Better Choices: Youth in WA
From the Minister

Young Western Australians have said to me:

• “I want a job that gives me financial independence.”
• “I’d like to go to uni and get a career.”
• “I’d want the chance to be a tradie.”
• “Making a positive difference to my community is important.”
• “I want to be able to look after my kids.”

As Minister for Youth it’s my job to listen to young people.

The McGowan Labor Government wants to give every young Western Australian the opportunity to make choices – whether that’s finishing year 12, pursuing a career, supporting their kids, undertaking further study, all of the above or, indeed, none of the above.

Hon Peter Tinley AM MLA
Minister for Youth
Government’s role:

I believe government should ensure that the life choices available to all young Western Australians are not restricted by differences in their individual circumstances. To the best of its ability, government should limit any impediments to young people setting themselves up for the future.

Youth’s role:

Government needs you to be engaged. As I see it, it’s your future, it’s your choice. This is your chance to be heard. You may want to do this as an individual, you may want to do this through a youth sector body or organisation.

Future Youth Strategy – Focus Questions:

1. What specific programs would help young Western Australians make choices about their future?

2. Do you have suggestions on how to implement these programs?

3. Do you know of existing programs that can be leveraged to complement these suggestions?

4. How can we improve access to young people and the youth sector to relevant programs?

5. Do you have suggestions for specific programs in regional areas?

6. Do you have suggestions for specific programs in metropolitan areas?

7. Where should the focus of youth programs lie? eg: on access and engagement, targeted intervention, or redirection services?
Have your say

This discussion paper aims to prompt conversations and encourage ideas on how to best support young Western Australians. We want your suggestions to help develop a new and integrated WA youth strategy – a strategy that will make a positive difference.

Provide your feedback to youngpeople@communities.wa.gov.au or go to communities.wa.gov.au/about/projects-and-programs/better-choices-youth-in-wa
Let’s start the discussion:

What do we mean by young people?

The age range for young people is defined as 10-25, with a focus on those aged 10-18.

Framework

There are three types of services within the youth service system:

1. Access and engagement services – designed to help people access mainstream services (such as school, education, hospitals) or engage in positive social activities. These services are generally accessible to all young people. Examples include: School Healthy Food and Drink, Cadets WA and WA Youth Theatre Company.

2. Targeted intervention services – provide targeted intervention to a sub-set of young people in WA who may be vulnerable or at risk. These services operate in greater isolation from other service sectors and focus on early intervention across a range of issues for vulnerable and at risk young people. Examples include: responses to suicide and self-harm in schools, Youth Beat (a Mission Australia safety and early intervention program) and mental health support for disengaged students in their home.

3. Redirection and re-entry services – these services provide highly targeted services that are designed to re-direct people away from crisis (tertiary) services or to enable re-entry for young people from crisis services. Examples include: Victim Support and Child Witness Services, Transitional Accommodation Support Services and Youth Legal Services.

The youth service system focuses on areas that complement mainstream systems such as school education, hospital systems or crisis services such as out of home care and juvenile detention.
Figure 1: Youth services intervention spectrum within the broader service system

Targeted youth services within the broader service system spectrum

- Broader universal services and mainstream activities (e.g. school education, hospitals)
- Access and engagement
- Targeted intervention
- Re-direction and re-entry
- Broader crisis services (E.g. out-of-home care, youth justice)

Scope of services by cohort

- Low risk
- Vulnerable
- At risk
- In crisis
Life as a young person in WA:

Young people (aged between 10 and 25) account for 20.4% of the state’s population. The cohort is a diverse and growing group, and young people are important contributors to the fabric of society in WA:

- 35.3% of young people are aged between 10 and 14, 23.9% are aged between 15 and 19 and 40.8% are aged between 20 and 25.
- Young people identifying as women account for 48.6% (253,262) of the youth population. Young people identifying as men account for 51.4% (267,595) of the youth population.
- Young people identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander account for 5.6% (29,189) of the total youth population. Almost 60% of the Aboriginal population in this age range reside in regional areas of WA.
- In 2016, approximately 75% of young Western Australians lived in the Perth metropolitan area.
- 25% of young people were born overseas and 22% of this group speak a language other than English at home.
- WA had the highest growth rate of young people across all Australian states and territories between 2005 and 2015, growing by 17.5%. Projections anticipate that young people will grow as a cohort by an additional 44% by 2030.

**Figure 2: snapshot of complex challenges facing young people**

- **Mental health**: 1 in 4 young Australians aged (15 to 25) experience a mental illness.
- **Unemployment**: 13.5% of young people (15 to 24) were unemployed in WA in August 2017 – a quarter of all unemployed people in WA.
- **Education**: In 2015, 28% of students were at educational risk because they were absent from school for more than 10% of the time.
- **Homelessness**: In 2011, a quarter of all homeless people in WA were under 18 years of age (2,425 young people).
- **Youth detention**: WA’s rate of detention for young people is one of the highest in Australia, with 134 young people in detention, and 995 young people managed in the community.
- **Out-of-home care**: The rate of growth in non-Aboriginal children coming into OOHC has stabilised over the past 10 years. The number and proportion of Aboriginal children has increased significantly in the last 10 years from 38% to 52%. 
What needs fixing?

The cohesion of WA’s youth service system is affected by three underlying issues:

1. **Fragmented funding model**

   Funding approaches have been traditionally fragmented across agencies with responsibility for young people, leading to fragmentation in policy development, funding and service delivery across multiple agencies (such as child protection, youth justice and communities). The recent machinery of government changes have reduced the number of agencies currently funding youth services, offering an opportunity to reduce fragmentation across the service spectrum.

2. **Limited visibility of services**

   The youth service system is complex and challenging to navigate. The current system has limited visibility of services and unclear linkages between services, impacting on service providers and young people’s access.

3. **Lack of clarity over governance**

   The logical basis of the youth service system differs from other government service systems. Other government service systems, such as the health system or the corrective services system, are defined by the services that they provide and are governed by discrete sets of legislation. The client cohort defines the youth service system and there is no clear legislative basis for the overall system. This means that the governance of the youth service system is unclear, creating challenges for providers. At a system level, limitations in governance mechanisms include limited data sharing, outdated funding approaches, poorly framed accountabilities and insufficient resourcing for engagement. At a local level, limitations in governance mechanisms include unclear local leadership and limited community development.
The current youth service system in WA:

Various WA Government agencies primarily engage with the parts of the youth service system that reflect their broader mission. For example, the Department of Communities (Child Protection and Family Support) funds the majority of redirection services.

Access and engagement services

### Health

**SERVICES OVERVIEW**
Health services provide primary health assistance and broader health education initiatives. Health education initiatives are particularly focused on alcohol and other drugs and sexual health for young people.

**MAJOR FUNDERS**
- Department of Health
- Mental Health Commission

**INDICATIVE PROVIDERS**
- Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services Council
- SRHWA
- Australian Red Cross
- Child and Adolescent Health service

**SERVICES LOCATIONS**
Health services are usually state-wide initiatives, but with emphasis on metro funding. There are some region specific programs, that focus on specific cohorts (such as young Aboriginal people, and CALD young people), but there is limited service provision in Peel.

**OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**
- Health services are generally provided by specialist health providers. Linkages with other youth services generally consist of referrals to health services from general youth services such as drop-in centres
- Health youth services are a subset of the broader health system.

### Education and Training

**SERVICES OVERVIEW**
Education and training funding focuses on services that engage young people (particularly Aboriginal young people) and assist them to access and navigate through the education system. These services also provide training programs and alternative learning pathways for young people who are struggling with the traditional education system.

**MAJOR FUNDERS**
- Department of Education
- Department of Training and Workforce Development

**INDICATIVE PROVIDERS**
- Clontarf Foundation
- South Metro Youth Link
- Fairbridge WA
- EdConnect
- DyslexiaSPED Foundation
- The Literature Centre

**SERVICES LOCATIONS**
Services are provided across most regions in WA but regions appear to be funded inconsistently.

**OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**
- Education and training youth services are subsets of the education system, and aim to improve young peoples’ access to the broader education system.

### Engagement

**SERVICES OVERVIEW**
Engagement funding provides a cross-section of activities that are universally available to young people. These services provide young people with opportunities to have new experiences and meet other young people through sport, music and a range of other activities. There is a strong weighting towards sport programs, particularly in regional areas.

**MAJOR FUNDERS**
- Department of Education
- Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries
- Department and Communities
- WA Police

**INDICATIVE PROVIDERS**
- Cadets WA
- PCYCs
- Local Governments
- Girl Guides WA
- WA Football Commission
- Local governments

**SERVICES LOCATIONS**
Services are provided across most regions in WA but regions appear to be funded inconsistently. Many of these services are state-wide or funded from the metropolitan area, but are open to young people across the state. Regional engagement funding tends to focus on sporting initiatives.

**OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**
- There is some provision (e.g. by PCYCs and local governments) of youth centres and structured hub-based programs for all young people. This is distinct from drop-in centres focused on vulnerable and at-risk young people in the targeted intervention space, although some providers are pro-active in identifying and referring vulnerable and at-risk youth to specialist services.

*Note: This refers to access and engagement programs in the health and education and training areas only.*
# Targeted intervention services

## Earlier intervention

### SERVICES OVERVIEW
Earlier intervention services provide a range of supports for young people at risk, often through targeted outreach. Services primarily target families at-risk of entering the child protection and juvenile justice systems and requiring other high cost government services. Other programs focus on engaging at-risk young people in specific programs and activities.

### MAJOR FUNDERS
- Department of Communities (Child Protection and Family Support)
- WA Police
- Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries
- Department of Justice (Corrective Services)

### INDICATIVE PROVIDERS
- South Metro TAFE
- Garnduwa Amboorny Wirnan Aboriginal Corporation

### SERVICES LOCATIONS
Services funding is primarily focused on specific parts of the metropolitan area (e.g. South East corridor), as well as significant provision in the Kimberley and Pilbara.

### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS
- This is an area where Commonwealth funding for related services (particularly for Aboriginal youth) has historically been prevalent, but has seen reductions in recent years.

## Support services

### SERVICES OVERVIEW
Support services provide significant outreach support for young people primarily through youth drop in centres. These centres provide a range of support services for young people, targeting young people who are vulnerable and require extra support, e.g. Derby and Kununurra drop in centres.

### MAJOR FUNDERS
- Department of Communities (Child Protection and Family Support)
- Parkerville Children and Youth Care
- Mission Australia
- Calvary Youth Services
- Local governments
- Albany Youth Support Association
- Broome Youth and Families Hub Inc.

### INDICATIVE PROVIDERS
- Parkerville Children and Youth Care
- Mission Australia
- Calvary Youth Services
- Local governments
- Albany Youth Support Association
- Broome Youth and Families Hub Inc.

### SERVICES LOCATIONS
Youth centres are provided in different locations across the state, with more coverage in the metropolitan area. These services are often run with support from local governments to tailor the service to the needs of the local community.

### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS
- These services are distinct from youth centres and structured hub-based programs for all young people provided in the access and engagement space. Services in the targeted intervention space generally have stronger referral pathways to specialist services.

## Mental health

### SERVICES OVERVIEW
Mental health services focus on young people at risk, with particular focus on suicide and self-harm prevention, as well as some counselling services (although these are also provided through outreach programs). These services are primarily provided to young people through their school and delivered jointly by a number of agencies.

### MAJOR FUNDERS
- Mental Health Commission
- Department of Education

### INDICATIVE PROVIDERS
- Child and Adolescent Health Service
- Youth Focus
- Wanslea Family Services

### SERVICES LOCATIONS
These services are primarily based in the metropolitan area with some state-wide provision. There is limited provision of these specific services in the Pilbara and the Kimberley.

### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS
- The Commonwealth Government is active in this space, with most funding flowing through the WA Primary Health Alliance. This includes funding for Headspace, the national mental health foundation dedicated to improving the wellbeing of young Australians, which contracts non-government providers to run 11 centres across WA.
Re-direction and re-entry services

**Housing and homelessness**

**SERVICES OVERVIEW**
These services provide support to young people at-risk of homelessness or with unstable home circumstances. They provide a range of temporary and longer term accommodation services for young people and their families.

**MAJOR FUNDERS**
- Department of Communities (Child Protection and Family Support)

**INDICATIVE PROVIDERS**
- Salvation Army
- Anglicare WA
- Short Term Accommodation for Youth Inc.
- Zonta House Refuge Association
- AccordWest

**SERVICES LOCATIONS**
Service funding is concentrated in the metropolitan area (~70%), with some provision for state-wide funding and relatively even funding across other regions.

**OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**
- Much of the funding for youth homelessness services is though the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness and the National Affordable Housing Agreement between the State and Commonwealth Government.

**Family support**

**SERVICES OVERVIEW**
These services provide intensive family support services, covering out-of-home care services (including foster parenting), as well as support for young people leaving out-of-home-care. These services also provide counselling services specific to the needs of these young people.

**MAJOR FUNDERS**
- Department of Communities (Child Protection and Family Support)

**INDICATIVE PROVIDERS**
- Parkerville Children and Youth Care
- UnitingCare West
- Centrecare
- Foundations Care

**SERVICES LOCATIONS**
The vast majority of family support services (~80%) are provided in the metropolitan area, with limited funding for other regions.

**OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**
- The "Building Safe and Strong Families: Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy" provides clear direction for some of these services, including an increased focus on providing services designed for Aboriginal young people and families.

**Youth offending**

**SERVICES OVERVIEW**
These services focus specifically on young people who are at-risk or have previously been in the juvenile justice system. They intend to reduce anti-social behaviour of young people and the likelihood of young people reoffending.

**MAJOR FUNDERS**
- Department of Communities (Child Protection and Family Support)
- Department of Justice (Corrective Services)
- Department of Justice (Attorney Generals)

**INDICATIVE PROVIDERS**
- Department of Justice (Attorney Generals)
- Hope Community Services
- Life Without Barriers
- Save the Children
- Wirrpanda Foundation
- Outcare

**SERVICES LOCATIONS**
These services are provided in metropolitan area, the Kimberley, the Pilbara and Murchison.

**OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**
- A significant proportion of this funding was a time-bound allocation from Royalties for Regions.
What works? – some thoughts on best practice:

Responsibility for initiating and developing youth policy settings in Australia largely sits with states and territories. While the Commonwealth initiated National Youth Strategy (2010) identified key priority areas for young people growing up in Australia, it did not provide a roadmap for delivering integrated and effective services for young Australians.[11] Youth service spending is also fragmented at a Commonwealth level, distributed across a variety of agencies through individual services. The lack of a cohesive national approach to youth services provides opportunity to draw inspiration from other jurisdictions and consider the approaches and initiatives within other youth service systems that may be applicable to the Western Australian context.

There are a range of approaches to youth services that provide leading examples of best practice:[12]

- **Youth service hubs** – formalised youth service hubs such as drop-in centres provide a single physical location around which services can be operationally coordinated. This makes it easier for young people and providers to access and navigate the system and facilitates referral pathways to develop between services.[13]

- **Mentoring** - current research confirms the value of lengthy and meaningful mentoring relationships. Young adults who have mentors, particularly those at-risk are more likely to report engaging in productive and beneficial activities than youth without a mentor.[14]

- **Digital engagement** – service providers are increasing their use of digital and online platforms to better engage with young people. Platforms can be used to provide a central information portal of available services, providing accessible information to young people about the services they can access. They are also used as engagement platforms for specific services and used to enhance young people’s connection with providers.[15]

- **Assertive outreach approaches for vulnerable young people** – underpinned by social justice values, assertive outreach programs recognise the many barriers vulnerable and disconnected young people face when accessing services. Assertive outreach is a proactive approach to delivering support and interventions to young people who don’t have adults to support and advocate for them when seeking help.[17]

- **Youth led initiatives** – supporting innovative youth-led initiatives is an empowering way of involving young people in youth services. Support for youth-led initiatives is likely to include a combination of youth representative or advisory groups as well as engagement linked to specific services or projects developed by young people.
Best practice in other jurisdictions:

In addition to drawing on examples of good practice in WA, other jurisdictions can provide guidance on approaches to improving youth service system coordination:

• Youth support model (Queensland) – this model focuses on providing support services to vulnerable young people and strengthening their relationships with their families and support networks. Funded organisations are encouraged to form collaborative partnerships to contribute to an integrated service system for these young people. A practice guide provides funded organisations with a range of guidelines, information and resources for effectively engaging and working with vulnerable young people.[17]

• Integrated youth refuge and service model (Victoria) – this integrated service model is intensive, youth-focused and delivers trauma-informed care for young people at risk of homelessness. The model engages young people by establishing the refuge as a consistent connection point for young people and the variety of services they require. The model uses a combination of integrated services, assertive outreach, digital engagement and portable support to provide a wraparound support service for vulnerable young people.[18]

• Whole-of-government policy initiatives – these initiatives take a community based approach to youth issues, critically engaging with how youth policy fits within a broader policy agenda. This framework has enabled some state governments to critically engage with how other policy areas can support opportunities for young people. Some examples include:
  • Back to Work (Queensland) – a regional employment initiative with explicit focus on young job seekers in the regions.[19]
  • Homelessness Strategy (New South Wales) - $40 million commitment over four years to youth homelessness, including young people with high risk of homelessness that was embedded within the broader state homelessness strategy.[20]
Conclusion:

I acknowledge that in a document like this, it is impossible to supply a complete and comprehensive overview of our youth system. But I sincerely hope that the information we have provided here will nurture a productive conversation about the best way forward for WA’s youth.

I urge you to exercise your choice and participate in this important conversation.

Provide your feedback to youngpeople@communities.wa.gov.au or go to communities.wa.gov.au/about/projects-and-programs/better-choices-youth-in-wa

[1] Department of Communities, Analysis of Youth Services, May 2017, Figure 4, p. 9.
[4] There is currently no ABS dataset that collates data for non-identifying persons. Use of this data set assumes that gender identity was selected by the respondent based on their individual identity preference.
[12] Education: This attendance rate was substantially lower for Aboriginal students (76.3%) than it was for non-Aboriginal students (92.2%). Department of Education, Annual Report 2015-16, p. 28. Available at: [www.education.wa.edu.au](http://www.education.wa.edu.au)/, Disability Services Commission, Count Me In Disability Future Directions, December 2013.

Youth detention: 73% of young people in detention are Identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Department of Corrective Services, ‘Young People in Detention – Quarterly Statistics’, March 2017


Have your say

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