Centre and VCAL classes

Photography Dani Burley

In addition, students will not only be connected to the broader community, and given the information and opportunities to understand how it works, but provided with the skills and confidence to advocate for their own and other people's wellbeing. This includes being able to identify services gaps and causes of community discord within the broader community, as well as developing skills and strategies in campaigning and community engagement to help negotiate potential solutions.

Students will also be equipped to access digital resources and technology so they can engage with social issues and social networks. In addition to providing connectivity through access to wifi, students will be given the information and skills they need to use the Internet and social media. This will be extended beyond information and etiquette around maintaining social connections to include how to access and use the information, resources and networks that are relevant to their interests and goals.

Students will also be supported to engage with the mainstream media, both as a source of information and as a vehicle for self-advocacy. This will include how to find and access information, as well as how to present themselves and their ideas or issues to get a message across.

Building self-efficacy skills goes beyond providing students with an understanding of their rights and responsibilities within a community – it's about having the tools, experience and confidence to enact these rights and responsibilities and to create change that is meaningful to them.

Access to meaningful opportunities to participate in civic and economic life

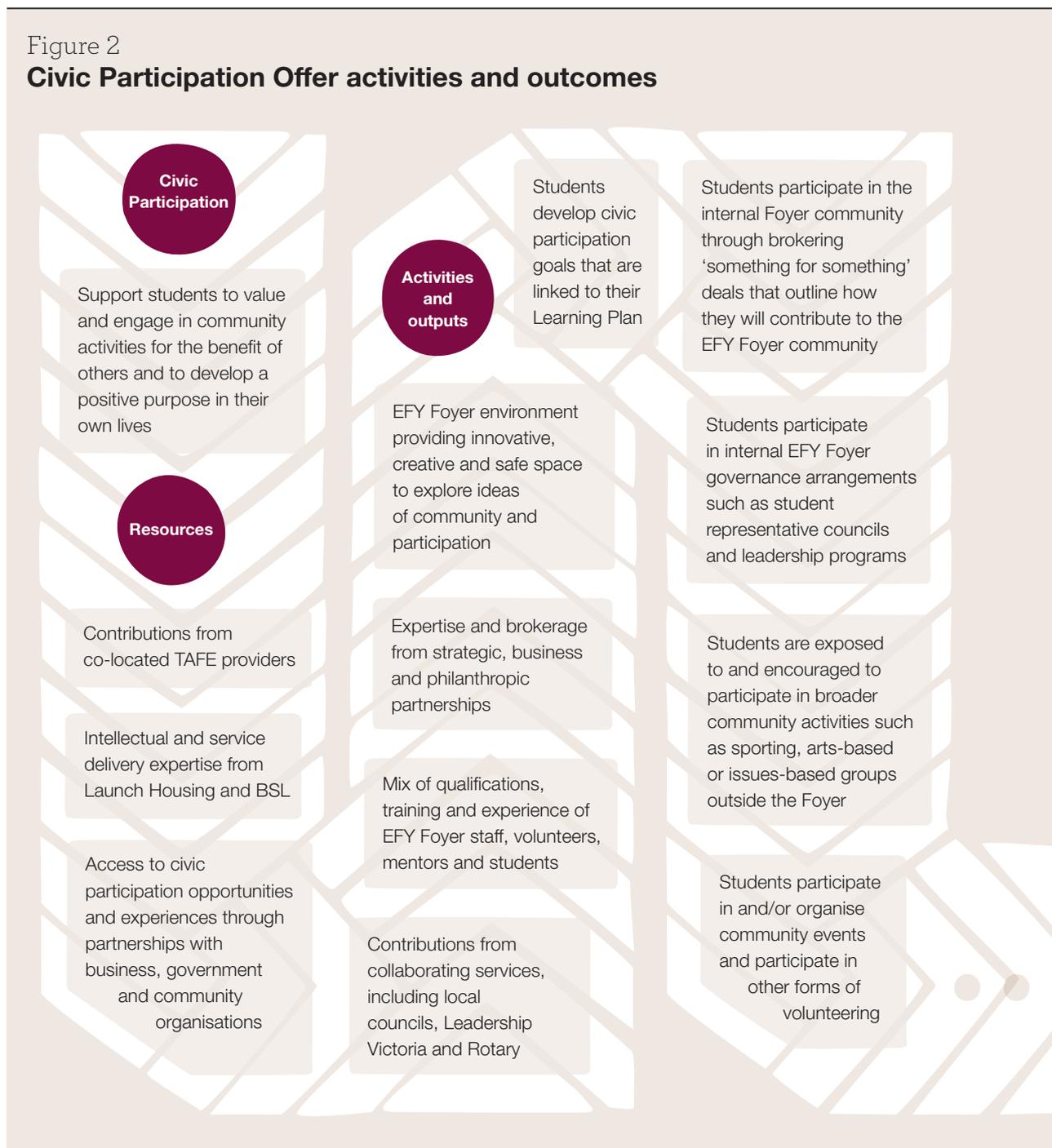
The EFY Foyer model holds high expectations of students. As part of 'the Deal', students are expected to put forward proposals on how they can contribute to the wider external community in return for access to resources, opportunities and networks that will help them achieve their personal goals. This will include students volunteering in the broader community through structured volunteering positions, organising community events or raising funds for, or awareness about, a worthwhile cause. In this way, students are supported to be confident about their own abilities and capacities and to feel valued by others, which demonstrates they are valued citizens with something to offer the community.

Young people at the Foyer will be encouraged to participate in self-directed projects and civic activities that are an extension of their individual interests, or that support the development of skills or experiences relevant to their goals. They will also be required to contribute in a way that benefits others or contributes to the wider community.

Many EFY Foyer students will have been on the margins of society at some stage in their life. Giving something back to the community can empower young people and help them to see themselves in a new light. It also builds goodwill for the EFY Foyer program and helps the campaign to change community and service providers' perceptions about young people – away from a deficit model to one that promotes and nurtures young people's talents.

Activities and outcomes

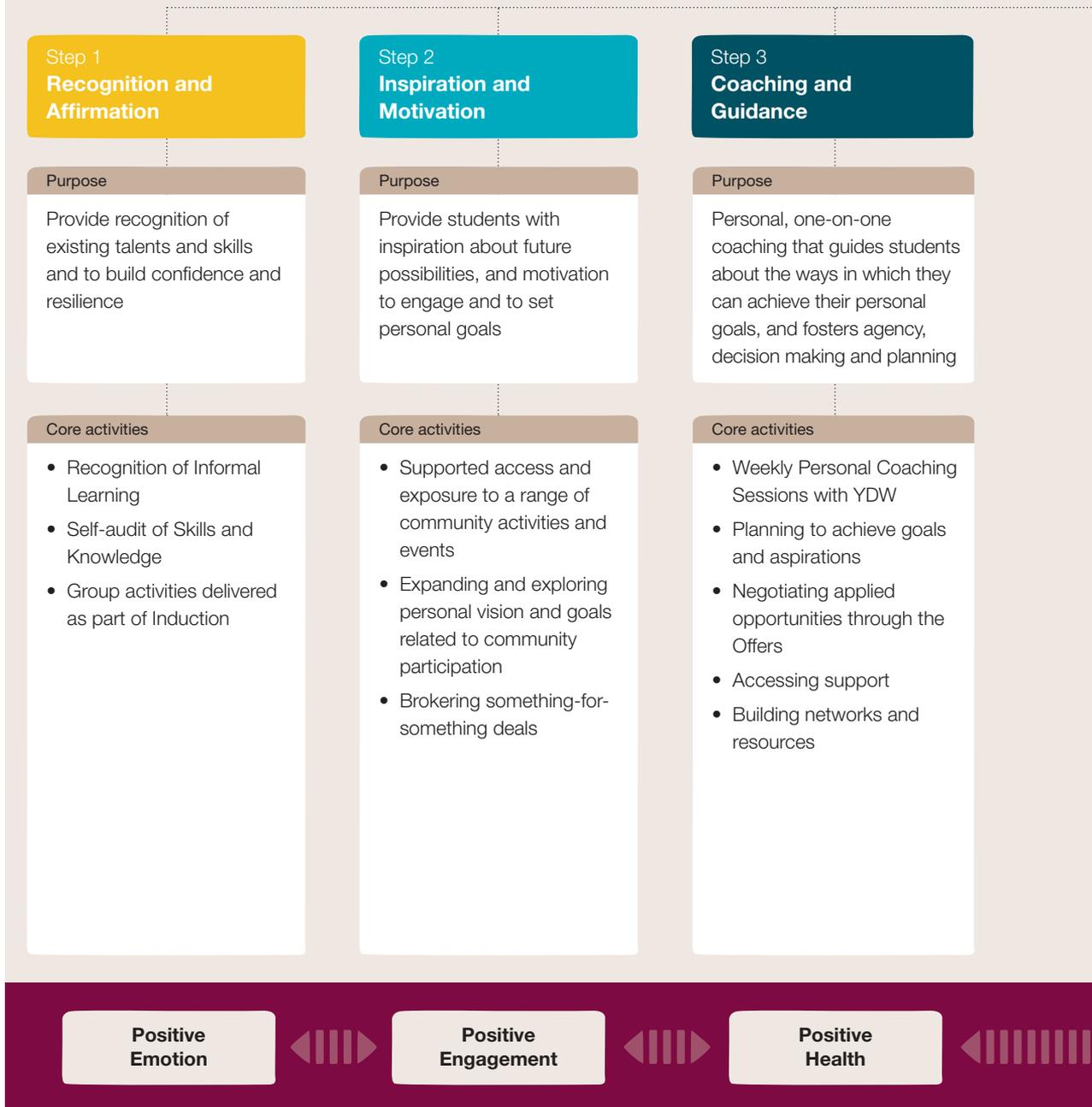
The activities and outcomes of the EFY Foyer Civic Participation Offer are outlined below in Figure 2.





3.2 Key practice elements

Figure 3
Civic Participation Offer practice model



**Step 4
Internal
Opportunities**

Purpose

Opportunities through EFY Foyer and TAFE that build skills relevant to individual goals and aspirations

- Core activities**
- Participation in EFY Foyer student governance arrangements
 - Participation in leadership groups
 - Information and advice about political processes, self-representation and self-advocacy
 - Participation in peer-support activities

**Step 5
External
Opportunities**

Purpose

Opportunities through external networks and services that foster the application of new skills and knowledge

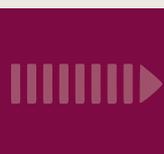
- Core activities**
- Opportunities to volunteer in the broader community through organised events and/or pursuing interests
 - Participation in community events and activities
 - Access to TAFE and local government groups such as youth groups, issues-based groups and sport, arts and music groups, programs and opportunities
 - Support to organise activities for the benefit/ interest of the broader community

**Step 6
Celebrating
Achievements**

Purpose

Acknowledgment and celebration of achievements, including the steps that are taken towards achieving goals

- Core activities**
- Reflecting on achievements
 - Recognising challenges and celebrating small steps forward
 - Graduation and award ceremonies
 - Events showcasing talents of students including concerts, arts shows, magazine launches
 - Foyer Alumni



Positive Purpose



Positive Relationships



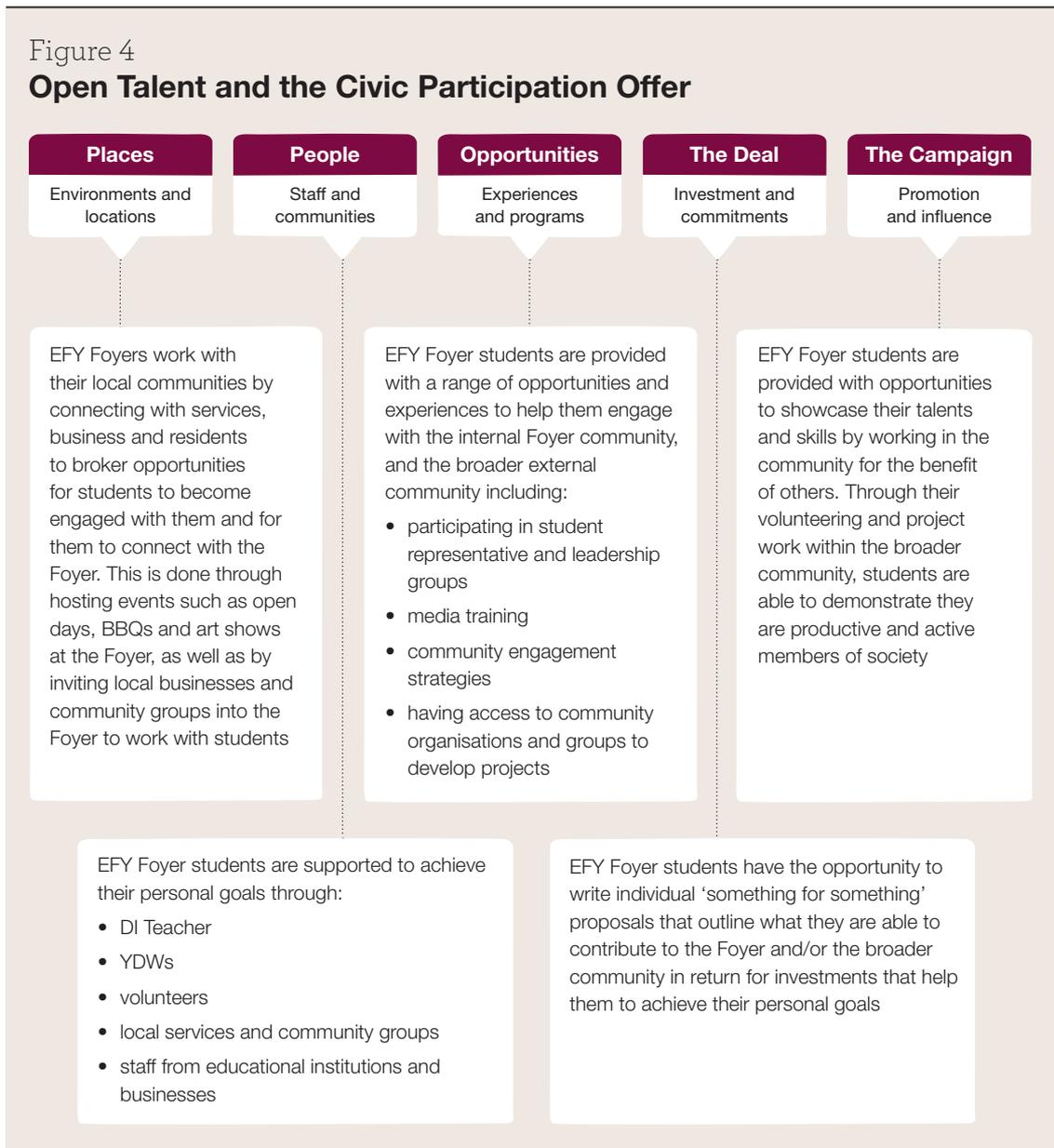
Positive Accomplishment

Practice assumptions and explanations

Each of the 6 Service Offers employs a common set of broad practice steps as a way of engaging students and maximising their potential for positive outcomes. Each step or aspect of this practice is also informed by an evidence base that underlines the importance of this form of engagement. These steps also align with Open Talent and Positive Education approaches.

The Open Talent approach

The Open Talent/Advantaged Thinking approach is expressed through the following 5 Key Practice Areas that are embedded within all of the 6 Service Offers. Figure 4 gives a snapshot of how these practice areas intersect with the Civic Participation Offer.



Recognition and Affirmation

Many young people who are service-connected have been exposed to disruptive and often devastating relationships and experiences that have a profound effect on their lives. While many have been traumatised by these relationships and experiences, most, if not all, have also acquired deep insight about themselves as well as skills that are largely unrecognised or unacknowledged both by themselves or others. Acknowledging these experiences or skills provides the foundation for all 6 Service Offers.

The Certificate of Recognition of Informal Learning or CRIL was developed to formalise this intention – to provide a positive first step into education and to recognise and affirm the individual talents and skills of all young people. The Developing Independence (DI) Teacher at the TAFE on which the EFY Foyer is located conducts the CRIL interview as part of the pre-Foyer Education Readiness process. It is through this process that all prospective students initially engage with Foyer and key dimensions of the Civic Participation Offer. EFY Foyer staff will work with young people on further developing their strengths as well as addressing their challenges.

Recognising and acknowledging these skills and strengths gives students a base on which to build – to develop their confidence and to start developing aspirations for the future. It also helps them to identify agency in relation to their own lives, as well as to the lives of the people around them. Students will be encouraged to recognise their capacity for self-efficacy in issues such as advocating for their family to get access to transitional housing or negotiating a reduced school load so they can continue at school while also looking after younger siblings. By utilising the concepts of recognition and acknowledgment, young people are given confidence as well as hope for the future.

Inspiration and Motivation

A sense of inspiration and motivation are essential for EFY Foyer students to achieve key personal and program outcomes and to maintain engagement with 'the Deal'. Research suggests that personal motivation is created and maintained by:

- establishing the capacity for **autonomy** or self-direction (over a task or goal, the time, means or techniques and the team to achieve it)
- the opportunity to strive for **mastery** (through mindset shift, recognition of the struggle it takes and that full mastery is rarely attainable)
- a sense of **purpose**, especially in the common good.⁹²

Inspiration has many sources, including from the key people in one's life (e.g., family members, peers, mentors) as well as those not personally known (e.g., celebrities, local or community figures). Art, music, nature and engagement in meaningful and interesting activities can also be sources of inspiration. Exposing young people, particularly those who have not had a stable home life, to a range of people, occupations and activities can help to inspire them about life's possibilities and the potential to change their trajectories. Access to inspirational speakers and mentors can also assist students to identify areas of passion and interest when developing a sense of purpose.

The EFY Foyer program also develops and fosters student motivation and inspiration through the provision of group activities – for example, groups interested in sexual identity, the environment, cooking or art. These groups enable Foyer students to connect over common backgrounds, interests and goals and assist them in identifying goals and values that resonate with them. In addition, connecting with peers who have similar backgrounds and observing them make personal gains can strengthen young people's beliefs in their own abilities and their motivation to achieve. The result is that the young people in Foyer are motivated by their peers and begin to feel like they can succeed.

⁹² D. Pink 2009, *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us*, Riverhead Books, New York.

Coaching and Guidance

Young people experiencing homelessness are thrust into independence at an early age, often due to crisis or trauma. They may not be emotionally or financially ready for independent living, and indeed may be grappling with common adolescent concerns, which are compounded by recently experienced crisis or trauma.⁹³ In addition to a disrupted education, young people who have experienced family breakdown or dysfunction have also often missed out on critical developmental guidance and support.⁹⁴ Providing both formal and informal coaching and guidance mechanisms are vital in establishing the necessary connections and supports that are required in the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Identifying and achieving goals in relation to Civic Participation will vary among Foyer students, depending on their current state of mental health, their social and emotional skills and their relationship status with family, friends and extended networks. Students who are suffering from anxiety or trauma may need to begin with simply attending and observing group activities, rather than being active participants. Others will be keen participants but may need some encouragement or support to take a role in leading a group or to contributing for reasons other than their own interest or benefit.

A tailored, graduated approach is needed to help young people identify their goals, address their needs and build on their strengths so they can develop the confidence needed to become active members of society. This graduated approach to achieving one's Civic Participation goals involves engaging both with the internal Foyer community and with the broader mainstream community. It might entail the Foyer's Youth Development Worker (YDW) encouraging a young person during weekly personal coaching sessions to participate in at least one Foyer activity per week, or supporting them to source and participate in external activities in which they are interested.

The Education First Youth Foyer Model provides integrated coaching support for all aspects of a student's development while in the Foyer. The 6 Service Offers are designed to work together to enable students to develop the necessary suite of skills and connections to build the foundations for a sustainable livelihood.

Internal Opportunities

Providing opportunities, resources and experiences is part of the EFY Foyer team's commitment to 'the Deal'. This is based on the understanding that disadvantaged young people are limited by their lack of resources and opportunities, rather than by a lack of potential. In many ways, the Foyer acts as a supportive *surrogate* family for Foyer students, most of whom come from disrupted and dysfunctional households that are unable to provide safety, social capital, clear expectations, positive role modelling and guidance. The Civic Participation Offer provides Foyer students with access to activities and opportunities that are relevant to a young person's goals and aspirations and provides them with the necessary *people, networks, resources and skills* to allow them to unlock their potential and to become productive and independent, yet connected, citizens.

Internal Opportunities are geared towards helping students to work on specific goals, to broaden their knowledge and to build and apply their skills within the familiar setting of Foyer – depending on their needs and capabilities. This begins with the Foyer environment in which young people live in a shared space with communal areas that facilitate their connections with peers and adults – where they can eat, relax, study and grow together.

⁹³ G. W. Kamieniecki 2001, 'Prevalence of psychological distress and psychological disorders among homeless youth in Australia: A comparative review', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 35(3):352–8.

⁹⁴ DHS 2008, op. cit.

Congregate living can be a challenge with 40 young people from diverse backgrounds residing together. Therefore, the EFY Foyer encourages its residents to participate in or lead social activities designed to establish a positive Foyer culture and enhance connections between people, while expanding their knowledge and understanding of each other's differences. Such social activities can assist in creating a sense of community and belonging, and developing interpersonal skills. It can also help students to recognise that everyone in the Foyer has different needs – all of which must be considered when making decisions about activities and responsibilities.

As part of the Foyer model, students are able to negotiate a 'something for something deal' that enables them to access resources or opportunities in return for providing something for other students and/or the broader community. Students are required to propose what it is they will do for others, a process that enables them to build their self-confidence by helping them to recognise they have skills that could be valued by others within the Foyer and in the broader community.

In the context of the Civic Participation Offer, Internal Opportunities include the development of social skills, self-confidence and social networks. They also include the provision of personalised coaching, and access to information and resources through participation in the range of activities available in all of the 6 Service Offers.

External Opportunities

These provide students with the opportunity to build and apply their knowledge and skills within an external setting, accessed through the networks associated with each of the 6 Service Offers. Given that all students enter the EFY Foyer with different needs and priorities, External Opportunities are highly personalised and relevant to each individual.

The Civic Participation Offer builds students' networks, including those that enhance their social capital and enable them to connect with the wider community and to access employment and other opportunities. Specific External Opportunities through the Civic Participation Offer include:

- joining community-based groups, activities or projects, such as sports teams, university or TAFE clubs, fundraising events or gender identity groups. Participation in these groups enables Foyer students to broaden their knowledge base and helps them to identify goals and values that resonate with them
- developing an Address Book of contacts which gives students the opportunity to connect with supportive peers and adults beyond the Foyer and link to institutions through mainstream services and activities
- access to opportunities to explore different experiences and philosophies and to understand how their skills are able to make a genuine difference in their own lives and the lives of others.

Celebrating Achievements

Throughout each stage of the Civic Participation Offer, students' achievements will be acknowledged and celebrated. This begins with the CRIL during the pre-Foyer Education Readiness process and continues throughout the two-year EFY Foyer tenancy via mechanisms such as personalised coaching and the Learning Plan, which ensure that Foyer staff are always supporting students to achieve their goals. Students are working towards both short-term and long-term civic participation goals, but will often need to undertake a number of steps before these goals can be achieved. This could include participating in internal group activities so as to build the confidence needed to attend a community group outside the Foyer.

Recognising and celebrating incremental steps increases students' confidence about their own abilities, their capacity to achieve the next step and their potential in the future. Focusing on and celebrating achievements can help students to recognise their strengths and growing asset base, thereby encouraging them to improve their current relationships and connect with new and supportive people and communities.

Core skills and activities

Many young people who have experienced homelessness have had limited opportunities to develop and enhance their sense of self and self-worth. Their personal strengths and capabilities have often not been recognised and they have had limited access to people, opportunities and experiences that will assist them in allowing these skills to flourish.

EFY Foyers have adopted and adapted the evidence-informed asset matrix that was developed by the UK Foyer Federation to identify the key assets, skills, attributes and character capabilities necessary for young people to transition successfully to adulthood.⁹⁵ This matrix is based on three key areas – social, personal and agency capabilities – all of which recognise the central importance of a young person's sense of self and the influence this has on their future outcomes. This matrix also resonates with the youth asset framework developed by the Youth Support and Advocacy Service⁹⁶ and informed by Ungar.⁹⁷

In addition, the EFY Foyers focus on developing practical skills that are specifically related to one of the 6 Service Offers. Together these core skills are critical to ensuring that students have the necessary capabilities to respond to, and cope with, life's challenges.

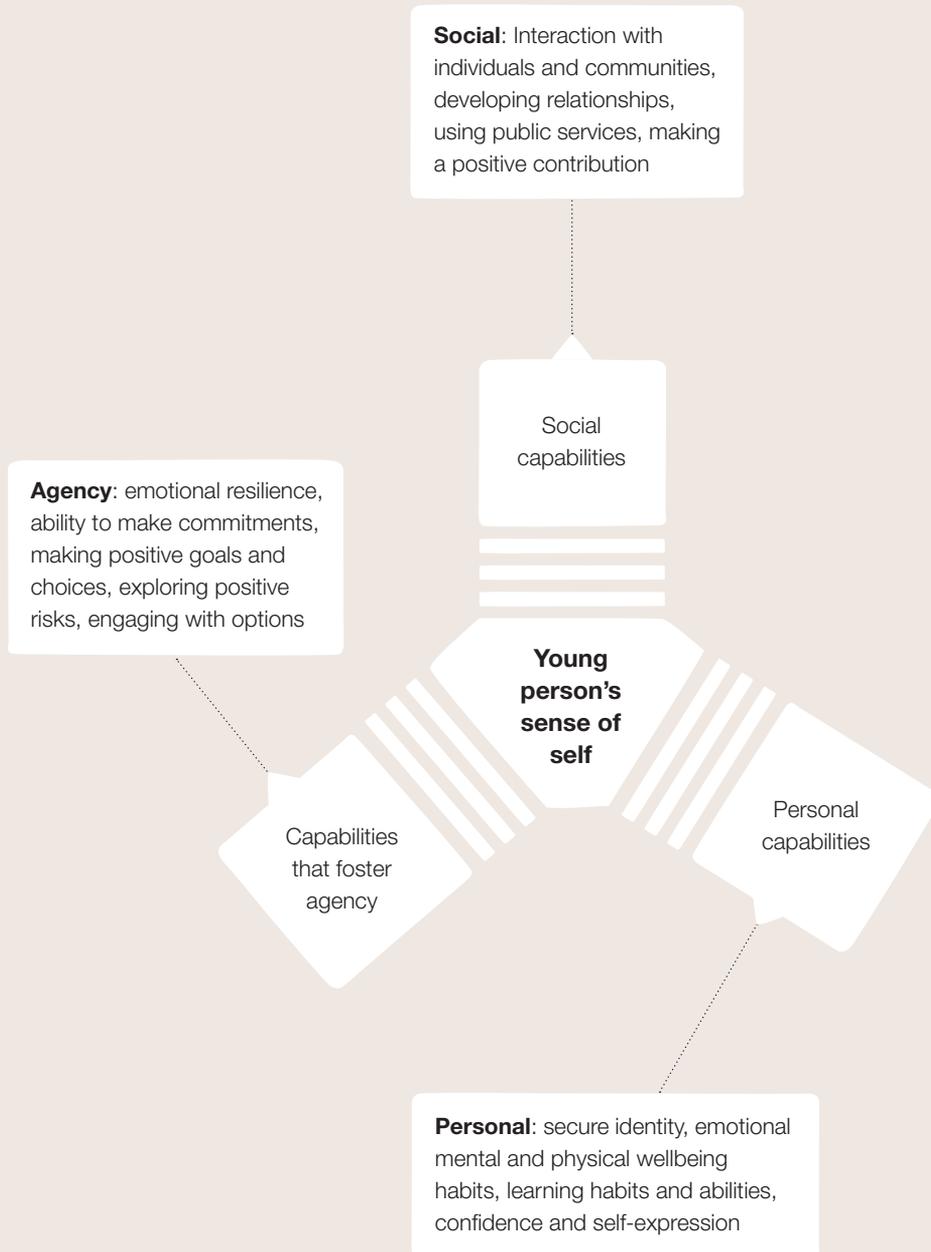
Figure 5 on the following page represents the core capabilities required for a young person to reach their potential.

⁹⁵ Foyer Federation op. cit.

⁹⁶ YSAS, op. cit.

⁹⁷ M. Ungar 2006, *Strengths Based Counselling with at Risk Youth*, Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Figure 5
Young person's capabilities



To develop the capabilities displayed in Figure 5, young people require the opportunity to build core skills. Table 1 below demonstrates the core skills required to build personal and social capabilities, agency and practical competencies.

Table 1: Core skills for young people

Stream	Skills
<p>Personal</p> <p>Reflectiveness, motivation, responsibility</p>	<p>Self-awareness: the ability to act appropriately, manage stress, regulate emotions, possess self-confidence about one's abilities and have optimism for the future.</p> <p>Self-expression: confidently express one's identity, talents and abilities, and recognise opportunities for self-development, personal growth and making positive change.</p>
<p>Social</p> <p>Relatedness, engagement and interaction</p>	<p>Social awareness: understand social and ethical norms of behaviour, relate to and communicate with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures, and be aware of family, social and community resources.</p> <p>Relationship skills: establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships, communicate clearly, negotiate conflict, resist inappropriate social pressure, and seek and offer help when needed.</p>
<p>Agency</p> <p>The capacity to act on one's own behalf</p>	<p>Decision making: make constructive and respectful choices about personal behaviour and social interactions, evaluate consequences of actions and safety and wellbeing of self and others.</p> <p>Problem solving: identify and define problems, investigate possible solutions and implement strategies for resolving issues.</p> <p>Positive experimentation: be able to take positive risks concerning one's self-development that may include new experiences, places and/or people, as well as pro-active steps towards achieving set goals.</p>
<p>Practical skills</p>	<p>Communication skills, community engagement strategies, self-advocacy skills: have the ability to engage with the broader community utilising oral and written literacy, information and communication technology, planning and organising skills</p>

Part 4: Overview of the Civic Participation Offer's Tools and Resources

The Education First Youth Foyer Civic Participation Offer is supported by a suite of practical tools and resources for use in operationalising this Offer. They are specifically designed for the use of Youth Development Workers, Team Leaders, Developing Independence Teachers and mentors in the EFY Foyer context, but

may also be useful to other workers and teachers in youth settings.

All of the following tools and resources have been developed to support the students and staff involved with the EFY Foyers. An overview of these tools and resources is provided here, all of which can be accessed at: efyfoyers.org.au.

Vision of the Civic Participation Offer

The Civic Participation Offer supports all EFY Foyer students to engage in community activities and to become active and valuable members of their community so they can develop a positive purpose in their own lives and contribute to improving the lives of others and the broader society in which they live.

How the Civic Participation Offer supports students to become active and valuable members of the community

- 1 **'The Deal'** is an agreement signed by all EFY Foyer students that during their residency in Foyer they are accountable for remaining engaged in activities – e.g., leading an activity attended by their Foyer peers or community members – as set out in a proposal developed by each student. In exchange, the EFY Foyer provides opportunities that are relevant to students' goals and aspirations, and access to the appropriate people, networks, resources and skills to allow them to unlock their potential to be productive and independent, yet connected, citizens.
- 2 **Coaching framework** formalises the positive, outcomes-focused relationship formed between EFY Foyer students and staff, and provides a weekly one-hour space for each student to engage in tailored goal setting, planning and skill development with their YDW.
- 3 **Certificate I in Developing Independence** supports students to set goals and aspirations, plan to achieve them and grow their networks and experiences.
- 4 **Volunteer and/or community project work** provides students with an understanding of the mechanisms of community organisations, and an experience of making a difference or a contribution to something bigger than themselves.
- 5 **Internal Opportunities** provide a broad range of activities, developmental resources and supports that are designed to build students' skills, assets and knowledge base to assist them in becoming engaged citizens.
- 6 **External Opportunities** connect students with community groups and services, social and economic networks, and resources and specialist supports that exist outside of EFY Foyer and TAFE.
- 7 **Celebrating Achievements** is a critical part of the Foyer model that ensures small and big achievements are recognised and supported as part of a student's development.

4.1 The Deal

'The Deal' is the ethos behind the EFY Foyer Model, but has particular resonance with the Civic Participation Offer. It is designed to prepare young people for the real world and the expectations associated with sustaining an independent livelihood. It does this by upholding both the rights and responsibilities of students and staff. In turn, students and staff are accountable for their actions and a culture of reciprocity is fostered. Holding young people in high regard instils in them a sense that they are valued members of society with something to contribute.

'The Deal' progresses personal goals and choices and cultivates the practice of learning and reflection. Through access to opportunities, networks and resources young people will have the capacity to make personal changes leveraged by the EFY Foyer. 'The Deal' enables students to work on their own 'something for something' proposal so they can access a resource or opportunity in exchange for providing a resource or opportunity either to other students or to the community. For example, a student who needs financial assistance to buy tools required as part of their horticulture apprenticeship might offer to provide their labour to help with establishing a community garden, or they might organise a Foyer workshop on growing and maintaining herbs to other Foyer residents interested in establishing a herb garden.

By promoting a culture of reciprocity, and by expecting something back from young people, 'the Deal' is designed to instil in them that they are both valued and can add value to society. This is key to developing a young person's sense of self, thereby enabling them to navigate their lives After Foyer confidently.

4.2 Coaching framework

The way that EFY Foyer staff, mentors and group facilitators work with students is central to ensuring the integrity of the Open Talent approach, and we aim to enable EFY Foyer staff, mentors and others involved with EFY Foyers to work in ways that develop their capacity to innovate and lead change.

A wide range of methods – including positive psychology, mindfulness techniques, narrative-based approaches, motivational interviewing, solutions-focused therapy, life coaching and group work methodologies – have informed the development of the EFY Foyer Coaching Framework. It incorporates a youth-focused coaching approach, which is distinct from models designed for adults such as leadership coaching, vocational coaching and life coaching.

Youth-focused coaching marks a move away from a traditional, deficit-based, case-management approach towards one that is 'aspirational' and goal-oriented. Such coaching does not replace all other forms of professional health and wellbeing services and supports. Rather, this approach clarifies and reshapes the activities of non-clinical staff in EFY Foyers, such as Youth Development Workers and Team Leaders, whose roles integrate personalised coaching, assisted planning and group work facilitation.

Coaching in the EFY Foyer is led by YDWs and Team Leaders, with the process structured and focused on a clear set of objectives and goals. It is relational and task orientated, and driven by the self-articulated goals of the young person. It requires a shared investment from both the Personal Coach (YDW or Team Leader) and the young person being coached. In the coaching relationship, it is the Coach's role to:

- recognise and improve skills, abilities and/or knowledge
- have expectations and make demands
- motivate
- facilitate further opportunities for young people to develop skills.

The Coach can also play an important role in supporting young people to arrive at a place where they are building in all areas of their life. The Foyer Federation recognises four distinct levels of livelihood, which map where young people may be on a continuum from surviving towards thriving. These four levels are:

- **Surviving** – a life defined by deficit and day-to-day sustainability
- **Coping** – a life limited by deficit and short-term sustainability
- **Building** – a life moving from deficit to asset and mid-term sustainability
- **Thriving** – a life defined by asset and long-term sustainability.

The EFY Foyer approach towards coaching aims to support young people to move from states of 'surviving to thriving' through regular Personal Coaching sessions.

Coaching Manual

The Coaching Manual provides an insight into the thinking and theory behind youth-focused coaching, as well as practical exercises and tools to use with young people in a coaching context.

Training

All EFY Foyer staff undertake Induction Training when they commence in a Foyer role and coaching is part of this training. The coaching modules provide practical, hands-on training designed to upskill staff as personal coaches.

4.3 Certificate I in Developing Independence

The Certificate I in Developing Independence (or Cert. 1 in DI) is a key component and driver of the Education First Youth Foyer Model. It is a mandatory course, formally accredited by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority, in which students accepted into the EFY Foyer will enrol on their second day of induction.

The Cert. 1 in DI fills a significant gap in the current education and training system by providing a formal, supportive and accredited space for young people to develop core life management skills – such as goal setting, planning and dealing with conflict – as well as recognising and validating their existing skills, talents and aspirations.

Through a combination of personal coaching around education and career planning, enhanced by engagement in group activities at the EFY Foyer, the Cert 1. In DI provides a solid platform from which young people can independently begin to navigate their own career and personal development journeys. It aims to provide a launch-pad from which to engage with the EFY Foyer's 6 Service Offers:



Education



Employment



Health and Wellbeing



Social Connections



Civic Participation



Housing and Living Skills

4.4 Volunteer and/or community project work

As part of the Civic Participation deal, students will be required to participate in charitable, volunteer and/or community project work. This could include activities such as:

- working with an existing charity or community service
- participating in structured volunteering positions
- organising community events
- raising funds for, or awareness about, a worthwhile cause.

Students should determine in what type of activity they want to be engaged, what talent and skills they bring to that activity and what it is they are contributing to others or to society at large. Those students who are part of the EFY Foyer leadership team will also be required to work on a local community revival project with a community group. This project should be determined by Foyer students in consultation with interested community members, and could include activities such as creating a community garden, painting a mural or establishing a community choir.

The leadership group will be expected to initiate one such project per year, coordinate the participation of Foyer students in it, and liaise with community members and appropriate authorities where necessary. The project should be planned carefully, with clearly identified key participants and an understanding of what the benefits are to those personally involved and to the broader community.

In addition to building the skills, experiences and networks of those organising and participating in the project, it should also build goodwill in the community towards EFY Foyer students. As such, it is a good opportunity for students to demonstrate to themselves and to others that they are a valuable resource to the community in which they live and study.

4.5 Internal Opportunities

The Civic Participation Offer provides access to opportunities that are relevant to a young person's goals and aspirations and provides them with the necessary resources and skills to allow them to unlock their potential to be productive and independent, yet connected, citizens.

Internal Opportunities relevant to the Civic Participation Offer include:

- structured, student-led social activity programs aimed at building social connections between students and at developing a positive culture and living environment
- workshops on civic systems and processes and community participation and engagement
- development of a leadership group that students will have the opportunity to be members of, or engage with, to ensure their voices within the Foyer are heard and represented.

TAFEs also have a wide and diverse range of opportunities for participation in the student community. These include counselling services, team sports, special-interest clubs, recreational facilities, music and cultural events, and student governance opportunities. As all EFY Foyer students are also students of their home TAFE, even if they are studying elsewhere, it is important that they know of, and can easily access, the services and opportunities available onsite and that they feel part of the TAFE community. It is also important that the EFY Foyer does not duplicate any TAFE services already provided.

Civic Participation Workshops

Civic Participation Workshops are a targeted and purposeful opportunity for students to increase their skills and knowledge related to civic engagement. Such workshops may be targeted 'one-offs' or a series of skills building activities, and can be facilitated either by a YDW or by external experts. The content of these workshops will depend on the characteristics of the student cohorts at each Foyer. In particular, where there is a large cohort of students from newly arrived communities, workshops on Australian services and systems, including political, legal and social services may be required. Other topics could:

- developing a project plan
- leadership skills
- community engagement strategies
- media training
- Internet activism
- fundraising.

In developing a program of Civic Participation Workshops, the following questions should be considered:

- What do the current cohort of EFY Foyer students identify as 'skills that they need to develop'?
- Does the TAFE or local community run any workshops like this already?
- If not, who could potentially present on these skills?
- Who will be the key EFY Foyer contact for Civic Participation Workshops?

4.6 External Opportunities

External Opportunities provide students with the opportunity to build and apply their knowledge and skills within an external setting. They can also broaden student's scope to build networks and connections that can sustain aspirations in life.

The objective is that students leave the EFY Foyer with an Address Book of contacts and resources that they have accumulated throughout their stay. For the Civic Participation Offer, this includes people who provide links to community groups and activities and who can broaden students' knowledge of how to become active citizens.

External Opportunities provided within the context of the Civic Participation Offer could include engaging with:

- the Australian Electoral Commission programs and resources
- local politicians and youth representative committees
- community groups such as sporting clubs, special-interest groups and youth engagement programs and activities
- local charities, services and organisations such as Rotary.

It is important to note that not all activities outside of the EFY Foyer are considered External Opportunities – only those that a student identifies as important to their personal development and goals. Other activities may be purely recreational.

All of the tools and resources referred to herein can be accessed at: efyfoyers.org.au.

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stuartpettigrewdesign

Brotherhood of St Laurence

67 Brunswick Street
Fitzroy VIC 3065

t +61 3 9483 1183

f +61 3 9417 2691

e info@efyfoyers.org.au

www.bsl.org.au

Launch Housing

68 Oxford Street
Collingwood, VIC 3066

t +61 3 9288 9600

f +61 3 9288 9601

e info@launchhousing.org.au

www.launchhousing.org.au

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