

**EDUCATION**first**YOUTH**foyer

# Employment Offer Conceptual Framework



Brotherhood of St Laurence  
Working for an Australia free of poverty





**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.'*

**EDUCATION**first**YOUTH**foyer

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Employment Offer  
Conceptual Framework

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The Education First Youth Foyer Employment Offer Conceptual Framework has been developed in partnership by Hanover Welfare Services and the Brotherhood of St Laurence.

A downloadable PDF of this Conceptual Framework is available @ [efyfoyers.org.au](http://efyfoyers.org.au).

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## Abbreviations

<b>BSL</b>	Brotherhood of St Laurence	<b>NCVER</b>	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
<b>DI</b>	Developing Independence	<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>DEECD</b>	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victorian Government)	<b>OH&amp;S</b>	Occupational Health and Safety
<b>DHS</b>	Department of Human Services (Victorian Government)	<b>PERMA</b>	Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment
<b>EFY Foyer</b>	Education First Youth Foyer	<b>SES</b>	Socio-Economic Status
<b>GGS</b>	Geelong Grammar School	<b>TAFE</b>	Technical and Further Education
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology	<b>VCAL</b>	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
<b>JSA</b>	Job Services Australia	<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education Training
<b>LLENs</b>	Local Learning and Employment Networks	<b>YDW</b>	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.<sup>1</sup> 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 Employment 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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 Hanover, 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 (DEECD) 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.

### Education First Youth Foyer Key Partnerships



## 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.<sup>2</sup> The EFY Foyers have adopted a version of PERMA based on the Geelong Grammar School (GGS) model,<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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'.<sup>5</sup>

## 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'.<sup>6</sup> 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, EFY 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 both during 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 talents and abilities.

In the EFY Foyer, 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.

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<sup>7</sup> 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.

# Part 1: Overview and Rationale of the Employment Offer

This conceptual framework for a new Employment Offer is 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.

Young people in Australia generally want to work. For some this is about earning an income so that they can live independently. For others it is about supporting themselves while they study or figure out what it is that they want to do.

*A lot of people think that there are a bunch of dole bludgers out there, but it's really not true, because no-one wants to be stuck at home all day doing nothing... People want to have savings, people want to go to other countries, people want to explore, people want to do things. If you don't have a full-time job you can't do that. I just want to get out there and work. I just need a job so I can move ahead in life.<sup>8</sup>*

For most young people, what they 'want to do' is to work in areas in which they have an interest or passion. They want to be listened to and given advice based on their goals. They also want to be given the time and opportunity to pursue work that is meaningful to them. This includes jobs that require university or TAFE education as well as entry-level employment.

Young people know that experience is crucial to their employment chances, but many consider gaining this experience impossibly difficult as they become trapped in a cycle of unemployment:

*Everyday the first thing I do is look for work. I'll print out resumés, hand them in, speak to managers, go on job-seeking websites, but still no success because I'm simply not given the chance because I'm young and lack experience. And because you need a job to get experience and because you need experience to get a job, with that constant loop, you can't really get into anything without having already known someone. And it can be frustrating.<sup>9</sup>*

Young people want more opportunities to gain experience: to have access to on-the-job training and entry level positions; to have opportunities to combine work and study; and to undertake courses with practical experience that is connected to their learning.<sup>10</sup>

The EFY Foyer Employment Offer values the aspirations of Australian young people, and recognises the contribution that they all can make to our national community, and to our economy. This conceptual framework for the Employment Offer not only presents a new way of working with young people experiencing disadvantage, but also of working with employers and the broader service system to alleviate structural and individual barriers to accessing employment. It presents young people with new opportunities and supports and coaches them to define and achieve their goals through building the foundations for a sustainable livelihood.

<sup>8</sup> Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) 2014a, 'Youth employment, my chance, our future: Kevin'. Available at: <http://www.bsl.org.au/Advocacy/Youth-employment.aspx>.

<sup>9</sup> BSL 2014b, 'Youth employment, my chance, our future: Troy's story'. Available at: <http://www.bsl.org.au/Advocacy/Youth-employment.aspx>.

<sup>10</sup> L. Walsh 2012, 'Generation Next: Where to for Australia's young people', *The Conversation*. Available at: <http://theconversation.com/generation-next-where-to-for-australias-young-people-10604>.

## 1.1 Overview of the Employment Offer

### Vision

The Employment Offer will provide EFY Foyer students with the opportunity to set career goals and aspirations, to develop personal, social and practical employability skills, to gain workplace experience and, ultimately, to achieve paid employment and strengthened career networks for sustaining employment options into the future.

### Purpose of the Employment Offer

The Employment Offer will provide resources, opportunities and support to:

- 1 EFY Foyer students to:
  - develop meaningful career goals and aspirations and plans to achieve them
  - develop the necessary skills to get and keep a job
  - access accredited education and training relevant to their career goals
  - strengthen their networks and social and community connections to facilitate employment outcomes
  - build their experience of work and of economic participation
  - access ongoing employment and advancement opportunities.

### 2 Employers to:

- implement meaningful work experience, internship and/or work placement opportunities and programs within their organisation that are responsive to the needs of both EFY Foyer students and their organisational and/or business needs
- understand the support needs of young people experiencing disadvantage
- access workers who can meet their organisational and skill needs
- provide customised work preparation and pre-employment training programs for potential recruits from among the EFY Foyer students
- provide ongoing support to EFY Foyer students within their workplaces to enhance their effectiveness and retention.

### Rationale for the Employment Offer

The EFY Foyer Employment Offer presents a new approach for service-connected young people that aims to increase their access to and participation in the labour market, and address structural and personal barriers to accessing employment. The Employment Offer recognises that enabling service-connected young people to build a pathway to employment requires the development of strong links with employers, education and training services, employment support services and community

“ The Employment Offer is dependent on the development of key partnerships... ”

service organisations. This recognition is based on evidence that:

- **Service-connected young people want to work** but experience high rates of unemployment and exclusion from the labour market, as they often lack the confidence, networks, experience and skills required for access to, or sustained engagement in, the labour market.
- **Employers need to fill vacancies with jobseekers who meet their organisational and skill needs**, but are concerned that service-connected young people will not have the right skills, personal capabilities and experience to be efficient and reliable workers.
- **Education and training services have expertise in developing and delivering educational programs and specialist and technical training** but have limited capacity to provide young people with on-the-job training or real world experience or to ensure training competencies are relevant to employers' needs.
- **Employment support services have expertise in providing young people with the skills required to look and apply for work**, but often do not have the time, resources or flexibility to support service-connected young people to build their personal capabilities, or to help them set and achieve incremental, long-term or sustainable career goals.
- **Community service organisations** have expertise in building young people's personal capabilities and providing support to overcome personal barriers to engagement, but often do not have the requisite links to adequate networks, employers or job opportunities.

The EFY Foyer Employment Offer presents a purpose-built framework that works to harness the expertise of each of these stakeholders and to provide them with integrated and inclusive support that can assist service-connected young people to build the foundations for a maintaining a sustainable livelihood.

## Supporting employment through a shared delivery model

The Employment Offer is dependent on the development of key partnerships with Business, Government, Philanthropy, Services and Community.

Business partnerships are particularly important in enabling the EFY Foyer to provide students with access to real-world opportunities and experiences related to employment. Working in partnership with businesses, for example, involves liaising with employers to develop strategies and opportunities that are mutually beneficial in meeting both business needs and the developmental and support needs of EFY Foyer students. Providing employers with appropriate support is critical to Foyer students gaining access to formal work experience placements in real workplaces and brokered access to employment opportunities. It will involve increasing employers' understanding of the needs of young people experiencing disadvantage, and assisting them to support young people on the job.

Businesses are also critical partners in co-designing the Employment Offer model to ensure that young people have the right types of skills and experience to be successful in the workplace.

Partnerships with Services and Community organisations – including trade unions, Job Services Australia (JSA) providers and informal pre-employment, engagement and personal support programs – are also essential in providing information and expertise on personal skills development and career information, and as formal and informal sources of support, mentoring and advice.

Over the long term, all levels of government – encompassing employment and education policy and support services – will be critical partners in helping to address some of the structural barriers to service-connected young people's participation in the labour market. Finding the right mix of active labour market interventions, and providing structural support and incentives for employers and education and training providers to work together to provide more frequent and relevant on-the-job training opportunities, will be critical to the future of both service-connected young people and the Australian economy.

## 1.2 Why a new employment offer is needed

### Young people and the Australian labour market

Young people necessarily have a different relationship to the labour market than other adults. The transition from school to work is a dynamic process and, as such, many young people move in and out of the labour market over a number of years before finding a job that offers career prospects and some stability.<sup>11</sup> The transition between work and school in Australia traditionally takes a number of different pathways including: full-time study, full-time or part-time work, combining work and study, and casual or temporary work either while pursuing a full-time work opportunity or other activities such as travel or self-employment. While these variances in participation are evident for all age groups, they are more concentrated among young people while they make the transition from school to work and from adolescence to adulthood.

Although many young people are able to navigate the transition between school and work successfully, usually with the financial and emotional support and guidance of their family, there are a number who are particularly vulnerable to being left behind. These include young people without family support and those who do not complete secondary, and increasingly post-secondary, education. However, even young people who do go on to complete post-secondary qualifications are finding it increasingly difficult to find work.

Youth unemployment in Australia is rising, and currently accounts for nearly 40 per cent of all unemployment in Australia. The rate for 15–24 year olds is currently 12.4

per cent nationally, rising to 20 per cent in some areas of disadvantage.<sup>12</sup> The numbers of young people not working or studying are also increasing with more than a quarter of 17–24 year olds nationally not engaged in either full-time work or study in 2011.<sup>13</sup> Again, for young people experiencing disadvantage, these rates are even higher, with many having given up looking for work and instead becoming inactive and disengaged.

Young people are particularly vulnerable to changes in the economy, both in terms of employment and education outcomes. Research shows that young people in Australia experienced significantly higher levels of full-time job decline (including apprenticeships) and higher increases in unemployment levels as a result of the Global Financial Crisis than other adults.<sup>14</sup> The number of young people in full-time employment has continued to decline since this time, as has the underemployment and underutilisation rates of 15–24 year olds. More than a quarter of employed 15–24 year olds report that they want more hours of work or more regular patterns of work.<sup>15</sup> In Victoria, the number of young people engaged in full-time employment was even lower than the national average, with only 33.6 per cent of 17–24-year-old Victorians engaged in full-time work post-school compared to 36.3 per cent nationally.<sup>16</sup> Young people looking for work are clearly finding it increasingly difficult to gain employment and, when they do, it is often not adequate to meet their needs.

Changes in Australia's labour market structure have meant that there are less entry-level jobs available for young people and greater competition for both skilled and unskilled employment.<sup>17</sup> Technological change and increased international competition have resulted in structural shifts away from traditional industries, such

<sup>11</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2010, *Off to a Good Start? Jobs for Youth*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

<sup>12</sup> BSL 2014c, *Australian Youth Unemployment 2014: Snapshot*, BSL, Fitzroy, Vic.

<sup>13</sup> COAG Reform Council 2013a, *Skills in Australia 2012: Five Years of Performance, Report to the Council of Australian Governments*, COAG Reform Council, Sydney.

<sup>14</sup> A. Anlezark 2011, *Young People in an Economic Downturn, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, Briefing Paper 23*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), Adelaide.

<sup>15</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2012, *Underemployed Workers*, Cat. No. 6265.0, ABS, Canberra.

<sup>16</sup> National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) 2013, *How Young People Are Faring 2013: A National Report on the Learning and Earning of Young Australians*, Foundation for Young Australians, Melbourne.

<sup>17</sup> Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency (AWPA) 2013, *Future Focus, 2013 National Workforce Development Strategy*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

as agriculture and manufacturing, to health, community and administrative services, retail and hospitality.<sup>18</sup> This has contributed to a relative decline both in full-time work opportunities for young people and in the demand for unskilled labour, particularly for unskilled men.<sup>19</sup> Full-time work opportunities for young people are also becoming more concentrated in industries that are sensitive to changing economic conditions and structural change, such as construction, leaving these young people more vulnerable to job losses.<sup>20</sup>

Entry-level jobs for young people are increasingly being relegated to casual, temporary and part-time positions. This means that many who are entering the labour market for the first time have little opportunity for training or progression, and no access to leave entitlements.<sup>21</sup> In addition, many current workforce development regimes do not allocate time or resources for the development of practical experience and on-the-job training of new workers, and instead look to employ only experienced people with proven skills and experience.<sup>22</sup> As such, young people's lack of previous work experience means that whether they are looking for full-time, part-time or casual work, that they are not competing on an even playing field with other adults in the labour market.

While the decline in full-time employment has to some extent been offset by increased participation in full-time education post-school, it does not explain the increase in unemployment rates and in the length of time young people are unemployed. The number of 15–24 year olds experiencing long-term unemployment in Australia has

tripled since 1998, with more than 18 per cent having been unemployed for more than 52 weeks in 2014.<sup>23</sup>

Long-term unemployment has been shown to have a significant scarring effect on young people, their communities and the broader economy.<sup>24</sup> Research shows that it is likely to lead to recurrent unemployment and welfare dependence in later years.<sup>25</sup> It can also erode young people's future earning capacity, their confidence, skills and motivation – and even their mental and physical health.<sup>26</sup> In addition to the personal and community impacts of increased welfare dependency, youth unemployment and its scarring effects are projected to have significant impacts on Australia's economic growth and its capacity to compete in a global economy.

## The economy: The need for increased skill levels in Australia

International and Australian research indicates that, to lift productivity, the Australian labour market will require individuals to have increased skill levels.<sup>27</sup> The types of work available are increasingly being driven by globalisation and technological change, which means that Australia will need to develop a knowledge-intensive economy. This will require both raising the qualification levels of Australians, as well as building an adaptive workforce that is able to re-skill to meet rapidly changing industry needs.<sup>28</sup> It will also require a more effective means of engaging and linking employers and educators to ensure that young people

<sup>18</sup> J. Buchanan, G. Dymski, J. Froud, S. Johal, K. Williams & S. Yu 2013, 'Changing employment portfolios and inclusive Growth in Australia: Redistributing risks at work', in P. Smyth & J. Buchanan (eds) 2013, *Inclusive Growth in Australia: Social Policy as Economic Investment*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, p. 69.

<sup>19</sup> R. McLachlan, G. Gillfillan & J. Gordon 2013, *Deep and Persistent Disadvantage in Australia*, Productivity Commission, Canberra.

<sup>20</sup> M. Circelli & D. Oliver 2012, *Youth Transitions: What the Research Tells Us*, NCVET, Adelaide

<sup>21</sup> K. Hoeckel 2014, 'Youth labour markets', in A. Mann, J. Stanley & L. Archer (eds) 2014, *Understanding Employer Engagement in Education*, Routledge, London.

<sup>22</sup> Buchanan et al., op. cit.

<sup>23</sup> BSL 2014d, *On the Treadmill: Young and Long Term Unemployed in Australia*, Youth Unemployment Campaign, BSL, Fitzroy, Vic.

<sup>24</sup> N. Hoffman & R. Schwartz 2014, 'Preface', in Mann, Stanley & Archer, op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> S. Scarpetta, A. Quintiti & T. Manfredi 2010, *Rising Youth Unemployment during the Crisis: How to Prevent Negative Long-term Consequences on a Generation?*, OECD Social Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 106, OECD Publishing, Paris.

<sup>26</sup> Circelli & Oliver, op. cit.

<sup>27</sup> Skills Australia 2010, *Australian Workforce Futures: A National Workforce Development Strategy*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

<sup>28</sup> AWPA, op. cit.

have the right skills to meet workforce needs and the opportunities to practise and develop these skills within the workplace.

Young people are vitally important when considering the workforce requirements of the future. Future workforce productivity will be largely dependent on ensuring that young people entering the labour market for the first time have the right level and types of training. Analysis published by the Australian Government in 2010 found that 70 per cent of the new jobs to be created in the five years to 2016–17 will require at least a Certificate III qualification and more than half a diploma level qualification or higher.<sup>29</sup> Economic modelling for Skills Australia suggests that the number of employed people without a post-school qualification will be the same or slightly lower in 2025 than it was in 2010, which means that low skilled jobs will effectively flat-line.<sup>30</sup> The Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency has recommended that the government support at least a 3 per cent annual increase in the level of tertiary qualifications to 2025, so as to meet national demand for skills and qualifications.<sup>31</sup>

## Links between education and employment

As can be seen, increasing school and further education completion rates and qualification levels is critical both to developing our young people's capacity for social and economic participation, and to building Australia's future economic capabilities and prosperity in a global economy.

Completion of secondary education is widely recognised internationally as the minimum level of education necessary for sustaining participation both in the labour force and in life-long learning and for career

progression.<sup>32</sup> Those with low educational attainment are at risk of prolonged periods of joblessness and exclusion. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has found that unemployment rates for adults without an upper secondary or equivalent vocational qualification are significantly higher than for those with this level of qualification (12.6% compared with 7.3% of adults).<sup>33</sup> For young people, 25–34 year olds, the difference is even more pronounced, with 18.1 per cent of those without a secondary or equivalent qualification being unemployed, compared to 9.5 per cent with this qualification.<sup>34</sup>

Young people experiencing disadvantage face particular difficulties in completing school and higher education. We know that even with government requirements to be earning or learning, students from disadvantaged backgrounds are overrepresented in the lower qualification levels of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system. We also know that those enrolled in Certificate I or II have very poor completion rates, with an average of only 21.5 per cent completing their qualification.<sup>35</sup>

Increasing school and further education completion and attainment rates among service-connected young people will require a focus on structural as well as individual level changes. This includes increased efforts to engage those currently excluded from education and employment and more flexible learning pedagogies and pathways.

## Homelessness and employment

While the majority of young people have opportunities that enable them to reach their full potential, a number face significant challenges. There are currently 29,700

<sup>29</sup> Skills Australia, op. cit.

<sup>30</sup> Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2012, *Skills for all Australians*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra. Available at: [http://www.dpmpc.gov.au/publications/skills\\_for\\_all\\_australians/pdf/skills\\_for\\_all\\_australians.pdf](http://www.dpmpc.gov.au/publications/skills_for_all_australians/pdf/skills_for_all_australians.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> AWPFA, op. cit.

<sup>32</sup> S. Scarpetta & A. Sonnet 2012, 'Challenges facing European labour markets: Is a skill upgrade the appropriate instrument?', *Intereconomics 2012: Review of European Economic Policy*, Springer, Berlin.

<sup>33</sup> OECD 2013, *Education at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, p. 77.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> National VET Equity Advisory Council (NVEAC), 2011, *Equity Blueprint 2011–2016*, NVEAC, Melbourne, p. 3.

Victorians aged 15–24 years not in full-time education who are unemployed (13.9%).<sup>36</sup> In addition, 24.3 per cent of all Victorians aged 17–24 are not fully engaged in either work or study, with this figure rising to 41.7 per cent of young people nationally from the lowest socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds.<sup>37</sup> Of those who were not in employment, education or training, 22.9 per cent had experienced a spell of homelessness, compared with 9.9 per cent of those who were.<sup>38</sup>

Almost 4000 young Victorians experience homelessness on any given night.<sup>39</sup> Young people experiencing homelessness are at increased risk of poor employment outcomes. In the July–December quarter of 2012 just over 10,000 18–24 year olds (and 2500 15–17 year olds) used Specialist Homelessness Services in Victoria.<sup>40</sup> In the last quarter of 2011, only 29 per cent – or less than a third – of the 15–18 year-old clients who gave their educational status (63% of those presenting) were enrolled in formal study or training.<sup>41</sup>

Young people experience homelessness for a variety of reasons but most commonly because of conflict with parents, violence at home, anxiety and depression, drug or alcohol use (their own or that of another family member) or the desire for independence.<sup>42</sup> Research investigating pathways out of homelessness show that young people who leave home and/or exit education early are unlikely to return to education or training. They are also much more likely to remain long-term unemployed and welfare dependent.<sup>43</sup> Completing education and training qualifications, therefore, is

critical to the capacity of young people to sustain ongoing engagement with the labour market and to maintain housing and economic independence.

Current homeless services have largely failed to address the training and work pathway needs of young people.<sup>44</sup> In the current homelessness service system, the focus has been on providing crisis services, in particular emergency and transitional accommodation assistance and social housing options.<sup>45</sup> It is clear that this approach is not working to provide long-term solutions to the range of barriers many young people face in establishing and maintaining economic independence. The focus must also be on finding sustainable employment, as this is a vital path out of poverty and homelessness.

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.<sup>46</sup> As the Victorian Department of Human Services has recently acknowledged, greater attention needs to be paid to moving young people out of disadvantage by building on their strengths and capabilities.<sup>47</sup> Providing integrated and personalised models of care are critical if young people are to build their resilience and achieve a successful youth transition trajectory.

<sup>36</sup> ABS 2013, *Labour Force Australia – Detailed Electronic Delivery*, February 2013, Cat.No. 6291.0.55.001, ABS, Canberra.

<sup>37</sup> COAG Reform Council 2013b, *Education in Australia 2012: Five Years of Performance*, COAG Reform Council, Sydney.

<sup>38</sup> NCVER 2013, op. cit.

<sup>39</sup> ABS 2011, *Census – Estimating Homelessness 2011*, Cat. No. 2049.0, ABS, Canberra (ABS reports this figure is likely to be a significant underestimation).

<sup>40</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2013, *Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, July–December 2012*, Cat. HOU 270, AIHW, Canberra.

<sup>41</sup> AIHW 2012, *Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, December Quarter 2011*, Cat. HOU 263, AIHW, Canberra.

<sup>42</sup> 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.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> AIHW 2013, op. cit.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> AIHW 2012, op. cit.

<sup>47</sup> Department of Human Services (DHS) 2011, *Human Services: The Case for Change*, DHS, Victorian Government, Melbourne.

### 1.3 The ‘standard employment offer’

Young people, in particular those who are in transition from school to further education or training and/or to work, necessarily have a different relationship to the labour market than other adults. Young people’s engagement with the labour market is tempered by their low levels of work experience, along with their need to undertake training and to develop both specific and general workplace skills, along with. This means that young people do not have equal access to the labour market in that they commonly experience higher levels of unemployment, more precarious employment conditions and lower wages than other Australians. However, there are a number of policy mechanisms and programs specifically aimed at supporting young people to make the transition from school to work, and these make up the ‘standard employment offer’ for young people.

The ‘Compact with Young Australians’<sup>48</sup> was established in 2009 to assist young people to acquire the skills needed to get a job and make the transition to further education and training. The Compact implements a series of education and workforce incentive and compliance mechanisms aimed at encouraging young people to stay at school and to increase their post-school education levels. This includes the requirement that for young people to be eligible for income support they must be either engaged in school, training, employment (or a combination of these activities) for a minimum of 25 hours a week until the age of 17, or to have attained Year 12 or its equivalent or to be ‘earning or learning’ until the age of 21. The Compact also guarantees access to vocational education and training for those young people under the age of 24 who are increasing their qualification level.

Job Services Australia (JSA), the Australian Government Employment Services System, provides jobseekers with support to help them find a job. These include job search, resumé writing, advice, skills development and access to employment opportunities. They also link jobseekers with relevant government initiatives, including access to training and work experience programs such as Green Corps’ and ‘Work for the Dole’.

JSA providers also monitor jobseekers’ eligibility for income support by ensuring that they meet the types of participation requirements outlined above. Assistance can be tailored to meet the needs of particular groups of jobseekers, with specialist support available for those experiencing homelessness, who have mental health issues or a disability, or who are newly arrived in Australia from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. There is also a very small number of providers with a specialist focus on young people.

The ‘National Career Development Strategy’<sup>49</sup> provides a framework for the design and development of resources that support career development for Australians of all ages and at all stages of life. This involves developing the skills and knowledge that enable individuals to plan and make informed decisions about education, training and career choices, as well as integrating career development support into government programs that assist people at education and employment transition points.

In addition to these standard offers, there are also a number of supplementary programs for young people considered to be at risk or marginalised from society. The ‘National Youth Connections’ program, for example, assists young people who have not completed, or who are at risk of not completing, Year 12 or an equivalent qualification to re-engage with school or to make the transition to further education

<sup>48</sup> Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) 2009, *Compact with Young Australians: Learning or Earning*, DEEWR, Australian Government, Canberra. Available at: <https://www.education.gov.au/compact-young-australians>.

<sup>49</sup> DEEWR 2013a, *National Career Development Strategy*, DEEWR, Australian Government, Canberra. Available at: <https://www.education.gov.au/national-career-development-strategy>.

or training. This is done through providing information, resources and brokered opportunities that will prepare those young people facing particular educational, personal, social, cultural or community barriers for entry to the employment market and assist them to create a realistic career pathway.

The Victorian Government also supports a range of programs aimed at assisting young people to transition from school to work including the funding of Local Learning and Employment Networks,<sup>50</sup> and the provision of the Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework that provides an integrated career education and counselling program for all Victorian school students.<sup>51</sup> In addition, the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development provides work-focused learning options such as school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, work experience and structured workplace learning placements, and alternative curriculum options such as the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning or VCAL and the VET in Schools programs.

## 1.4 The results of the ‘standard employment offer’

### Different outcomes for different groups

The above suite of programs make up the ‘standard employment offer’ available to young people in Australia. They provide a range of supports that assist young people to decide about their future career paths, to make the transition from school or training to work, and to find a job. However, while these policy mechanisms have had some success – as evidenced in moderate increases in the participation rate of 15–17 year olds in full-time study post-school (up 3.4% between 2006 and 2011), and overall improvement in the number of 20–24 year olds completing Year 12 or its equivalent<sup>52</sup> – there are significant variations in the outcomes for different groups of young people.

The academic achievements of students from low SES backgrounds in Years 7–9 actually fell between 2006 and 2011 and there has been no improvement in the proportion of these students progressing beyond Year 10.<sup>53</sup> In addition, there is an almost 20 per cent gap between the Year 12 or equivalent completion rates of those from the lowest and highest SES backgrounds.<sup>54</sup> The strong link between educational attainment and gaining employment means that these young people are being left increasingly vulnerable to long-term unemployment.

Similarly, work experience and structured workplace learning programs, along with the Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework, are largely delivered in school settings. Those young people who leave school are, therefore, unlikely to benefit from the standard supports to which most have access, such as informed career development and advice and an experience of work.

<sup>50</sup> Local Learning and Employment Networks support young people, 10–19 years old, within their geographical boundaries by improving their participation, engagement, attainment and transition outcomes.

<sup>51</sup> DEEWR 2011, *The Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework*, DEEWR, Australian Government, Canberra. Available at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/carframe/Pages/framework.aspx>.

<sup>52</sup> COAG Reform Council 2013b, op. cit.

<sup>53</sup> McLachlan, Gilfillan & Gordon, op. cit.

<sup>54</sup> COAG Reform Council 2013b, op. cit.

This is compounded by the fact that those students who leave school early in many cases also leave home early and, therefore, also miss out on family support. Evidence suggests that students 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.<sup>55</sup>

Furthermore, the current political environment means that funding for some of the additional or complementary supports tailored towards young people experiencing disadvantage, such as the Youth Connections program and community VCAL courses, have been or are soon to be significantly or wholly cut. Decreasing levels of apprenticeships and traineeships, and low completion and attainment rates for students from low SES backgrounds in VET courses, also mean there is a growing need for a specialist 'employment offer' for service-connected young people.

## The costs of young people disengaging from the labour market

Young people are critical to Australia's future economic prosperity. With a rapidly ageing population,<sup>56</sup> and an economic imperative for Australia to increase its productivity and its workforce participation levels,<sup>57</sup> it is particularly important that young people are given every opportunity to make a successful transition to the labour market.

Young people's first experiences of engaging with the labour market can have long-term ramifications. We know that those who experience prolonged periods of unemployment are more likely to experience long-term or recurrent unemployment and welfare dependence in later life.<sup>58</sup> This has significant economic, community and individual costs.

At the personal level, unemployment and welfare dependence can impact upon whole families, as well as individuals, affecting both their physical and mental health as well as their access to education and housing. This can create intergenerational cycles of poverty and exclusion that exacts significant personal tolls. Such a level of exclusion can also create a greater need for services in homelessness, crisis accommodation, health, mental health and even criminal justice, all of which can impact upon the broader community.

Long-term welfare dependency also has significant economic and productivity costs. These include a drain on government resources through the provision of income support and associated services, as well as the productivity costs of having a diminished pool of skilled workers who can contribute both to an internationally competitive economy and an increased taxation revenue.<sup>59</sup> This is particularly pertinent in relation to Australia's ageing population, which will see labour force participation rates decline at the same time that expenditure on health, aged care and the age pension will need to increase.<sup>60</sup>

Without structural shifts in the policies, programs and services provided to assist young people to enter the labour market for the first time – to make the transition from education and training to employment and to develop the range of skills necessary to get and keep a job – service-connected young people will continue to be left behind.

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<sup>55</sup> Circeli & Oliver 2012, op. cit.

<sup>56</sup> Productivity Commission 2013, *An Ageing Australia: Preparing for the Future*, Productivity Commission, Canberra.

<sup>57</sup> AWPA, op. cit.

<sup>58</sup> Scarpetta, Quintiti & Manfredi, op. cit.

<sup>59</sup> Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) 2014, *Learning to Work: A Helping Hand for Young Australians*, ACCI, Canberra.

<sup>60</sup> Productivity Commission 2013, op. cit.

“ ... the level, extent and continuity of support that service-connected young people receive is marginal in comparison to those who are family connected. ”

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

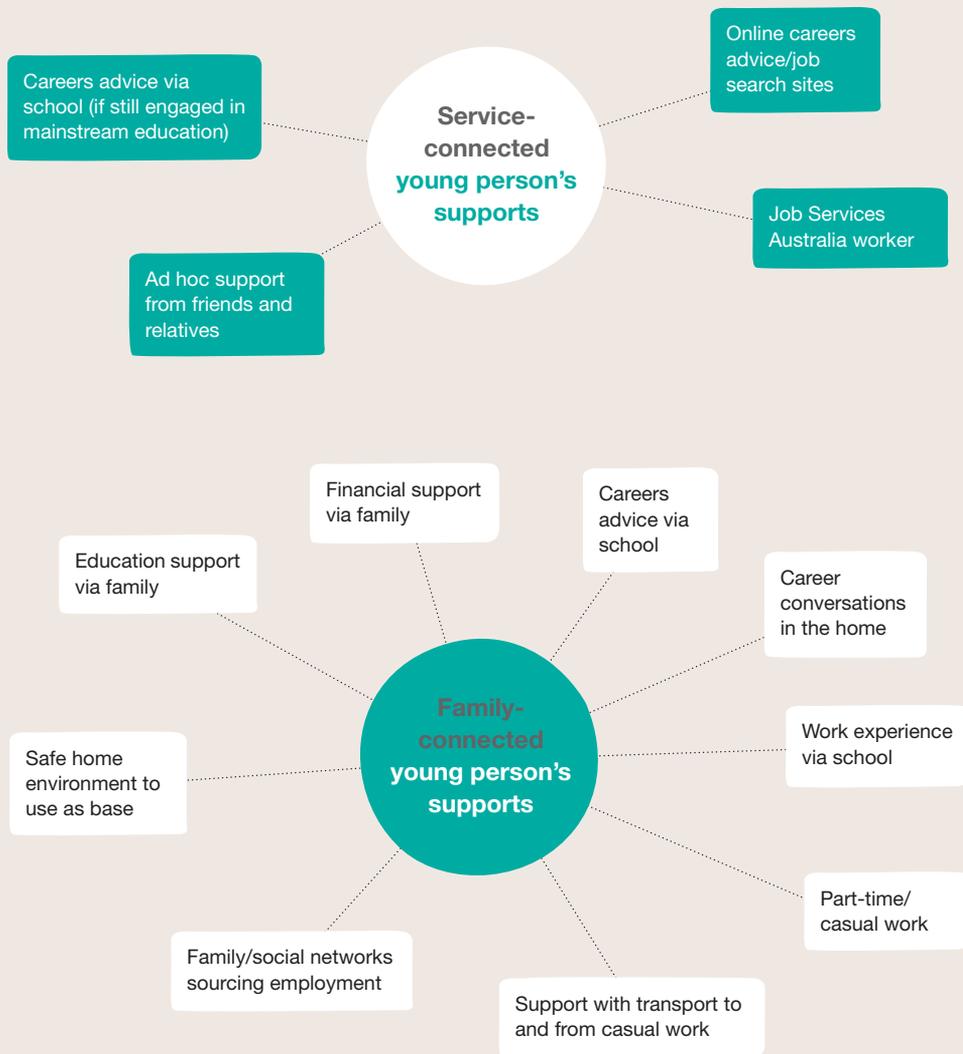
The ‘standard employment offer’, as with many mainstream services, contains an implicit assumption about the presence of familial and extended network support. Having access to family and extended networks usually provides young people with a range of emotional, financial and material supports, as well as a source of formal and informal information, advice and role modelling. While the levels of support differ between families and their own available resources, financial support will often include housing, amenities and food at little or no cost to the young person.

In addition, many young people living in the family home often receive some financial assistance with education, transport, clothing and even leisure activities during their transition to adulthood. Emotional support can include assistance with goal setting and decision making, navigating friendships and relationships, and with engaging more broadly in civic life. The security and stability of a family home also usually allows young people to take risks and to make mistakes, while maintaining financial and housing stability.

Standard programs and supports for young people that assume at least a base level of family support will, therefore, necessarily fail to meet the needs of those relying solely on community services – whether they be for education, employment or health and wellbeing. In addition, while there are a number of program and policy supports targeted specifically at young people experiencing disadvantage, these often fail to adequately or systematically address the multiple and complex barriers faced by many service-connected young people participating in education and training and in social and economic life more broadly. To have the same level of opportunity as their family-connected counterparts, service-connected young people need a range of additional formal and structural supports that alleviate economic, cultural and social barriers, as well as more personalised supports that provide advice, coaching and mentoring.

What follows in Figure 1 (overleaf) is a diagrammatic representation of the average support networks that family-connected young people receive in comparison to those who are service connected. As is shown, the level, extent and continuity of support that service-connected young people receive is marginal in comparison to those who are family connected.

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



## 1.5 Summary of the barriers to economic participation

Young people entering the EFY Foyer face multiple and complex barriers to participating in education and training and in social and economic life more broadly. In addition to lack of stable accommodation, young people experiencing homelessness lack the guidance and support typically provided by parents or guardians in the critical developmental stage of transitioning to adulthood. This can have a profound effect on an individual's health and wellbeing, with weak family cohesion and family conflict being associated with poorer academic outcomes and increased risks of disruptive behaviour and depressive illness.<sup>61</sup>

### Exclusion from mainstream education negatively impacts on skill development

Mainstream education and support services often fail to address adequately the complex inter-play of issues faced by young people experiencing homelessness, who often have high rates of expulsion or suspension from school and poor completion rates within the VET system.<sup>62</sup> This can contribute to poor literacy and numeracy skills and affect levels of confidence and engagement within education, the workforce and society more broadly.<sup>63</sup> This in turn can lead to the underdevelopment of character capabilities desired by employers, which include personal skills such as resilience, confidence and motivation and inter-personal skills such as communication and problem solving.<sup>64</sup>

Skills such as these are as important to educational engagement and life outcomes as academic abilities, and are even cited by employers as being more valuable than technical skills and qualifications.<sup>65</sup>

However, even programs such as VCAL, which have had considerable success in re-engaging early school leavers in education and training, have struggled to support the complex and high needs of students in their programs, without the support of specialist wellbeing and literacy aides.<sup>66</sup> These additional supports are not generally budgeted for in such programs and, therefore, often fail to improve the qualification levels of the most disadvantaged.

### Lack of appropriate employment opportunities

Structural, systemic and demand side barriers remain a critical challenge to achieving sustainable job outcomes for many disadvantaged jobseekers. Government policy and programs in Australia have generally focused on supply side barriers, with an emphasis on improving the skills and capabilities of jobseekers and providing counselling and support for those experiencing disadvantage to address these barriers.<sup>67</sup> However, young people are increasingly vulnerable to periods of precarious employment due to factors beyond their control.<sup>68</sup> Demand side barriers – such as structural labour market changes, economic conditions, employer attitudes and recruitment practices – are also critical. Research suggests that the increasing incidence of employment insecurity in Australia points to the need

<sup>61</sup> J. Margo, M. Dixon with N. Pearce & H. Reed 2006, *Freedom's Orphans: Raising Youth in a Changing World*, Institute for Public Policy Research, London; 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. Whaites & S. R. Zubrick 2000, *The Mental Health of Young People in Australia*, Mental Health and Special Programs Branch, Department of Health and Aged Care, Australian Government, Canberra.

<sup>62</sup> Productivity Commission 2012, *Impacts of COAG Reforms: Business Regulation and VET, Research Report*, Productivity Commission, Canberra.

<sup>63</sup> S. Sodha & J. Margo 2010, *Ex Curricula*, Demos, UK.

<sup>64</sup> J. Margo, E. Grant, D. Longford & M. Lewis 2010, *Foyer – Access All Areas*, The Foyer Federation UK.

<sup>65</sup> Sodha & Margo, op. cit.

<sup>66</sup> G. Myconos 2011, *A Path to Re-engagement: Evaluating the First Year of a Community VCAL Education Program for Young People*, BSL, Fitzroy, Vic.

<sup>67</sup> D. Perkins 2007, *Making it Work: Promoting Participation of Jobseekers with Multiple Barriers through the Personal Support Programs*, BSL, Hanover, Melbourne City Mission, Melbourne.

<sup>68</sup> M. Horn 2013, 'Inclusive growth: The role of active labour market interventions', in P. Smyth & J. Buchanan 2013, *Inclusive Growth in Australia: Social Policy as Economic Investment*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

for a broader reform agenda that 'builds capabilities, offers pathways into paid work and strengthens the prospect of job retention and advancement across the life course'.<sup>69</sup>

Research has also shown that one of the main barriers facing young people in gaining entry to the workplace is lack of experience, with employers increasingly demanding experienced workers for any type of job.<sup>70</sup> In workplace surveys employers routinely rank work experience as among the most important attributes they need in staff,<sup>71</sup> but gaining this experience is becoming harder, particularly for those who are disadvantaged.<sup>72</sup> Demand for higher skilled work has led to increased competition in low skilled employment, meaning that entry level positions are increasingly being filled by those with higher level qualifications and more experience.<sup>73</sup>

Employers' reluctance to take on people without experience is compounded by a decline in on-the-job training opportunities. Research suggests that opportunities for novice workers and new entrants to the labour market need to be made more widely available, with very few industries in Australia providing structured entry-level positions.<sup>74</sup> This is reflected in apprenticeship and traineeship statistics, which show a 26 per cent decline in the number of apprenticeship and traineeship commencements in the 12 months to 31 December 2013 compared with the previous year.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, the sharpest falls in commencements over the past five years have been for those aged 19 and under, while the rates for those 25 years and older

have been increasing.<sup>76</sup> This move away from what has traditionally been an entry point into the labour market for young people reflects a further tightening of the labour market for this cohort.

Changes in the structure of the labour market – from manufacturing and industrial to service-based work – also means that many young people entering it for the first time are increasingly being employed on casual and temporary contracts. Although this often suits employers, it leaves young people more vulnerable to job losses in economic downturns and less likely to be able to access training and development opportunities.<sup>77</sup> Irregular shifts and insufficient hours also result in many young people not being able to support themselves adequately or meet additional work or study commitments, as reflected in the growing underemployment and under-utilisation rates for the 15–24 year old cohort. While temporary jobs do provide young people with some workplace experience and can provide a stepping-stone to more permanent employment, research has shown that this is much more likely for youth with tertiary qualifications than it is for those without.<sup>78</sup>

### Lack of appropriate supports for disadvantaged jobseekers

Evidence suggests that some employment services also fail to offer young people who are experiencing high levels of disadvantage a reasonable prospect of obtaining a job.<sup>79</sup> Education and workforce compliance

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<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> J. Rose, L. Morstyn & A. Tudehop 2011, *Swimming Upstream: Young People and Service Provision under JSA*, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Melbourne.

<sup>71</sup> Graduate Careers Australia 2011, 'What employers want'. Accessed 6 November 2013 at: <http://www.graduateopportunities.com/>.

<sup>72</sup> NCVET 2013, *op. cit.*

<sup>73</sup> AWPA, *op. cit.*

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> NCVET 2014, *Australian Vocational Education and Training Statistics: Apprentices and Trainees Collection, September Quarter*, NCVET, Adelaide.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Scarpetta & Sonnet, *op. cit.*

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> BSL 2011, *Line of Sight: Better Tailored Services for Highly Disadvantaged Jobseekers: Submission to the Australian Government on Future Employment Services from 2012*, BSL, Fitzroy, Vic. Available at: [http://www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/BSL\\_subm\\_Future\\_employment\\_services\\_from\\_2012\\_Jan2011.pdf](http://www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/BSL_subm_Future_employment_services_from_2012_Jan2011.pdf).

measures mean that participation in education and training programs is a mandatory activity for many young jobseekers. However, rather than linking training to an individual's aspirations or interests, young people are forced to participate in courses in which they may have no interest, and/or that have inappropriate pedagogy and support for their particular circumstances and needs, simply because of their relevance to areas of skill shortages. This means that many of them are unlikely to be successful in completing the training,<sup>80</sup> and even those who do are unlikely to maintain a job in an area that does not hold their interest. As a result, many young people end up having to take further training and obtain more multiple low-level credentials – but still fail to attain the skills that employers want.<sup>81</sup> This is detrimental both to employers and to jobseekers and does nothing to increase young jobseekers employability over the long term.<sup>82</sup>

Similarly, 'work first' approaches that push disadvantaged jobseekers into unsuitable jobs – due to a skills mismatch, poor pay or conditions, and/or a lack of connection to the individual's interests or aspirations – often result in poor job retention. This can have detrimental effects on young people's attitudes to, and motivation for, work as well as employers' attitudes towards hiring young people in the first place.

Career development support is a particularly important factor both in building young people's understanding about what specific jobs entail, and in building their motivations and aspirations. However, because individualised career development support and

advice has largely been delivered through the school system, rather than being linked to employment support services, those who leave school early often miss out on any career guidance, thereby making the transition to employment or further education even more difficult.<sup>83</sup> Service-connected jobseekers require a stronger focus on vocational guidance to match them to training that it is then linked to paid work.

Employment services also often struggle to engage adequately with, or understand, employers' needs. This has meant that many young people do not have the right skills to meet workforce needs, or the opportunities to practise and develop these skills within the workplace. Research suggests that rapid job placement, and quality and performance ratings based on short-term outcomes, have taken precedence over building sustainable relationships with employers or finding appropriate matches between employers and jobseekers.<sup>84</sup>

Another report found that national employers interested in improving meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities for disadvantaged jobseekers often found it difficult to engage with employment services because they were highly localised and prescriptive.<sup>85</sup> Employment services need to work with employers to develop strategic partnerships so as to understand their specific skill needs, and to design and deliver training programs, work placement opportunities and on-the-job support to meet these needs.

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**80** E. Flentje, E. Cull & G. Guiliani 2010, *Achieving Sustainable Outcomes for Disadvantaged Jobseekers*, Hanover, Melbourne City Mission and Jobs Australia, Melbourne.

**81** Horn, op. cit.

**82** BSL 2011, op. cit.

**83** Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) 2013, *National Careers Service: The Right Advice at the Right Time: New Challenges, New Chances*, BIS, UK.

**84** National Employment Services Association (NESA) 2011, *Response to Employment Services 2012 Consultation*, NESA, Melbourne. Available at: <https://www.nesa.com.au/policy-development/response-papers.aspx>.

**85** Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS), Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) & The Business Council of Australia (BCA) 2012, *Opportunity for All: Joint Statement on ACOSS, ACTU and BCA Co-operation*. Available at: <http://www.bca.com.au/publications/opportunity-for-all-joint-statement-on-acoss-actu-and-bca-cooperation>.

## Employer attitudes

Employers commonly report a reluctance to employ young people who are new to the workforce due to their often limited personal and social skills and lack of experience.<sup>86</sup> Young people who have experienced disadvantage often face even greater stigma with employers reporting lack of work ethic, poor attitudes and poor skills as their biggest barriers.<sup>87</sup> Employers are increasingly looking to recruit workers who have experience and can be immediately productive, rather than providing the time and resources required to train young people. This means that instead of being given training or support to help them understand employer expectations and workplace culture, many young people are not even considered for positions or are 'let go' more easily or not given more shifts when they display any of these characteristics.<sup>88</sup> This is reinforced by evidence that suggests decisions around training and development are generally grounded in the immediacy of current business reality, such as improving productivity or competitiveness, rather than in the future needs of the industry or succession planning.<sup>89</sup>

Bias against young people, particularly those without experience, is also evident through employer recruitment and selection practices. Even employers who claim to be looking to hire young people based on attitude and fit, rather than technical or academic skills, often make selection requirements prohibitive for those without experience or qualifications.<sup>90</sup> For example, the use of online application forms often does not allow jobseekers to present their social or emotional skills or attitude or behavioural competencies. Similarly, selection criteria specifying previous experience immediately disqualifies many young people from even applying, despite their potential to be a good cultural

or organisational fit. Instead, young people need to be able to demonstrate their attitude and potential through alternative application and selection processes, such as the use of situational- and behavioural-based tests and interview.

Employer attitudes, processes and practices can pose significant impediments to young people's entry to, and retention in, the labour market. Providing work-ready employees requires a focus not just on young people addressing their skill deficits, but also on helping employers to understand the benefits, including the economic and productivity gains, of changing their workplace practices and processes to better realise their needs. This includes altering or redesigning recruitment, selection, training, development and support policies, processes and practices.

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<sup>86</sup> OECD 2012, *Better Skill, Better Jobs, Better Lives – A Strategic Approach of Skills Policies*, OECD Publishing, Paris; Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI) & BSL 2010, *Barriers to Hiring Disadvantaged or Vulnerable Workers: Victorian Employers Attitudes Survey*, VECCI and BSL, Melbourne.

<sup>87</sup> VECCI & BSL, *ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> K. Rudiger 2013, *Employers Are from Mars, Young People Are from Venus, Addressing the Young People/Jobs Mismatch*, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, London.

<sup>89</sup> ACCI 2011, *Employers Commitments to Training: Key Findings from the ACCI National Workplace Skills Survey 2010*, ACCI, Canberra.

<sup>90</sup> Rudiger, *op. cit.*

## 1.6 What young people need to succeed in employment

### Concerted policy and practice interventions aimed at disadvantaged young people

For many young people, unemployment, disengagement or inactivity is:

*the result of discouragement and marginalisation, which tend to reflect the accumulation of multiple disadvantages, such as lack of qualifications, health issues, poverty and other forms of social exclusion.*<sup>91</sup>

This experience can have serious cyclical effects that can lead to deeper and prolonged forms of exclusion, ‘where inactivity feeds into discouragement and that, in turn, to a further detachment from the labour market’.<sup>92</sup> Increasing the participation rates of young people in both work and study requires concerted policy and practice interventions, particularly for those young people from disadvantaged backgrounds or those experiencing ‘deep social exclusion’. In Australia, more than 5 per cent of young adults experience this form of social exclusion, in which multiple and inter-related factors can compound to impact on people’s capacity to participate fully both socially and economically.<sup>93</sup> Early school leavers experience social exclusion at nearly 2.5 times the rate of those with a Year 12 qualification, and experience deep social exclusion at up to three times the rate of those with Year 12.<sup>94</sup> Targeted support that provides multiple and joined-up initiatives to address the structural as well as the personal causes of disadvantage and exclusion are needed to enable these young people to break the cycles of poverty and exclusion.

To engage successfully with the labour market in an ongoing capacity, service-connected young people need to be able to access the same level of support as their family-connected counterparts. This support needs to encompass a suite of active labour market policy interventions such as:

- work experience and intermediate labour market programs
- skills-building activities including in both an ‘on’ and ‘off’ the job capacity
- financial incentives
- employment assistance
- engagement with local employers.

It also needs to encompass more personal supports such as:

- informal sources of advice and mentoring
- personal development
- skills-building programs.

Broadly, service-connected young people need the opportunity and resources to develop both internal assets, including core skills and capabilities, and external assets, including structural interventions and targeted support systems.

<sup>91</sup> Scarpetta & Sonnet, op. cit.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> F. Azpitarte 2013, *Social Exclusion Monitor*, Brotherhood of St Laurence and Melbourne Institute, Melbourne.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*

## Internal assets: Core skills and capabilities

### Character capabilities and employability skills

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 to enable these skills to flourish.

Providing service-connected young people with opportunities and experiences that can develop their personal and social capabilities, as well as their employability skills, is critical to ensuring they have the necessary capabilities to respond to, and cope with, life's challenges and become independent yet connected adults. This includes the development of capabilities like self-worth and relationship skills, as well as those that foster agency such as decision making and problem solving. These skills need to be encouraged, taught and practised in both formal and informal settings so that service-connected young people can use them as the foundations for a sustainable livelihood.

Employability skills focus on the personal, social and transferable qualities that are relevant to all jobs, as opposed to specific technical skills or qualifications.<sup>95</sup> Employers continually rank these skills, along with foundational or functional expertise in language, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT),<sup>96</sup> as equally if not more important to getting and keeping a job than technical skills and

qualifications.<sup>97</sup> Among the key characteristics that employers look for are:

- motivation and flexibility
- willingness to work and learn
- confidence
- appropriate clothing and grooming
- positive behaviour, gestures and mannerisms.<sup>98</sup>

With the growth of precarious and rapidly changing conditions in the workplace, it is also imperative that young people are equipped to become better skilled at career management and maintenance, such as with job seeking, resumé and application writing, interviewing, goal setting, planning and decision making.<sup>99</sup>

## External assets: Structural interventions and targeted support systems

### Clear links between employment, education and training

The mainstream trajectory for young people transitioning from school to work includes a number of pathways, including but not limited to:

- apprenticeships and traineeships
- VET courses
- university-level courses;

However, these pathways do not necessarily provide young people with a secure or smooth transition to employment.

<sup>95</sup> R. Blades, B. Fauth & J. Gibb 2012, *Measuring Employability Skills: A Rapid Review to Inform Development of Tools for Project Evaluation*, National Children's Bureau, London.

<sup>96</sup> Margo et al. 2010, op. cit.

<sup>97</sup> ibid.; Sodha & Margo, op. cit.

<sup>98</sup> K. Anderson, M. Brophy, B. McNeil & D. Potter 2010, *Opening the Doors to Apprenticeships: Reaching Young People Who Are Disadvantaged and Disengaged from Apprenticeships*, The Young Foundation, London.

<sup>99</sup> Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) 2010, *The Australian Blueprint for Career Development*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

The structural links between education and employment systems need to be strengthened, in particular through increasing employer engagement in education. Research shows that countries with strong dual vocational education systems, those that combine work and training, have the lowest youth unemployment rates.<sup>100</sup> Gaining experience of a real-world working environment enables students and graduates to develop an awareness of workplace cultures and expectations, gain practical skills, build networks, and develop ‘soft skills’ in communication, teamwork and leadership.<sup>101</sup> Studies show that workplace engagement for young people prior to entering the workforce can:

- improve communication and teamwork skills
- develop the use of initiative and problem solving
- increase confidence, autonomy, responsibility and income
- provide exposure to workplace culture and understanding of norms and expectations
- improve longer term job opportunities through developing their resumes, networks and contacts
- provide a forum in which to refine the choice of career pathway through confirming skills, abilities and interests.<sup>102</sup>

Employer engagement in education would also enable a better matching of the education and training curriculum with industry workforce requirements. This would ensure that graduates have more of the skills that employers want and help to prevent skills shortages.<sup>103</sup>

## Improved school and vocational qualification attainment

Ensuring service-connected young people remain engaged in, and are able to complete successfully, school and post-school education and training qualifications is critical to them being able to build a pathway to a sustainable livelihood.<sup>104</sup> This requires multifaceted strategies incorporating outreach, pedagogy, pathway and wellbeing interventions,<sup>105</sup> including:

- applied, flexible and personalised learning pedagogies for young people experiencing disadvantage
- a continuum of flexible educational options from non-accredited engagement programs through to mainstream settings, which allows a graduated approach to engagement at a level of intensity and a skills base with which individuals feel comfortable
- access to non-academic supports that promote health and wellbeing
- access to affordable training options including language, literacy and numeracy skills’ development
- access to work-integrated learning programs that demonstrate real-world relevance and applicability of training.

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**100** Hoeckel, op. cit.

**101** AWP, op. cit.

**102** S. Oxenbridge & J. Evesson 2012, *Research Paper: Young People Entering Work: A Review of the Research*, Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, UK. Available at: <http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/5/2/Young-people-entering-work-a-review-of-the-research-accessible-version.pdf>.

**103** Hoeckel, op. cit.

**104** OECD 2013, op. cit.; Productivity Commission 2012, op. cit.

**105** M. Davies, S. Lamb & E. Doecke 2011, *Strategic Review of Effective Re-Engagement Models for Disengaged Learners*, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victorian Government, Melbourne.

## Individualised support

Re-engaging young people who have experienced homelessness and disadvantage with employment, education and training requires specific strategies and supports that acknowledge young people's experiences and build their confidence, knowledge and skills.<sup>106</sup> Not only does this include supports around education and employment but also supports that promote health and wellbeing and build young people's resilience.

It is critical, therefore, that the intersection between employment and education and training support provides the flexibility to engage young people in areas that interest them and which give them the time and support needed to gain real outcomes. Young people who have experienced disadvantage may make a number of attempts before they are ready or able to engage successfully with employment, education or training.<sup>107</sup> Providing ongoing support, which allows a graduated approach to engagement, will help to ensure that service-connected young people are able to make a sustainable transition to work.

## Career development support

Effective career development has been shown to improve educational engagement and promote self-confidence.<sup>108</sup> For service-connected young people, who often don't have the support and guidance provided by family networks, it is vital to have a multifaceted approach to career development. This means providing both formal and informal sources of advice and guidance, ongoing access to reliable information to allow for different skill levels and

developmental phases,<sup>109</sup> and exposure to a range of careers and pathway planning support.<sup>110</sup> This suggests that career development should span both primary and secondary schooling, as well as post-school settings, to support young people as they move through different developmental phases.

There is some debate about the impact of aspirations on education and employment outcomes, with commentators suggesting that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds don't suffer from a lack of aspirations, as is often asserted by policy makers, but rather from a lack of available 'capital' to support their choices and decision making.<sup>111</sup> Capital can include access to information, education, opportunities, advice, and emotional and financial support, which is typically provided through family, school, culture and class settings. Rather than trying to develop or raise service-connected young people's aspirations, career development needs to focus on encouraging, informing and resourcing their aspirations. Providing service-connected young people with the time and support to develop realistic career plans that match individual interests, skills and abilities with areas of opportunity provides young people with hope and gives them agency over their own future. Incremental pathway planning also enables young people to develop the necessary skills and capabilities to manage their careers throughout their lives.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> C. Falconer 2012, *A Better Life for All Young People*. Available at foyer.net; Davies, Lamb & Doecke, op. cit.

<sup>107</sup> Davies, Lamb & Doecke, op. cit.

<sup>108</sup> MCEECDYA, op. cit.

<sup>109</sup> A. Mann 2012, *Work Experience: Impact and Delivery – Insights from the Evidence*, Education and Employers Work Taskforce, London; Margo et al. 2010, op. cit.

<sup>110</sup> MCEECDYA, op. cit.

<sup>111</sup> L. Archer 2014, 'Conceptualising aspirations', in Mann, Stanley & Archer, op. cit.

<sup>112</sup> DEEWR 2013a, op. cit.

## Real work opportunities and experiences

Service-connected young people need access to real work opportunities and experiences. Gaining experience in a real-world working environment enables students and graduates to develop an awareness of workplace cultures and expectations, gain practical skills, build networks and develop 'soft skills' in communication, teamwork and leadership.<sup>113</sup>

In addition to strengthening the work placement components of education and training courses, there should also be an increase in entry-level positions across all industries.<sup>114</sup> These positions need to provide both an entry point for those with limited skills and experience, as well as opportunities for on-the-job training and advancement.

Intermediate labour market opportunities that provide training and support, including social enterprise and paid internships, can also provide an important pathway to ongoing employment through building participants' skills and experience.<sup>115</sup>

## Business, government and community partnerships

Employer engagement is critical to creating opportunities for service-connected young jobseekers. This involves not only preparing jobseekers to meet the needs of employers, but also increasing employers' understanding of the needs of young people experiencing disadvantage, and providing them with the knowledge, strategies and support to harness their potential successfully. A recent report suggests that deeper and more effective community and employer

partnerships are crucial to developing mutually beneficial strategies that will provide employment solutions to match business needs and meet the support needs of disadvantaged jobseekers.<sup>116</sup>

In addition to benefiting service-connected jobseekers, employers who broaden their recruitment strategies to train and recruit from among those currently excluded from the labour market can benefit both from an increased capacity to meet their workforce requirements and from improved retention rates and productivity.<sup>117</sup> Partnerships that can assist employers with recruitment, and/or can provide customised work preparation and pre-employment training programs for potential recruits, can give employers cost and administrative incentives and jobseekers streamlined access to training and employment.<sup>118</sup>

Improving young people's access to, and engagement in, meaningful and sustainable workplace opportunities requires a concentrated effort to engage and support employers. This includes providing them with resources and support to implement work placements and work experience programs, with workplace mentoring and training, and with ongoing field officer support.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> AWWA, op. cit.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> D. Nockolds 2012, *Exploring Success for Intermediate Labour Market Social Enterprises*, BSL, Fitzroy, Vic.

<sup>116</sup> ACOSS, ACTU & BCA, op. cit.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> BSL 2013, *Pathways to Social and Economic Inclusion: Submission to the Australian Government on Employment Services from 2015*, BSL, Fitzroy, Vic.

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*



Kitchen area at Kangan EFY Foyer

**Photography** Dani Burley

## Part 2: Theories and Frameworks

### 2.1 EFY Foyer theoretical framework

A core set of theoretical perspectives and approaches informs the Employment 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 broader community.

The 6 Service Offers are also underpinned by core sets of theoretical perspectives and approaches. For the Employment Offer these include a particular understanding of the youth transitions process, and positive psychology. Our practice is also informed by a number of approaches including PERMA and Open Talent.

### 2.2 Theories and frameworks informing the Employment Offer

#### Youth transitions

Youth transitions theory refers to a global trend identified throughout Western democracies, in which there is a protracted transitional stage between youth and adulthood. This occurs across three spheres of life: the movement between school and work, the domestic sphere and housing.<sup>120</sup> During this stage, young people begin to develop their identities through exploring the possibilities of who they are and what they could be. This exploration allows them to begin to imagine new and different possibilities for themselves.<sup>121</sup>

As technological advances led to changes in the economy, and consequently to the length of time people were required to study before entering the workforce, a range of other social and structural changes that impact on youth transitions have occurred. Young people are generally staying in full-time education for longer, living in their familial homes for extended periods of time and often struggling to access and secure independent housing. Simultaneously, they may be engaging in adult practices in a range of cultural, industrial or personal settings, despite the domestic and financial limitations on their independence.<sup>122</sup>

Along with the increasing length of the youth transition phase, there is also evidence of growing numbers of young people who are unable to make a smooth transition to adulthood. This can be seen in the increasing number of young people experiencing homelessness, youth unemployment, and mental health, violence and substance misuse issues.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>120</sup> A. Furlong & F. Cartmel 1997, ‘Risk and uncertainty in the youth transition’, *Young: The Nordic Journal of Youth Research*, 5(1):3–20.

<sup>121</sup> T. Krettenauer 2005, ‘The role of epistemic cognition in adolescent identity formation: Further evidence’, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 34:185–19.

<sup>122</sup> H. Stokes & J. Wyn 2007, ‘Young people’s identities and making careers: Young people’s perspectives on work and learning’, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 26(5):495–511.

<sup>123</sup> Azpitarte, op. cit.



In the context of the school to work transition [there is]... a recognition that the wellbeing and identity needs of young people should be of paramount importance.



As a result there is now more of a focus on the youth transition phase than in the past, and on finding the most effective ways of responding to the needs of young people.

There are numerous theories on the best approaches to pathway planning, pedagogies and policy on youth transitions. However, it is now generally acknowledged that personal, social, political and structural factors are all important in determining the quality and ease of young people's transitions.<sup>124</sup> This means that issues such as affordable housing, equitable labour market policies and equal access to tertiary education are increasingly being recognised as critical factors in ensuring a 'smoother transition' from youth to adulthood, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Australian research suggests that an effective transition requires not only access and opportunities through

policies and pathways, but also a number of structural and social factors. These include:

- a healthy economy and labour market
- clear connections between qualifications and career destinations
- the opportunity to combine work and study
- a tendency to take every young person seriously
- careers advice from qualified professionals
- effective institutions and processes.<sup>125</sup>

In the context of the school to work transition, this has been interpreted as requiring a 'unification' of general and vocational educational streams to provide 'coherent, flexible and interconnected pathways',<sup>126</sup> and a recognition that the wellbeing and identity needs of young people should be of paramount importance.<sup>127</sup> For those also experiencing disadvantage, this includes a focus on broadening the possibilities of who they are and what they want to do.

<sup>124</sup> C. Spooner, W. Hall & M. Lynskey 2001, *Structural Determinants of Youth Drug Use*, Australian National Council on Drugs, University of New South Wales, Sydney; Davies, Lamb & Doecke 2011, op. cit.

<sup>125</sup> R. Sweet 2008, 'Round and round or fully rounded? How we can improve youth transitions', ACER Research Conference. Available at: [http://research.acer.edu.au/research\\_conference\\_2008/16](http://research.acer.edu.au/research_conference_2008/16).

<sup>126</sup> D. Raffe 2003, 'Pathways linking education and work: A review of concepts, research and policy debates', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 6(1).

<sup>127</sup> J. Wyn 2009a, 'The changing context of Australian youth and its implications for social inclusion', *Youth Studies Australia*, 28:1.

## Social and cultural capital

A key tenet of the EFY Foyer model is to ensure that young people have opportunities to develop networks that provide social support, resources and opportunities both during and after their time at Foyer.<sup>128</sup> These forms of social capital are recognised as being a necessary part of building sustainable livelihoods, but are something to which young people experiencing disadvantage often have limited access. The EFY Foyer, therefore, actively cultivates and assists its students to build their own networks that can help facilitate their access to opportunities and support in all areas of life.

There are a range of theoretical definitions and applications of cultural capital, but it is most clearly defined by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu as ‘the knowledge, education and skills to mobilise cultural authority’.<sup>129</sup> Cultural capital is distinguished from social capital in that it refers to implicit and explicit familial influences on people’s knowledge, values, dispositions, assumptions and expectations about their place within society. Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital is predicated on education as being primarily concerned with reproducing and legitimising the culture of the dominant classes, which, he claims, largely accounts for class differences in educational attainment.<sup>130</sup> This has been taken up by other researchers to explain the ways in which cultural and economic resources can influence educational outcomes and attainment rates of particular groups based on class, gender and geographic location.<sup>131</sup>

Research suggests that assumptions about identity and expectations can influence the ease of young people’s transition through education to employment.<sup>132</sup>

This is because young people experiencing disadvantage often have limited exposure to the diversity of career options available and, in addition, are less likely to have access to accurate information and advice about educational pre-requisites and career progression routes. Lack of familiarity or experience with these settings can also affect young people’s confidence and sense of belonging often leading them to ‘develop aspirations that are neither determined by their ability, nor based on a comprehensive understanding of the types of jobs available’.<sup>133</sup> Conversely, parents with experience and knowledge of the education system and broad professional and social networks are able to provide information, advice and modelling, as well as social networks, that can help their children to feel more at ease in these situations, and more able to successfully navigate education and employment routes.

For EFY Foyers, the concept of cultural capital can be used to help develop fairer education and labour market systems. It can also be used to provide young people experiencing disadvantage with the opportunity to develop a form of cultural capital through the skills they acquire in the Employment Offer and to build positive expectations and aspirations about their place in the world.

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**128** Mallett et al. 2014, op. cit.

**129** P. Bourdieu 1986, ‘The forms of capital’, in J. Richardson (ed.) 1986, *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Capital*, Greenwood Press, New York, pp. 241–58.

**130** *ibid.*

**131** J. Wyn 2009b, *Touching the Future: Building Skills for Life and Work*, ACER, Camberwell, Vic.; R. Teese 2000, *Academic Success and Social Power*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne; J. McLeod & L. Yates 2006, *Making Modern Lives*, State University of New York Press, Albany NY.

**132** E. Norris & B. Francis 2014, ‘Impact of financial and cultural capital’, in Mann, Stanley & Archer, op. cit., p. 34.

**133** *ibid.*

## A Positive Psychology approach

Key to the positive psychology approach is the understanding:

*that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves and to enhance their experiences of love, work and play.*<sup>134</sup>

Seligman, one of the founders of positive psychology, asserts that people commonly have particular hopes or aspirations in relation to their lives – they want to live meaningful lives, have the chance to develop their potential and enjoy positive experiences.

The EFY Foyer Model is not just about achieving happiness. At its core it is equipping people with the skills to flourish rather than simply to cope or survive. As such it takes a pro-active, preventative rather than a re-active approach to health and wellbeing. It attempts to prevent mental health issues occurring or at least skill people to respond and act constructively to mental health challenges.<sup>135</sup>

The positive psychology model PERMA (**P**ositive emotion, **E**ngagement, **R**elationships, **M**eaning, **A**chievement), developed by Seligman,<sup>136</sup> has been embedded into an educational context by Geelong Grammar School as a Positive Education framework. Positive Education is described as:

*bringing together the science of positive psychology with best practice teaching and learning to encourage and support schools and individuals within their communities to flourish.*<sup>137</sup>

The EFY Foyer has adopted and adapted the GGS model, which focuses on the following six domains for optimal wellbeing:

- **Positive emotion** assists students to anticipate, experience, prolong and build positive emotional experiences, as well as responding to negative emotions in a positive way
- **Positive engagement** encourages students to understand and experience complete immersion in activities as peak experiences through understanding the nature of engagement, the pathways to it and the function it has on individual wellbeing
- **Positive health** assists students to develop a healthy mind and body and to live healthy, energetic and resilient lives
- **Positive purpose** encourages students to understand, believe in and serve something greater than themselves, and deliberately engage in activities for the benefit of others
- **Positive relationships** help students create and promote strong and nourishing relationships with themselves and others by encouraging and developing social and emotional skills
- **Positive accomplishment** helps students develop their potential through striving for and achieving meaningful goals.

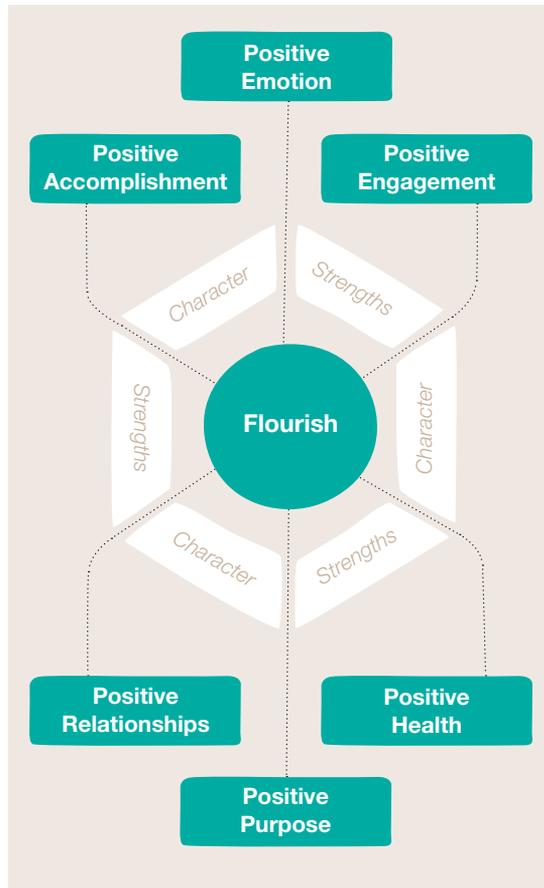
<sup>134</sup> M. E. P. Seligman 2006, *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*, Vintage Books, New York.

<sup>135</sup> Seligman 2011, op. cit.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> GGS 2011, 'Positive Education resources'. Available at: <http://www.ggs.vic.edu.au/School/Positive-Education/Resources>.

## The PERMA Model and the Positive Education framework



These elements are critical to promoting successful engagement in education and in life. The PERMA model is embedded into our practice approach in the delivery of each of the Offers and is consistent with Advantaged Thinking and Open Talent approaches.

## Coaching pedagogy

The pedagogy of coaching has been described as an 'informal approach to learning based on experience' that applies theories of constructivism and experiential learning.<sup>138</sup> The 'learning cycle' articulated by the experiential learning theorist Kolb is specifically noted in the literature, due to its emphasis on demonstration, practical experience and reflection.<sup>139</sup> A representation of the 'learning cycle' is presented in Figure 2 overleaf.

Constructivism is an approach to teaching and learning in which students directly apply their own experiences to build learning in social, cognitive and reflective realms.<sup>140</sup> Jameson describes the constructivist process of coaching as:

*... the coach closely guides the student through a series of individually tailored lessons in which the student gets closer and closer to achieving their goals by improving their practice. The coach empowers the coachee to perform highly motivated activity in pursuit of practical goals.*<sup>141</sup>

According to Collett<sup>142</sup> the key attributes of coaching include:

- **Coaching is relational:** The relationship between coach and coachee is 'one of developing trust, attending respectfully and with sensitivity to the powerful emotions involved in deep, professional learning.'<sup>143</sup>
- **Coaching is dynamic:** 'Although the coach may have a plan, the coaching that happens will change in response to the coachee's progress, and the type of coaching required will change over time, as the coachee develops new skills.'<sup>144</sup>

<sup>138</sup> J. Jameson 2012, 'Coaching as a pedagogical approach', in A. Brown, L. Browne, K. Collett, C. Devereux & J. Jameson 2012, *Insights No. 1, The Role of Coaching in Vocational Education and Training*, City and Guilds Centre for Skills Development, London, p. 58.

<sup>139</sup> D. A. Kolb 1984, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

<sup>140</sup> Jameson, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>141</sup> ibid.

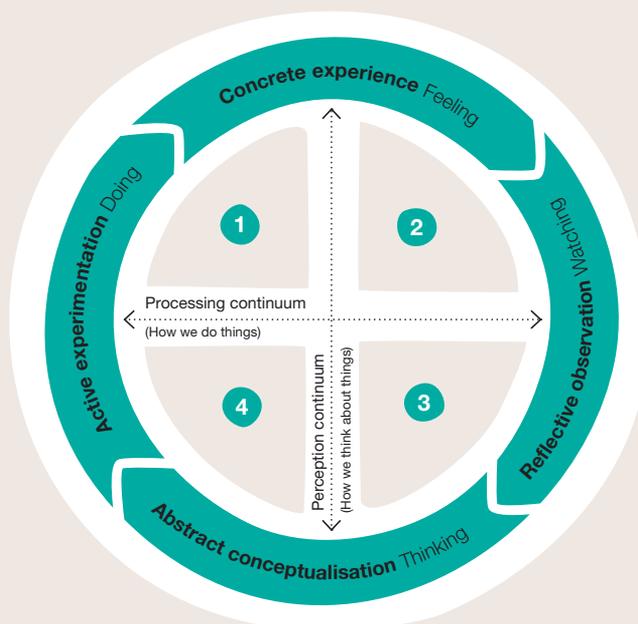
<sup>142</sup> K. Collett 2012, 'What is coaching?', in Brown et al., op. cit., pp. 8–19.

<sup>143</sup> ibid., pp. 11–12.

<sup>144</sup> ibid., p. 12.

## Figure 2 Coaching as a pedagogical approach

- 1 Accommodation (feel and do)  
**Activists**
- 2 Diverging (feel and watch)  
**Reflectors**
- 3 Assimilating (think and watch)  
**Theorists**
- 4 Converging (think and do)  
**Reflectors**



*Kolb's learning cycle*

- **Coaching is co-productive:** 'Both the coach and the coachee must be actively engaged in creating the learning experience. Both of them must bring some understanding of the task at hand, and a willingness and ability to reflect on the learning experience.'<sup>145</sup>
- **Coaching is performance or outcomes-focused:** 'The coach and the coachee work with direct shared examples of practice to enhance the coachee's performance. The targeted goal-orientated approach distinguishes coaching from the subjective focus of counselling at one end, and the less individualised focus of classroom teaching (which is not individualised to the same extent) at the other.'<sup>146</sup>

In the EFY Foyer, the pedagogy of coaching is integrated into the way that key staff communicate with and 'teach' Foyer students. The reasons for this are threefold:

- 1 YDWs are a key contact for all Foyer students. However, they are not educationalists or teachers, and as such are not required to plan, assess or formally teach. In the context of the Cert. 1 in DI, their function is to provide 'learner support' as evidence indicates that coaching is an effective practice to achieve learner success.<sup>147</sup>
- 2 As a provider of 'learner support', YDWs are able to fill the critical gap left when family members or supportive others are not available or able to provide positive support, encouragement, reinforcement and motivation.
- 3 YDWs are well placed to coach students towards developing a vision, becoming self-motivated and being able to self-navigate, trouble-shoot and build networks.

<sup>145</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>146</sup> *ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>147</sup> *ibid.*

## Part 3: The Employment Offer Model and Practice Approach

### 3.1 The EFY Foyer Employment Offer

#### Vision

The Employment Offer aims to provide EFY Foyer students with the opportunity to set career goals and aspirations, to develop personal, social and practical employability skills, to gain workplace experience and, ultimately, to achieve paid employment and strengthened career networks for sustaining employment options into the future.

#### Key components

##### Skills development

The Employment Offer will provide EFY Foyer students with a range of personal, social and employability skills that will assist them to access and maintain employment and to participate in education and community life. It will include access to functional or foundational skills training, such as:

- literacy, numeracy and ICT
- personal and social skills development (self-awareness, social awareness, relationship and problem solving skills)
- career management and maintenance skills (job search, resumé writing, goal setting, planning and decision making).

##### Workplace experience

Through the Employment Offer, EFY Foyer students will gain an increased experience of work, including access to short- and medium-term work experience placements and workplace learning opportunities.

Where possible, students will also be supported to access and participate in temporary, part-time and casual work while studying. Work experience can increase access to extended networks and improve knowledge of careers and workplace culture, while paid employment not only builds confidence and engagement, but also provides an experience of earning and managing an income.

##### Meaningful career planning

The Employment Offer will prepare EFY Foyer students for immediate engagement in the labour market, as well as developing long-term career aspirations and career pathway planning. Students will develop career plans and incremental goals to achieving these plans throughout their stay in the Foyer and beyond. Educational engagement will be strongly linked to individual career plans, thereby enhancing an understanding of, and engagement in, both learning and work. In this way, the Employment Offer is inextricably linked with the Education Offer as: 'Education not only provides skills and the capacity to learn, it improves a person's employment prospects and earning capacity'.<sup>148</sup>

##### Personal coaching

The Employment Offer provides coaching support to EFY Foyer students to help them set and achieve goals related to their career aspirations. Rather than utilising a traditional case management approach, EFY Foyer staff, mentors and teachers coach students through providing inspiration, guidance and opportunities that help them build their skills and capacities so that they can achieve their goals. In this way students are able to develop agency and capacity to enable them to seek and achieve sustainable employment outcomes beyond their stay in the EFY Foyer.

## Principles of employment support for the Employment Offer

The following evidence-informed principles relate to the provision of employment support to students, through the EFY Foyer's Employment Offer. These principles, however, are also applicable more generally to the delivery of employment support for young people who have or are experiencing disadvantage.

The EFY Foyer Employment Offer will provide students with:

### **Linked education and employment support:**

Employment support must be linked to education support to build the necessary skills and capacities of young people so they can seek, attain and maintain appropriate employment.<sup>i</sup>

**Recognition of talent and skills:** Recognition of talent, skills and capacities promotes the self-esteem and resilience required to facilitate engagement in learning and work.<sup>ii</sup>

**Assistance tailored to need:** Young people who have or are experiencing disadvantage require expert assistance that is tailored to their needs. A graduated approach is necessary to enable many young people to get to a point where they are ready and able to engage with employment, education or training.<sup>iii</sup>

### **Practical, personal and social skills development:**

Young people need practical skills and experience as well as social and personal skill development to successfully participate in education, work and community life.<sup>iv</sup>

### **Formal and informal sources of advice and support:**

Young people need advice and assistance from both formal and informal sources, to develop realistic career aspirations and goals.<sup>v</sup>

### **Opportunities to develop meaningful employment goals:**

Achieving long-term employment outcomes for young people requires employment support that focuses on fostering pathways to sustainable and meaningful employment opportunities.<sup>vi</sup>

### **A range of work experience and employment opportunities:**

Young people who have or are experiencing disadvantage need brokered access to a range of vocational taster, work experience and employment opportunities. Opportunities need to be varied to allow for different skill and development phases.<sup>vii</sup>

### **Flexible placement support:**

Flexible on-the-job placement support should be available to young people and their employers to help increase productivity and employment sustainability.<sup>viii</sup>

### **Real work:**

Participation in part-time or casual work while studying improves educational engagement, increases understanding of workplace culture and fosters independence, self-reliance and increased economic participation.<sup>ix</sup>

### **Access to supportive employers:**

Providing support to employers to understand the needs of young people experiencing disadvantage and how to successfully harness their potential is a critical component of creating meaningful employment opportunities for disadvantaged young jobseekers.<sup>x</sup>



Chrissy at work, Kangan EFY Foyer  
**Photography** Dani Burley

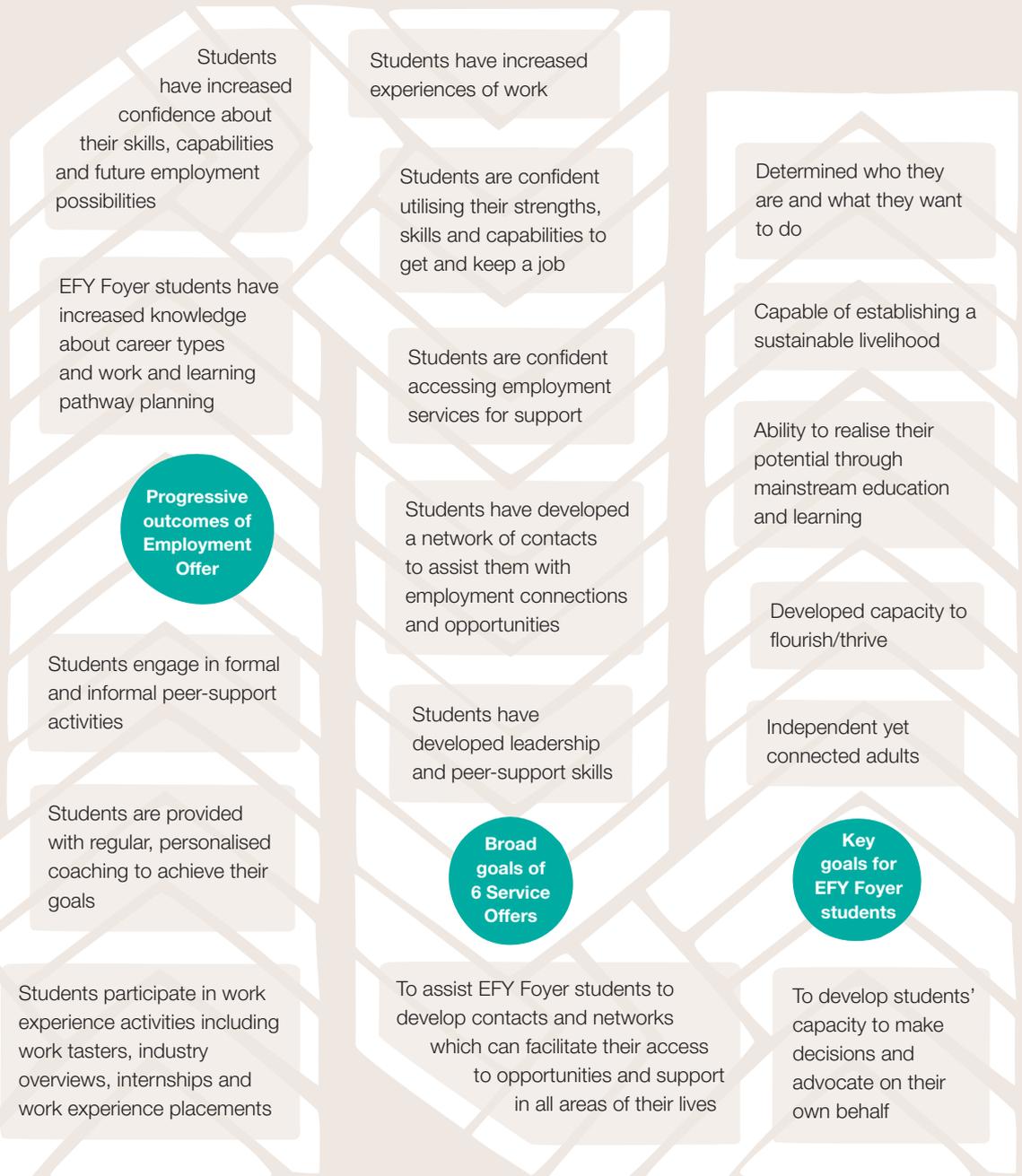
## Activities and outcomes

The activities and outcomes of the EFY Foyer Employment Offer are outlined below in Figure 3.

Figure 3

### Employment Offer activities and outcomes





### 3.2 Key practice elements

The practice model for the Employment Offer is based on the Positive Education framework as outlined in Figure 4 below.



**Step 4  
Internal  
Opportunities**

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

- Core activities**
- Employment Readiness Workshops
  - Careers counselling through TAFE
  - Job Clubs
  - Something-for-something deals

**Step 5  
External  
Opportunities**

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

- Core activities**
- Work experience and work tasters
  - Mentoring
  - Internships and apprenticeships
  - Part-time/casual employment
  - Access to networks

**Step 6  
Celebrating  
Achievements**

**Purpose**  
Enable students to recognise the advances they have made towards their goals and inspire them to continue to achieve

- Core activities**
- Graduation and award ceremonies
  - Reflecting on achievements
  - Work experience references
  - Certificate of Employment Readiness
  - Foyer Alumni

**Practical skills**

**Personal skills**

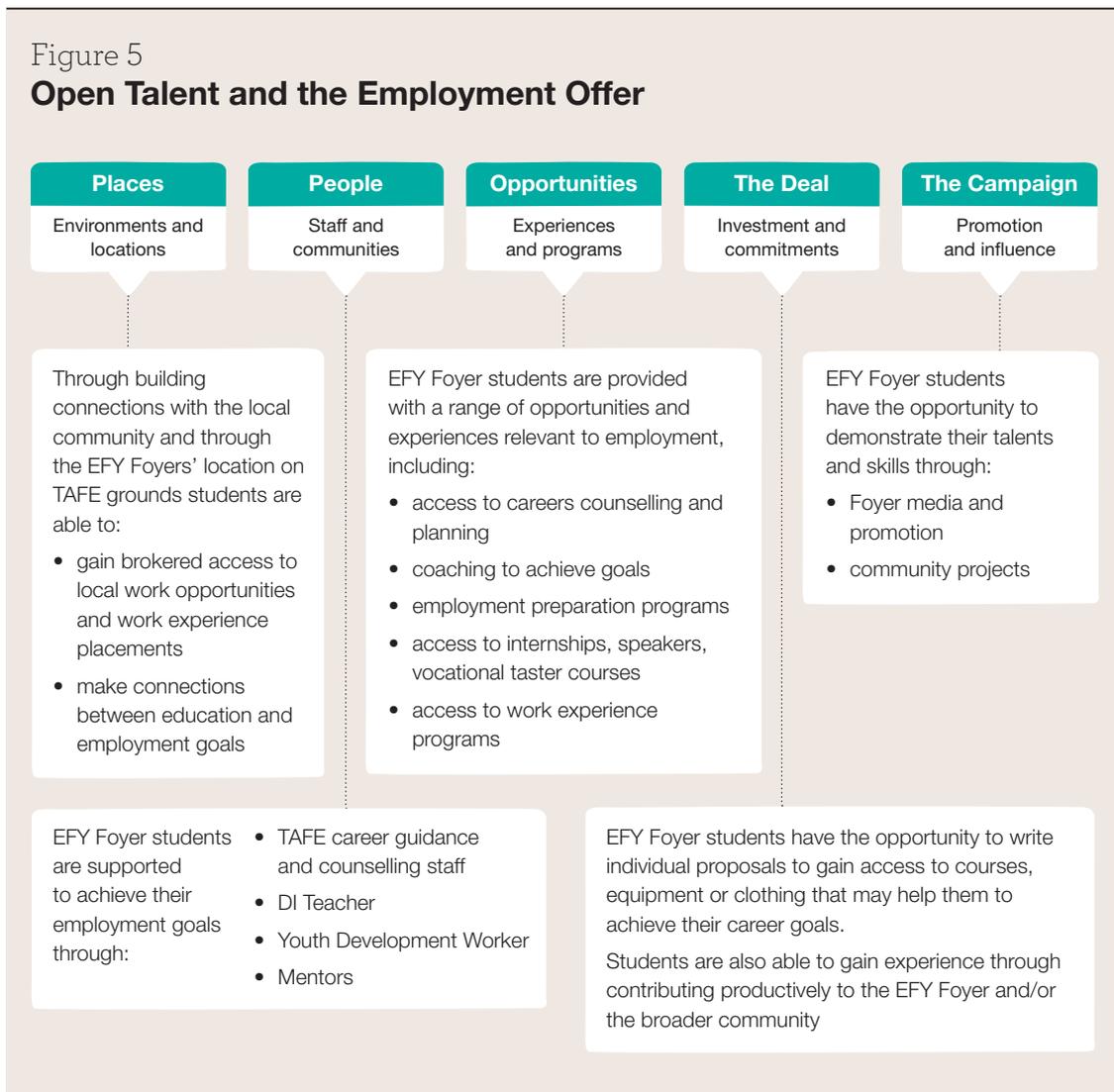


## Practice assumptions and explanations

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 the Positive Education Model.

## 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 5 below gives a snapshot of how these practice areas intersect with the Employment Offer.



“ Recognising and affirming informal learning and life experience gives students a base of achievement on which to build, develops confidence about their capacity and helps to develop aspirations. ”

### 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 to enable 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.<sup>149</sup> This matrix is based on three key areas – social, personal and agency capabilities – 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 Service<sup>150</sup> and informed by Ungar.<sup>151</sup>

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

<sup>149</sup> Foyer Federation 2013, *MyNav, Destination Independence – Navigating the Journey to Independent Adulthood*, The Foyer Federation, UK, p. 18.

<sup>150</sup> Youth Support and Advocacy Service 2012, ‘Youth AOD Practice Toolbox’, Available at <https://www.youthaodtoolbox.org>.

<sup>151</sup> M. Ungar 2006, *Strengths Based Counseling with at Risk Youth*, Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks CA.

Figure 6

## Young person's capabilities

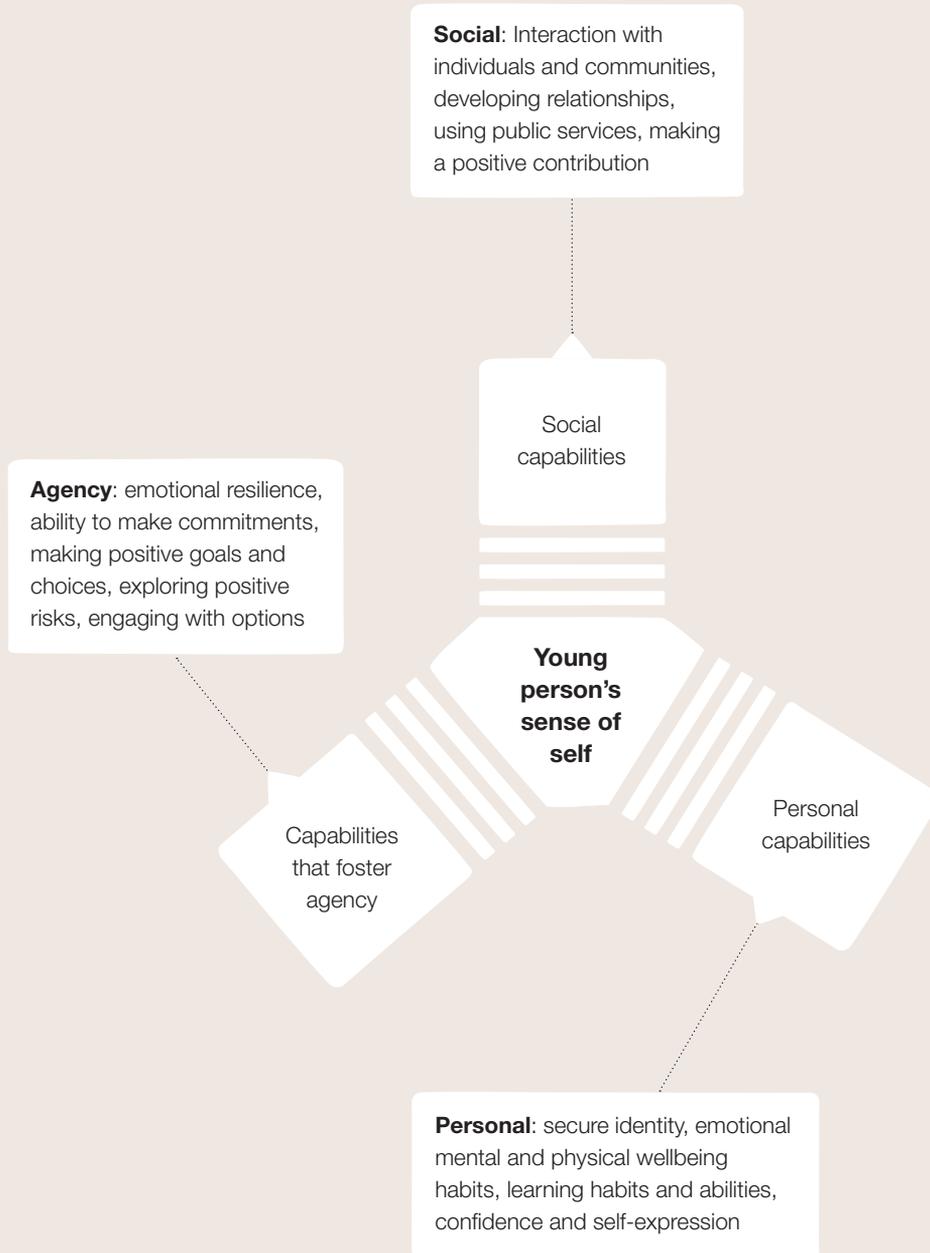


Table 1: Core skills for young people

Stream	Skills
<b>Personal</b> Reflectiveness, motivation, responsibility	<b>Self-awareness:</b> be able to act appropriately, manage stress, regulate emotions, possess self-confidence about abilities and have optimism for the future. <b>Self-expression:</b> confidently express one's identity, talents and abilities, and recognise opportunities for self-development, personal growth and making positive change.
<b>Social</b> Relatedness, engagement and interaction	<b>Social awareness:</b> understand social and ethical norms of behaviour, relate to and communicate with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures, and recognise family, social and community resources. <b>Relationship skills:</b> establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships, communicate clearly, negotiate conflict, resist inappropriate social pressure, and seek and offer help when needed.
<b>Agency</b> The capacity to act on one's own behalf	<b>Decision making:</b> make constructive and respectful choices about personal behaviour and social interactions, evaluate consequences of various actions, and ensure the safety and wellbeing of self and others. <b>Problem solving:</b> identify and define problems, investigate possible solutions and implement strategies for resolving issues. <b>Positive experimentation:</b> 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.
<b>Practical skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literacy and numeracy</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Career planning and development</li> <li>• Job search and application</li> <li>• Planning and organising skills</li> <li>• Learning skills</li> <li>• Initiative and enterprise</li> <li>• Technical skills</li> </ul>

### Recognition and Affirmation

Many young people who are service-connected have been exposed to disruptive and often devastating experiences that have a profound effect on their lives. While many have been traumatised by these 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 and skills provides the foundations for all 6 Service Offers.

If young people are able to recognise their own assets, they can build on their strengths.<sup>152</sup> Recognising and affirming informal learning and life experience gives students a base of achievement on which to build, develops confidence about their capacity and helps to develop aspirations. The Certificate of Recognition of Informal Learning or CRIL was developed to formalise this intention – to provide a positive first step into education and/or to recognise and affirm the individual talents and skills of all young people.<sup>153</sup>

<sup>152</sup> Seligman 2011, op. cit.

<sup>153</sup> S. Halliday-Wynes & F. Beddie 2009, *Informal Learning: At a Glance*, NCVET, Adelaide.

In the context of the Employment Offer, students will also be encouraged, assisted and enabled to recognise existing or emerging employability skills, career aspirations and employment experience (formal and informal) including paid work and volunteering. Affirming students' own knowledge and encouraging them to build on their strengths, rather than subjecting them to testing or accreditation, serves to 'promote access to formal education and training pathways, empower the learner and confirm or refocus the learner on a career direction'.<sup>154</sup> Recognising young people's assets and strengths empowers them to plan for the future, to develop employment goals and aspirations and to build on their strengths through further education and training.

### Inspiration and Motivation

A sense of inspiration and motivation are essential for EFY Foyer students to achieve key personal and program outcomes, including short, medium and long-term employment outcomes. 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.<sup>155</sup>

The EFY Foyer program encourages each of these aspects of motivation by requiring students to develop their own individualised Learning Plan and goals, motivating them to achieve through an Advantaged Thinking casework approach and engaging them in meaningful activities that promote active citizenship.

Inspiration has many sources, including from the key people in one's life as well as those not personally known such as celebrities or local or community figures. Art, music, nature and engagement in fulfilling 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.

The EFY Foyer also develops and fosters student motivation and inspiration through Open Talent/ Advantaged Thinking coaching and personal planning, which is tracked through the Developing Independence Learning Plan. This Learning Plan and related activities focus on developing students' talents and capabilities. Evidence suggests that focusing on capabilities and possibilities, rather than deficits and barriers, gives people confidence as well as hope for the future.<sup>156</sup>

Research suggests that young people who are disengaged from education due to disadvantage have often not been ready or able to engage with learning when the system required it.<sup>157</sup> Once young people are able to recognise their own capabilities, they often gain confidence and motivation to develop these interests further or the inspiration to pursue other interests and passions.<sup>158</sup> This does not mean that their needs or problems are overlooked, rather that they do not become the focus or the motivating force for student engagement in the Employment Offer.

Activities undertaken through the Employment Offer, such as participating in work taster programs or meeting with mentors, are also designed to expand a young person's experience and to inspire and motivate them to expand their vision of what their future could be. Enabling young people to develop personal visions

<sup>154</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> D. Pink 2009, *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us*, Riverhead Books, New York.

<sup>156</sup> C. Falconer 2009, 'An Advantaged Thinking approach'. Available at: [advantagedthinking.blogspot.com](http://advantagedthinking.blogspot.com)

<sup>157</sup> L. Nechvoglod & F. Beddie 2010, *Hard to Reach Learners: What Works in Reaching and Keeping Them?*, Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victorian Government, Melbourne.

<sup>158</sup> Falconer 2009, *op. cit.*

and goals provides them with agency and self-direction about their future. This has been found to lead to a deeper and more sustained level of engagement in education, training and employment.<sup>159</sup>

### 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.<sup>160</sup> In addition to a disrupted education, young people who have experienced family breakdown or dysfunction have often also missed out on positive relationship modelling and on critical developmental guidance and support.<sup>161</sup> 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.

For some, establishing re-engagement in education, training or employment will involve incremental steps and may take significant time or a number of attempts. For others, it will involve finding and gaining access to the right course and ensuring that appropriate supports are in place to facilitate their successful engagement with it. The time needed to find the right pathway will vary greatly according to the different ages and developmental stages of the students at the EFY Foyer.

For example, a 16-year-old still connected or just recently disengaged from school may take considerably longer to decide on an education or employment pathway than a 23-year-old looking for a career direction. A graduated approach is necessary to enable young people to get to a point where they are

able to maintain engagement with, and/or successfully complete, mainstream education and training.

Disrupted education and family life also means that many young people entering the EFY Foyer have not been exposed to a broad range of careers and often feel they have limited options or potential. The Employment Offer provides exposure to, and information about, the day-to-day workings of a wide range of industries and careers, as well as information about their education and training requirements. This is done both formally – through the provision of employment mentors, work tasters, industry speakers and seminars – and informally through the expert advice and guidance of TAFE staff and courses as well as through interaction with peers and exposure to positive role models.

Employment preparation programs incorporating elements such as career development activities, employability skills workshops, job clubs or simulated work environments also provide the necessary information to prepare people to succeed within a work environment. Providing a range of guidance and information enables students to think differently about their futures and to explore different possibilities. It also assists students to make informed decisions about their future and provides them with the tools to succeed.

The Education First Youth Foyer Model provides 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 reach their potential and build the foundations for a sustainable livelihood.

<sup>159</sup> F. Aldridge & A. Tuckett 2011, *Tough Times for Adult Learners: The NIACE Survey on Adult Participation in Learning*, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, Leicester, UK.

<sup>160</sup> 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.

<sup>161</sup> DHS 2008, *Vulnerable Youth Framework Discussion Paper*, DHS, Victoria Government, Melbourne.

**Youth Development Workers** are the key coaches for students, providing assistance and support across all aspects of living at the EFY Foyer. By using an Advantaged Thinking approach they work to build aspiration, confidence and motivation through tailoring activities and opportunities that meet the specific needs and goals of individuals. This includes sourcing inspirational speakers' work taster opportunities, as well as assisting students to set career goals and linking them to appropriate employment and work experience opportunities.

**TAFE teachers and support staff** will play a critical support role for the Employment Offer through the process of assessing and recognising students' informal learning. They will also provide career guidance and pathway planning by linking students' career aspirations with their engagement in education and training and by connecting them to networks and opportunities. The provision of additional learning support will also assist students to develop qualifications that can lead to employment.

**Mentors** will be provided for EFY Foyer students in a range of functions and capacities, including **workplace mentors** for students participating in traineeships or work experience placements, and more general mentors who can provide **career development and life coaching** expertise. There will also be **peer mentor** roles to enable those who have benefited from the EFY Foyer to share their experience and expertise by guiding those who are just starting out.

## Internal Opportunities

Providing opportunities, resources and experiences is part of the Foyer team's commitment to 'the Deal'. This is based on the understanding that young people who are or who have experienced disadvantage are limited by their lack of resources and opportunities, rather than by a lack of potential.<sup>162</sup>

THE EFY Foyer program recognises that access to the right people, information, activities and resources enables young people to develop the skills required to build the foundations for a sustainable livelihood. Providing students with the opportunities, experiences and networks already available to family-connected young people is a critical component of ensuring their future independence.

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.

In the context of the Employment Offer, Internal Opportunities will include:

- the development of employability skills through employment readiness workshops
- career guidance and advice through TAFE
- inspirational speakers and industry information nights
- assistance with job search and job application processes.

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<sup>162</sup> Falconer 2009, op. cit.

## External Opportunities

These provide students with opportunities 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.

Many young people entering Foyer will have limited experience of, or exposure to, work, which can limit their vision of potential employment prospects.<sup>163</sup> Work experience placements, in particular, are increasingly being recognised as an essential developmental milestone for young people, as well as an important networking source for future employment opportunities.<sup>164</sup> However, positions with local employers are becoming the preserve of high-achieving students, which in effect excludes disengaged young people from this experience.<sup>165</sup>

Experience within the workplace, even in part-time and casual positions, has also been shown to have significant benefits for young people, not only in terms of skills building but also in improving retention in education and training.<sup>166</sup> In addition, it gives students an experience of earning an income and the associated financial management skills that this entails.

In the context of the Employment Offer, External Opportunities will include:

- the provision of work tasters and work experience placements
- opportunities for real employment including part-time and casual positions
- links to workplace learning and ongoing employment opportunities.

## Celebrating Achievements

Throughout each stage of the Employment Offer, students' achievements will be acknowledged and celebrated. Students are working towards both long-term and short-term employment goals, but will often need to undertake a number of steps before these can be achieved. Recognising and celebrating these incremental steps increases students' confidence about their own abilities, their capacity to achieve their next step and their potential for the future.

Celebrating achievements also draws on the Advantaged Thinking approach. Focusing on and celebrating young people's successes can help break negative mindsets about deficits and problems and refocus on capabilities and possibilities. This in turn can increase young people's self-confidence and sense of self-worth and build resilience.<sup>167</sup> Celebrating achievements can also help students to recognise their growing asset base and to promote themselves, both of which are critical skills in gaining employment. Being able to recognise and focus on one's skills and attributes can broaden employment possibilities and help 'sell' oneself in the application and interview process.

## Strategic supports

**Foyer partners** include a broad range of organisations that will contribute to supporting students in all aspects of their development. This includes government, education and health services, businesses, and community and philanthropic organisations. In addition to providing mentoring, work experience, vocational taster courses and employment opportunities for Foyer students, these organisations will also provide physical and mental health and wellbeing supports, financial and in-kind support, and access to existing programs and services.

<sup>163</sup> DEEWR 2013a, op. cit.

<sup>164</sup> Margo & Grant, op. cit.

<sup>165</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> Mallett et al. 2006, op. cit.

<sup>167</sup> C. Dweck 2006, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Ballantine Books, New York.

## Employer supports

**Partnership Engagement** is critical to brokering and recruiting individuals and organisations willing to provide knowledge, expertise and/or opportunities to students. This includes both assisting employers to identify the skill base and qualification needs of their organisation, as well as gaining their expertise in designing customised work preparation and pre-employment training programs for potential recruits. It also includes providing training and resources that assist organisations to engage with and support students. Maintaining these relationships and ensuring they are mutually beneficial is also critical to securing ongoing community and organisational engagement with the EFY Foyer. The role of Partnership Engagement could be incorporated into existing positions or be made a dedicated resource, but either way it needs to be specifically acknowledged and time and resources allocated to its implementation.

Field Officers will provide support and guidance to students and employers while a student is on a work placement or in a work experience position. They will ensure student wellbeing and safety and appropriate program and policy implementation.

## 3.3 Operational approach for the Employment Offer

Each EFY Foyer will operationalise the Employment Offer by:

- Utilising an Open Talent/Advantaged Thinking Approach, which *recognises students' capabilities and strengths* and provides them with the confidence, motivation and resources to develop their interests and goals further, and to engage in formal education and training. This approach also *provides students with agency and choice about their learning*, which can lead to deeper and more sustained levels of engagement.
- Requiring all students to develop a Learning Plan, as part of the Cert. 1 in Developing Independence, in which students are assisted to *articulate meaningful career and education goals* and plan an *incremental learning and employment pathway* to achieve these goals. Students are supported to undertake each step of the Learning Plan and to review their goals and pathway progression regularly. This also allows EFY Foyer and TAFE staff to *tailor support to the specific needs of students* and implement a *graduated approach* that allows students to build skills relevant to their own goals and aspirations at a level and pace with which they feel they comfortable.
- Providing opportunities for the development of employability skills, including *foundational, personal and social skills* through participation in employment readiness programs and activities and in each of the other Foyer Offers.
- *Providing broad sources of advice and support* through facilitating access to careers counsellors and teachers at TAFE, and other programs external to Foyer (such as Job Service Australia providers), and through workplace and peer mentor programs. Students are also encouraged to expand their social networks to create a wider informal base of support, through the provision of congregate living areas and

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Focusing on and celebrating young people's successes can help break negative mindsets about deficits and problems and refocus on capabilities and possibilities. ”

activities that encourage relationship building within Foyer, as well as through mainstream education and training programs.

- Providing work taster programs that assist students to *develop realistic career aspirations and goals* through increasing students' understanding of the day-to-day activities of particular jobs and broadening students' knowledge about the types of activities, positions and career structures within a range of industries and their associated educational requirements.
- *Providing access to quality, meaningful work experience, workplace learning and employment opportunities*, including apprenticeships and traineeships, intermediate labour market programs and mainstream employment opportunities. This includes short-term, part-time and casual work that can increase students' experiences of economic participation as well as opportunities to access meaningful employment relevant to individual career goals.
- *Providing students with support and guidance once employed* through coaching, workplace mentors, field officer support, financial counselling, and developing and linking to strategies such as employer engagement and incentive programs.
- *Providing resources and support to employers* to assist them in creating employment opportunities for young people experiencing disadvantage that are beneficial for both the young person and their organisation.



Life is not a race,  
it's a journey!

Life is AMAZING  
because

"THE WORLD OWES US NOTHING,  
BUT WE OWE EACH OTHER THE WORLD"  
- AL PACINO

It's exciting to be excited in.

Shannon and Chrissy at Kangan EFY Foyer  
**Photography** Dani Burley

## Part 4: Overview of the Employment Offer's Tools and Resources

The Education First Youth Foyer Employment Offer is supported by a suite of practical tools and resources for use in operationalising the Offer. They are specifically designed for the use of Youth Development Workers, Team Leaders, TAFE's Developing Independence Teachers and volunteers 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](http://efyfoyers.org.au).

### Vision of the Employment Offer

The Employment Offer will provide EFY Foyer students with the opportunity to set career goals and aspirations, to develop personal, social and practical employability skills, to gain workplace experience and, ultimately, to achieve paid employment and strengthened career networks for sustaining employment options into the future.

### How the Employment Offer supports students to build the foundations for a sustainable livelihood

- 1 **'The Deal'** is an agreement signed by all EFY Foyer students that they must engage in education and/or training for the duration of their residency.
- 2 **Coaching Framework** formalises the positive, outcomes-focused relationship 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 Toolkit** supports students to set goals and aspirations, formulate plans to achieve them and grow their networks and experiences.
- 4 **Employer Engagement Tools** provide employers with a range of resources to assist them in engaging with EFY Foyer students and the Employment Offer.
- 5 **Internal Opportunities** provide both staff and students with a range of tools and resources that help develop students' employability skills and inspire students to think more broadly about their career options.
- 6 **External Opportunities** are aimed at connecting students to quality, meaningful work experience, workplace learning and employment opportunities.
- 7 **Celebrating Achievements** is a critical part of the EFY Foyer Model, ensuring that small and big achievements are recognised and supported as a part of students' learning journeys.

## 4.1 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 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, 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 access to other 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 up-skill staff as Personal Coaches.

## 4.2 Certificate I in Developing Independence Toolkit

### 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**

### Developing Independence Learning Plan

The Learning Plan for students is a key component of the Cert. 1 in DI, and is designed to be completed by students enrolled in the certificate in consultation with both their EFY Foyer Youth Development Worker and their TAFE DI Teacher.

The Learning Plan outlines:

- the 6 Steps to attaining the Cert. 1 in DI
- an Assessment Rubric
- the Address Book for Students.

Once completed, approaches to storing the Learning Plan will differ for each EFY Foyer. The DI Teacher will need to keep a record of the Learning Plans for assessment purposes, and generally the Foyer team will keep a copy in the Student File system.

### Open Talent Resumé/Application Builder

The Open Talent (OT) Resumé/Application Builder is an assessment task in Step 6 of the Cert. 1 in DI. The tool is designed to embed young people's skills, attributes and talents into their resumé in an authentic and relevant way.

Using the Resumé/Application Builder, students engage in active discussion with their DI Teacher about their vocational goals, aspirations and unique skills and talents. The Resumé Template provides a general format for completing a resumé, and should be regularly updated and revised.

### 4.3 Employer engagement tools

Employer engagement is critical to creating employment opportunities for service-connected young people. This involves not only preparing them to meet employers' needs, but also increasing employers' understanding of the needs of young people experiencing disadvantage, and providing them with the knowledge, strategies, resources and support to harness their potential successfully.

#### Employer Toolkit

The Employer Toolkit provides a range of resources to assist employers provide opportunities for EFY Foyer students. These include tips for working with young people, guides for designing work taster and work experience activities, and forms, student logbooks, information and guidelines regarding administrative requirements.

The Employer Toolkit is available at: [efyfoyers.org.au](http://efyfoyers.org.au).

#### Partnerships management

Sourcing a range of opportunities for EFY Foyer students is critical to delivering 'the Deal'. EFY Foyers will need to ensure they can facilitate, manage and maintain a broad range of partnerships that will enable access to diverse opportunities for students to engage with employers. Tools and resources for developing and maintaining partnerships are currently under construction and will be available at: [efyfoyers.org.au](http://efyfoyers.org.au).

### 4.4 Internal Opportunities

The Employment Offer provides access to education and training 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 Employment Offer will include the development of employability skills, including foundational, personal and social skills through participation in work tasters, employment readiness workshops, working with TAFE and through participation in activities relevant to the other Service Offers.

#### Employment readiness workshops

As part of the Employment Offer, students will have the opportunity to undertake a work experience placement. Prior to this, students will attend employment readiness workshops designed to provide them with the information and resources they need to prepare for this placement, and to develop the necessary skills to find and participate in casual, part-time and full-time employment more generally.

It is envisioned that these Foyer-run workshops will constitute an unaccredited eight-week Certificate in Employment Readiness. Where possible, this should be co-sponsored or endorsed by an employer or business, so that students can then include the attainment of the certificate on their resumé.

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Employer engagement is critical to creating employment opportunities for service-connected young people.

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Suggested topics to be covered in this short course include:

- Understanding the World of Work
- Job Search and Resumés
- Understanding Workplace Behaviour
- Interview Preparation
- Personal Presentation Skills
- Your Rights at Work
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Career Taster Activities.

Where possible, the workshops will be delivered by professionals external to the EFY Foyer who have expertise or experience in one or more of these topic areas. While an outline of the potential content and resources is provided, the guest speakers will need to modify or replace this to suit their own expertise and experience and/or to meet student needs. A range of resources will be used in delivery including video, animation, role play and simulated work environments, along with external excursions where appropriate.

Students will also be encouraged to create new multimedia resources, which could be used to deliver some of the workshops in the future. This will include activities such as creating YouTube clips about workplace behaviour or a multimedia presentation on workplace culture. These resources will be collated for future use.

An overview of suggested content for each of the topics, including potential resources to be used in their delivery, is provided at: [efyfoyers.org.au](http://efyfoyers.org.au).

## Working in partnership with TAFE

TAFEs have a wide and diverse range of opportunities available to their students. These may extend from onsite career guidance and counselling services to study and exam help sessions, team sports and recreational facilities. As all EFY Foyer students are also students of their home TAFE, it is important that they know of, and can easily access, the services available onsite. It is also important that the EFY Foyer does not duplicate TAFE services.

## Work taster activities

Work tasters are a chance for students to learn about the world of work. They give students the opportunity to trial or 'taste' different types of work. This can include providing students with information and insight into the day-to-day workings of an industry or profession in which they may be interested or exposing them to jobs about which they know nothing or very little.

Work tasters span both Internal and External Opportunities. They range from EFY Foyer staff talking about their own career paths, to industry panels discussing different careers and pathways within a particular sector, to attending a workplace for a short, one-off trial of a particular industry. They can also be delivered to small or large groups or arranged for individuals according to their aspirations.

Tools outlining the different types of work tasters and activities are available at: [efyfoyers.org.au](http://efyfoyers.org.au).

## 4.5 External Opportunities

External Opportunities provide students with the chance to build and apply their knowledge and skills within an external setting. They can also broaden students' scope to build networks and connections that can sustain their 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 Employment Offer, this includes accessing opportunities and making connections with employers, businesses, professional clubs, local employment service providers and philanthropic organisations that can translate into real work.

Given that all students enter the Foyer with different needs and priorities, External Opportunities are highly personalised and relevant to each individual. Within the context of the Employment Offer, External Opportunities could include:

- work experience
- workplace learning and employment opportunities
- mentoring with a career or employment focus.

### Work experience

Work experience is a structured workplace learning placement. It provides young people with insight into the day-to-day activities of a particular occupation or industry and an experience of workplace culture.

For some students, work experience is about trialling a burning vocational aspiration, while for others it provides exposure to careers they know very little about. It can inspire students and motivate them to engage in further education or training, or it can inform them about the day-to-day realities of a job and deter them from following a particular career path. Work experience also expands young people's networks and increases their social, personal and employability skills.

Work experience placements will be brokered for all EFY Foyer students not undertaking a structured workplace learning component within their studies. However, students undertaking work experience through their courses can also be assisted to access a placement.

Work experience can be tailored to students' study and career interests or used by them to trial a particular occupation. Where possible, students should be involved both in deciding what type of work experience they would like to do and in applying for positions.

EFY Foyer work experience tools include:

- **A workplace experience logbook** that enables students to reflect on their experiences, and where employers can document the skills students used in their placement
- **Employers' guide** that includes information, tips and activities for developing meaningful work experience placements.

All tools are available at: [efyfoyers.org.au](http://efyfoyers.org.au).

### Workplace learning and employment opportunities

EFY Foyers provide young people with opportunities to experience the world of work and the day-to-day realities of different careers, to build employability skills and to strengthen their networks. In addition to work experience, this is done through providing real workplace learning and employment opportunities, such as apprenticeships and traineeships, intermediate labour market programs, social businesses and mainstream employment. This includes short-term, part-time and casual work that can increase students' experiences of economic participation as well as access to employment opportunities relevant to their career goals.

### Real employment opportunities

While students will be encouraged to apply for mainstream places and positions, the EFY Foyer will also broker full-time, part-time, casual and ongoing training and employment opportunities for them. This is not simply a hand-out, as they are required to make a significant commitment to engage in developing the employability skills required to succeed in this and in future opportunities. Providing EFY Foyer students with the opportunities, experiences and contacts that many other young people are able to access through family and social networks is a critical component of ensuring their future independence.

## Endnotes

- I** The OECD (2013) and the Productivity Commission (2012) provide detailed evidence about the links between levels of educational attainment and rates and levels of employment. McLachlan, Gilfillan and Gordon (2013) discuss the ways in which education can prepare people for work, and Scarpetta and Sonnett (2012) look at the intersection between educational and labour market policies in terms of both economic productivity and individual employment security. Margo, et al. (2010) and Sodha and Margo (2010) also discuss the link between education and the employability skills and character capabilities desired by employers.
- II** Colin Falconer (2009, 2012) from the UK Foyer Federation developed the Advantaged Thinking and Open Talent approach as a way of thinking about and working with young people who are struggling to make the transition to adulthood. It is founded on the understanding that all young people have talent and abilities, but that they are not all recognised or valued in the same way. Open Talent asserts that rather than investing in these young people's problems, the community needs to re-direct investment towards building their abilities; harnessing them for personal as well as social good. Seligman (2011) founded the concept of Positive Psychology, which outlines the skills and capabilities that are necessary to promote meaningful, happy and fulfilling lives. He proposes that encouraging people to cultivate what is best in themselves can, in turn, enhance their experiences across important life domains, including engagement in work and help them to 'flourish' in terms of functioning and performance. A key tenet of this approach is that the skills and mindsets required for coping with life and for promoting wellbeing can be explicitly taught.
- III** Davies, Lamb and Doecke (2011) provide a review of effective re-engagement models for low skill and disengaged adult learners, and identify practices and strategies that work to help improve their levels of educational participation and attainment. They identify the four key areas for successful re-engagement as outreach, pedagogy, pathways and wellbeing and stress the importance of tailoring support to meet the needs of individuals. This includes ensuring people can engage at a level of intensity (outreach) and at a skills base and delivery level (pedagogy) with which they feel comfortable, and that they have appropriate non-educational supports to promote wellbeing. Pathway planning also recognises that for people experiencing disadvantage it may take a number of attempts to engage successfully, and that a graduated approach is necessary to build confidence and promote the aspiration required to engage in further education or work opportunities. The Victorian Government report (Nechvologlod & Beddie 2010) *Hard to Reach Learners* found that young people who are disengaged from education due to disadvantage have often not been ready or able to engage with learning when the system required it. The report identifies flexible engagement and delivery options, with appropriate non-academic supports for wellbeing, as critical to ensuring successful and sustained engagement.
- IV** The Foyer Federation's My Nav (2013) refers to the skills needed to transition to independent adulthood as assets. These are defined as the capacities and capabilities that enable us 'to do and be'. My Nav sets out an asset matrix to assist young people and those supporting them to build a positive asset base of skills, resources and opportunities. The skills are grouped into social, personal and agency assets against which individual strengths, the potential for growth and gaps for development can be assessed. Blades, Fauth and Gibb (2012) define employability skills as those that focus on the personal, social and transferable skills relevant to all jobs, as opposed to specific technical skills or qualifications required for specific jobs. Margo et al. (2010) define foundational and functional employability skills – such as language, literacy and numeracy – and pair these with character capabilities they believe as essential for employability and life chances. These

skills include social, emotional and behavioural competencies and are considered equally, if not more, critical to the successful participation in education, work and community life.

- V** It is widely acknowledged that parents and families are an important source of career advice and guidance for young people (DEEWR 2013a; Urbis 2011; DHS 2011). In research commissioned by the former Australian Government Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), Urbis Social Planning and Social Research (2011) points out that while families have significant influence on young people, this influence is not always positive. As a result, experiential influences including unemployment and negative role modelling can produce limited insight into career choices. This highlights both the need for varied sources of information and advice Pink (2009) and the role of art, music, nature and engagement in creating fulfilling activities that can be important sources of inspiration, particularly for young people with limited career exposure. The National Career Development Strategy (DEEWR 2013a) points to the need for varied sources of information and advice extending beyond the school system, because people are increasingly required to change careers numerous times throughout their working life. It also notes that young people who leave school early often miss out on formal sources of counselling through the school system. In addition to promoting exposure to a range of sources of inspiration, young people in particular also need guidance to ensure that they are able to develop realistic goals based on an understanding of the day-to-day work components and study requirements of particular careers. Kennedy and Haines (2012) note the link between effective careers advice and improved educational engagement, greater self-confidence and future work orientation.
- VI** Scarpetta and Sonnett (2012) demonstrate the importance for young people of productive and rewarding jobs that offer good career prospects. They detail the precariousness of unskilled and temporary jobs in times of economic crisis and uncertainty and show the ways in which this leaves young people, in particular, exposed to high and recurring levels of unemployment. Jobs with good career prospects provide opportunities for development and advancement and offer a more sustainable attachment to the labour market. The International Labour Organisation's (2013) 'Decent Work for Youth' agenda defines decent work as offering skills advancement and progression opportunities, protecting young people's rights and guaranteeing income and social protection and security. Decent work is seen as the best way for young people to realise their aspirations, improve their living conditions and actively participate in society thereby stimulating the economy. McNeil, Reader and Rich (2012) note that young people identify engagement in meaningful activities as one of their key aspirations, along with health, positive relationships and career and education success.
- VII** Research from the UK's Education and Employers Work Taskforce (Mann 2012) highlights the importance of providing a range of opportunities to allow for different developmental phases. It does this through detailing a statistically significant positive relationship between the number of employer contacts (such as careers talks or work experience) a young person experiences while at school (between the ages of 14 and 19) and their confidence (at age 19–24) in progressing through education, employment or training to achieve their ultimate career goals. Mann (2012) also demonstrates that people who have no contact with employers at school are five times more likely to become unemployed than their peers with the same qualifications who have taken part in career-focused activities such as career talks, mentoring, vocational taster courses and work experience activities. Margo and Grant (2010) note that work experience placements are increasingly being recognised as an essential developmental milestone for young people and, as such, are becoming progressively difficult to access, particularly for those experiencing disadvantage with limited access to family and social networks. They note that brokering placements for these young people can provide an important networking source for future employment opportunities. It also demonstrates that young people engage with ideas of work at different skill and developmental phases.

### VIII DEEWR's (2013b) *Job Services Australia*

*Demonstration Pilots Better Practice Guide 6 – Post Placement Support* found that JSA providers undertaking frequent and purposeful contact with disadvantaged jobseekers and their employers post-placement enabled them to identify and address any emerging issues before a job became at risk. Providers who delivered continuing post-placement support reported positive signs for maintaining employment compared to a control group. This support included additional training for employees, such as soft skills development; a forum for debriefing or for employees to ask questions; and providing an avenue for employers to deal with any issues that arose. BSL's (2012) evaluation of the Centre for Work and Learning at Yarra found that ongoing post-placement support was a critical success factor for both employee and employer when placing disadvantaged jobseekers in employment. The National Employment Services Association or NESAs (2012) advocates for the provision of post-placement support for both disadvantaged jobseekers and their employers as an important means of bolstering productivity, improving participation and reducing welfare reliance. They note that creating opportunities for less skilled and highly disadvantaged jobseekers requires support that maximises the speed at which jobseekers become productive. NESAs also notes the importance of addressing employability skills deficits as they manifest in a real work context, and supporting employers to address issues in a way other than terminating employment, as this will lead to improved retention outcomes and long-term sustainability.

- IX** Research by Coates (2011) shows that moderate amounts of paid work have benefits for educational engagement and outcomes, help students to develop a range of work-ready skills and improve access to paid employment post-study. Kuh (2009) finds that part-time or casual employment while studying can provide opportunities for university students to practice and become more competent in collaboration and teamwork – skills that are needed to function effectively in the 21st century work environment. Robinson's (1999) research on the effects of part-time work on school students

found that those who work part-time gain a knowledge of the labour market and develop skills and contacts that give them some advantage in the labour market, at least in the early years after leaving school. She also found that students in part-time employment were more likely to be happy with many aspects of their lives – especially the money they earned, their social life and their independence – than those who did not work. Creed, Patton and Prideaux (2007) found strong correlations between part-time work while studying and career decision-making self-efficacy, work experience and school achievement.

- X** The Australian Council of Social Service, the Australian Council of Trade Unions and the Business Council of Australia (2012), in a joint statement promoting opportunities for Australians who are disadvantaged in the labour market, note the need not only to lift the skills and work capacities of disadvantaged jobseekers, but to connect them early with employers who can offer a pathway towards secure employment. They suggest that job placement and other support services that are responsive to the needs of both jobseekers and employers are critical to creating meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities. Evidence from the BSL's (2012) evaluation of the Centre for Work and Learning suggests that successful employer support models include assisting employers to meet their hiring needs through linking them with jobseekers who have the appropriate skills to be productive and reliable workers. Based on this, and on the service delivery evidence, the BSL (2011) has recommended the implementation of an Integrated Employment Pathway for disadvantaged jobseekers, which allows larger employers to take a direct role in matching jobseekers to emerging jobs. Such a strategy would also enable the implementation of transitional labour market approaches – e.g., the development of social procurement strategies that encourage government contractors to support the employment of disadvantaged jobseekers. This includes mentoring and post-placement support for jobseekers and employers.

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