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## **Youth Affairs Council Victoria**

### **Youth Work Matters Social Return on Investment Study**

Final Report

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Access **Economics**

# Contents

SECTION	TOPIC	PAGE
0	Glossary	3
1	Executive summary	4
2	Background and purpose	8
3	SROI framework	12
4	Detailed findings	16
5	Future Opportunities	34
A	Appendix A – SROI framework indicators and data sources	37
	Appendix B – Detailed inputs for modelling	46
	Appendix C – References	50



# Glossary

*A list of key abbreviations discussed within this document*

Abbreviation	Full
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AOD	alcohol and other drugs
AYAC	Australian Youth Affairs Coalition
BSL	The Brotherhood of St Laurence
CALD	culturally and linguistically diverse
CMY	Centre for Multicultural Youth
DALY	Disability adjusted life years
DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
DoH	Department of Health
EFY	Education First Youth
EYOP	Embedded Youth Outreach Project
H3	Health Homelessness and Housing
HEY	Healthy Equal Youth
L2P	learners to permit
LLEN	Local Learning and Employment Networks
LYAG	Lockington Youth Action Group

Abbreviation	Full
MCM	Melbourne City Mission
NELLEN	North East Local Learning and Employment Network
NPV	net present value
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OfY	Office for Youth
SHRCC	Swan Hill Rural City Council
SHYAP	Southern Homeless Youth Assistance Program
SROI	social and economic return on investment
VCOSS	Victorian Council of Social Service
VSLY	Value of a statistical life year
WHO	World Health Organisation
YACVic	Youth Affairs Council Victoria
YCLP	Youth Community and Law Program
YCPG	Youth Crime Prevention Grants
YSAS	Youth Support + Advocacy Services
YWC	Youth Work Coalition

# 1 – Executive summary

# 1 – Executive Summary

*Introduction, scope, objectives and approach of this study.*

## 1.1 – Youth work in Victoria

According to the national definition by the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, youth work is a distinct discipline that places young people and their interests first (AYAC 2013). It includes a range of generalist and specialist support for young people between the ages 12 and 25 with the aim of developing skills and capabilities, and engaging with their community (YWC 2021). In Victoria, thousands of youth workers operate alongside young people, advocating for and facilitating their independence, participation in society, connectedness, and realisation of their rights. Youth work qualifications are awarded through three Youth Work degree programs in Victoria (Australian Catholic University, RMIT University, and Victoria University) which are accredited by Youth Workers Australia, the professional association, and a number of TAFEs which deliver Youth Work and Community Services certifications.

Youth work is a distinct discipline unique from other professions that involve working with young people. It is a relational empowering practice that puts young people at the centre, building trust and relationships without stigma, underpinned by human rights and social justice. 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).

Over a million young people live in Victoria, making up 18 per cent of the community (ABS 2021). Today, young people face critical issues such as insecure employment, declining mental health and wellbeing, disruption to education, and homelessness (YWC 2021). Without the right support, young people can be at risk of experiencing a negative cycle of marginalisation, resulting in reduced opportunities and quality of life. Consequently, these issues also lead to significant economic impact on society.

Despite its important role, 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). Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted young people in Victoria and further exacerbated the impact of key issues that affect young people such as mental health, disengagement with education and employment and increased instances of young people being unable to pay their rent (AIHW 2021a).

In light of these circumstances, Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic), the peak body and leading policy advocate for young people and the Victorian youth sector, commissioned Deloitte Access Economics to conduct this social and economic return on investment (SROI) study in order to enhance the evidence base that can inform future policy changes.

## 1.2 – Scope and objectives of this study

This SROI study aims to evaluate, communicate and promote the social and economic value of youth work in Victoria among government and other stakeholders.

This study draws upon qualitative and quantitative data including:

- consultations with key youth work organisations (e.g. SROI framework workshops),
- stakeholder consultation interviews, and
- review of secondary data (e.g. research literature, specific program evaluation reports and grey literature).

Key inputs into the SROI model were also informed by the above data sources.

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 12-25. 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.

## 1.3 – Limitations and assumptions

At the outset of this 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.

# 1 – Executive Summary

*Key findings from the SROI analysis and qualitative evidence.*

## 1.3 – SROI study findings

The SROI analysis was first carried out to examine the current impact of youth work in Victoria. The cohort of young people receiving intensive youth work support was estimated to be 16,000, modelled based on the estimated number of youth workers in Victoria and an assumption around the extent to which this workforce provides intensive supports. Only the benefits of certain intensive 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 \$396m under the baseline scenario with costs estimated at \$151m, yielding an SROI of 2.62.** In other words, every dollar of investment in youth work returns an estimated \$2.62 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 \$77m 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 \$285m 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 \$20m in benefits over 30 years.
-  **Justice system:** Avoided costs of justice system due to reduced contact and recidivism are estimated to realise approximately \$8m in benefits over 30 years.
-  **Health system (alcohol and drug use):** The benefits of reduced hospitalisations and ambulance attendances as a result of mitigated harmful AOD use are approximately \$5m over 30 years.

Under the hypothetical scenario of an expanded workforce, the SROI modelling indicates that youth work could realise a total benefit of **\$594 million with an expanded workforce of 50 per cent.**

See Section 4 for further discussion of this.

## 1.4 – Qualitative findings

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

-  **Youth work plays a crucial role in young people’s mental health.** Effective youth work programs (e.g. Live4Life and REVERB) improve young people’s mental health. Youth work also proactively involves parents and carers to achieve a greater outcome, improving family relationships for young people.
-  **Youth work addresses AOD use and its associated risk factors in a holistic manner.** Specialist Youth AOD treatment services (e.g. Youth Support + Advocacy Services) achieve positive changes in the severity and risk of young people’s substance use.
-  **Youth work enhances engagement with young people, supporting their education and employment.** Programs such as Invigor8ing Education increase young people’s self-confidence, family and community connection, as well as ability to plan for the future. Initiatives such as STREAT Fast Track to Work deliver employment opportunities and help young people maintain employment.
-  **The youth work sector is highly active in working to achieve housing stability for young people,** from housing services such as Frontyard Youth Services, early intervention such as The Geelong Project, to outreach such as Health Homelessness and Housing Alliance.
-  **Youth work interventions provide immediate response to young people in contact with police or the justice system and prevent recidivism.** Youth Community and Law Program, Embedded Youth Outreach Program and Youth Crime Prevention Grants program generated positive outcomes by addressing their various needs.
-  **Youth work presents a unique service offering tailored support for diverse and marginalised groups.** Some youth work programs also specifically target the needs of groups of marginalised young people 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.

Overall, youth work supports the capability development of young people, promoting young people’s identity development as contributing members of their communities.

# 1 – Executive Summary

*Areas of future opportunities.*

## 1.5 – Future opportunities

The youth work sector could also benefit significantly from improved data capture, particularly in relation to outcomes. Evident through the process of undertaking this study was a lack of data in several areas which quantifies the impact or achievement of outcomes realised through youth work interventions in Victoria. This was the greatest limitation in undertaking this study, and means that the real SROI of youth work programs is likely to be even higher.

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 it could more effectively allocate resources and funding within the sector.

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

- measurement of resource requirements,
- measurement of impact, and
- consistency in data collection across the sector.

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.*

### 2.1 – Youth work in Victoria

There are over a million young people aged 12-25 in Victoria, making up 18 per cent of our community (ABS 2021). 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 to support young people targeting their needs. 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 Code of Ethical Practice (YACVic 2008), 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. Some youth workers also gained employment based on relevant experience without formal qualifications (YWC 2021).

### 2.2 – 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 alcohol and other drugs (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:

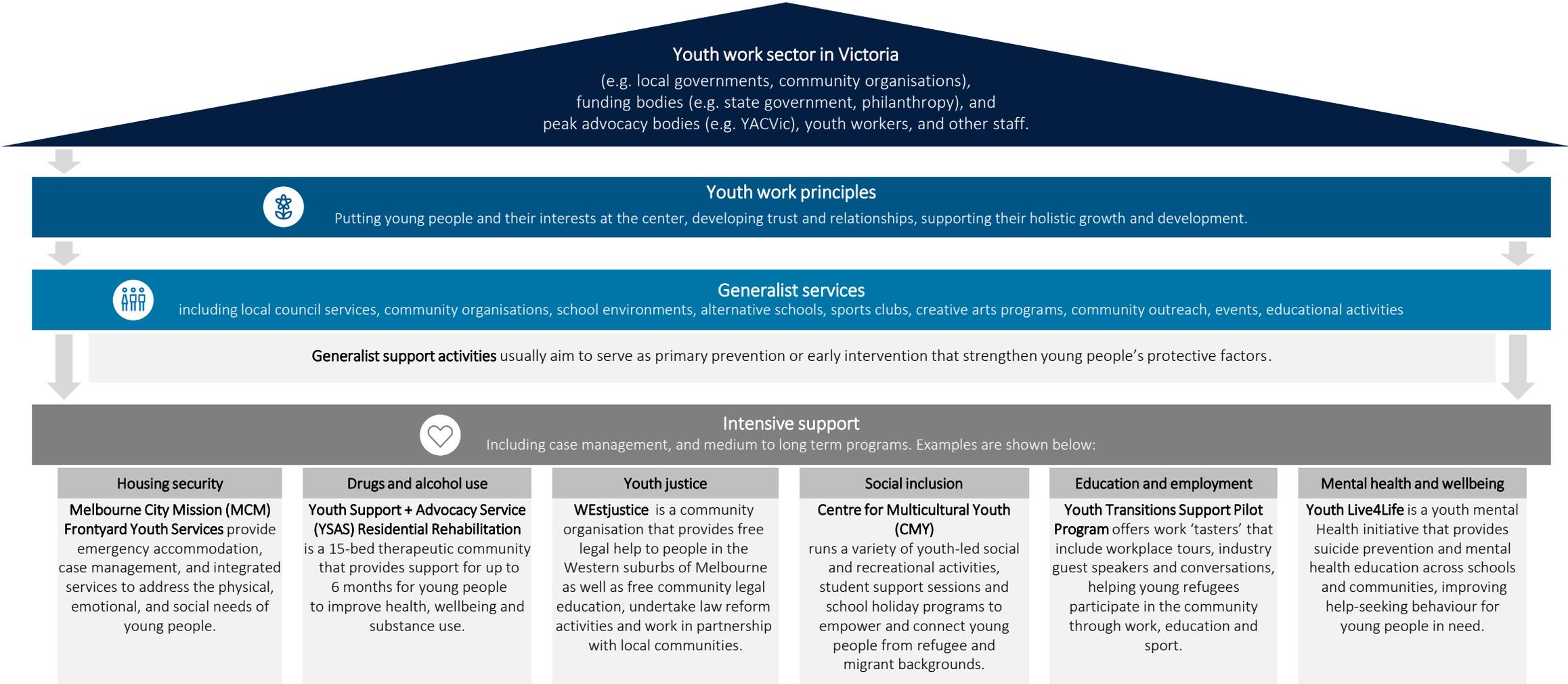
- generalist support, such as community outreach, events, and educational activities, that engage many young people at one time in a social or community setting. Generalist support activities usually aim to serve as primary prevention or early intervention that strengthen young people's protective factors (Community Crime Prevention 2016), and
- intensive 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 intensive support programs.



## 2 – Background and purpose

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

### 2.3 – 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 the 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 that is critical to ongoing trust and relationships with young people and communities. It also creates an additional burden for workforce training and development for organisations, and in its absence, can result in reduced workforce quality. 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 which also results in other challenges: eg 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. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated key issues facing young people such as mental health and AOD, further increasing the number of young Victorians trying to access support services (AIHW 2021).

Additionally, limited resourcing has 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 youth sector relies heavily on qualitative data in the form of feedback from the young people they work with, to assess whether their service is meeting the needs and expectations of young people and achieving good outcomes for them. This in turn can affect the likelihood of youth work programs receiving renewed and 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 from youth work. Due to the unique value of youth work, this in turn impacts the engagement of young people in the community and their individual wellbeing, resulting in ongoing implications for young people and 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.

### 2.4 – Youth Affairs Council Victoria – Youth Work Matters

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.

In 2018, YACVic launched the original Youth Work Matters campaign, calling on the Victorian Government to implement policies to develop more trained, supported youth workers in Victoria (YACVic 2018). It seeks commitment from all political parties to invest in:

- employing more youth workers to help address our state’s priority issues, such as youth employment, mental health, youth justice, housing stability, social inclusion and education.
- a new initiative to recruit, train and employ youth workers from diverse communities, focused on those where young people experience high levels of disadvantage, exclusion or marginalisation, and
- a commitment to improve and create systemic change in the youth sector, so every young person can access the right support, whether they live in rural, regional or metropolitan Victoria.

As the peak body, YACVic understands there is an opportunity to secure more upstream (i.e. prevention and early intervention) investment in youth work and youth services, that will achieve cost savings downstream in a range of areas of service provision. 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 Youth Sector Coalition is working collaboratively on the Youth Work Matters campaign and includes:

- the Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS), Whitelion, the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), Melbourne City Mission (MCM), Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS), Youth Live4Life, Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs), Knox City Council, Swan Hill Rural City Council, Grampians Community Health, Women’s Health Goulburn North East and Western Bulldogs Community Foundation; and
- the heads of the three Youth Work degree programs in Victoria (Australian Catholic University, RMIT University, and Victoria University), and TAFE Gippsland which delivers the Community Services certification that is often a pathway to youth work.

# 3 – SROI Framework

## 3 – SROI framework

*Developing the program logic model and social impact framework.*

### 3.1 – 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 should form 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 on slides 11 and 12 have been categorised into five groups, including:

- **connectedness/social inclusion**, including reduced social isolation and increased inclusion of diverse groups, 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, including improved mental health, reduced drug and alcohol abuse, reduced demand for emergency services 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, including 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, and including more young people participating in the workforce and increased long-term independence,
- **positive social participation**, including reduced likelihood of committing crime and increased engagement with restorative practice.

### 3.2 – 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.

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.

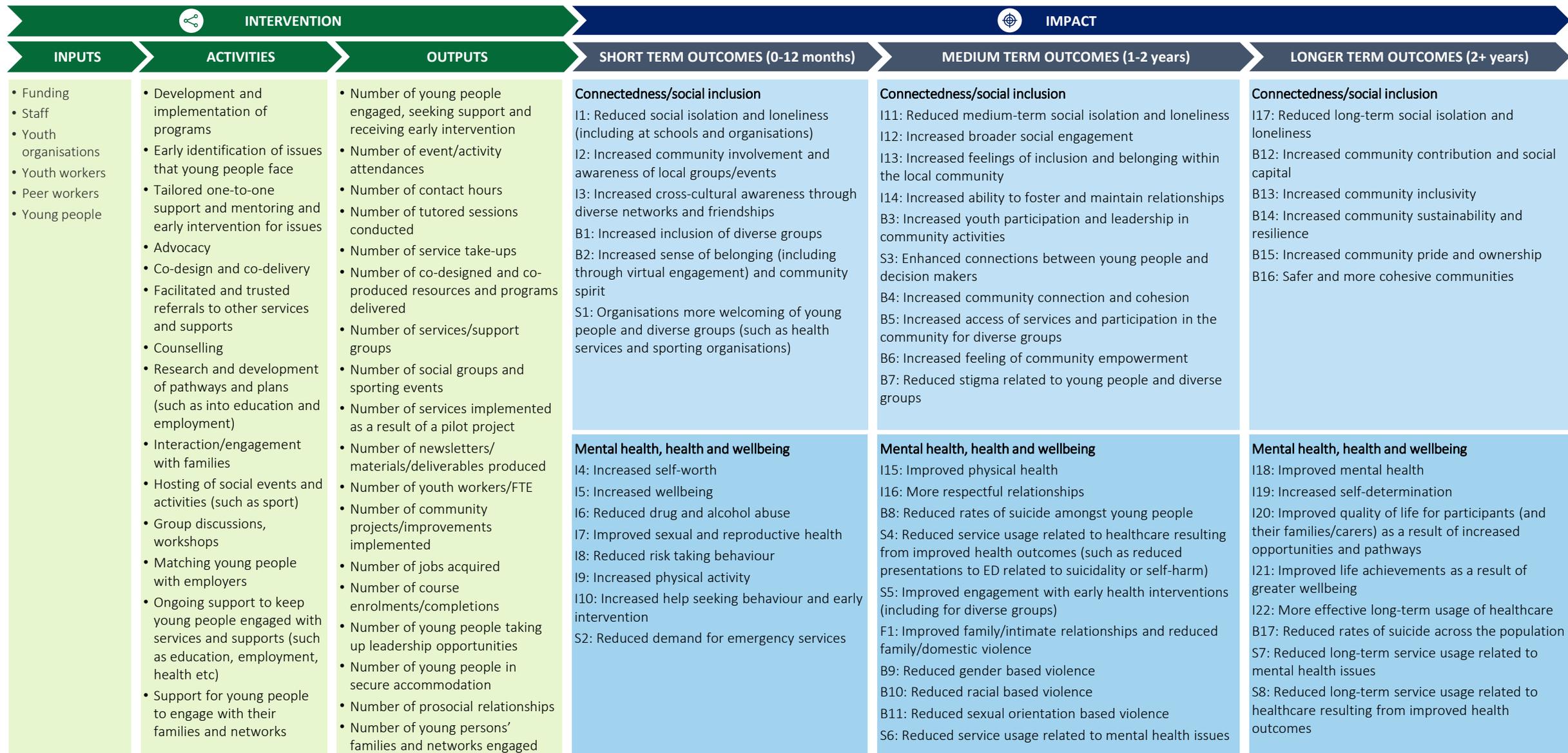
The framework identifies the key assumptions and whether the outcome is reported using qualitative descriptions (e.g. quotes and examples from interviews), using quantitative data (e.g. reporting numbers of participants or outcome measurement), or monetised (a dollar value placed on the outcome).

The framework developed to guide the analysis will be provided in full. It is intended that this framework can be used by YACVic in the future for impact measurement, and to inform their policy and advocacy.

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.

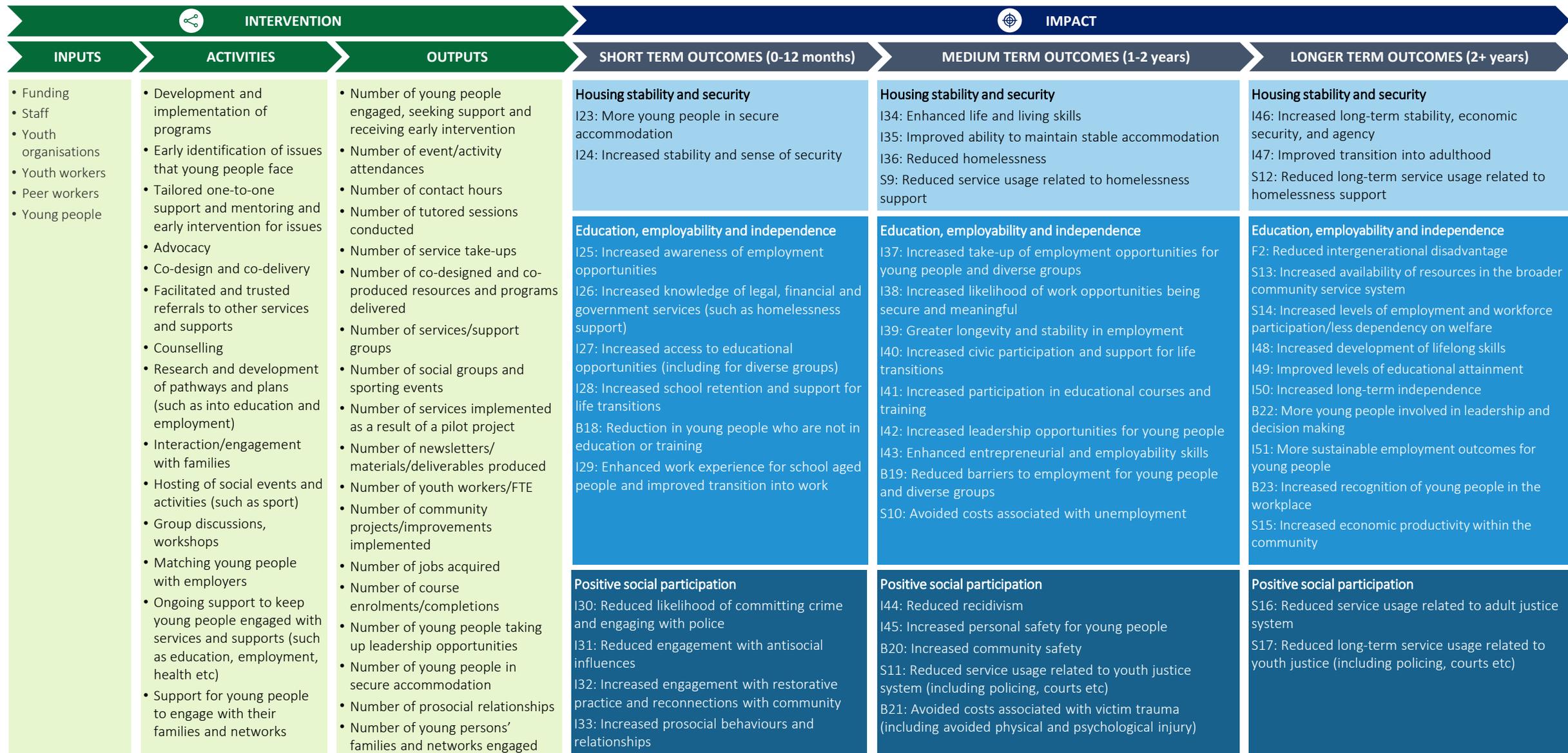
# 3 – SROI framework – Program logic model

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.



Key: C(x): CHILDREN    F(x): FAMILY    B(x) BROADER COMMUNITY    S(x) BROADER SYSTEM

# 4 – Detailed findings

## 4.0 – Detailed key findings

*The results of modelling are considered under three different scenarios.*

The SROI modelling was undertaken under two separate scenarios, with the intention of both providing an indication of the current impact of youth work in Victoria (Scenario 1) as well as an indication of what the impact or benefits could be if the capacity of the youth work sector were expanded (scenario 2). Further detail on the two scenarios is provided below.

Figure 3. A summary of modelling scenarios.



### Scenario 1 - Baseline

- The baseline scenario represents benefits over a 30-year time span under a **conservative model of cohorts of young people**.
- The conservative model is **based on the actual supply of youth workers** and the capacity of this workforce to provide intensive support.
- **Modelled benefits reflect those with which there was sufficient data to monetise**. As such, a number benefits were not estimated.



### Scenario 2 – Expanded workforce

- The expanded workforce scenario is a variation of the baseline scenario where **the supply of youth workers is hypothetically increased**. The analysis that follows presents three expanded workforce scenarios, where the workforce is increased by 50 per cent.
- This demonstrates what **benefits could be if the supply of youth workers was increased**.

## 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 intensive 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 intensive supports, which is informed by stakeholder consultation. In aggregate, the target cohort is estimated to be approximately 16,000 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 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 in Section 1.2.

#### The intervention

Due to data limitations, only the benefits of certain intensive 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 intensive 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 (baseline scenario)

Cohort (baseline scenario)	Number of young people affected
Mental health & wellbeing	4,196
Education and employment	2,583
Housing stability	291
Justice system	613
Health system (AOD)	807
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,492</b>

Source: Deloitte Access Economics

## 4.0 – Detailed key findings

### Model overview

#### Assumptions

The interventions were spread across 8,492 young people under the baseline scenario (see Table 1) and 12,737 under the expanded workforce scenario (50 per cent expansion). In the baseline and extended workforce scenarios, 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 long effects on prevalence of mental illness. See the following subsections for further detail on any 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 on the right.

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 intensive intervention or support have not been modelled. However, costs have also been scaled appropriately to reflect the focus on intensive 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 intensive supports informed by stakeholder consultation (see Appendix B for detailed inputs).

Table 2. Benefit domains

Benefit domain	Description	Calculation
<b>Mental health &amp; wellbeing</b>	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 costs))
<b>Education and employment</b>	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)
<b>Housing stability</b>	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))
<b>Justice system</b>	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))
<b>Health system (AOD)</b>	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 \$396m under the baseline scenario with costs estimated at \$151m.**
- **This yields an SROI of 2.62 under the baseline scenario,** suggesting a significant return on investment for the community.
- Under an **‘expanded workforce scenario’** (50 per cent increase), equivalent benefits are estimated at around **\$594m** in NPV terms. The SROI remains the same relative to the baseline as benefits scale linearly with the size of the workforce given benefits are measured on a per person basis.
- **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).

#### Additional benefits that could not be monetised

Apparent through the process of undertaking consultations with the sector and desktop research were a number of key benefits and outcomes that could not be monetised given existing data is limited. Some of these 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, and
- benefits related to connectedness and social inclusion such as increased ability to foster and maintain relationships.

Further, as the benefits in Table 3 are quantified in relation to intensive 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.

Table 3. A summary of results (\$ million)

Benefit Domain	Scenario 1 – NPV Total (\$ million)	Scenario 2 – NPV Total (\$ million)
Mental health & wellbeing	\$77	\$116
Education and employment	-	-
Increased earnings	\$185	\$277
Increased tax paid	\$57	\$86
Reduced welfare payments	\$43	\$66
Housing stability	\$20	\$29
Justice system	\$8	\$12
Health system (AOD)	\$5	\$8
<b>TOTAL BENEFIT</b>	<b>\$396</b>	<b>\$595</b>
<b>Cost</b>	<b>\$151</b>	<b>\$227</b>
<b>SROI/BCR</b>	<b>2.62</b>	<b>2.62</b>

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.*

### Most mental health issues occur before the age of 25

One in four (26 per cent) young Australians experience a clinically relevant mental health problem, the highest prevalence across all age groups (ABS 2018). Indeed, half of all mental health conditions in adulthood emerge by age 14, and three quarters by age 24 (Kessler 2005). The Royal Commission into Victoria’s mental health system in 2020 highlighted the adverse impact mental ill-health can have on young people and recommended a reformed youth mental health service model (State of Victoria 2021).

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

There are several national and state-wide initiatives involving youth work that target mental health (e.g. Live4Life), as well as many localised community-based programs. Mental health is also a collateral factor in other youth issues, such as AOD use, unemployment and homelessness, that is addressed in a range of youth work programs as described.

### *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.

There was limited available data demonstrating the impact of youth work on prevalence of mental illness and therefore these results are subjects to sensitivity analysis presented in Table 4.

These benefits, applied to a single cohort over a ten-year time horizon, are estimated to amount to \$77m 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 life long effects on prevalence of mental illness.

At around \$77m 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 (4,196 under the baseline scenario), with around 26 per cent of young people in Victoria suffering from mental ill-health (ABS 2018). Further, the disability adjusted life year methodology results in a relatively high annual benefit per person in alleviating mental illness of around \$35,000 (see Appendix B).

Table 4. Mental health & wellbeing benefits NPV total for Scenario 1 with sensitivity analysis (\$ million)

	Reduction in prevalence: 3.3 per cent	Reduction in prevalence: 5.5 per cent	Reduction in prevalence: 7.7 per cent
<b>Mental health &amp; wellbeing</b>	\$46.5m	\$77.5m	\$108.4m

Source: Deloitte Access Economics

Note: Due to a lack of available data demonstrating the impact of youth work on prevalence of mental illness, a proxy data point was used related to Headspace intervention. Given this is a proxy, sensitivity analysis was conducted allowing the reduction in prevalence to vary as above. 5.5 per cent is deemed a baseline where 25 per cent of the impact of the intervention is attributed to youth workers. This assumption was informed by an outline of a role for a youth worker at Headspace, Swan Hill (2022).

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

Consistent with the findings of the SROI model is a considerable body of 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. An evaluation of the program found that it drives conversations about mental health amongst young people and their families, with one in four senior students reporting that they had sought mental health support for themselves, and nearly one in three supporting a friend to seek help within three to six months of attending mental health training. **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).
- **REVERB** is a mental health prevention initiative by the Centre for Multicultural Youth 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 in mental health** (ACIL Allen 2022). REVERB also addresses a gap in mental health prevention programs for culturally diverse communities, suggesting a need for initiatives that target the local community’s needs.

In addition to benefits quantified (i.e. health system cost and improved quality of life) from intensive intervention, many of the mental health benefits associated with youth work are delivered through the frontline and generalist support that youth workers provide to young people facing mental health challenges, such as averting crisis in the short-term, or supporting them while on waitlists to access more acute services. Further, it has been noted through consultation that support provided by youth workers in the early stages of young people’s lives can also form the foundation for long-term wellbeing.

## 4.1 – Mental health, health and wellbeing

Alcohol and other drug (AOD) 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 (41 per cent) were found to exceed the single occasion risk guideline for AOD use in 2019 (AIHW 2020, AIHW 2021b). Among approximately 42,000 Victorians who sought AOD treatment in 2020-21, a considerable proportion were young people, with 8 per cent aged 10-19, and 27 per cent aged 20-29 (AIHW 2022a).

### Youth work addresses AOD use and its associated risk factors

Victoria is the only state in Australia with a comprehensive and fully integrated youth AOD service system with Youth Support + Advocacy Service (YSAS) being its flagship service organisation since 1998 (Bruun 2015). The YSAS Youth AOD Treatment model incorporates outreach, case management, drug residential rehabilitation, and long term residential care. Bruun, YSAS's co-founder, and Mitchell (2012) proposed 10 characteristics of effective specialist youth AOD treatments that align with youth work principles to address risks and build protective factors (Figure 4).

*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.**

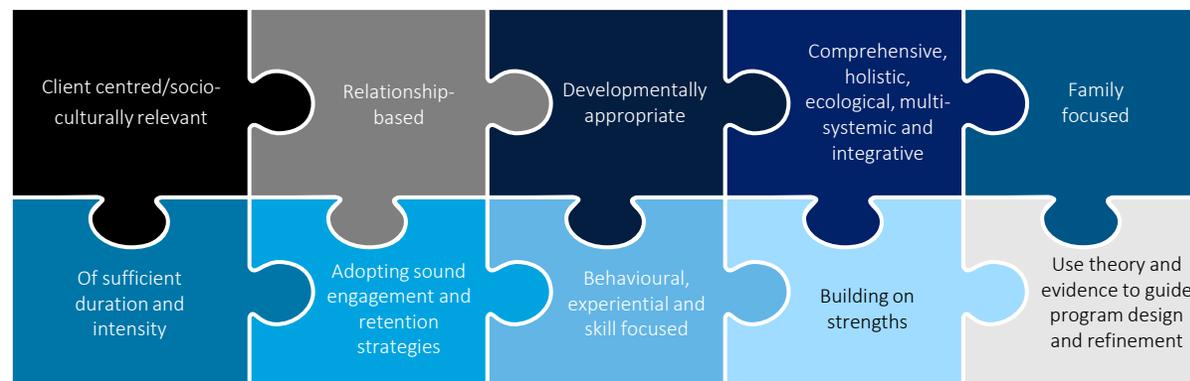
These benefits, applied to a single cohort over the entire 30-year horizon, are estimated to be **over \$5m in NPV terms** in the baseline scenario (Table 5). These benefits are relatively small when compared against the estimates of other benefit domains. This is predominantly a product of a smaller cohort (807 under the baseline scenario) in addition to per unit service usage costs (e.g. around \$8,000 per hospitalisation) that are notably less than others such as the cost of supervision within the justice system.

Table 5. Health system (AOD) benefits NPV total (\$ million)

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Health system (AOD)	\$5.4m	\$8.1m

Source: Deloitte Access Economics

Figure 4. Characteristics of effective youth AOD treatments (Bruun 2012).



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

- A study of young people engaging in AOD treatment in Melbourne, Victoria found that young people engaged positively in specialist Youth AOD treatment services and that they valued their relationship with youth workers highly (Best 2012). **Overall, the programs achieved overall positive changes in young people's substance use severity and risk**, as well as in wider life domains.
- An analysis of youth AOD programs in the UK, which has a similar service system as Victoria, found that the programs are highly cost-effective. The immediate benefits of treatment are **lower levels of drug and alcohol related crime, and fewer drug and alcohol related inpatient admissions and deaths**. The long term benefits of treatment are a lower likelihood of young people developing substance misuse problems as adults, and improved educational attainment and labour market outcomes.
- This is consistent with the Victorian Youth Needs Census, **where 37 per cent of young people had experienced drug related harm** including hospital admission, suffering injuries or physical harm, driving a vehicle while substance affected, or being involved in physical violence.
- **Overall, the youth work model addresses young people's AOD use in a holistic manner**, supporting them to better understand and manage problems in life, and navigate them towards supports and services that are meaningful to them in order to receive more help (Hamilton 2010).

## 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

For example, YSAS 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 intensive rehabilitation programs either improve or maintain a healthy sense of self.
- During interviews, another youth worker reflected that during the COVID-19 pandemic: “Parent engagement with us was through the roof... (we created a) safer environment (where) you can leave (the) camera off, listening to the information... Through the re-engagement, (it builds) healthy relationships.” He highlighted **the direct impact that parents’ engagement with youth workers has on the family relationships of young people.**
- The impact of youth work on family relationships stretch beyond into the long term. An interviewed stakeholder 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 are also integral to justice-related youth work programs

Pivot is a Youth Crime Prevention Grants program implemented by the Victorian Government in response to 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 workers in organisations such as Orange Door, 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 (DFFH 2014).



## 4.2 – Education, employability and independence

*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 2020), social exclusion (Razer 2013), risky health behaviours, poorer health and mental health outcomes (Fergusson 2014), and contact with the justice system (Pettitt 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 2018).

### 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 under the baseline scenario, are estimated to amount to (Table 6):

- \$185m in increased earnings,
- \$57m increased taxes to government, and
- \$44m in reduced welfare payments.

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 2,583 under the baseline scenario resulting from some 16 per cent of young people not finishing year 12 in Victoria (AIHW). Further, per person benefits are also significant, with a yearly average earnings differential of around \$12,000 (ABS). This is also combined with a large intervention effect size of some 32 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.

Table 6. Education and employment benefits NPV total (\$ million)

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Increased earnings	\$185	\$277
Increased tax paid	\$57	\$86
Reduced welfare payments	\$43	\$66

Source: Deloitte Access Economics

### Youth work enhances engagement with young people supporting their education journey

- In Whittlesea, Victoria, the city council delivers the Invigor8ing Education program to provide a practical applied learning option for students at risk of disengaging from education. Youth workers worked alongside industry professionals to deliver the program to improve young people’s engagement. The programs received a good attendance rate of 80-84 per cent, and an excellent rating from participants (a score of 4.8 out of 5). In particular, **all of the participants surveyed indicated that the program had changed how they view school and education.**
- The Centre for Multicultural Youth in Victoria implemented the Walk it Out and After School Mentoring programs to engage young people in education for the Pasifika and African communities respectively (Turnbull 2017). The programs assist young people to identify their personal strengths and educational pathways, as well as supporting them to develop goals and build their work readiness. Both programs yielded positive outcomes at evaluation. All surveyed participants reported significantly greater understanding of the importance of education and careers. **They also described increased self-confidence, increased family and community connection, as well as improved ability at setting goals and planning for the future.**
- VET and TAFE are also important pathways for young people from diverse communities. A youth worker interviewed reflected on **the role that youth work plays in linking young people with education opportunities.** They highlighted that a number of TAFE providers have taken on board proposed strategies to address language barriers. As a result, there are currently a high number of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in the Swan Hill community participating in TAFE to access further education and employment.

## 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 the whole 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.

The Jobs Victoria Community Traineeship Pilot Program (CTPP), delivered by the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS), provided traineeships in the community services industry for young people from the Cities of Hume and Greater Dandenong, who were experiencing barriers to secure and meaningful employment. As part of the program, a Youth Worker provided holistic interventions across study, work and personal lives, to support completion of the program for each young person.

*'I have successfully completed my Cert IV Community Services course, graduated with a traineeship, and have now been offered full-time permanent employment with my employer. I have gained an incredible amount of skills and experience since commencing in the Community Traineeship Pilot Program and I am keen to use these skills to give back to my local community'.*

*- Participant of Jobs Victoria Community Traineeship Pilot Program  
Obtained and amended from Youth Work Articulation (YWC 2021)*

### 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."

Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) are comprised of 31 organisations across Victoria with the goal of supporting secondary school students by promoting school-employer engagement activities in local government areas (VicGov 2022). The LLENs create and develop sustainable relationships, partnerships and brokerage of initiatives with and across local schools, education providers, industry and community. Through their activities, they improve the education, training and employment outcomes of young people.

STREAT is a hospitality-based social enterprise that delivers programs for young people facing multiple barriers and disadvantages. Since its inception in 2009, STREAT has transitioned 76 per cent of program graduates into employment or education. Their flagship Fast Track to Work program provide young people with workplace experience, work readiness workshops, social engagement, and individual case support. Those who completed the program have the chance to proceed to a nine-month program to transition into paid employment with partnering employers while receiving intensive youth work support.

Further to this, **youth work forms a bridge for young people seeking employment**. A youth worker reflected on their provision of one-to-one support and engagement with a young person before and after their work shifts, saying: "On the first shift I travelled with the young person to get them there (and give them an) extra level of support. One time a young person changed (work) venue so I accompanied them to that venue and made them feel comfortable, walking through any anxieties they had."

## 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).**

A study into youth homelessness in Australia found that family violence is a major driver of young people becoming homeless (Mackenzie 2016). Homelessness is also associated with early school leaving and labour market disadvantage. Nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of the homeless young people surveyed for the study had been placed in out-of-home care.

### ***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:

- 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,
- the incidence of self-injury and attempted suicide is also much higher than the general population, and
- overall the total costs of health services and the justice system due to young people experiencing homelessness is an average of \$17,868 per person per year (Mackenzie 2016).

Many youth work organisations such as Melbourne City Mission (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.

Under the baseline scenario **these benefits are estimated at some \$20m** in NPV terms (Table 7). These are benefits to a single target cohort realised over a 30-year time horizon. The target cohort is comparatively slight at 291, baseline. This is contrasted with 6,000 young people being homeless on a given night, 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).

**Table 7.** Housing stability benefits NPV total (\$ million)

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
<b>Housing stability</b>	\$19.6m	\$29.4m

*Source: Deloitte Access Economics*

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

Melbourne City Mission (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).

### ***Early intervention programs aim to prevent young people from becoming homeless in the first place***

The Geelong Project was launched in 2016 to address homelessness that affect around 900 young people in the area each year (Mackenzie 2018). Utilizing a whole-of-community approach, three pilot schools that represent roughly 60 per cent of homeless young people in Geelong participated in this program. An evaluation in 2018 found that among the schools, **70 per cent of students who were identified with a high risk of homelessness had reduced risks a year later**. Six months later, nine out of ten of these students (89 per cent) were still living at home with their families; only six students from the pilot schools turned up at the Youth Entry Point seeking help for homelessness. Overall early school leaving has also been reduced by about 20 per cent for the three pilot schools.

Importantly, the **effectiveness of The Geelong Project partly stemmed from the interaction and involvement of youth workers with the schools and the practice of putting young people at the centre of the work** (Mackenzie, 2018). Youth workers play an essential role in addressing the varied and complex needs of young people, and reaching vulnerable young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

## 4.3 – Housing stability and security

*Youth work also plays a proactive role in tackling youth homelessness through outreach and early intervention programs.*

### *Education First Youth Foyers – A case study in holistic housing support*

The Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) and Launch Housing, with funding from the Victorian Government, developed Education First Youth (EFY) Foyers to provide an integrated approach to tackling youth homelessness, by combining accommodation with education, training and employment opportunities and other support services (Coddou 2019). EFY Foyers expand upon the original Youth Foyer concept by prioritising education as key to a sustainable livelihood.

An EFY Foyer evaluation of 162 participants found that the **model substantively improves participants' education, employment, housing, and health and wellbeing outcomes**, and these improvements are largely sustained a year after exit:

- prior to enrolling, about 74 per cent had experiences in state custody or supported care, including 33 per cent from out-of-home care. A third did not feel safe in their homes and over half had lived in three or more places in the year prior to foyer. About 70 per cent reported moderate or serious symptoms of mental distress (Coddou 2019),
- participants showed **large improvements in their housing independence** at exit: the percentage living in their own rented or owned place increased from 7 per cent at entry to 43 per cent at exit, and to 51 per cent a year later. Meanwhile, the percentage sleeping rough or living in crisis accommodation, treatment centres or detention declined from 32 per cent at entry to 3 per cent at exit, and to 2 per cent a year later, and
- in terms of **education outcomes**, the percentage who had completed at least Year 12 or a Certificate III increased from 42 per cent at entry to 67 per cent at exit and to 75 per cent a year after exit. On **employment outcomes**, the percentage of participants employed, including in part-time or casual work, increased from 19 per cent at entry to 31 per cent at exit and 36 per cent a year later.

Through the program, EFY Foyers used youth work principles to expand young people's capabilities, by creating opportunities aligned with their goals and by developing their resources and skills (Coddou 2019).

### **Youth workers conduct outreach to young people experiencing homelessness**

Whitelion delivers the Southern Homeless Youth Assistance Program (SHYAP), and as part of the H3 (Health, Homelessness and Housing) Alliance, housing-focused and targeted interventions.

SHYAP provides outreach-based case management and brief intervention support for young people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. **Youth workers connect young people to housing options, assist with family reunification, assist to stabilise housing placements, and connect young people to mental health services, family violence services, income support and other services.**

Similarly, the H3 Alliance connects young people to housing options by supporting them with service coordination, advocacy, coordination of paperwork and budgeting required for renting. The outreach-based service also assists with avenues of community support, short-term/crisis options, and establishing strategies to ensure housing is sustainable once attained.

Whitelion **youth workers also work holistically to address other contributing situational and co-existing factors to homelessness or housing instability** such as mental ill-health, alcohol and other drug misuse and unemployment or education disengagement.

The participant survey found that:

- 79-86 per cent of young people remained stable or improved in relation to housing,
- 78-100 per cent are working towards or committed to education/employment, and
- 66-90 per cent have established trust in relationships, and 66-83 per cent of young people are building personal networks.

Young people also reflected on the support they received and highlighted that outreach support has been really helpful. They also appreciated the dedication of youth workers who “go above and beyond to find relevant services”.

## 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

Over 1,500 young people aged under 18 become involved in justice-linked supervision in Victoria every year (AIHW 2022b). These young people often face complex and inter-related challenges, such as 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, Maori and Pasifika young people, young people from Sudanese Australian communities, and those from specific disadvantaged geographic locations (DJCS 2020). In Victoria, 85 per cent of those under youth justice supervision are male.

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

Between 60-80 per cent of young people who exit the youth justice system commonly reoffend (AIHW 2021c). A long-term study by the University of Canberra found that for an intervention to be effective, it should be holistic, integrated and flexible. Intensive 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.

Overall, the study's recommendations are aligned with the role of youth work in supporting positive social participation of young people and reducing their engagement with the justice system.

### *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.

**Total benefits in NPV terms to a single target cohort stretched over a 30-year horizon amount to approximately \$8m under the baseline scenario (Table 8).** The target cohort is estimated at 613 in the baseline 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 (27 per cent, Children's Court Victoria).

Table 8. Justice system benefits NPV total (\$ million)

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Justice system	\$8.3m	\$12.4m

Source: Deloitte Access Economics

### **Many youth work 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.

- Amongst the 568 young people who exited the program by mid-2019, over half were aged 15-19 (55 per cent), 23 per cent were aged 20 to 24, and 18 per cent were aged 10 to 14. The vast majority of young people were born in Australia, and 10 per cent identified as Aboriginal.
- Upon assessment by project workers, 53 per cent were identified to have a physical or mental health issue, 12 per cent as a victim of violence, and 43 per cent with substance use issues, highlighting the need for the holistic support. Amongst the 438 participants included in the offending analysis, 59 per cent had previously been recorded by police as alleged youth offenders, while the remaining were classified as the at-risk cohort.
- **Overall, young people involved in the YCPG had lower rates of reoffending after exiting the program.** 73 per cent reported overall positive changes in their levels of risk/protective factors. Almost half had reduced or stopped offending. Project workers emphasised the importance of addressing basic needs such as housing and food prior to more complex social needs.

## 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 provide valuable immediate response and diversion in conjunction with Victoria Police

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.

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

The hospitality-based social enterprise STREAT specifically targets young people with multifaceted disadvantages including 36 per cent of their participants having contact with the justice system (STREAT 2020). They also deliver various initiatives ranging from early contact to post-incarceration support including:

- partnering with local police in an engagement program to deliver prevention, early intervention and initial contact with over 500 young people each year,
- delivering the STREAT program as a diversion program (when capabilities aligned with the criteria), or sometimes forms part of a young offender's parole conditions,
- enrolling young people from Parkville and Malmsbury youth prisons in STREAT's 8-week Entree program and 6-month Main Course program to maintain employment of young people on bail, and
- partnering with Parkville College and increasingly working with young people before they leave custody.

Through their work, STREAT is increasingly working within youth prisons to ensure that a young person exits smoothly into the programs upon release, as exiting from prison is a critical point of transition that requires the right support to prevent recidivism.

### Youth workers provide holistic support for young people by addressing underlying needs

The Youth Community and Law Program (YCLP) provides **a range of specialist services to young people who are facing criminal matters** in the Magistrates' Court of Victoria. In an evaluation of the program, most of the 240 young people who participated are male (82 per cent) and come from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The program aims to establish holistic interventions for young people to address all of their identified areas of need. Upon assessment, the most commonly identified areas of need are offence-specific case management (97 per cent), employment (65 per cent), alcohol and drug treatment services (63 per cent), mental health services (61 per cent) and education (55 per cent). On average, the case manager identified seven areas of need per client that contributed to the underlying reasons for their offending, reaffirming the association among the crucial developmental factors in a young person's life.

Overall, the YCLP achieved high acceptance (95 per cent) and completion (74 per cent) rates. **Magistrates interviewed regarded the YCLP as effective at reducing reoffending rates.** A previous study found that the YCLP clients have a much lower reoffending rate at 26 per cent within 12 months of participating in the program, compared to 40-55 per cent for offenders of a similar age to YCLP clients. The evaluation also found that the program has been effective at linking young people with services tailored to their various needs.

### *Young people who experience justice-related interventions value youth work*

In consultation with fourteen young people who had experience of the youth justice system, YACVic found that young people must be clearly aware, and on board with, the purpose of an intervention in order for it to be effective. They also identified several key supportive factors about youth work (YACVic 2012):

- support from youth workers can remove the barriers to attending programs and appointments,
- facilitating access to education, training or work can divert them from offending behaviour,
- providing intensive, holistic support earlier can help young people to address the underlying causes,
- minimising the long term ramifications of justice system involvement is important in maintaining young people's belief in their potential, and
- young people have valuable ideas that may be helpful in improving justice system responses.

## 4.5 – Connectedness/social inclusion

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

### **Inclusion of diverse groups is one of the key youth work practice principles in Victoria (YACVic 2008)**

Many stakeholders interviewed identified **socioeconomic status and marginalisation as ubiquitous driving factors for a range of issues that impact young people**. In 2020, STREAT reported that the majority (75 per cent) of young people they supported come from a low socioeconomic background. One-third of the participants are from a refugee or migrant background, one-fifth identifies as a member of the LGBTIQ+ community, and 3 per cent are disabled young people (STREAT 2020). A similar diversity was observed in the programs delivered by YSAS.

### ***Youth work presents a unique service offering tailored toward diverse groups***

- Robinvale is a town served by Swan Hill Rural City Council (SHRCC) that has a population of ~4,000 people from more than 40 nationalities of birth (Malcolm 2015). The programs delivered by SHRCC youth workers are designed to fit a diverse range of cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic status. A youth worker interviewed for this study highlighted that on crucial topics such as sexual health and consent education, **inter-cultural awareness and understanding are key**. For example, they deliver separate sessions for female and male participants respectively to respect cultural practices and create a safe environment for young people to engage and learn.
- The Victorian Transport Accident Commission has conducted the learners to permit (L2P) program since 2010 in Swan Hill and Robinvale, helping over 350 learner drivers (SHRCC 2021). The L2P mentors help young people to gain the 120 hours driving experience required to apply for a probationary licence, **with around 40 per cent of the learners coming from diverse communities** according to the youth worker interviewed. In addition, the Harmony Day festival in Swan Hill is designed and delivered by a committee that includes around 20-30 young people from various nationalities.

### ***Some youth work programs also target specific groups of marginalised young people.***

The CMY supports young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds by removing the barriers many young people face, through a combination of support services and programs, sector capability building, advocacy and knowledge sharing (CMY 2019). During the interview, YSAS indicated that they support programs which focus on young people from refugee and asylum seeking backgrounds while differentiating the various needs of different cultural backgrounds and groups. YSAS partner with other organisations to deliver programs that focus on resettling people seeking asylum and assist them to establish themselves in a new country. They emphasized that “**youth work is helpful for people who don’t have social scaffolding and (local) cultural competency**”.

As the state’s peak body, Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic) includes YACVic Rural, which advocates for the needs of young people and the youth sector in rural and regional communities. YACVic auspices the Koorie Youth Council which advocates for and provides direct programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and the Youth Disability Advocacy Service which advocates for and supports disabled young people. YACVic also oversees the Healthy Equal Youth (HEY) program that provides grants and convenes a service provider network to support for LGBTIQ+ young people (YACVic 2022). These programs 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.

### ***Emerge – A case study in social/support program for LGBTIQ+ young people***

Emerge is a 12-month social/support program for LGBTIQ+ young people aged 18-25 delivered by Knox Youth Services. The program aims to build the confidence, connectedness, social skills, self-care, self-esteem, and therefore, overall wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ young people.

The youth workers provide a safe space for young people to connect and grow together. The young people are supported, encouraged, and empowered to step out of their comfort zone and challenge themselves. The program has helped develop the young people’s mental health including their confidence and self-worth, as well as a sense of belonging. This is evidenced by:

- acts of self-care (e.g. making their bed, showering daily, sleep hygiene),
- connection to the group (e.g. talking and catching up with other group members outside the group, a group messenger chat),
- increased connectedness to society (e.g. finding and holding down work, moving into their own rental, starting a course at university or TAFE, joining other social/sport/art groups),
- increased confidence (e.g. speaking in front of the group, sharing experiences and perspectives, dressing in a way that affirms their gender),
- their general demeanour (e.g. eye contact, posture, etc), and their expression of appreciation.

A young person who participated in the program said: ‘**I’ve loved being a part of Emerge, connecting with everyone in the group and feeling supported while sharing my experiences. [Youth Worker] has been absolutely amazing at supporting me in the space, helping me find the support I need, putting things into perspective and telling me what I need to hear**’.

*Obtained and amended from Youth Work Articulation (YWC 2021)*

## 4.5 – Connectedness/social inclusion

*The youth work sector has a significant presence in rural and regional communities.*

### Youth work programs focus on the needs of young people from First Nation communities

The Koorie Youth Council is guided by an executive team of 15 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 16-28 years living in Victoria. KYC advocates for the rights and representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in many different forums, engaging young people and working with the Victorian Government's Aboriginal Youth Justice team to develop the Aboriginal Youth Justice Strategy, and the Office for Youth on the new Victorian Youth Strategy.

Whitelion and the Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Sports and Recreation (MAYSAR) deliver the Deadly Lions program for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have been, or at-risk of being, in contact with the youth justice system (Whitelion 2022). This program supports young people to build positive and sustainable connections to self and communities of choice.

The Victorian Government Office for Youth also has a focus on prevention and early intervention programs for high needs communities that are likely to face discrimination and disadvantage.

### Connections in rural community

YACVic Rural was established in 2015, with the support of the Victorian Government, to increase support to rural-based young people and the youth sector (Pivot 2018). **The service model was informed by several factors unique to rural communities**, such as the absence of direct connection to metropolitan and state-wide matters, increasing needs for place-based, localised services, increased difficulty accessing education and skill-building opportunities, and underserved smaller communities outside regional city centres. The program evaluation reported that by choosing appropriate regional sites (i.e. Warrnambool and Swan Hill), clarifying the role of YACVic, developing a strong local team, and building trust with the communities, YACVic has achieved "service-market fit" and become a trusted, deeply embedded member of the local service sector.

Due to the lack of specialised youth services in rural and regional areas, and the difficulty of transport to access them, rural council youth services and health services play a vital role in providing generalist, place-based youth work programs.

In Swan Hill, together with the support of YACVic, the SHRCC youth service provides youth work in the form of case management, school engagement, and outreach activities for young people in the area. Stakeholders interviewed noted that, due to the sparse locations, youth work in rural communities entails significantly more travel (i.e. 50-80,000km on the road per year) than in denser metropolitan areas, reducing time available to engage with young people and build important relationships. SHRCC also applies

higher flexibility and creativity with youth work where thinking outside the box is required. For example, during COVID-19, youth workers travelled to the areas without internet and phone receptions to offer wifi booster boxes to communities in need.

### ***Keys to Unlocking Our Future – A case study in youth employment pathways for a diverse rural community***

The Employment Pathway Program, delivered by a youth worker based at the North East Local Learning and Employment Network (NELLEN) in Wodonga, aims to build a collaborative response to the needs of young people from refugee and newly arrived migrant backgrounds, as they complete Year 12 and commence job-seeking or job-creating activities.

NELLEN received funding from the Department of Premier and Cabinet to pilot this as a six-month program, which has been successful, even despite model changes due to COVID-19 restrictions. The participants of NELLEN's program had mostly resettled in Australia from Congo and Rwanda.

Interventions delivered by the youth worker:

- collaborative, culturally appropriate group workshops and one-on-one mentoring and support,
- preparation for transition into employment and support to engage with employers who offered jobs,
- linking young people up with supports (e.g. Centrelink, Skills and Job Centre),
- monitoring the job application process and outcomes, and
- conducting a series of consultations with young people to co-design a 'best practice' model that supports young people to obtain a vocational pathway.

The 22 participants who were engaged in the project had a variety of outcomes, including six young people finding employment and four young people completing their Certificate II studies.

The youth worker said: **'The whole model is for the young people to come in, learn as much as they can and build their confidence and their independence to go and successfully look for work'**.

A young person who participated in the program said: **'We learnt a lot; how to find a job, how to write a cover letter, how to approach [business]'**.

*Obtained and amended from Youth Work Articulation (YWC 2021)*

## 4.5 – Connectedness/social inclusion

*Youth work activities are designed to build holistic life skills and give young people the opportunities to participate and lead. They also foster connection and inclusion within local communities.*

### Youth participation and leadership in community activities

**Many youth work activities are designed to build holistic life skills and give young people the opportunities to participate and lead.** For example, the Lockington Youth Action Group, an initiative for young people in the small town of Lockington, Victoria, focuses on promoting young people’s participation in community activities and interaction with their peers (LYAG 2021). Co-designed with young people themselves, the Youth Action Group undertakes the Lockington Life Skills sessions involving mentoring, resume writing workshops, and hands-on volunteering experiences. Members of the Youth Action Group reported an increased level of self-confidence after participating in the activities. The co-design process further facilitated their ability to make independent decisions and valuable contributions to the local community.

Overall, youth work principles and activities centre on the development of young people’s identity, connections and life goals, promoting their ability to contribute as members of their communities.

This becomes a precursor to employment and prosocial attitudes that have flow on benefits to other outcome groups, according to a stakeholder consulted. It also builds their capabilities. As YACVic highlighted in the interview, “practicing genuine youth participation provides opportunities for young people to step up, develop leadership skills, and build pathways to full time jobs”.

### *Youth participation provides leadership and empowerment opportunities for young people*

Youth participation – involving young people in decision making that affect their lives – is recognised as best practice for youth work. In Victoria, more than half of Local Government Councils have established (53 per cent) or are establishing (11 per cent) a youth council or youth advisory group (YACVic 2021). Some other organisations that involve young people in the design and delivery of youth work programs include:

- Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS) runs co-designed and co-delivered Young Leaders Programs and Access and Inclusion Training, growing leadership skills, gain confidence and ongoing opportunities.
- YSAS maintains several Youth Action and Advisory Groups such as The CREW and Youth Advocates to empower young people and benefit YSAS services and governance (YSAS 2021).
- SHRCC implemented a youth participation and engagement framework that allows for youth-led, youth-run, and youth-informed services, ensuring that the services are tailored to the needs of young people.
- Whitelion initiated a Youth Council program to promote young people in leadership opportunities. The youth workers are also developing a co-design approach to utilise and employ peer support workers, allowing young people both on the receiving and the delivering end to benefit from youth work.

- Youth Live4Life trains young leaders as Mental Health Ambassadors in rural and regional communities.
- The Victorian Government’s Office for Youth runs the Victorian Youth Congress, an advisory group of young people who help identify and advocate for issues that matter to young people.

### Feelings of connection and inclusion within the local community

Along with voice and leadership, the broad range of youth work activities, including events, school activities, and outreach, also serves to promote young people’s connection and inclusion within their communities.

FreeZA is a long-standing Victorian Government initiative that provides opportunities for young people across Victoria to plan, organise and enjoy a range of music and cultural events (OfY 2007). Funded by the Victorian Government’s Office for Youth and delivered by youth workers in local community organisations, FreeZA events aim to cater for the diverse needs of young people in their local community as modelled on a “by youth, for youth” approach. A review of FreeZA found a range of benefits that demonstrate the active engagement and participation of young people in the program, including:

- opportunities to build and develop a wide range of practical skills including, leadership, communication, teamwork, event management, budgeting etc,
- increased opportunities to participate in and contribute to other community events and festivals, and
- greater links to community organisations and local services.

These outcomes were also associated with other positive outcomes in educational attainment and employment, as well as broader social engagement that also benefited local communities.

### Place-based organisations bring local knowledge and trust to youth work programs

In addition, locally-embedded small-scale community organisations also play a vital youth work role in the community. A report in 2018 found that these organisations typically possess better knowledge of the local context and networks (Arashiro 2018). They can also offer more flexibility to tailor services, or provide trusted referrals, in cases that involve complex needs. Young people interviewed for the report highlighted personalisation, genuine care, a safe and comfortable environment, and trust as central to the value of youth work services. Youth workers also pointed to the community dynamics and their in-depth understanding of operating within these parameters as beneficial in their work (Arashiro 2018). Together, large and small youth work initiatives strengthen young people’s feelings of connection and inclusion within the local community.

## 4.6- State-wide needs modelling

In addition to scenario one and two, this study also modelled a state-wide need scenario (hypothetical scenario). This represents the benefits modelled under a purely hypothetical scenario where all young people in Victoria with a particular need are able to receive supports in addressing that need.



### Hypothetical state-wide need model

- The state-wide need scenario represents benefits modelled under a **purely hypothetical scenario where all young people in Victoria with a particular need are able to receive supports** in addressing that need.
- In other words, the cohort of young people receiving support is expanded to every young person (after applying an intervention take-up assumption) who needs support state-wide.
- It should be noted that this modelling exercise is purely hypothetical due to the prohibitively high cost required.

### Hypothetical state-wide need model findings

Under a hypothetical scenario where the entire need in Victoria is fulfilled, the SROI modelling indicates that youth work can realise a total benefits of approximately **\$16 billion if the state-wide need was fulfilled (with an SROI of 2.22)**. This modelling exercise, although purely hypothetical, was carried out to demonstrate the level of need among young people in Victoria for support programs and services described in this report. The hypothetical benefits are described in Table 9, should this need be met.

It is possible benefits are over-stated under this scenario as it is assumed the broader Victorian youth population would respond to intervention to the same extent as the young people who have received youth work interventions in actuality. However, an intervention uptake rate of 75 per cent has been applied to account for the likelihood that not all young people in Victoria with a particular need or vulnerability will take up the intervention. This scenario is also associated with the highest cost, with total costs estimated over \$7bn.

### Hypothetical state-wide need scenario considerations

The state-wide need scenario should be considered as purely hypothetical due to the cost required to expand the workforce to this extent. As such, it would not be feasible for this to eventuate. In the process of meeting state-wide need, there would be a crowding out of other types of support and likely a duplication of services and disproportionate focus on youth. The benefits of this scenario should therefore be viewed as a hypothetical consideration of the extent of benefits the community could realise should this be feasible.

Table 9. Justice system benefits NPV total (\$ million)

Benefit domain	Hypothetical state-wide need model
Mental health & wellbeing	\$3,769
Education and employment	-
Increased earnings	\$7,063
Increased tax paid	\$2,182
Reduced welfare payments	\$1,676
Housing stability	\$953
Health system (AOD)	\$263
Justice system	\$402
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$16,308</b>

Source: Deloitte Access Economics

# 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

The youth work sector could benefit significantly from improved data capture, particularly in relation to outcomes. Evident throughout the process of undertaking this study was a lack of data which quantifies the impact or achievement of outcomes realised through youth work interventions in Victoria. This was the greatest limitation in undertaking this study.

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. Centralised workforce and program data collection

There was a lack of centralised data collection across the sector relevant to both the size of workforce and the funding and expenditure required to deliver youth work programs. A more systematic and centralised approach to measuring required and actual resources would benefit analyses of the sector. A method of achieving this in relation to the workforce could be through conducting a periodic workforce census of the youth work sector. In addition to workforce size, the census would ideally target data on the types of interventions that youth workers deliver to provide a breakdown and picture of the overall coverage of supports provided by youth workers state-wide.

#### b. 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.

#### c. 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 by working 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 such as this study.

## 5 – Future opportunities

*Other feedback that we have received throughout the process of conducting this study for consideration by YACVic, the youth work sector, and government.*

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

In the course of conducting this SROI study, we identified a number of improvement opportunities for the youth work sector in Victoria. 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 in the consultation process 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. A clear definition of youth work would assist in attributing outcomes to the sector

- As outlined earlier in this report, and apparent throughout the process of undertaking this SROI, there is a lack of clarity in the broader community, including within government and other relevant stakeholders, as to who may be classified as a youth worker, the kind of work they do, and what role they play in supporting young people. This has implications for being able to attribute the outcomes and benefits that are delivered by youth workers across the state and presents difficulties for analyses such as this SROI. YACVic and other key sector stakeholders (including the Youth Workers Association) could agree upon how the quantum of youth workers could be estimated. This estimation could potentially then be validated through a workforce census.

#### 4. Youth work benefits can be maximised by improving youth worker retention and career pathways

- 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, some stakeholders noted 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.

#### 5. 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.
- Stakeholders interviewed noted that by embedding youth workers within more sectors and industries, fewer young people will 'fall through the cracks' and will instead receive the intervention and multi-faceted support they need. This model has proven success through Whitelion, which has a program targeted at receiving vulnerable young people from sectors where they did not receive the necessary support.

# Appendix A - SROI framework

## Indicators and data sources

# Appendix A: SROI framework

Indicators and data sources – Connectedness/social inclusion.

Table A1.1. Indicators and data sources – Connectedness/social inclusion

Indicator ID	Outcome	Other related outcomes	Indicator	Measures	Potential data sources	Qual	Quant	Monetise
B1	Increased inclusion of diverse groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>B5: Increased access of services and participation in the community for diverse groups</li> <li>I3: Increased cross-cultural awareness through diverse networks and friendships</li> <li>B13: Increased community inclusivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved community connection for specific cohorts e.g. migrants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of young people from diverse backgrounds that attend youth work social events/workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case studies</li> <li>Stakeholder consultation</li> </ul>	✓		
I12	Increased broader social engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I2: Increased community involvement and awareness of local groups/events</li> <li>B12: Increased community contribution and social capital</li> <li>B13: Increased community inclusivity</li> <li>B14: Increased community sustainability and resilience</li> <li>B15: Increased community pride and ownership</li> <li>I31: Reduced engagement with antisocial influences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value of increased social participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of young people attending youth work social events/workshops</li> <li>Proportion of young people who subsequently participate in broader society</li> <li>Change in quality of life through increased social participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data from evaluation and reporting on youth work programs</li> <li>Literature</li> <li>Stakeholder consultation</li> </ul>	✓	✓	
I13	Increased feelings of connection and inclusion within the local community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I1: Reduced social isolation and loneliness (including at schools and organisations)</li> <li>B2: Increased sense of belonging (including through virtual engagement) and community spirit</li> <li>I14: Increased ability to foster and maintain relationships</li> <li>B4: Increased community connection and cohesion</li> <li>B6: Increased feeling of community empowerment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value of reduced social isolation &amp; improved social capital</li> <li>Value of improved community connectedness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of young people engaging with youth workers and accessing opportunities through their networks</li> <li>Proportion of young people who are socially isolated</li> <li>Cost of social isolation</li> <li>Change in quality of life through reduced social isolation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data from evaluation and reporting on youth work programs</li> <li>Literature</li> <li>Stakeholder consultation</li> </ul>	✓	✓	

Note: This SROI framework represents what was devised at the inception of the project, and is not necessarily a representation of the analysis that was actually undertaken.

# Appendix A: SROI framework

Indicators and data sources – Connectedness/social inclusion.

Table A1.1. Indicators and data sources – Connectedness/social inclusion

Indicator ID	Outcome	Other related outcomes	Indicator	Measures	Potential data sources	Qual	Quant	Monetise
B3	Increased youth participation and leadership in community activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>S3: Enhanced connections between young people and decision makers</li> <li>B7: Reduced stigma related to young people and diverse groups</li> <li>S1: Organisations more welcoming of young people and diverse groups (such as health services and sporting organisations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value of young people contributing to community leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of young people participating and assuming leadership roles in community activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case studies</li> <li>Stakeholder consultation</li> </ul>	✓	✓	

Note: This SROI framework represents what was devised at the inception of the project, and is not necessarily a representation of the analysis that was actually undertaken.

# Appendix A: SROI framework

Indicators and data sources – Mental health, health and wellbeing.

Table A1.2. Indicators and data sources – Mental health, health and wellbeing

Indicator ID	Outcome	Other related outcomes	Indicator	Measures	Potential data sources	Qual	Quant	Monetise
I15	Improved physical health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I6: Reduced drug and alcohol abuse</li> <li>I7: Improved sexual and reproductive health</li> <li>I8: Reduced risk taking behaviour</li> <li>I9: Increased physical activity</li> <li>I45: Increased personal safety for young people</li> <li>S2: Reduced demand for emergency services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value of improved health outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and proportion of young people diverting from drug and alcohol abuse</li> <li>Change in quality of life through improved physical health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data from evaluation and reporting on youth work programs</li> <li>Literature</li> <li>Stakeholder consultation</li> </ul>	✓	✓	
S4	Reduced service usage related to healthcare resulting from improved health outcomes (such as reduced presentations to ED related to suicidality or self-harm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I6: Reduced drug and alcohol abuse</li> <li>S8: Reduced long-term service usage related to healthcare resulting from improved health outcomes</li> <li>I7: Improved sexual and reproductive health</li> <li>I8: Reduced risk taking behaviour</li> <li>I22: More effective long-term usage of healthcare</li> <li>S2: Reduced demand for emergency services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoided costs associated with reduced service usage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unit cost of engaging with health services per person</li> <li>Per cent reductions in young people experiencing poor health outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost estimates from sources such as the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare</li> <li>Data from TAC related to road injuries</li> <li>Data from evaluation and reporting on youth work programs</li> <li>Literature</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓
F1	Improved family/intimate relationships and reduced family/domestic violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I14: Increased ability to foster and maintain relationships</li> <li>I16: More respectful relationships</li> <li>I18: Improved mental health</li> <li>B9: Reduced gender based violence</li> <li>B10: Reduced racial based violence</li> <li>B11: Reduced sexual orientation based violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value of improved family and intimate relationships</li> <li>Value of reduced family/domestic violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of young people experiencing improved family relationships</li> <li>Improved quality of life resulting from improved family and intimate relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data from evaluation and reporting on domestic violence support programs/initiatives</li> <li>Literature</li> <li>Stakeholder consultation</li> </ul>	✓	✓	

## Appendix A: SROI framework

Indicators and data sources – Mental health, health and wellbeing.

Table A1.2. Indicators and data sources – Mental health, health and wellbeing

Indicator ID	Outcome	Other related outcomes	Indicator	Measures	Potential data sources	Qual	Quant	Monetise
I20	Improved quality of life for participants (and their families/carers) as a result of increased opportunities and pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I37: Increased take-up of employment opportunities for young people and diverse groups</li> <li>I41: Increased participation in educational courses and training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value of improved career/ educational pathways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of young people who enrol in/complete educational courses</li> <li>Number of young people who realise employment opportunities</li> <li>Change in quality of life through employment and education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data from evaluation and reporting on youth work programs</li> <li>Literature</li> <li>Stakeholder consultation</li> </ul>	✓	✓	
I18	Improved mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I4: Increased self-worth</li> <li>I5: Increased wellbeing</li> <li>S6: Reduced service usage related to mental health issues</li> <li>I10: Increased help seeking behaviour and early intervention</li> <li>B17: Reduced rates of suicide across the population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value of improved mental health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and proportion of young people participating in social and resilience building activities</li> <li>Change in quality of life through reduced mental illness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder consultation</li> <li>Data from evaluation and reporting on youth work programs</li> <li>Literature</li> </ul>	✓	✓	
S6	Reduced service usage related to mental health issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I18: Improved mental health</li> <li>I8: Increased help seeking behaviour and early intervention</li> <li>S5: Improved engagement with early health interventions (including for diverse groups)</li> <li>Reduced demand for emergency services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoided costs associated with reduced service usage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unit cost of engaging with mental health services per person</li> <li>Per cent reductions in young people engaging with mental health services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost estimates from sources such as the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare</li> <li>Data from evaluation and reporting on youth work programs</li> <li>Literature</li> </ul>	✓	✓	

Note: This SROI framework represents what was devised at the inception of the project, and is not necessarily a representation of the analysis that was actually undertaken.

# Appendix A: SROI framework

## Indicators and data sources – Housing stability and security.

Table A1.3. Indicators and data sources – Housing stability and security

Indicator ID	Outcome	Other related outcomes	Indicator	Measures	Potential data sources	Qual	Quant	Monetise
I34	Enhanced life and living skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I47: Improved transition into adulthood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value of enhanced life and living skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of young people that acquire enhanced life and living skills</li> <li>Change in quality of life from enhanced life and living skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data from evaluation and reporting on youth work programs</li> <li>Literature</li> <li>Stakeholder consultation</li> </ul>	✓	✓	
S9	Reduced service usage related to homelessness support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I37: Increased take-up of employment opportunities for young people and diverse groups</li> <li>I49: Improved levels of educational attainment</li> <li>I36: Reduced homelessness</li> <li>I23: More young people in secure accommodation</li> <li>I35: Improved ability to maintain stable accommodation</li> <li>I26: Increased knowledge of legal, financial and government services (such as homelessness support)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoided costs associated with reduced service usage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unit cost of engaging with homelessness services per person</li> <li>Per cent reductions in young people engaging with homelessness services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost estimates from sources such as the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare</li> <li>Data from evaluation and reporting on youth work programs</li> <li>Literature</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓
I46	Increased long-term stability, economic security, and agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I24: Increased stability and sense of security</li> <li>I35: Improved ability to maintain stable accommodation</li> <li>I47: Improved transition into adulthood</li> <li>I51: More sustainable employment outcomes for young people</li> <li>I49: Improved levels of educational attainment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value of stability and economic security</li> <li>Value of agency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of young people that achieve Increased long-term stability, economic security, and agency</li> <li>Change in quality of life from stability and economic security</li> <li>Change in quality of life from agency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data from evaluation and reporting on youth work programs</li> <li>Literature</li> <li>Stakeholder consultation</li> </ul>	✓	✓	

Note: This SROI framework represents what was devised at the inception of the project, and is not necessarily a representation of the analysis that was actually undertaken.

# Appendix A: SROI framework

Indicators and data sources – Education, employability and independence.

Table A1.4. Indicators and data sources – Education, employability and independence

Indicator ID	Outcome	Other related outcomes	Indicator	Measures	Potential data sources	Qual	Quant	Monetise
I37	Increased take-up of employment opportunities for young people and diverse groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I25: Increased awareness of employment opportunities</li> <li>I49: Improved levels of educational attainment</li> <li>I29: Enhanced work experience for school aged people and improved transition into work</li> <li>I43: Enhanced entrepreneurial and employability skills</li> <li>I39: Greater longevity and stability in employment</li> <li>I38: Increased likelihood of work opportunities being secure and meaningful</li> <li>I51: More sustainable employment outcomes for young people</li> <li>B23: Increased recognition of young people in the workplace</li> <li>F2: Reduced intergenerational disadvantage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value of increased employability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion and number of young people that realise meaningful and secure job opportunities</li> <li>Increased earnings over time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data from evaluation and reporting on youth work programs</li> <li>Literature</li> <li>Stakeholder consultation</li> <li>Data on earnings from sources such as the ABS</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓
I49	Increased levels of educational attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I27: Increased access to educational opportunities (including for diverse groups)</li> <li>I41: Increased participation in educational courses and training</li> <li>I28: Increased school retention</li> <li>B18: Reduction in young people who are not in education or training</li> <li>F2: Reduced intergenerational disadvantage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value of higher levels of educational attainment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion and number of young people that achieve higher levels of educational attainment</li> <li>Increased earnings over time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data from evaluation and reporting on youth work programs</li> <li>Literature</li> <li>Stakeholder consultation</li> <li>Data on earnings and educational attainment from sources such as the ABS</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓

Note: This SROI framework represents what was devised at the inception of the project, and is not necessarily a representation of the analysis that was actually undertaken.

# Appendix A: SROI framework

Indicators and data sources – Education, employability and independence.

Table A1.4. Indicators and data sources – Education, employability and independence

Indicator ID	Outcome	Other related outcomes	Indicator	Measures	Potential data sources	Qual	Quant	Monetise
S10	Avoided costs associated with unemployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I37: Increased take-up of employment opportunities for young people and diverse groups</li> <li>S14: Increased levels of employment and workforce participation/less dependency on welfare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoided costs associated with unemployment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reductions in unemployment/realised job opportunities</li> <li>Unit costs in unemployment payments per person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost estimates from sources such as the ABS</li> <li>Data from evaluation and reporting on youth work programs</li> <li>Literature</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓
S15	Increased economic productivity within the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>S14: Increased levels of employment and workforce participation/less dependency on welfare</li> <li>I49: Improved levels of educational attainment</li> <li>I40: Increased civic participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value of increased productive capacity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased levels of employment</li> <li>Increased levels of educational attainment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data from evaluation and reporting on youth work programs</li> <li>Literature</li> <li>Data on earnings and educational attainment from sources such as the ABS</li> </ul>	✓	✓	
I50	Increased long term independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I37: Increased take-up of employment opportunities for young people and diverse groups</li> <li>I49: Improved levels of educational attainment</li> <li>I26: Increased knowledge of legal, financial and government services (such as homelessness support)</li> <li>I48: Increased development of lifelong skills</li> <li>S13: Increased availability of resources in the broader community service system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value of independence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of young people who realise independence</li> <li>Improved quality of life as a result of independence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data from evaluation and reporting on youth work programs</li> <li>Literature</li> <li>Stakeholder consultation</li> </ul>	✓	✓	
B22	More young people involved in leadership and decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I42: Increased leadership opportunities for young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value to the community of young people being involved in leadership and decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of young people who are in leadership positions</li> <li>Improved outcomes for young people as a result</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature</li> <li>Stakeholder consultation</li> </ul>	✓		

Note: This SROI framework represents what was devised at the inception of the project, and is not necessarily a representation of the analysis that was actually undertaken.

# Appendix A: SROI framework

Indicators and data sources – Positive social participation.

Table A1.5. Indicators and data sources – Positive social participation

Indicator ID	Outcome	Other related outcomes	Indicator	Measures	Potential data sources	Qual	Quant	Monetise
<b>S11</b>	Reduced service usage related to youth justice system (including policing, courts etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I30: Reduced likelihood of committing crime and engaging with police</li> <li>I44: Reduced recidivism</li> <li>B21: Avoided costs associated with victim trauma (including avoided physical and psychological injury)</li> <li>I31: Reduced engagement with antisocial influences</li> <li>S16: Reduced service usage related to adult justice system</li> <li>I32: Increased engagement with restorative practice and reconnections with community</li> <li>I33: Increased prosocial behaviours and relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoided costs associated with youth justice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reductions in young people engaging with the youth justice system (including police costs)</li> <li>Unit costs in youth justice services per person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost estimates from sources such as Crime Statistics Agency Victoria</li> <li>Data from evaluation and reporting on youth work programs</li> <li>Literature</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓
<b>B20</b>	Increased community safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I30: Reduced likelihood of committing crime and engaging with police</li> <li>I45: Increased personal safety for young people</li> <li>B9: Reduced gender based violence</li> <li>B10: Reduced racial based violence</li> <li>B11: Reduced sexual orientation based violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value of reduced crime</li> <li>Value of feelings of increased safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reductions in crime</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data from evaluation and reporting on youth work programs</li> <li>Literature</li> <li>Stakeholder consultation</li> </ul>	✓	✓	
<b>B21</b>	Avoided costs associated with victim trauma (including avoided physical and psychological injury)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I30: Reduced likelihood of committing crime and engaging with police</li> <li>I45: Increased personal safety for young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoided cost associated with victim trauma</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reductions in young people committing crime</li> <li>Unit cost in victim trauma per crime</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost estimates from sources such as Crime Statistics Agency Victoria</li> <li>Data from evaluation and reporting on youth work programs</li> <li>Literature</li> </ul>	✓	✓	

# Appendix B – Detailed inputs

Inputs used in modelling

# Appendix B: Detailed inputs

## Inputs used in modelling

Table B1.1. Input used for each variable, assumption and data source.

Variable	Assumption (\$ values inflated to 2022 terms)	Source
<b>Mental health and wellbeing</b>		
Probability of mental illness, general youth population	26.0%	AIHW - Australia's youth: Mental Illness
Reduced probability of mental illness	22.2%	Headspace study
Wellbeing cost (DALYs/person/year)		
15-24	0.15	Global Burden of Disease
25+	0.16	Global Burden of Disease
Health system and care costs associated with mental illness	\$7,582	Calculation based on Productivity Commission - Mental Health Inquiry report
Value of a statistical life year (VSLY)	\$231,310	Office of Best Practice Regulation
<b>Education and employment</b>		
Probability of not completing year 12, general youth population	16.0%	AIHW – School retention and completion
Adjusted probability not completing year 12 or Cert III	31.8%	Research & Policy Centre - Outcomes from a longitudinal study of Education First Youth Foyers
Wage (less taxes), no post school qualifications	\$40,089	ABS (2021)
Wage (less taxes), post school qualifications	\$49,340	ABS (2021)
Average income tax rate	23.60%	OECD
Taxes, no post school qualifications	\$12,383	ABS (2021)
Taxes, post school qualifications	\$15,241	ABS (2021)
Probability of employment, post school qualifications	79.39%	ABS (2021)
Probability of employment, no post school qualifications	55.93%	ABS (2021)
Jobseeker, single, no children	\$16,939	Services Australia (2021)

## Appendix B: Detailed inputs

### Inputs used in modelling

Table B1.1 (continued). Input used for each variable, assumption and data source.

Variable	Assumption (\$ values inflated to 2022 terms)	Source
<b>Homelessness</b>		
Use housing services, general youth population	2%	AIHW – Australia’s youth: Homelessness and Overcrowding
Reduced probability of housing support	40%	The Geelong Project evaluation
Average cost of housing supports per person	\$4,997	Productivity Commission - Report on Government Services 2022
Health costs associated with homelessness	\$7,574	The Cost of Youth Homelessness in Australia – Research Briefing
<b>Justice system</b>		
Per cent risk of committing crime, general youth population	4%	AIHW – Australia’s youth: Crime and violence
Probability of re-offending, treated cohort	80.00%	AIHW, Youth Justice in Australia
Rate of re-offending per year	0.56	Calculation based on 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
Probability of entering youth supervision	21.92%	Calculation
Reduced probability of re-offending	9.0%	Embedded Youth Outreach Program evaluation
Adjusted probability of re-offending	72.8%	Calculation
Adjusted probability of entering youth supervision	19.9%	Calculation
Cost to justice system (youth supervision, average sentence length)	\$151,505	Productivity Commission - Report on Government Services 2022
Per cent of sentences that are custody	15.0%	ABS (2021)
Probability of entering adult custody	12.0%	Calculation
Adjusted probability of entering adult custody	10.9%	Calculation
Average cost of court appearance	\$1,409	Productivity Commission - Report on Government Services 2022
Average policing cost per offence	\$2,198	Calculation based on CSA and Smyth, R (2011), Costs of Crime in Victoria
Ratio of remand/parole costs to supervision/custody	1.46	Calculation based on Morgan A. (2018), How much does prison really cost? Comparing the costs of imprisonment with community corrections
Cost to justice system (adult custody, average sentence length)	\$65,661	Morgan A. (2018), How much does prison really cost? Comparing the costs of imprisonment with community corrections

## Appendix B: Detailed inputs

### Inputs used in modelling

Table B1.1 (continued). Input used for each variable, assumption and data source.

Variable	Assumption (\$ values inflated to 2022 terms)	Source
<b>Health system</b>		Specialist drug and alcohol services for young people - Cost benefit analysis
Reduction in AOD abuse	39%	Placeholder
Average visits to hospital per year	0.15	Calculation
Average ambulance attendances per year	0.05	Calculation
AOD hospitalisations per year	7,806	AODStats – Hospital admissions
AOD ambulance attendances per year	2,656	AIHW - Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs in Australia
Cost of ambulance attendance	\$2,012	Calculation based on Ambulance Victoria annual reports
Cost per hospitalisation	\$7,912	Calculated based on AIHW
Per cent AOD prevalence	5.0%	Victorian Government, Health Direct
AOD prevalence in Victorian youth	52,371	Calculation
<b>Other inputs</b>		
Per cent time toward intensive/targeted support	50.0%	Informed by stakeholder consultation
Youth worker to young person ratio, intense support	12.5	Informed by stakeholder consultation
Youth workers in Australia	12,300	Labour Market Insights – National Skills Commission
Per cent youth workers in Victoria	21.0%	Labour Market Insights – National Skills Commission
Youth worker salary	\$66,945	Calculated based on ABS (2021), Health care and social assistance industry
Oncosts	1.75	Department of Treasury and Finance, Regulatory Change Measurement Manual
Victorians aged 12-24	1,047,421	ABS (2021)
Youth percentage of overall Victorian population	16%	ABS (2021)

# Appendix C – References

## Appendix C: References

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#### Limitation of our Work

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