



Youth Affairs Council Victoria

Supported, Connected, Strong | Social Return on Investment Study 2.0

June 2026 Update



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Glossary

Abbreviation	Full
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ANZSCO	Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations
AOD	Alcohol and Other Drugs
AYAC	Australian Youth Affairs Coalition
BRACE	Building Resilience Through Advocacy, Counselling and Education
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CMY	Centre for Multicultural Youth
DALY	Disability adjusted life years
DFFH	Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
DoH	Victorian Department of Health
DTF	Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance
EIIF	Early Intervention and Investment Framework
EYOP	Embedded Youth Outreach Project
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual +
LLENs	Local Learning and Employment Networks

Abbreviation	Full
MCM	Melbourne City Mission
NPV	Net Present Value
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OfY	Office for Youth
RoGS	Report on Government Services
SROI	Social Return on Investment
VCOSS	Victorian Council of Social Service
VRU	Violence Reduction Unit
VSly	Value of a statistical life year
WHO	World Health Organisation
YACVic	Youth Affairs Council Victoria
YCPG	Youth Crime Prevention Grants
YJCSS	Youth Justice Community Support Service
YSAS	Youth Support and Advocacy Service
YWC	Youth Work Coalition

1 – Executive Summary

1 – Executive summary

Introduction, scope and purpose of this study.

Youth Work in Victoria

According to the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC), youth work is a distinct discipline that places young people and their interests first (AYAC, 2013). It includes a range of generalist and specialist supports for young people between the ages of 12 and 25, with the aim of building skills, strengthening capabilities, and fostering community engagement (YACVic, 2022).

There are over 3,300 youth workers in Victoria (Jobs and Skills Australia, 2026), who operate alongside young people, advocating for and supporting their independence, participation, connectedness, and realisation of rights. Professional pathways for youth work include degree programs at Australian Catholic University, RMIT University, and Victoria University, accredited by Youth Workers Australia, as well as vocational qualifications delivered through TAFEs.

Youth work is a distinct, relationship-based practice grounded in human rights and social justice, focused on building trust without stigma or judgement. Using strengths-based and holistic approaches, youth workers empower young people to engage with their communities, build skills and confidence, and achieve their goals (YACVic, 2021). Youth workers work with young people with a wide diversity of identities and life experiences, and significant intersectionality, with the majority bringing their own lived experience and diverse background to their role (YACVic, 2022).

In Victoria, youth work plays a critical system-bridging role across health, education, justice, and housing, combining early intervention with targeted support for young people with higher needs and helping them navigate fragmented systems over time. As the sector evolves, there is increasing emphasis on integrated, prevention-focused, and place-based approaches, with youth work contributing to sustained outcomes by addressing underlying drivers of disadvantage and building young people's capabilities, connections, and resilience for long-term wellbeing.

Despite its valuable contribution to young people and the Victorian community, the understanding of the impact of youth work and its benefits remains limited. This has resulted in various historical and ongoing challenges for the sector regarding public and stakeholder recognition, and lack of ongoing investment (YWC, 2021).

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Scope and purpose of this study

This study provides an update to the [2022 Social Return on Investment \(SROI\) study](#) (the 2022 SROI study), commissioned by the Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic) and delivered by Deloitte Access Economics. The 2022 SROI study estimated the social and economic value of youth work in Victoria by combining economic modelling with stakeholder insights. SROI is a framework that assigns monetary values to social and economic outcomes to estimate the broader value created relative to investment.

The 2022 SROI study found that at the time, youth workers were creating close to \$400 million in benefits to Victoria and estimated that for every dollar invested in youth work, young people and the broader community received \$2.62 in benefits. These benefits were particularly aligned to improving mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

Findings have been widely used by youth organisations and advocates to strengthen the evidence base for continued and expanded investment, including being quoted in budget and policy submissions and by various youth work organisations across Australia.

Since the 2022 SROI study, the Victorian youth sector has undergone significant change, shaped by rising demand and an evolving policy environment. Young people are experiencing increasingly complex and intersecting challenges, including across mental health, housing and cost-of-living pressures, creating higher demand for accessible services and more complex service delivery requirements (YACVic, 2026).

Over this period, government policy and funding settings have shifted in the context of broader statewide reforms, including those following the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System and the introduction of Our Promise, Your Future: Victoria's Youth Strategy 2022–2027. These reforms emphasise the need for greater integration across services, earlier intervention and place-based approaches, alongside an increased focus on prevention, co-design and community-based support.

This study is intended to update the 2022 SROI study to reflect changes in the sector and the needs of young people, to support continued knowledge building about the role and value of youth work today.

1 – Executive summary

Methodology, assumptions and key findings from the SROI analysis.

Methodology

This SROI study builds upon the qualitative and quantitative data used in the 2022 SROI study, including:

- workshop with YACVic and key sector stakeholders to identify key changes and challenges facing the youth work sector in 2026
- review of secondary data (e.g. research literature, specific program evaluation reports and grey literature) to identify new research on the impact of youth work
- review of costs to account for changes in the costs of government service delivery in Victoria (e.g. using Report of Government Services [RoGS] data), and accounting for inflation.

While youth work as a profession and practice is clearly defined, there is debate around who should be recognised as a youth worker. This is because youth work is a broad practice that crosses over multiple sectors and environments, and there are a number of pathways into providing youth support services, including formalised youth work qualifications, professional experience, and lived experience. In light of this, different organisations in Victoria apply the title of youth worker in slightly different contexts and it is hence somewhat difficult to distinguish youth work by qualification or pathway.

For the purposes of this study, a broad definition must be taken in order to consider the impacts of programs and interventions that are considered by stakeholders to be relevant to youth work. Namely, youth work and youth work interventions more broadly are defined as holistic and strength-based services provided to support solely young people aged 12 to 25. This may include interventions that are delivered only in part by degree qualified youth workers or staff that are categorised as youth workers based on alternate qualifications and pathways.

Limitations and assumptions

As in the 2022 SROI study, it was recognised that there is limited data related to the youth work sector in Victoria, particularly in relation to quantitative data demonstrating the achievement of outcomes and scale of impact. As a result, the SROI model was subject to a number of limitations and assumptions, and the findings should be considered in this context. This is outlined in greater detail in Section 4. In essence, the accuracy of the modelling is reliant on the extent to which the limited data points measuring changes in outcomes represent the impact of youth work interventions more broadly.

SROI study finding

The SROI analysis examines the current impact of youth work in Victoria. The cohort of young people receiving intensive youth work support was estimated to be 21,000, modelled based on the estimated number of youth workers in Victoria and an assumption around the extent to which this workforce provides supports. Only the benefits of certain interventions are monetised in the SROI model due to data constraints.

Overall, in net present value (NPV) terms, the **total benefits accrued to the target cohort amount to approximately \$657 million with costs estimated at \$222 million, yielding an SROI of 2.96**. In other words, every dollar of investment in youth work returns an estimated \$2.96 in social and economic benefits, suggesting that youth work delivers a significant return on investment for the community (this is likely to be a conservative estimate given data limitations which hindered the measurement of many benefits). The benefits include:



Mental health and wellbeing: improved quality of life due to alleviation of mental illness for a relatively large cohort of young people results in benefits at around \$239 million over ten years.



Education and employment: Increased earnings, increased government taxes and reduced welfare payments, as a result of improved education and employment outcomes, amount to a total of \$363 million in benefits over 30 years.



Housing stability: benefits of a reduction in homelessness and reliance on housing support services as a result of youth work brings in around \$34 million in benefits over 30 years.



Justice system: Avoided costs of justice system due to reduced contact and recidivism are estimated to realise approximately \$17 million in benefits over 30 years.



Health system (alcohol and other drug (AOD) use): The benefits of reduced hospitalisations and ambulance attendances as a result of mitigated harmful AOD use are approximately \$5 million over 30 years.

1 – Executive summary

Qualitative evidence and areas of future opportunities.

Qualitative findings

As many benefits of youth work were not able to be quantified and monetised, the study utilises insights from case studies and document reviews to supplement the SROI model and present a more comprehensive picture of the value of youth work in Victoria. Some of the key findings include:



Youth work presents a unique service offering tailored support for diverse and marginalised groups, such as young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, disabled young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, LGBTQIA+ young people and more. Youth work is also important in rural areas where other services are limited.



Youth work forms a key component in Victoria's domestic and family violence response, including through organisations such as Drummond Street, safe steps and Kids Helpline that support young people who experience family violence.



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Future opportunities

In Victoria, the youth sector continues to contribute to improved outcomes for young people. As discussed throughout this study, youth workers and youth work led interventions support young people to strengthen community connection, and improve education, employment outcomes and mental health outcomes.

The impact of youth work, however, remains challenging to articulate and quantify, as it is typically realised through long term, relational and preventative outcomes shaped by the individual experience of the young people engaged (Doherty & St Croix, 2019).

The youth work sector could benefit significantly from improved data capture, particularly in relation to outcomes. Enhanced data capture would allow more effective outcome reporting which would in turn increase youth work sector efficiencies and effectiveness through better allocation of funding as the true value of youth work becomes more apparent. It would also increase the robustness of future studies similar to this SROI.

Improved ability to demonstrate and quantify impact is also becoming increasingly important to secure Government funding in a Victorian context. It is however worth recognising that the sector faces barriers to improved data capture, including due to a reliance on short term contracts of one to two years (YACVic, 2026), which make it challenging to meaningfully evaluate long term outcomes.

In addition to enhanced data capture, a number of **other areas of opportunity** were also identified by stakeholders, including:

- more focus on early intervention can enhance the benefits realised through youth work,
- alignment of the funding model can improve youth work outcomes,
- a clear recognition of youth work would assist in attributing outcomes to the sector,
- youth work benefits can be maximised by improving youth worker retention and career pathways, and
- embedding youth work across various sectors can improve youth engagement and benefits.

2 – Background and purpose

2 – Background and purpose

A Social Return on Investment study to examine the unique attributes and value of youth work programs.

Youth work in Victoria

There are over a million young people aged 12-25 in Victoria, making up approximately 16 per cent of our community (ABS, 2024). Many young people do not have access to assistance, support and connections from their family network, or they may face discrimination, marginalisation, trauma or disaster in their lives. Without skilled and specialised support, they are more likely to disengage from education, experience unemployment, mental ill-health and homelessness, engage in harmful use of alcohol and other drugs, and become involved in the justice system (YWC, 2021).

Youth work is a profession that delivers a range of generalist and specialist services that respond to the needs of young people. A youth worker operates alongside a young person, supporting their learning and development in their context. Youth workers do so by advocating for and facilitating their independence, participation in society, connectedness, and realisation of their rights (AYAC, 2013).

Youth work operates as a cross-sectoral practice in conjunction with various other services, with which they collaborate well, often through necessity due to lack of resourcing. Youth workers are employed by local governments, non-profit organisations, education providers, or community groups to support young people on issues such as active citizenship, engagement in education and employment, social cohesion, and positive mental health and wellbeing. There are also targeted services in housing support, drug and alcohol support, mental health, crime prevention, education engagement, and family violence prevention and recovery (YWC, 2021). The youth work sector is largely funded by government, through service contracts and grant programs, and philanthropy. A summary of the youth work sector, its activities and their domains of focus is presented in Figure 1.

In Victoria, youth work practice is underpinned by the revised Code of Ethical Practice (YACVic, 2025), and the degree programs must be accredited by Youth Workers Australia, the professional association. Among the eight guiding principles are the empowerment of young people, young people's participation, social justice for young people, the safety of young people, and more. Youth workers in Victoria possess varied levels of qualifications from Certificates, Diploma, Bachelor's to Master's degree. Only 34 per cent of youth sector workers have a specific youth work qualification, however, the majority bring experience and diverse identities to their work with young people (YACVic, 2022). Some youth workers also gain employment based on relevant experience without formal qualifications (YWC, 2021).

Value of youth work

Youth work is a distinct discipline and body of knowledge unique from other professions that involve working with young people, such as teachers, social workers and psychologists. Youth work is defined by the relational and empowering practice that puts young people and their needs at the centre, building trust and rapport without stigma. By providing strengths-based and holistic care to young people, youth workers assist young people to engage with their community and develop skills and capabilities to achieve their goals (YWC, 2021).

Youth work has been shown to be effective in promoting skill-building, leadership and social connections (Maslow, 2013). Targeted programs have also demonstrated effectiveness in prevention and early intervention for issues such as AOD use (Robertson, 2003), homelessness (Alves, 2021) and mental health care (Hilferty, 2016).

In Victoria, as shown in Figure 1, youth work approaches can be broadly categorised into:

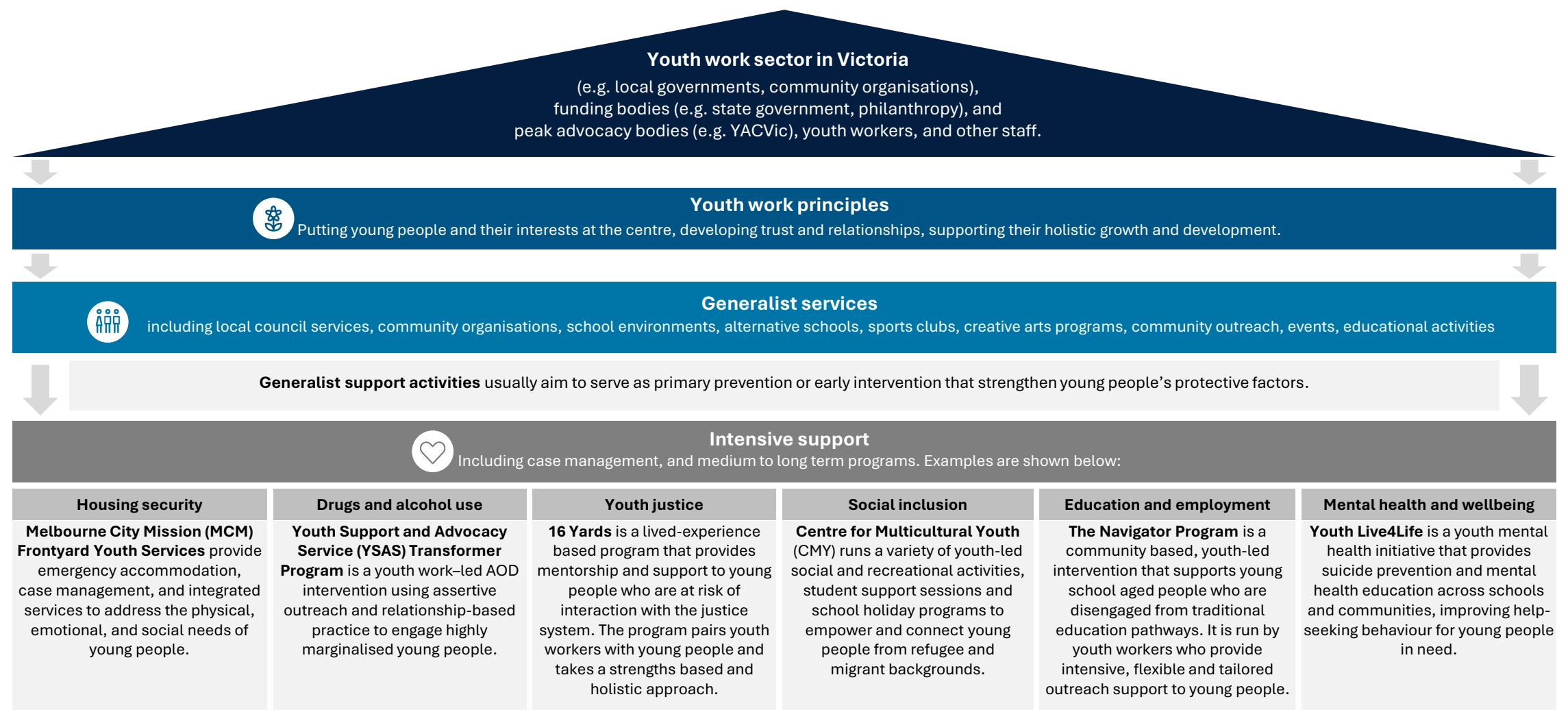
- generalist support, such as community outreach, events, and educational activities, that engage many young people at one time in a social or community setting. Generalist support activities usually aim to serve as primary prevention or early intervention that strengthen young people's protective factors (Community Crime Prevention, 2016), and
- support, such as case management that entails one-on-one supportive services to young people at-risk of marginalisation, and other young people who require specialised assistance. A youth worker works with a young person to understand their needs, develop a plan, maintain regular contact, and implement the plan alongside the young person. Case management has a strong evidence base in its effectiveness to improve young people's contacts with services, social functioning, and program satisfaction (Ziguras, 2000).

Through these approaches, youth workers often facilitate diversion before issues become crises, and smooth pathways to more complex care when needed (YWC, 2021). Overall, youth work contributes to safe, strong, supportive communities for young people and society. It plays a role in melding systems together, such as education and justice, mental health and AOD, and helping young people progress in positive pathways (YWC, 2021).

2 – Background and purpose

A Social Return on Investment study to examine the unique attributes and value of youth work programs.

Figure 1. A summary of youth work activities in Victoria and examples of support programs



2 – Background and purpose

A Social Return on Investment study to examine the unique attributes and value of youth work programs.

Challenges for youth work in Victoria

The role of youth work and its unique value are poorly understood among the public and some key stakeholders in Victoria (YWC, 2021). This lack of recognition limits funding available to the sector and restricts ongoing investment in youth work resources and services. Among the most important resources are youth workers themselves. Funding limitations causes high turnover and loss of skills and expertise of youth workers (YWC, 2021), affecting the continuity of service provision critical to ongoing trust and relationships with young people and communities. Poor job security also contributes to youth workers' trauma and burnout (Barford, 2010; YWC, 2021), as does the constant need to stretch limited resources across the high demand for support. Funding models are also often service- or issue-specific, resulting in other challenges, such as failure to cover the full cost of a program or staff, or imposition of eligibility restrictions that result in the exclusion of some young people in need of support (YWC, 2021).

This overall lack of resources results in the youth work sector being unable to meet the full extent of need in Victoria. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated key issues facing young people such as mental health and AOD, further increasing the number of young Victorians trying to access support services (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2021). Sector stakeholders advised this impact is still ongoing and present in young people to date.

Limited resourcing has also affected youth services' capacity to conduct robust evaluations of their programs and services. Without investment from funding bodies to embed monitoring and evaluation practices, the sector relies heavily on qualitative data in the form of feedback from the young people they work with, to assess whether services meet the needs and expectations of young people and achieve good outcomes. This can affect the likelihood of youth work programs receiving ongoing funding, as quantitative evidence of an effective model or framework is usually required to secure ongoing funding for a program.

Together, these challenges affect the level of care that young Victorians receive through youth work. Given the unique role that youth work plays in supporting young people, these challenges can reduce community engagement and wellbeing, with ongoing implications for the broader community (YWC, 2021). The underrepresentation of diverse groups in many programs and services also leads to underserved communities, exacerbating cycles of social and economic marginalisation.

It is imperative for the youth work sector to receive adequate resources to provide the dedicated, targeted support that young people need now and in the future.

Youth Affairs Council Victoria – Supported, Connected, Strong

As the peak body and leading policy advocate for young people and the youth sector, YACVic works across the state to influence change in the best interests of young people. YACVic does so by elevating young people's voices, promoting solutions, building capacity, nurturing connections, and advancing thinking (YACVic, 2020). In particular, they place a focus on the issues and voices of young people who face marginalisation.

A core aspect of this is YACVic's advocacy work, including the Supported, Connected, Strong campaign. This campaign is seeking the following three reforms on behalf of the Victorian youth sector:

1. Increase investment in early intervention and prevention services for young people.
2. Embed meaningful youth participation in decision making processes so young peoples' voices are heard.
3. Secure a strong and sustainable youth sector to support young people.

This advocacy work builds on YACVic's previous 2018 Youth Work Matters campaign by updating the advocacy asks to reflect changes in the context and challenges facing young people and the youth sector in 2026. The updated Supported, Connected, Strong campaign has also been informed by YACVic's 2024 state-wide listening tour and ongoing engagement with young people and youth services across Victoria.

YACVic understands there is an opportunity to secure more upstream (i.e. prevention and early intervention) investment in youth work and services, that will achieve cost savings downstream across service provision areas. Aligned with their purpose and mission, YACVic commissioned this report to determine the social and economic return of investment of youth work in Victoria.

The Victorian Youth Sector Coalition is working collaboratively on the Supported, Connected, Strong campaign and includes the Koorie Youth Council (KYC), Victoria Student Representative Council (VicSRC), Junction Youth Services, Youthlaw, Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS), Youth Support Advocacy Service (YSAS), Youth Projects, Life4life, and Melbourne City Mission.

2 – Background and purpose

A Social Return on Investment study to examine the unique attributes and value of youth work programs.

Evolving context for youth work in Victoria

Since the 2022 SROI report, the Victorian youth sector has undergone significant change, shaped by rising demand and an evolving policy environment. Young people are experiencing increasingly complex and intersecting challenges, including worsening mental health, housing insecurity and cost-of-living pressures, contributing to higher demand for services and more complex service delivery requirements.

Over this period, government policy and funding settings have shifted in the context of broader statewide reforms, including those following the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System and the introduction of Our Promise, Your Future: Victoria's Youth Strategy 2022–2027. These reforms emphasise greater integration across services, earlier intervention and place-based approaches, alongside an increased focus on prevention, co-design and community-based support.

In parallel, the youth workforce has evolved to operate within a more connected and outcomes-focused service system. Youth work is increasingly embedded across mental health, housing, justice and education, requiring stronger capabilities in coordination, system navigation, data use and evidence-informed practice. There is also growing emphasis on trauma-informed and culturally responsive approaches, as well as collaboration and co-design with young people to deliver more coordinated, wraparound support.

This shift has been accompanied by an increased scope and expectations for the workforce. Youth workers are more frequently supporting young people experiencing multiple, complex and overlapping vulnerabilities and are increasingly involved in outreach, cross-sector coordination and sustained engagement. Consequently, youth workers are navigating greater complexity, increased accountability for outcomes, and heightened expectations in delivering integrated, high-quality care. At the same time, the workforce continues to face constraints, including shortages, burnout, rising capability requirements and challenges in attracting and retaining skilled practitioners.

Additionally, sector stakeholders have noted that the needs of young people have become more complex and less stable. Many young people are navigating fragmented pathways across education, employment and support systems, compounded by the lingering impacts of COVID-19 disruption (YACVic, 2026). Rising mental health concerns, housing stress, barriers to service access and broader economic pressures have increased vulnerability, while expectations for participation, resilience and self-navigation have also risen (YACVic, 2026).

These pressures are further shaped by structural barriers, including discrimination, transport disadvantage and system complexity, particularly in rural and regional areas (YACVic, 2024). Cost-of-living pressures are placing additional financial strain on young people, affecting their ability to meet basic needs such as housing, food and transport, while climate anxiety reflects growing concern about long-term environmental futures (Deloitte Access Economics, 2025). While the SROI framework reflects aspects of this through the data selected inputs into the modelling, the analysis is not disaggregated by specific cohorts, such as regional and rural youth, or First Nations youth.

In this context, youth workers play a central role in responding to this rising complexity, providing sustained, flexible support while assisting young people to navigate systems, access services and maintain engagement across key life domains.



3 – SROI framework

3 – SROI framework

Developing the program logic model and social impact framework.

The program logic and social impact framework remain unchanged from the 2022 SROI. The comprehensive model was originally developed with inputs from key stakeholders and designed to support ongoing application, and no material revisions were identified during this update.

Updates in the 2026 SROI were therefore limited to the underlying data inputs, reflecting the availability of more current and accurate data.

Program logic

The program logic model, or theory of change, is used to identify and map the broad range of impacts of youth work and forms the basis of the SROI framework.

A program logic model is a schematic representation that describes how a program or intervention is intended to work. It aims to show the intended causal links for a program.

The SROI aims to establish and assess the relationship between the elements of the model to establish the impact of youth work.

The outcomes identified in the program logic in Figure 2 (pages 15 and 16) have been categorised into five groups, including:

- **connectedness/social inclusion**, including reduced social isolation, increased community connection and social capital, and increased inclusion of diverse groups
- **mental health, health and wellbeing**, including reduced drug and alcohol abuse, increased self-worth, and reduced demand for emergency services, improved mental health and reduced service usage related to healthcare overall
- **housing stability and security**, including reduced drug and alcohol abuse and reduced service usage related to healthcare, more young people in secure accommodation and enhanced life and living skills
- **education, employability and independence**, including more young people in secure accommodation and enhanced life and living skills, participating in the workforce and increased long-term independence
- **positive social participation**, including reduced likelihood of committing crime and increased engagement with restorative practice.

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Social impact framework

The framework for estimating social impact is based on the program logic. For each short- and medium-term outcome, indicators and measures were developed in 2022.

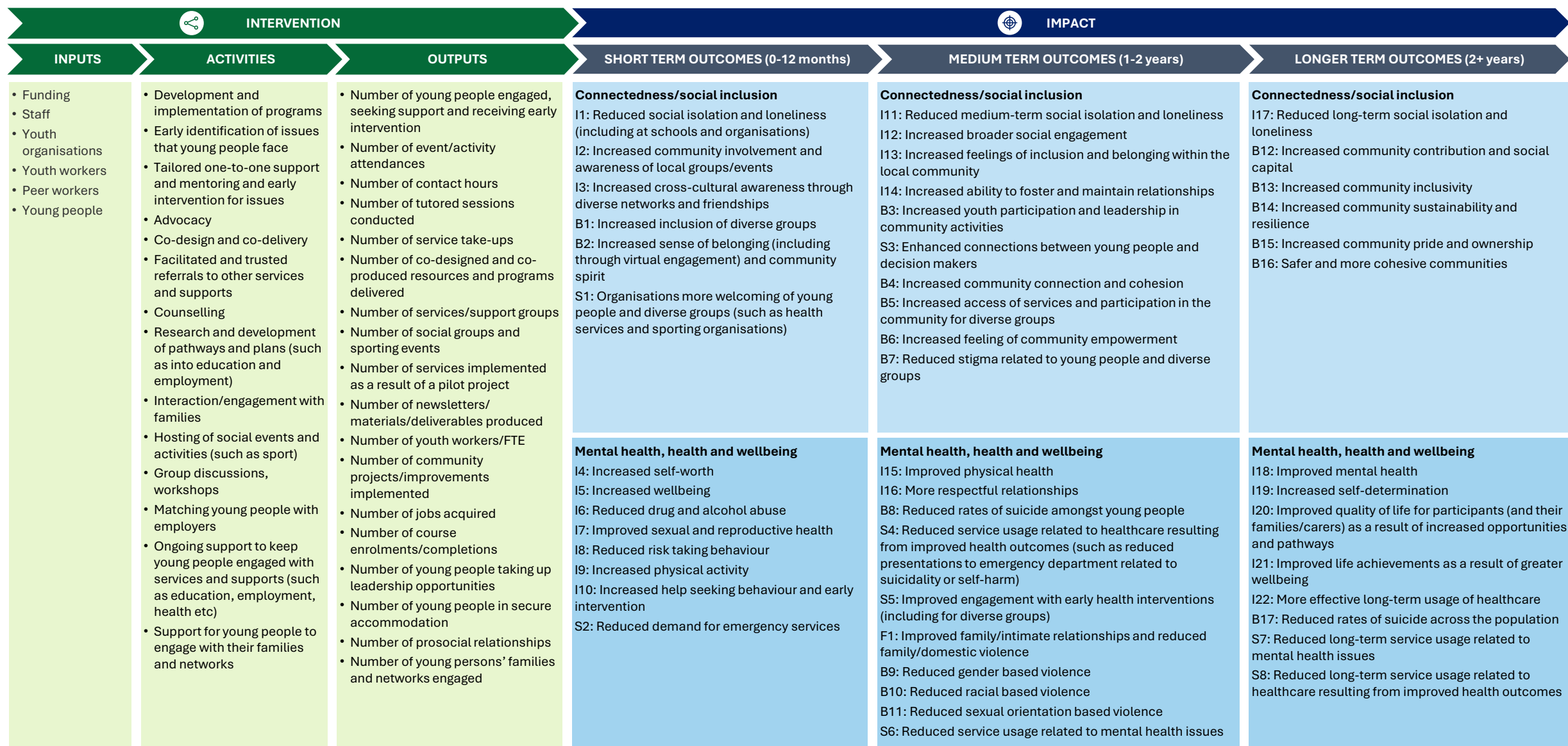
Youth sector stakeholders defined short- and medium-term outcomes that can be directly attributable to youth work. Long-term outcomes are considered indirect outcomes, as they are influenced by youth work along with a range of external influences. In these cases, youth work's contribution is less clear. Short- and medium-term outcomes are therefore reported with greater certainty.

The framework identifies the key assumptions and whether the outcome is reported using qualitative descriptions (e.g. quotes and examples from interviews), using quantitative data (e.g. reporting numbers of participants or outcome measurement), or monetised (a dollar value placed on the outcome).

The next section on findings provides a summary for the five groups of outcomes explored in detail for this report. This is then followed by a full description, evidence and finding for each outcome.

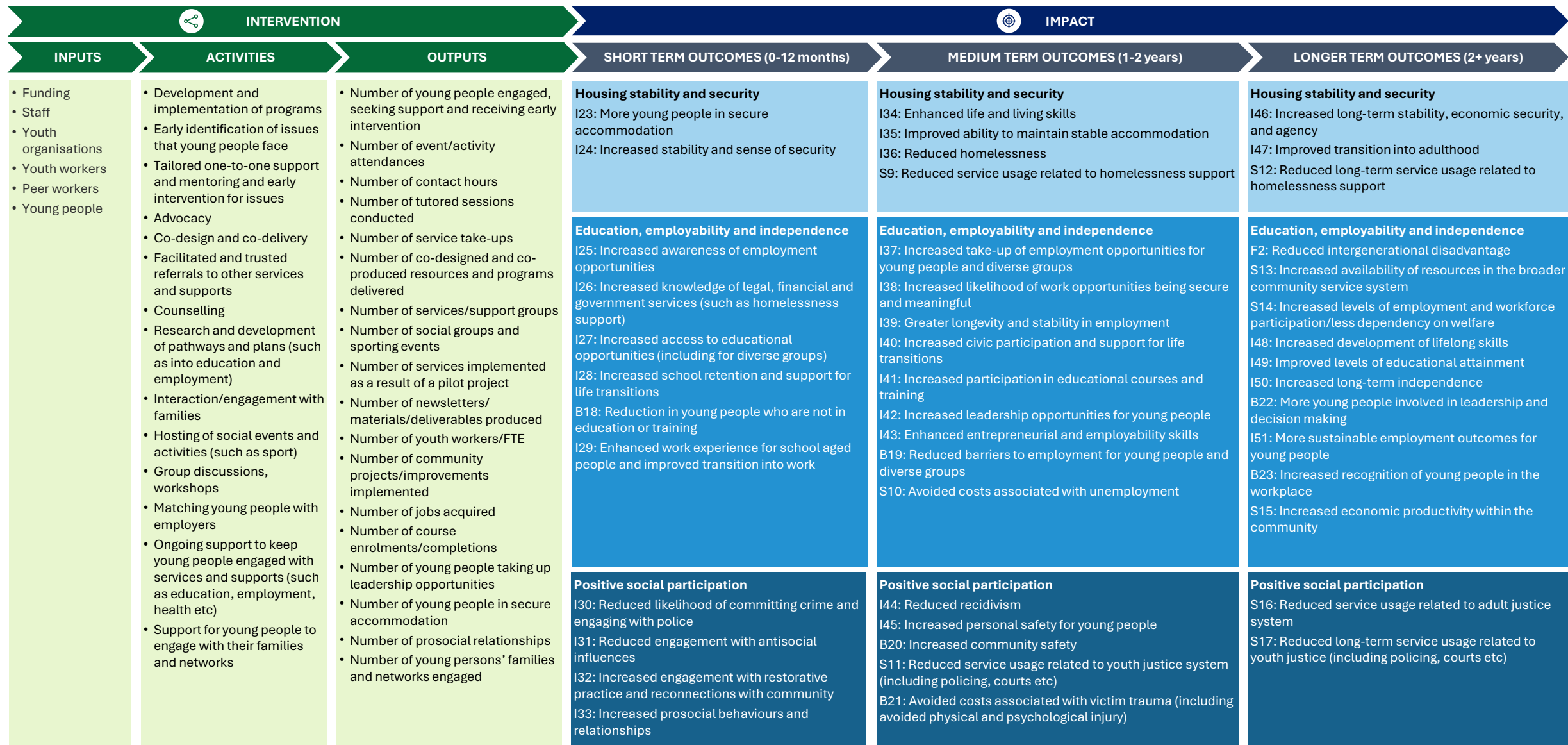
3 – SROI framework – Program logic model

Figure 2. Program logic of youth work impact in Victoria



3 – SROI framework – Program logic model

Figure 2 (continued). Program logic of youth work impact in Victoria



4 – Detailed findings

4.0 – Detailed key findings

Model overview.

Target cohort

The SROI model was based on an estimated maximum cohort of young people in Victoria that could be receiving supports or interventions from a youth worker in a given year. This cohort of young people was modelled based on the estimated number of youth workers in Victoria and their capacity to provide supports, which is informed by stakeholder consultation. In aggregate, the target cohort is estimated to be approximately 21,000 young people.

Of this aggregate cohort, the proportions accessing particular types of interventions (such as mental health or housing support) are based on Victorian youth population averages to provide a conservative estimate. These cohort numbers are presented in Table 1.

It should be noted that the data and definition of youth worker used to model this cohort is that of Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) occupation group ‘Youth Workers’. However, a broader definition was used in the subsequent modelling of benefits through use of data from evaluations of interventions that may be delivered by youth workers in a broader sense of the definition as outlined on page 6.

The intervention

Due to data limitations, only the benefits of certain interventions are reflected and monetised in the SROI model. Many of the benefits associated with youth work have not been monetised due to data constraints. Namely, there was limited data which quantified changes in particular outcomes as a result of intervention. This includes many indirect benefits such as reduced impact on families and the community associated with mental health issues, AOD use or risk-taking behaviour. Further, as monetised returns are all based on interventions, benefits could be greater if the impacts of primary prevention and earlier intervention were also able to be monetised.

The modelled benefits and their accuracy therefore rely on the extent to which the limited data points measuring changes in outcomes represent the impact of youth work interventions more broadly. The findings of this analysis should be viewed within the context of that limitation.

The model estimated the overall benefits of delivering various types of intervention to a single cohort over a time horizon of 30 years. This timeframe reflects that the impact of youth work on young people would be expected to be realised over an extended period of their life and is standard practice in modelling benefits that may prevail over a lifetime. This structure is designed to fully quantify the benefits of this single cohort over time. It should be highlighted that the findings presented on subsequent pages refer only to the single cohort over time. The estimated benefits would be significantly larger were the intervention to be provided to additional cohorts over time.

The possible outcomes of a successful intervention were captured in terms of young people’s mental wellbeing, their educational attainment and future employment prospects, as well as their engagement with the health system, homelessness services and the justice system.

Table 1. Cohort summary

Cohort	Number of young people affected
Mental health & wellbeing	8,095
Education and employment	3,612
Housing stability	416
Justice system	789
Health system (AOD)	88
TOTAL	12,999

Source: Deloitte Access Economics

4.0 – Detailed key findings

Model overview.

Assumptions

The interventions were spread across 13,000 young people (see Table 1) and it is assumed that all of these young people would take up the intervention.

It is assumed that the impact of an intervention persists over the 30-year time horizon with the exception of mental health which persists over ten years. This is consistent with similar analyses of mental health benefits and also reflects a lack of evidence that such interventions delivered in the short-term have lifelong effects on prevalence of mental illness. See the following subsections for further detail on assumptions specific to each benefit domain.

Benefit domains

The SROI model estimates benefits over a suite of interventions targeted toward the benefit domains outlined in Table 2.

Benefit domains are limited to those which are measurable given data constraints and thus overall benefits are likely underestimated within the context of this model and its other limitations. For example, benefits of early intervention rather than late-stage or intervention or support have not been modelled. However, costs have also been scaled appropriately to reflect the focus on intervention.

Other benefits and outcomes are assessed qualitatively later in this chapter.

Costs

Given a lack of alternative data, the costs associated with delivering youth work interventions in Victoria have been estimated based on the labour costs associated with the youth worker workforce. This is deemed an appropriate proxy given it is a relatively labour-intensive industry.

Total labour costs are calculated based on an average wage of the health and social services industry, an on-cost and overhead multiplier to account for non-salary labour costs and an assumption around the proportion of labour time put toward supports informed by stakeholder consultation (see Appendix A for detailed inputs).

Table 2. Benefit domains

Benefit domain	Description	Calculation
Mental health & wellbeing	Improvement in quality of life through lower rates of mental illness and reduced health system costs associated with mental illness.	(Change in rate of mental illness) X ((Quality of life adjusted for mental illness) X (Value of statistical life year) + Per person health system cost of anxiety))
Education and employment	Increased likelihood of completing year 12 or equivalent and improved employment rates and income associated with higher educational attainment.	(Change in likelihood of year 12 completion) X (expected earnings with/without year 12 completion)
Housing stability	Reduced likelihood of needing housing assistance/accommodation and reduced health system costs associated with homelessness.	(Change in rate of housing support) X ((per person cost of housing support) + per person health system costs))
Justice system	Reduced likelihood of interaction with the justice system.	(Change in rate of justice system utilisation) X ((annual cost supervision or imprisonment) X (multiplier for remand/parole costs) + (policing costs, court costs, legal costs))
Health system (AOD)	Reduction in number of hospitalisations and ambulance attendances due to AOD.	(Reduction in AOD prevalence) X ((rate of hospitalisation) X (cost of hospitalisation) + (rate of ambulance attendance) X (cost of ambulance attendance))

Source: Deloitte Access Economics

4.0 – Detailed key findings

Results.

Results

- In net present value (NPV) terms, **the total benefits accrued to the target cohort amount to approximately \$657 million with costs estimated at \$222 million.**
- **This yields an SROI of 2.96**, suggesting a significant return on investment for the community.
- **A key driver of the size of each benefit estimate is the relevant cohort sizes** which are based on the scale of need of young people in Victoria within each domain (e.g. prevalence of mental health issues, prevalence of homelessness).
- If the youth sector workforce were to increase by 50 per cent, equivalent benefits are estimated at around \$986 million in NPV terms. The SROI remains the same at 2.96 as benefits and costs scale linearly with the size of the workforce given benefits are measured on a per person basis.

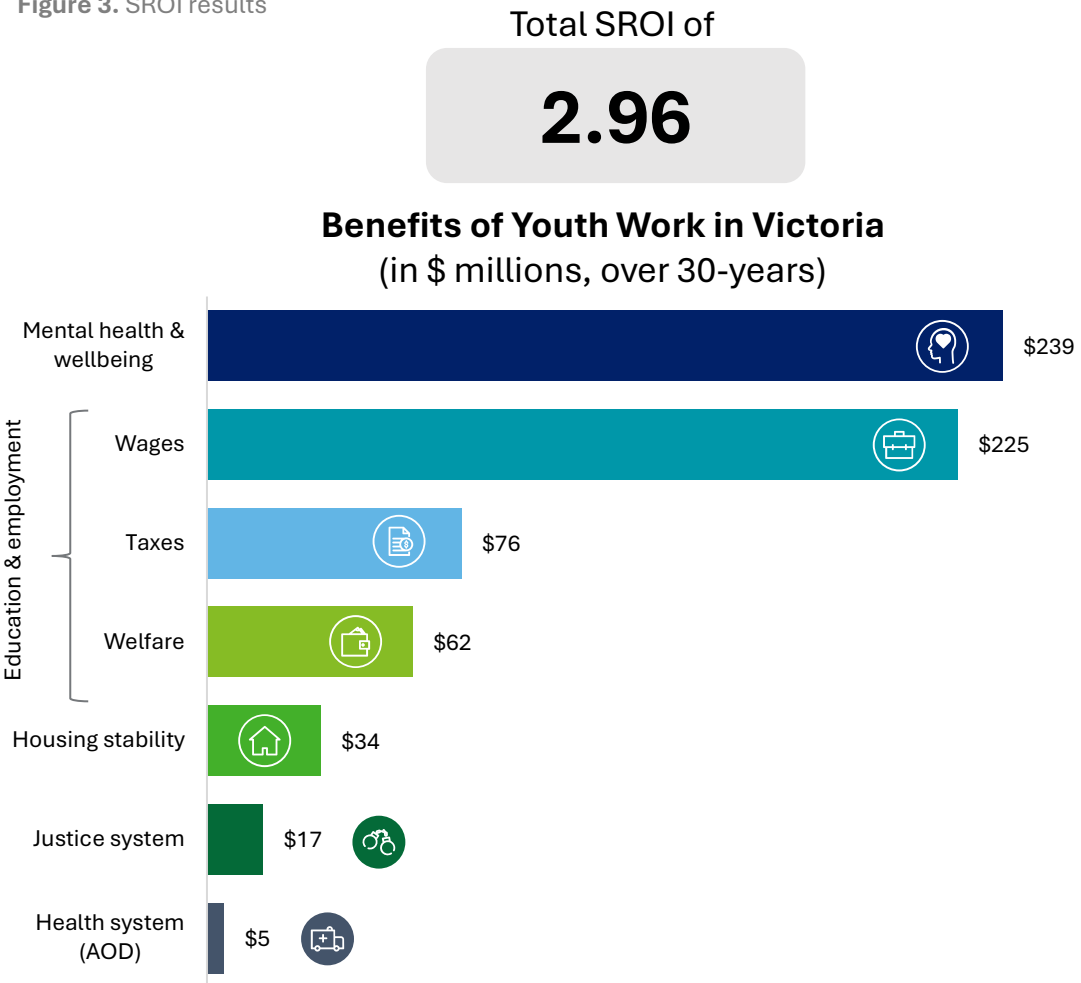
Additional benefits that could not be monetised

Apparent through desktop research and consultation with the sector (both as part of the 2022 SROI and this report) is that there are a number of key benefits and outcomes that could not be monetised given existing data is limited. Some of these benefits included:

- reduced negative impacts and ripple effects on siblings associated with AOD use, risk-taking and anti-social behaviour and educational disengagement. This can often be through exposure to negative influence or reduced parental focus on siblings,
- some costs associated with crime or anti-social or risk-taking behaviour that have not been monetised, such as criminal damage, accidents, sexual and reproductive health issues,
- benefits related to connectedness and social inclusion such as increased ability to foster and maintain relationships
- support provided to young people who experience family and domestic violence, given existing evidence is focused on impact on adults (inc. perpetrators), rather than youth.

Further, as the benefits in Figure 3 are quantified in relation to intervention, they are benefits associated with intervention that is fairly ‘late’ on the spectrum of early intervention. It is hence important to note that benefits could be markedly higher if the benefits of primary prevention were monetisable.

Figure 3. SROI results



Source: Deloitte Access Economics

4.0 – Detailed key findings

Changes since the 2022 SROI.

Changes since the 2022 SROI

The estimated SROI ratio of youth work has increased from 2.62 in 2022 to 2.96 in 2026 (Table 3). This means that the estimated social value generated for every dollar invested in youth work increased by approximately 13 per cent compared with the 2022 study.

This higher estimate reflects a number of key factors, notably:

- Demographic changes:** The prevalence of young people experiencing disadvantage has increased across multiple domains since the 2022 SROI. Notably, the incidence of mental ill-health used in the 2022 model was 26 per cent, based on the most recent National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing available at the time (drawing on 2007 data). More recent estimates indicate that the incidence of mental disorders has increased to 39 per cent in 2020–22. There have also been marginal increases in other key drivers, including the Victorian Year 12 non-completion rates (from 16 per cent to 17.4 per cent) and the proportion of young people accessing housing services (from 1.8 per cent to 2 per cent).
- Changes in assumptions:** The updated SROI incorporates a higher estimate of the Value of Statistical Life Year (VSLY), which increases the estimated benefits associated with mental health and wellbeing. VSLY is used in economic analysis to assign a monetary value to changes in quality of life, including improvements associated with reduced severity of mental illness. The 2022 SROI applied a VSLY of approximately \$233,000 (2022 dollars), equivalent to \$267,000 in 2026 dollars, based on Office of Impact Analysis guidance. This updated SROI study instead applies a VSLY of approximately \$430,000 (2026 dollars). This revised estimate is based on a Deloitte meta-analysis conducted for the Australian Safety and Compensation Council, drawing on 17 Australian estimates and 227 international estimates, supported by econometric analysis.
- Higher avoided cost of service provision, particularly for youth justice:** The cost per person of youth justice has increased significantly since the 2022 study, resulting in higher estimated avoided costs. In Victoria, the cost of community-based supervision increased from approximately \$370 per day in 2020 to \$620 per day in 2025, while the cost of detention-based supervision more than doubled from approximately \$3,100 per day to \$7,500 per day over the same period, with all values expressed in 2026 dollars.

Conversely, benefits related to avoided AOD use have decreased slightly between 2022 and 2026, reflecting updated Victorian data showing a lower prevalence of AOD service use than previously estimated, partially offset by higher hospital utilisation among those who do use these services.

Table 3. Comparison of 2022 SROI vs 2026 SROI results (\$ million, 2026 dollars)

Benefit Domain	2022 SROI	2026 SROI
Mental health & wellbeing	\$89	\$239
Education & employment	-	-
Increased earnings	\$211	\$225
Increased tax paid	\$65	\$76
Reduced welfare payments	\$50	\$62
Housing stability	\$22	\$34
Justice system	\$9	\$17
Health system (AOD)	\$6	\$5
TOTAL BENEFIT	\$453	\$657
Cost	\$173	\$222
SROI	2.62	2.96

Source: Deloitte Access Economics

4.1 – Mental health, health and wellbeing

Mental health issues often emerge during teenage years and young adulthood, and youth work plays a crucial role in addressing them. The SROI model finds the benefits to wellbeing are significant relative to other domains.

Youth mental health significantly impacts a growing number of young people

Youth mental health in Victoria reflects a growing and complex public health challenge, consistent with national evidence showing that young people experience the highest burden of mental ill-health across all age groups (AIHW 2026). **39 per cent of young Australians aged 16–24 experience a clinically relevant mental health problem in any given year** (AIHW, 2022). This is a significant increase in prevalence since the 2022 SROI, when 26 per cent of young Australians experienced mental ill-health (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS,] 2018).

Mental health conditions are also the leading contributor to disease burden among young people shaped by broader social determinants such as socioeconomic disadvantage, barriers to care, and experiences of marginalisation (AIHW, 2026). Together, these trends underscore the critical importance of early intervention, integrated care, and sustained investment in youth-focused mental health supports to improve outcomes across the life course.

Youth work plays a crucial role in young people’s mental health

Mental health specific youth work programs are common across both Australia and Victoria. Mental health is a significant focus for both government and community level interventions as it is a foundational determinant of young people’s wellbeing, shaping their capacity to engage in education, sustain employment, maintain stable housing, and build healthy social relationships.

The SROI model suggests youth work delivers significant benefits to mental health and wellbeing.

This study sought to **monetise the impact youth work has on mental health and wellbeing by measuring improvement in quality of life and reduced health system costs** achieved through reducing instances of mental illness in the target cohort. Improvement in quality of life was measured in terms of disability adjusted life years and the value of a statistical life year.

The impact of youth work on the prevalence of mental health draws from an evaluation of the headspace program (Rickwood, D et al., 2023). The evaluation finds that 22.39 per cent of participants experience a clinically significant change in their K10 score as a result of the program (almost identical impact to that identified from Deloitte analysis for the 2022 SROI). In line with the 2022 SROI, this impact is scaled down to reflect limited evidence of the direct impact of youth work on mental health outcomes, with 25 per cent of the impact estimated as driven by youth workers.



\$239 million

Mental health and wellbeing

These benefits, applied to a single cohort over a ten-year time horizon, are estimated to amount to **\$239 million** in NPV terms. Benefits were modelled over ten years rather than 30 to be consistent with similar analyses of mental health benefits and also reflect a lack of evidence that such interventions have lifelong effects on prevalence of mental illness.

Mental health and wellbeing benefits are significant relative to the other benefits monetised through this study. Driving this result is a relatively large cohort of young people receiving intervention related to mental health (8,095), with around 39 per cent of young people in Victoria suffering from mental ill-health (AIHW, 2022). Further, the disability adjusted life year methodology results in a relatively high annual benefit per person in alleviating mental illness of around \$66,000.

Improved mental health is also expected to deliver avoided costs to government, with the annual cost of anxiety to Victoria estimated to be close to \$1,500 for every young person with anxiety.

Effective youth work programs have been shown to improve young people’s mental health

Consistent with the findings of the SROI model there is clear evidence demonstrating the crucial role youth work plays in promoting young people’s mental health in Victoria:

- **Live4Life is a rural youth mental health initiative**, currently in nine rural communities in Victoria, that provides suicide prevention and mental health education across schools and communities. Post-program evaluation found that Live4Life increased youth help-seeking behaviour compared to the national rate in terms of school services (12 per cent vs 28 per cent) and telephone-based services (1 per cent vs 8 per cent). An evaluation of Live4Life’s Crew Camp program found that 76 per cent of participants felt their knowledge on mental health improved and over half felt more confident in their ability to offer help to others (Live4Life, 2024).
- **REVERB is a mental health prevention initiative by the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY)** that focuses on young people from culturally diverse backgrounds. By delivering youth work-directed workshops, the program increased young people’s awareness and help-seeking behaviour related to mental health (ACIL Allen 2022). REVERB also addresses a gap in mental health prevention programs for culturally diverse communities, with Reverb 2.0 being delivered in partnership with headspace and the National Youth Mental Health Foundation (CMY, 2026).

4.1 – Mental health, health and wellbeing

Alcohol and other drug use is a complex issue for young people with a range of other social determinants in play. Youth work programs designed to address this issue were found to bring benefits by reducing the associated health costs.

Alcohol and other drug (AOD) use is one of the leading causes of burden of disease for young people

Two out of five young adults aged 18-24 (42 per cent) were found to exceed the single occasion risk guideline for AOD use in 2024-25 (AIHW, 2025). Among approximately 38,000 Victorians sought AOD treatment in 2023-24, a considerable proportion of which were young people, with 6.8 per cent aged 10-19, and 20.1 percent aged 20-29 (AIHW, 2025). The 2025 Victorian Youth Needs Census found 37.5 per cent of young people had experienced a drug related harm in the previous 12 months.

Complex service needs highlight the critical role of youth work

In 2019, 3,072 young people in Victoria accessed AOD services for the first time (Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance [DTF], 2024). Of these, 1,702 engaged with community-based supports, often delivered by youth workers.

These young people were found to be:

- 39 times more likely to experience nights in custody, and
- 8 times more likely to use mental health services.

These patterns highlight the highly complex and intersecting needs of young people experiencing AOD-related harms. The strong reliance on community-based services further underscores the critical role of youth workers in providing coordinated, relationship-based support, helping young people navigate multiple systems and achieve more stable, long-term outcomes.

The SROI model suggests youth work delivers quantifiable benefits to health and avoided health system costs by reducing AOD use.

This study provides a **monetary estimate of the of the impact of youth work in mitigating harmful AOD use by modelling the benefits of reduced hospitalisations and ambulance attendances as a result of targeted AOD services for young people in Victoria.**

These benefits, applied to a single cohort over the entire 30-year horizon, are estimated to be **over \$5 million in NPV terms**. These benefits are relatively small when compared against the estimates of other benefit domains. This is predominantly a product of a smaller cohort (88) in addition to per unit service usage costs (e.g. around \$7,000 per hospitalisation) that are notably less than others such as the cost of supervision within the justice system.



\$5 million
Health system (AOD)

Youth programs and services achieve positive outcomes for young people with AOD issues

- **BRACE (Building Resilience via Advocacy, Counselling and Education)** is a school-based youth AOD program in northwest Melbourne that embeds specialist clinicians and youth mental health workers to deliver early intervention, counselling, and wrap-around support for students. It has achieved strong engagement, with around 1,500 students participating and 275 receiving counselling (Deakin University, 2024). The program’s effectiveness is driven by clinicians building trusted relationships that encourage help-seeking. Overall, it demonstrates that accessible, relationship-based support in schools can improve wellbeing and sustain engagement among at-risk young people (Deakin University, 2024).
- **The YSAS Transformer Program** is a youth work-led AOD intervention using assertive outreach and relationship-based practice to engage highly marginalised young people, particularly those experiencing substance use harms and justice involvement. It centres youth work principles by building trust, meeting immediate needs, and providing culturally responsive, strengths-based support through case management and group activities. This approach supports young people to develop safety, stability, connectedness and self-efficacy as foundations for change. Evaluation findings show these outcomes translate into reduced AOD risk and harm, lower justice system involvement, and improved participation in education, employment and community life (Cleugh Consulting, 2024).

4.1 – Mental health, health and wellbeing

Through supporting young people, youth work also engages families and improves family relationships. Youth work also forms an essential part of responding to family violence.

Youth work also proactively involves parents and carers to achieve greater outcomes, improving family relationships for young people

As an example, YSAS also delivers the Family and Youth Early Intervention Program, an early intervention program for families, providing support and tools for the family to adequately respond to young people becoming involved with AOD.

Some of the reflections on family engagement in youth work include:

- In programs that track young people's sense of self wellbeing at home, stakeholders interviewed indicated that 93 per cent of young people in rehabilitation programs either improve or maintain a healthy sense of self.
- The impact of youth work on family relationships stretch beyond into the long term. An interviewed stakeholder in 2022 said that: "Several young people involved (in our program) have gone on to become the first (generation) in their family to not have their children taken off them, (even though) they themselves had been in child protection. (It is) almost like early intervention for the next generation."

Family support is also integral to justice-related youth work programs

The Youth Crime Prevention Program implemented by the Victorian Government in response to addressing youth offending and recidivism (Community Crime Prevention, 2017). The program aims to strengthen the ability of local communities to intervene early and divert young people from criminal behaviour. In Casey and Dandenong, **the program works with a targeted cohort of young people and their families to provide support based on a risk and protective factors framework.**

Youth work forms a key component in Victoria's domestic and family violence services

Youth work plays a critical role at the intersection with family violence practice by providing developmentally informed, trauma-responsive support that recognises young people as both direct victim-survivors and active agents in their own recovery. Children and young people are disproportionately exposed to family violence, with evidence showing these experiences can have serious and long-lasting impacts on mental health, education, social development, and future life outcomes (AIHW, 2026).

From a youth work perspective, responding to family violence involves relational, strengths-based and participatory approaches that prioritise trust, voluntary engagement and the empowerment of young people to shape their own pathways forward (Corney et al., 2021; Toros & Falch-Eriksen, 2021). Youth workers are uniquely positioned to identify early signs of harm, provide consistent and safe relationships, and create youth-friendly entry points into broader service systems, complementing specialist family violence responses that focus on risk assessment and safety planning.

Youth workers in organisations such as Drummond Street, safe steps and Kids Helpline support young people who experience family violence through a strengths-based case management and life skills development framework. They provide crisis intervention and referral to specialist services, when necessary, while allowing young people to develop life skills, employability and wellbeing essential for long-term independence. In cases of adolescent perpetrators of family violence, these services support a young person to address their use of family violence within a practice approach that privileges the safety, stability and development of the young person (Department of Families, Fairness and Housing [DFFH], 2014).

A trauma-informed lens is central to this work, recognising that exposure to violence can disrupt emotional and social development, and that supportive, strengths-focused engagement can promote resilience and recovery (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2025; National Network for Youth, 2026). Critically, youth work also elevates young people's voices, an area historically underrepresented in family violence practice, by valuing lived experience as expertise and supporting autonomy in decision-making, which has been shown to enhance engagement and recovery outcomes (Cullen et al., 2023). Together, this positions youth work as a complementary and essential component of an integrated system response, addressing both immediate safety and the longer-term developmental impacts of family violence.

The contribution of youth workers to family violence outcomes for young people is not currently quantified within the SROI, primarily due to limited data availability in this area. Existing evidence is also largely focused on the impacts of interventions on adult cohorts, rather than young people. As such, there remains a significant evidence gap, highlighting the need for further investigation into youth-specific impacts and outcomes.

4.2 – Education, employability and independence

[Exec. summary](#)[Background](#)[SROI framework](#)[Detailed findings](#)[Opportunities](#)

Education is a strong precursor to a young person’s employment, wellbeing and long-term independence. Youth workers are effective in supporting school (re)engagement and development of self-confidence.

Young Victorians experiencing disadvantage may lack a reliable support system to sustain their education

Leaving school early is a risk factor for downstream negative effects such as unemployment (Rumberger, 2003), lower average income levels (ABS 2024), social exclusion (Razer 2013), risky health behaviours, poorer health and mental health outcomes (Fergusson 2014), and contact with the justice system (Pettit, 2004).

Youth work improves young people’s engagement with education and training

By providing young people with opportunities and support to develop skills and making young people feel valued and connected to their community, youth work reduces young people’s likelihood of school disengagement (McMahon, 2016). Youth workers also support young people to access external support services and foster greater participation through increased attendance and completion at school (YACVic, 2022).

The SROI model suggests youth work delivers comparatively significant benefits to education and employment outcomes

The SROI model **estimates benefits specific to education and employment by modelling the impact of an intervention which seeks to re-engage young people with education and assist them in completing Year 12 or equivalent studies**. Year 12 or equivalent completion results in higher probability of employment and higher expected lifetime earnings resulting in wage benefits for the young person, higher tax revenue for government and avoided welfare payments.

These benefits, applied to a single cohort over a 30-year time horizon are estimated to amount to:

- \$225 million in increased earnings,
- \$76 million in increased taxes to government, and
- \$62 million in reduced welfare payments.



\$363 million

Education & employment

The **estimated benefits related to education and employment make up a significant portion of the overall estimated benefits of the SROI model**. This is due to a large target cohort of 3,612 resulting from some 17 per cent of young people not finishing year 12 in Victoria (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2022). Further, per person benefits are also significant, with a yearly average earnings differential of around \$13,000 (ABS, 2025). This is also combined with a large intervention effect size of 43 per cent. It is again important to note these results hinge on the intervention effect size being a representation of the actual state-wide impacts.

Youth work enhances engagement with young people supporting their education journey

- Berry Street delivers education through its **Berry Street Education Model**, implemented across Victorian schools and flexible learning settings to support students with complex trauma and disadvantage. Youth work practitioners and educators apply relational, trauma-informed strategies, working alongside students to build safety, regulation, and engagement in the classroom. This integrated approach strengthens relationships and provides consistent support structures within learning environments. As a result, **schools report improved attendance, reduced behavioural incidents, and enhanced emotional regulation, contributing to sustained re-engagement and improved educational outcomes for at-risk young people**.
- The Melbourne based **Pavilion School** provides alternative secondary education for young people excluded from mainstream schooling, using a flexible and highly individualised model. Youth workers are embedded within the school, delivering intensive wellbeing support, mentoring, and case management alongside teaching staff. This ensures that students’ social, emotional, and practical barriers to learning are addressed in tandem with curriculum delivery. **Through this model, students experience increased engagement, improved wellbeing, and greater confidence, with many successfully transitioning into further education, training, or employment**. The program reduces ongoing disengagement by re-establishing stable connections to education.

4.2 – Education, employability and independence

Youth work programs connect young people with employment opportunities and support them in maintaining employment. Positive employment outcomes lead to improved wellbeing and quality of life for individuals and boost economic productivity for society.

Youth work supports young people's long-term independence and economic productivity within the community

Disparities in educational attainment can lead to major differences in life outcomes (Zajacova, 2018). High school completion has been shown to influence health and wellbeing through access to health care, information, and skills through social networks and workplaces. It follows that youth work programs that improve education outcomes have a long-term impact on young people's independence, increasing their quality of life and reducing welfare costs for the community.

An economic evaluation of youth work in Melbourne found that the youth work programs targeted toward school re-engagement result in avoided costs to community and society. As well as earning more income, education also increases a young person's opportunity to secure lifetime employment. Increased economic productivity also leads to additional benefits in productivity spill overs and reduced marginal excess tax.

Other broader benefits to the economic productivity within the community include the avoidance of:

- sunk costs of incomplete education
- parents giving up work to support struggling young people
- siblings' education/employment affected by disruption and negative sibling role modelling.

Youth work programs deliver employment opportunities for young people

Youth work engagement provides a crucial layer of support for young people seeking employment. Reflecting on the role of youth work, an interviewed stakeholder suggested that: "Young people need referral (to employment opportunities), but they also require support (from youth workers) to stay in them. They need consistent support for a timeframe that many (other services) are not resourced to do. They need more than a job opportunity program where they might disengage again."

As of June 2026, LLENs comprised 31 organisations across Victoria, with the goal of supporting secondary school students by promoting school-employer engagement activities in local government areas (Victorian Government, 2026). The LLENs create and develop sustainable relationships and partnerships, and broker initiatives across local schools, education providers, industry and the community, improving the education, training and employment outcomes of young people.

The Navigator Program

The Navigator Program is a youth work-led intervention that supports young people (aged 12–17) who are disengaged from school or at risk of disengagement to re-engage in education and employment pathways. Delivered through community organisations across Victoria, the program embeds qualified youth workers who provide intensive, flexible, and outreach-based support tailored to each young person's circumstances.

In practice, youth workers actively engage young people in community and home-based settings, rather than relying on office-based models, allowing them to build trust with those who are hardest to reach. Support is highly individualised and coordinated, often involving collaboration with schools, families, and other services (e.g. mental health, housing, justice) to address multiple and intersecting barriers to engagement. The program operates through sustained, relationship-based case management, with youth workers maintaining consistent contact and adapting strategies over time to work alongside the young person and reconnect them with appropriate education, training, or employment pathways.

Key findings from an evaluation of the Navigator Program included:

- **Re-engagement in education and pathways:** highly vulnerable participants showed increased rates of sustained re-engagement in school, training, or alternative education, strengthening long-term employability.
- **Improved stability and readiness for work:** the holistic case management model worked with participants to address barriers such as housing, wellbeing, and family conflict, improving participants capacity to engage in employment pathways.
- **Enhanced engagement and retention through relationships:** Trusted, ongoing relationships with youth workers drove consistent participation in the program itself, improved attendance, and reduced disengagement over time.

4.3 – Housing stability and security

Youth work is at the forefront of addressing youth homelessness. It helps mitigate the severe disadvantages and risks that homelessness poses for young people and the associated negative outcomes it creates for the society.

On an average day, more than 6,000 young people experience homelessness in Victoria (MCM 2022).

Melbourne City Mission (MCM) found that four in five young Victorians who accessed crisis housing services had experienced family violence and two in three reported a history of self harm (MCM, 2025). Homelessness is also associated with early school leaving and labour market disadvantage. Nearly two-thirds of the young people surveyed also reported not currently being engaged in either study or employment.

The experience of homelessness creates significant life challenges for young people

Young people face a lack of safety, exposure to drugs and alcohol, more health and medical issues, challenges to accessing education and employment, and a greater likelihood to have contact with the criminal justice system. Evidence suggested that (Mackenzie, 2016):

- half of the young people experiencing homelessness that were surveyed (53 per cent) reported that they had been diagnosed with at least one mental health condition, and
- the incidence of self-injury and attempted suicide is also much higher than the general population
- total health cost associated with youth homelessness is estimated to be, on average, **\$9,033 per person annually** (in 2026 dollars).

Many youth work organisations such as MCM deliver programs to address youth homelessness. Given the high-cost offsets of youth homelessness, it is particularly crucial to implement early intervention and rapid rehousing with wraparound youth work supports for young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

The SROI model suggests youth work intervention can deliver notable cost savings specific to housing

The model **estimates benefits of a reduction in homelessness and reliance on housing support services** that result from targeted youth worker intervention. The benefits are monetised in avoided costs to homelessness services as well avoided costs to the health system associated with homelessness.

Total benefits are estimated at some \$34 million in NPV terms, for a single target cohort realised over a 30-year time horizon. The target cohort is slight at 416, compared to other benefit domains.



\$34 million
Housing stability

This is contrasted with 6,000 young people being homeless on a given night (MCM, 2022), meaning that under these modelling assumptions a significant portion of young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness would not receive youth worker support. A smaller cohort results in these benefits being notably below some of the other larger benefits such as mental health and education and employment.

The estimated target cohort is relatively slight as a result of homelessness being much less prevalent than other issues such as mental health. However, it is worth considering there is also a lack of accurate data on the number of young people experiencing homelessness, largely because traditional models of data capture don't take into account the different ways young people can experience homelessness (such as couch surfing).

The youth work sector is highly active in working to achieve housing stability for young people

MCM offers Frontyard Youth Services as Victoria’s only state-wide specialist access point for young people seeking to access the Homelessness Services system, offering support with housing, health, mental health, legal issues, Centrelink, employment and living skills. MCM also provides crisis and short-term accommodation, as well as Youth Foyer Programs that provide intensive case management and medium-term accommodation to young people for up to 2 years. Across these programs, MCM also offers short and long-term support to assist over 848 adults and family households to find and keep long-term housing each year (MCM, 2022).

MCM’s Amplify Program is a specialist, youth-focused intervention targeting unaccompanied young people aged 15–19 experiencing intersecting family violence and homelessness. It combines intensive, developmentally appropriate case management with system capacity building, delivering an integrated response that bridges youth homelessness and family violence service systems. A recent evaluation of this program found that it has **improved youth engagement with support services for not only homelessness and family violence, but also mental health, education and employment**. Within this program, youth workers are engaged to assist young people with self advocacy and navigation of complex system access (Centre for Innovative Justice, 2025).

4.4 – Positive social participation

Young people who have had contact with the justice system generally have high and complex needs. The SROI model found that youth work interventions deliver a positive outcome in avoided costs to the justice system by reducing the (re)offending rate.

Engagement with the youth justice system comes at a significant burden to the young person and broader system

On an average day in Victoria, 545 young people are under youth justice supervision (AIHW, 2025). Of those, 55 per cent are aged 10 – 17, the remainder are between 18 and 20 years of age. These young people often face complex and inter-related challenges, such as mental health challenges, involvement with the child protection system, out-of-home-care, housing instability or homelessness. Several cohorts are also over-represented, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (who are eight times more represented in the youth justice system than young people of other backgrounds (AIHW, 2025)), Maori and Pasifika young people, young people from Sudanese Australian communities, and those from specific disadvantaged geographic locations (Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2021). In Victoria, 90 per cent of those under youth justice supervision are male (AIHW, 2025).

High recidivism rate highlights insufficiency of existing support provided to young people

The AIHW reports that of young people who are sentenced to supervision, 41 per cent return to sentenced supervision before turning 18. Of these, 70 per cent returned within six months and 84 per cent within twelve months (AIHW, 2025). A long-term study by the University of Canberra found that for an intervention to be effective, it should be holistic, integrated and flexible. Support is also required at particular points of vulnerability. Young people who have more social support and contact are also more likely to achieve long-term positive outcome. This can be seen by the comparatively low recidivism rates of young people who are given community-based supervision, with only 39 per cent of community supervised young people returned to supervision within six months and 56 per cent within 12 months (AIHW, 2025).

The SROI model suggests youth work intervention can deliver a positive outcome in avoided costs to the justice system

This study provides a monetary **estimate of the impact of youth work on service usage within the justice system.** The modelled benefits represent the result of a reduction in offending rates following intervention leading to avoided costs associated with policing, court appearances, remand, custody and parole.



\$17 million
Justice system

Total benefits in NPV terms to a single target cohort stretched over a 30-year horizon amount to approximately \$17 million. The target cohort is estimated at 789 which in large part drives this benefit being a relatively slight proportion of overall benefits. Further, the largest benefits within this domain are realised in avoiding instances of custody, however a relatively small number of offences actually result in a custodial sentence (22 per cent, Productivity Commission 2025).

Many youth interventions are targeted at preventing recidivism

The Victorian Government Youth Crime Prevention Grants program (YCPG) **aims to address recidivism by strengthening early intervention responses for young people who have had contact with, or are at-risk of coming into contact with, the youth justice system.** Projects funded through the YCPG and delivered by community organisations focus on (1) decreasing known crime-related risk factors and increasing protective factors, (2) achieving sustained improvement in engagement in school, training and/or employment, and (3) increasing connectedness with the community. An evaluation of the YCPG found that young people who had been involved had lower rates of reoffending, with recidivism rates dropping between 38 per cent for young people with planned program exits, and 20 per cent for those with unplanned program exits (Community Crime Prevention, 2022).

The Youth Crime Prevention and Early Intervention Project is a place-based initiative aimed at reducing youth offending and recidivism in Melbourne’s western suburbs. It aims to divert young people from the justice system by promoting the use of warnings, cautions and early referrals to support services. The program is a collaborative effort between Victoria Police, WEstjustice, Victoria Legal Aid, and youth agencies such as YouthNow and YSAS. An evaluation of the program suggests a reduction in reoffending among first-time offenders (from 54.7 per cent to 30.5 per cent), alongside annual criminal justice system savings estimated at \$4.4 million and total social cost savings of approximately \$8.6 million (Allen + Clarke consulting, 2024).

4.4 – Positive social participation

Youth work is valuable in supporting young people through engagement with youth justice, via early intervention and diversion, during their journey, and with parole and when exiting youth prisons.

Youth work provides valuable immediate response and diversion in conjunction with Victoria Police and other government initiatives

Victoria Police piloted the Embedded Youth Outreach Project (EYOP) in 2018 that pairs a police officer and a Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS) youth worker, providing after-hours secondary response to young people coming into contact with police.

Evaluation of the EYOP pilot indicates that youth workers can identify the criminogenic needs, vulnerability factors, and protective factors of young people. Most young people referred to support services show high attendance. Young people interviewed spoke positively about the relationships they established with their youth workers. Professionals interviewed also highlighted the value of immediate engagement by youth workers.

Overall, a positive effect was found for EYOP clients, compared to a matched control group. A cost-benefit analysis as part of the evaluation also showed a positive outcome and that it provides value for money (Centre for Forensic Behaviour Science, 2020).

In December 2025, the Victorian Government launched the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) to explicitly address youth antisocial behaviours. The VRU is modelled after successful programs in the UK and Scotland and takes a public health approach that focuses on early intervention and addressing underlying causes to antisocial behaviours. Across programs such as the Lived Experience Mentoring Program, Early Intervention Officers in Schools, and targeted community and cultural initiatives, youth workers provide trusted relationships, positive role modelling, and practical support that keep young people engaged in education, family and community life. The VRU's investment in mental health services, culturally responsive programs such as Project Sunrise, and partnerships with Community Support Groups and schools highlights the importance of holistic, place-based approaches that respond to trauma, disengagement, and systemic barriers (Victorian Government, 2025).

Youth work supports young people with and throughout contact with the justice system

Youth work plays a critical role in supporting young people who come into contact with the justice system by providing early intervention, advocacy, and continuity of care before, during, and after legal involvement. Youth workers build trusted relationships that help young people navigate complex systems, address underlying drivers of offending such as trauma, disengagement from education, or housing instability, and support reintegration into the community (Moore et al., 2025). Through strengths-based, developmentally appropriate approaches, youth work contributes to reduced reoffending and improved wellbeing, particularly when integrated with broader service systems (Richards, 2014).

Youth workers provide these supports holistically, by working with young people to address the underlying social, emotional, and structural factors that shape their wellbeing, rather than focusing on presenting issues alone. This includes supporting mental health, family relationships, education engagement, housing stability, and substance use through integrated, youth-centred approaches. By building trusted relationships and coordinating across services, youth workers help young people navigate complex systems and achieve sustained outcomes across multiple life domains and reduce recidivism.

- **Youth Justice Community Support Service (YJCSS):** YJCSS provides , community-based support to young people subject to youth justice supervision orders. Youth workers deliver case management, practical assistance, and therapeutic support to address contributing factors such as family conflict, substance use, and disengagement from school. The program emphasises coordinated, wraparound support to stabilise young people and reduce recidivism.
- **16 Yards:** 16 Yards is a lived-experience based youth work program that supports young people to build lives away from crime through identity transformation, strengths-based practice and practical support. In its first year, the program supported 102 young people, contributing to improved routines, decision-making and re-engagement in education or work, with 75 per cent stepping away from offending and others demonstrating significant behavioural or identity shifts. Highlighting the impact of sustained, relational youth work grounded in lived experience and supports.

4.5 – Connectedness/social inclusion

Youth work provides important and trusted service offerings, tailored for diverse groups of young people, especially those facing marginalisation.

Respect for diversity is one of the principles within the Youth Work Code (2025) and recognition of First Nations young people is a key practice consideration within youth work (YACVic, 2025)

Young people are an incredibly diverse cohort within Australia. The 2021 census reported that 30 per cent of all Victorians were born overseas and more than 27 per cent speak a language other than English at home (ABS, 2021), reflecting the significant number of young Victorians who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD). Additionally, in Victoria, there are approximately 66,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People with a median age of 24, indicating that within the Victorian youth population, 50 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are 24 or under (ABS, 2021). This makes culturally appropriate youth work and culturally aware youth workers incredibly important.

Diversity also extends to sexuality and gender, with national data indicating substantial LGBTQIA+ representation among young people and distinct wellbeing needs, highlighting the intersectional nature of youth identities. Additionally, young people are increasingly identifying as neurodiverse or disabled (ABS, 2022). Inclusion in youth work also involves consideration of location, with rural and regional youth facing their own unique challenges including transport and social isolation.

Together, these characteristics demonstrate that young people in Victoria are not a homogenous group but instead reflect complex and intersecting forms of diversity that shape their experiences and service needs.

As the state’s peak body, YACVic includes YACVic Rural, which advocates for the needs of young people and the youth sector in rural and regional communities. YACVic works closely with the Koorie Youth Council, an independent Aboriginal-led organisation that advocates and delivers programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, and the Youth Disability Advocacy Service, which advocates for and supports disabled young people.

All the programs mentioned within this report work with intersectional and holistic models, led by the principles and priorities outlined in the Youth Work Code of Ethical Practice. These programs, among others, create safe spaces for specific cohorts of young people to explore and build pride in their identity, actively contribute on issues that affect their lives, and receive support. Intersectional lenses and approaches in social and wellbeing spaces have a growing evidence base for creating significant positive impact and addressing underlying structural and systemic drivers for ill-health, disengagement and antisocial behaviours.

Youth Projects

Youth Projects was founded in 1984 and is an independent charity that provides health, outreach, employment, education and training services to young people experiencing disadvantage. A significant part of their offering focuses on supporting young people to prepare for and transition into employment.

Within Youth Projects, youth workers engage directly with young people to set goals, identify barriers to support, deliver and coordinate activities and connect young people to opportunities. Support is primarily delivered using a one-on-one, tailored coaching model, designed to respond to the needs of each young person.

The program has contributed to a range of positive outcomes, including supporting young people to engage with English language programs, enter employment and complete education pathways. Participants have also reported improvements in their wellbeing, confidence and ability to advocate for themselves.

Yarra Ranges Council – Youth Development Team

The Yarra Ranges Council covers a significant area of land that includes Metropolitan, regional and rural communities. The council’s Youth Development Team deliver primary intervention services, practicing a positive youth development framework. They facilitate three distinct programs; Defrosted events, Youth Ambassadors and an L2P program, additionally to oversee the processes there is a Youth Advisory Group. Together these offerings aim to foster inclusive social connection and build skills for the region’s 26,000 young people

Within the programs, the youth workers take on various roles, including program facilitation and connection to pathways and opportunities. Over the past twelve months, the team has assisted three local young people to receive grants and facilitated partnerships with other local organisations, and within the last six years, has supported six young people to gain permanent employment.

The programs have also support increased social cohesion in areas that were otherwise lacking support or opportunities given the dispersion and inaccessibility of the region.

5 – Future opportunities

5 – Future opportunities

The youth work sector could benefit from enhanced data capture, particularly around measuring impact and workforce/resource requirements.

Enhanced data capture will allow future improvements and enable measurement of success

Since the 2022 study, there has been expanded evidence on the impact of youth work, including evaluations of headspace and youth homelessness initiatives discussed in this study. However there remain continued opportunities for the youth work sector to expand the evidence base and data capture, particularly in relation to outcomes measurement.

Enhanced data capture would allow more effective outcome reporting which would in turn increase youth work sector efficiencies and effectiveness through better allocation of funding as the true value of youth work becomes more apparent. It would also increase the robustness of future studies similar to this SROI.

Governments can target funding to enable organisations to more effectively monitor and evaluate their programs and interventions through improved data capture. This would result in flow-on benefits for government as they can more effectively allocate resources and funding within the sector.

In particular, data capture could be improved in relation to the following:

a. Impact measurement

Data demonstrating the impact of youth work and the outcomes achieved were also limited and a key inhibitor to undertaking this SROI. While there is a substantial amount of qualitative evidence to this end, data capture could be improved through more widespread collection of quantitative data relevant to key outcomes following youth work interventions. This could be achieved through the consistent design and use of pre- and post-program surveys as well as methods of capturing longitudinal data relevant to the outcomes for young people who participate in programs.

This would ideally be somewhat standardised in approach across the sector and programs to allow for the comparison of impact in addition to consistency in analysis.

b. Achieving consistency in data collection

There is an opportunity for YACVic to play a role in working to achieve consistency in data collection and impact measurement across the youth work sector. YACVic could, through working with the sector, develop shared resources, a data and evaluation working group or other frameworks that would decrease the burden on individual organisations. Additionally, YACVic could work with the sector to develop a standardised evaluation or impact framework featuring the necessary data to effectively track outcomes over time in addition to the required resources and funding. With this achieved, YACVic could periodically collect data in line with this framework to report on the outcomes that are achieved throughout the sector over time. This would also build a stockpile of consistent data and evidence that could be used in future analyses.

Another avenue for YACVic to explore may be partnerships with organisations such as universities or philanthropic organisations. Throughout the SROI work, a number of data sources used were evaluations or work conducted by Victorian universities on youth work programs or methodologies. Exploring potential partnerships would again, reduce burden on organisations themselves and also allow for robust frameworks and data collection methods to be developed.

Strengthening the case for funding through evidence of impact

Improved ability to demonstrate and quantify impact is also becoming increasingly important to secure Government funding in a Victorian context. The Early Intervention Investment Framework (EIIF), introduced in the 2021-22 Budget, is a Victorian Government funding framework intended to guide investment in social services towards more effective early intervention programs, prioritising initiatives with strong social outcomes and fiscal benefits.

Several youth work focused initiatives have been funded under the EIIF since its inception, often supported by existing evidence of impact. This includes Education First Youth Foyers, Navigator and La Mana Pasifika. A focus on outcomes measurement and robust evaluation may support further youth work initiatives to receive government funding through the EIIF, as well as other government and philanthropic funding pathways.

5 – Future opportunities

Other identified areas that have been discussed as potential focuses of the youth sector. Largely unchanged from the 2022 SROI, highlighting how the sector still requires further, more support.

Broader feedback and suggestions to increase the benefits of youth work in Victoria

The primary focus of youth work organisations is on delivering services to young people in Victoria, within often constrained capacity and resources. As a result, many of the future opportunities identified in the 2022 SROI study still apply. These are presented here for the consideration of funding bodies (e.g. governments), youth work organisations and/or peak advocacy bodies (e.g. YACVic) to further enhance the social and economic benefits of youth work and the outcomes for young Victorians.

1. The earlier the intervention, the greater the benefits realised through youth work

- While the benefits of youth work early intervention are out of scope for this study due to data constraints, a recurrent theme that emerged through the research and continuing from feedback received in 2022 is that early intervention, defined as those that occur before serious problems arise in a young persons' life, generally leads to better outcomes.
- Evidence suggested that the earlier one is able to address the underlying predisposing factors for young people, the greater the likelihood of it having a significant positive impact as it prevents young people experiencing serious problems, reducing trauma and other negative outcomes that need to be remediated. Further to this, early intervention also maximises the number of years that the flow on outcomes are realised. It therefore follows that preventative intervention can deliver greater downstream cost savings to governments and communities.

2. Alignment of the funding model can improve youth work outcomes

- The adoption of an outcome-based funding model may be better aligned with the desired benefits of youth work. Reporting requirements associated with funding are currently linked to outputs delivered (i.e. number of young people supported or the number of services delivered) rather than outcomes realised (i.e. the extent of impact it has on young people supported).
- Flexibility in funding terms allows youth work to better serve young people based on their readiness to engage with support. The nature of youth work is such that young people need to be involved and willing to engage with the support and/or program in order to realise the benefits. This may be limited by rigid funding requirements that are tied with a specific number of young people.

- A less fragmented funding profile will improve efficiency, reduce burden, and increase resources applied to support young people. For some organisations, the bulk of their funding is obtained through a large number of grants, each offering a small amount that is tied to a certain activity and scope.

3. Youth work benefits can be maximised by improving youth worker retention and career pathways, alongside continuing to grow peer-led programs and lived-experience workers

- A more consistent funding stream for youth work programs (and therefore worker employment and long-term career pathways) can alleviate the pressure on the youth work workforce. The absence of this poses challenges to the workforce and program outcomes by causing a high level of turnover, lost knowledge, trust and relationships, and a significant amount of resources required to retrain new staff.
- Targeted support (such as mental health support) can also assist youth workers to address inherent challenges of the profession, improving workforce retention. As such, the known challenge of burnout among youth workers due to the level of stress and intensity that comes with the nature of youth work, and stretching limited resources across the high demand for support.

4. Embedding youth work across various sectors can improve youth engagement and benefits

- The benefits of youth work could be furthered with greater integration across sectors including health, especially mental health, education, disability, youth justice, sport and employment services. Youth work approaches young people's development in a comprehensive and integrated manner, therefore it serves as a linkage for young people with complex needs. This may potentially be done by continuing to encourage lived-experience workers within these systems, alongside youth workers.
- As discussed throughout this report, young people are facing complex and intersecting issues. Accordingly, services need to be comprehensive and intersectional. Siloed services and service offerings are becoming less effective in meeting the needs of young people. This extends into youth work run by larger organisations. YACVic is a strong enabler of collaborative work in the sector, yet further integration across services is required for a "no wrong door" approach to be fully integrated into the sector.

Appendix A – Detailed inputs

Appendix A: Detailed inputs

Inputs used in modelling.

Table A1.1. Input used for each variable, assumption and data source

Variable	Assumption (Dollar values expressed in 2026 terms)	Source
Mental health and wellbeing		
Probability of mental illness, general youth population	39.00%	AIHW, National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing (2023)
Reduced probability of mental illness	5.60%	Rickwood, D et al., Sixteen years of innovation in youth mental healthcare: Outcomes for young people attending Australia’s headspace centre services (2023)
Wellbeing cost (DALYs/person/year)		
15-24	0.15	Global Burden of Disease (2023)
25+	0.15	Global Burden of Disease (2023)
Per person healthcare expenditure (based on people aged 15-24 with anxiety in Victoria)	\$1,551	Calculation based on AIHW (2024)
VSLY	\$430,146	Deloitte Access Economics meta-analysis for the Australian Safety and Compensation Council
Education and employment		
Probability of not completing year 12, general youth population	17.40%	Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, Victoria Summary statistics (2022)
Adjusted probability not completing year 12 or Cert III	58.00%	Research & Policy Centre, Outcomes from a longitudinal study of Education First Youth Foyers (2019)
Impact of program attributable to youth workers	66.67%	Assumption
Wage (less taxes), no post school qualifications	\$44,671	ABS (2025)
Wage (less taxes), post school qualifications	\$54,382	ABS (2025)
Average income tax rate	25.30%	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2024)
Taxes, no post school qualifications	\$15,129	ABS (2025)
Taxes, post school qualifications	\$18,418	ABS (2025)
Probability of employment, post school qualifications	77.68%	ABS (2025)
Probability of employment, no post school qualifications	54.20%	ABS (2025)
Jobseeker, single, no children	\$21,026	Services Australia (2025)

Appendix A: Detailed inputs

Inputs used in modelling.

Table A1.1 (continued). Input used for each variable, assumption and data source

Variable	Assumption (Dollar values expressed in 2026 terms)	Source
Homelessness		
Use housing services, general youth population	2.00%	Council to Homeless Persons, Victorian Youth Homelessness Assembly (2025)
Reduced probability of housing support	58.90%	Social Ventures Australia, Youth Housing in Australia (2026)
Average cost of housing supports per person per episode of support	\$5,228	Melbourne City Mission, Youth Homelessness Snapshot (2025)
Health costs associated with homelessness	\$9,033	Swinburne Institute for Social Research, the Cost of Youth Homelessness in Australia – Research Briefing (2016)
Justice system		
Per cent risk of committing crime, general youth population	3.80%	AIHW, Australia's youth: Crime and violence (2021)
Probability of re-offending, treated cohort	80.00%	AIHW, Youth Justice in Australia 2024-25 (2026)
Rate of re-offending per year	55.56%	Calculation based on: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018 Update on Prisoner Recidivism: A 9-Year Follow-up Period (2005-2014)
Per cent of sentences that are supervision	27.40%	Children's Court of Victoria Annual Report 2020-21 (2021)
Probability of entering youth supervision	21.92%	Calculation
Reduced probability of re-offending	9.00%	Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science, Embedded Youth Outreach Program evaluation (2020)
Adjusted probability of re-offending	72.80%	Calculation
Adjusted probability of entering youth supervision	19.90%	Calculation
Cost to justice system (youth supervision, average sentence length)	\$387,777	Calculation based on Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services: Youth Justice (2025)
Per cent of sentences that are custody	15.00%	ABS (2021)
Probability of entering adult custody	12.00%	Calculation
Adjusted probability of entering adult custody	10.90%	Calculation
Average cost of court appearance	\$1,732	Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services: Courts (2022)
Average policing cost per offence	\$2,513	Calculation based on: Crime Statistics Australia and Smyth, R., Costs of Crime in Victoria (2011)
Ratio of remand/parole costs to supervision/custody	1.46	Calculation based on: Morgan A., How much does prison really cost? Comparing the costs of imprisonment with community corrections (2018)
Cost to justice system (adult custody, average sentence length)	\$116,402	Morgan A., How much does prison really cost? Comparing the costs of imprisonment with community corrections (2018)

Appendix A: Detailed inputs

Inputs used in modelling.

Table A1.1 (continued). Input used for each variable, assumption and data source

Variable	Assumption (Dollar values expressed in 2026 terms)	Source
Health system		
Reduction in AOD abuse	40%	Whitten, T et al., Hospitalisation following therapeutic community drug and alcohol treatment for young people with and without a history of criminal conviction (2022)
Average visits to hospital per year	1.30	Calculation
Average ambulance attendances per year	0.77	Calculation
AOD hospitalisations per year	6,881	Alcohol and Other Drug Statistics (AODStats), Hospital admissions (2022)
AOD ambulance attendances per year	4,080	AIHW, Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs in Australia (2025)
Cost of ambulance attendance	\$1,605	Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services: Ambulance data (2025)
Cost per hospitalisation	\$7,258	Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority (2025)
Per cent of Victorian young people who have accessed AOD services	0.42%	Victorian Government, Client Pathways Report – Experiences of young people accessing AOD treatment (2024)
Other inputs		
Per cent time toward /targeted support	50.00%	Stakeholder consultation (2022)
Youth worker to young person ratio, intense support	12.50	Stakeholder consultation (2022)
Youth workers in Australia	16,200	Jobs and Skills Australia (2026)
Per cent youth workers in Victoria	20.50%	Jobs and Skills Australia (2026)
Youth worker salary	\$76,522	Calculated based on ABS, Health care and social assistance industry (2021)
Oncosts	1.75	Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance, Regulatory Change Measurement Manual (2018)
Victorians aged 12-25	1,246,136	ABS (2025)
Youth percentage of overall Victorian population	16.30%	ABS (2025)

Appendix B – References

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