

Response to the  
Victorian Government Department of Health  
and Human Services  
regarding  
What's Important To Youth Discussion Paper

*Wyndham City Council*

*in consultation with the Wyndham Youth Senior Alliance*

## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>OVERVIEW</b> .....	<b>6</b>
3.1	THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH SERVICES .....	6
3.2	KEY ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN YOUTH SERVICES .....	6
<b>4</b>	<b>THE CITY OF WYNDHAM</b> .....	<b>8</b>
4.1	LOCAL CONTEXT .....	8
4.2	WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE IN WYNDHAM VALUE .....	8
<b>5</b>	<b>RESPONSE TO KEY QUESTIONS</b> .....	<b>9</b>
5.1	WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE DRAFT VISION? .....	9
5.2	WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE DRAFT OBJECTIVES? .....	9
5.3	WHAT DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE DONE TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE? .....	10
5.4	WHAT DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE DONE TO IMPROVE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE? .....	11
5.5	WHAT DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE DONE TO IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE? .....	12
5.6	WHAT DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE DONE TO IMPROVE THE MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNG PEOPLE? .....	13
5.7	WHAT DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE DONE TO TACKLE ALCOHOL AND DRUG ISSUES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE? .....	14
5.8	WHAT DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE DONE TO IMPROVE HOUSING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE? .....	15
5.9	WHAT DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE DONE TO TACKLE DISCRIMINATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE? .....	17
5.10	WHAT DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE DONE TO IMPROVE PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE? .....	18
5.11	OTHER COMMENTS .....	19

## 1 Introduction

Wyndham City welcomes the Victorian Government's commitment to ensuring that every young person has the opportunities and support that they need to reach their potential. We know from our experience in working with young people and their families as both a provider and a planner of youth services in a growing community, that the creation of a service system that empowers and engages young people within a strength-based framework is effective in ensuring that young people are able to be active and engaged citizens.

The development of this response to the discussion paper was facilitated by Wyndham City Council in consultation with the Wyndham Youth Senior Alliance. The Wyndham Youth Senior Alliance is a partnership of the following agencies and networks:

- Anglicare Victoria
- Karingal CREATE
- Whitelion
- School Focused Youth Service
- Wyndham Community Education Centre
- Western Drug Health Service
- Wyndham Headspace
- Wyndham Principals Network
- Werribee Support and Housing
- Wynbay LLEN
- The Smith Family
- Royal Children's Hospital
- Orygen Youth Services

Wyndham City Council has demonstrated its commitment over many years to work in partnership with young people to develop programs and services that enable all young people (including those experiencing disadvantage) to participate fully in our community. This is achieved through providing youth-friendly infrastructure as well as a range of staff and services.

We are committed to working collaboratively with the State Government to plan, develop and implement an integrated system of infrastructure and services. Strategies to achieve this include improving planning, to align youth service development with the planning of support and education services, sharing data and information, to ensure that our processes are aligned and working collaboratively to develop an integrated service system.

Our response is organised around the key consultation questions.

## 2 List of Recommendations

Key Questions	Recommendations
What do you think of the draft vision?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the vision and ensuing policy be underpinned by the principles of the United Nations Convention On The Rights Of The Child.</li> <li>2. That the vision and policy be driven by a strengths and assets-based approach, recognising and acknowledging that young people make a positive contribution to the Victorian community and have the right to participate in all aspects of community life.</li> </ol>
What do you think of the draft objectives?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. That the objectives be strengthened to acknowledge that many young people can be supported to build their strengths to avoid disengagement and to develop skills to manage the particular challenges that they face through funding early intervention services.</li> <li>4. That the State Government develop more measureable objectives, underpinned by a strong evaluation framework and a commitment to using evidence of effective practice to inform future policy.</li> </ol>
What do you think should be done to improve educational opportunities for young people?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. That the State Government create links and consistent approaches between the policy directions of The Education State directions and the youth policy.</li> <li>6. That the State Government consider developing flexible funding models that encourage and support schools to develop innovative approaches to prevent students from disengaging from learning.</li> <li>7. That the State Government reviews and modifies current funding arrangements in particular Student Resource Package (SRP) and equity funding.</li> <li>8. That the State Government increases the provision of alternative and innovative education programs, focussed on engaging the most vulnerable young people in education and learning. This includes increasing the availability of alternative school settings and increasing access to existing innovative programs, particularly those that focus on young people in out-of-home care settings.</li> </ol>
What do you think should be done to improve training opportunities for young people?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. That the State Government considers increasing funding to support young people who are unable to live at home to engage in training and education.</li> <li>10. That the State Government develops more flexible approaches to enable young people to access funded TAFE courses.</li> </ol>
What do you think should be done to improve employment opportunities for young people?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. That the State Government invests in innovative employment programs and services that facilitate improved collaboration between employers, education and training providers and young people, to increase opportunities and</li> </ol>

Key Questions	Recommendations
<p>What do you think should be done to improve the mental health of young people?</p>	<p>equip young people to develop employment skills.</p> <p>12. That the State Government strengthens the existing tertiary and secondary youth mental system.</p> <p>13. That the State Government increases the capacity of early intervention youth service providers.</p> <p>14. That the State Government enhance the relationship between secondary/tertiary and early intervention providers to ensure that young people receive a seamless system of support.</p>
<p>What do you think should be done to tackle alcohol and drug issues for young people?</p>	<p>15. That the State Government funds the development of an integrated, multi-disciplinary service system, that is able to provide holistic and developmentally appropriate services for young people with alcohol and other drug issues, and their families.</p> <p>16. That the State Government funds community based detox and rehabilitation programs, outreach services and family support in growth municipalities.</p> <p>17. That the State Government expand the availability of education programs for young people, focussing on binge drinking and alcohol abuse and the importance of healthy lifestyles.</p>
<p>What do you think should be done to improve housing for young people?</p>	<p>18. That the State Government extends the Victorian Education Youth Foyer to growth municipalities.</p> <p>19. That the State Government fund more flexible accommodation options for young people at risk of homelessness, particularly those in out-of-home care and kinship care or those with Child Protection orders.</p> <p>20. That the State Government strengthen the capacity of early intervention programs to engage with young people experiencing homelessness.</p>
<p>What do you think should be done to tackle discrimination of young people?</p>	<p>21. That the State Government funds and develops programs that focus on educating young people about their rights and engaging them in youth led anti-discrimination programs.</p> <p>22. That the State Government support young people to develop a sense of community connectedness by strengthening early intervention youth programs.</p>
<p>What do you think should be done to improve public transport for young people?</p>	<p>23. That the State Government develop funding models that makes public transport affordable for all young people.</p> <p>24. That the State Government develops integrated transport plans in growth municipalities.</p> <p>25. That the State Government increases accountability for transport providers in meeting the needs of young people.</p>

Key Questions	Recommendations
Other comments	<p>26. That the State Government articulates how new Youth Policy intersects and aligns with other key Government initiatives, particularly The Education State and The Roadmap to Reform.</p> <p>27. That the State Government engages with young people to support the implementation and evaluation of the policy.</p> <p>28. That the State Government consider the impact of rate capping on growth municipalities and its continued capacity to deliver prevention and early intervention services for young people.</p>

### 3 Overview

#### 3.1 The importance of youth services

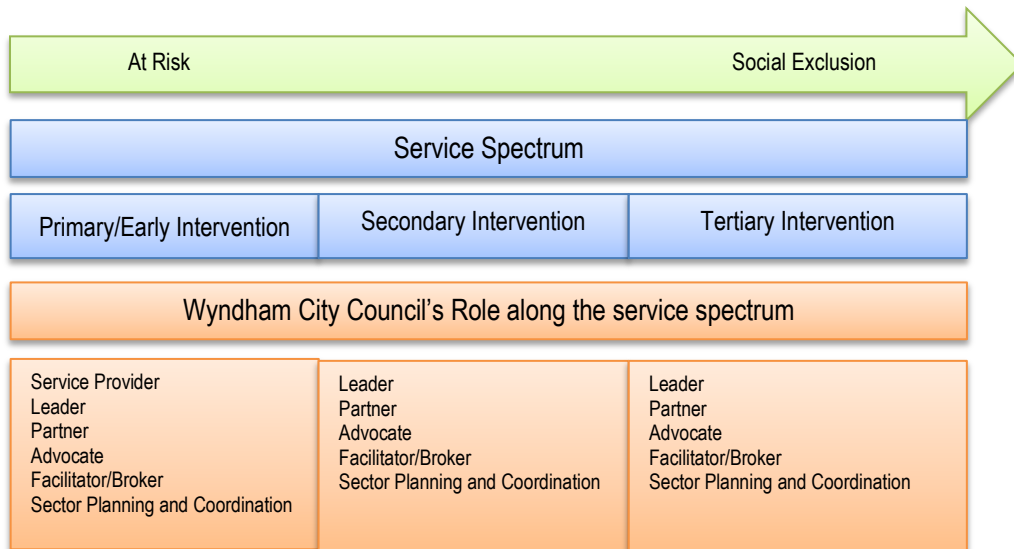
Adolescence is a critical phase of development, during which young people undergo profound personal and physiological change. The range of experiences that young people have as adolescents not only impacts on them at that time of their lives, but can profoundly impact on their futures. It is a time during which young people can be particularly vulnerable and require access to effective and high quality services. This will help to support young people to become healthy and engaged adults who can make a valuable contribution to the community.

#### 3.2 Key role of local Government in youth services

Supporting the most vulnerable and disengaged young people requires a strong, connected universal system. Local Government is well placed to work in partnership with the State Government and other service providers to support the development of this system.

Wyndham City Council has a role in the provision of primary /early intervention services and activities which contribute to the improved health and wellbeing of young people in Wyndham. These primary / early intervention youth support services provide an important universal service platform for young people, building on the continuum of care from the early years, through the middle childhood years to adolescence. The services support the physical, social and emotional development of all young people, enhancing protective factors and working with young people to develop their strengths, thus minimising the impact of risk factors. Importantly, primary and early intervention youth services provide a strong link to the range of other more intensive support services for young people. They also serve to facilitate partnership arrangements and networking between service providers. The provision of these services is critical for the development of an integrated, coherent and systematic approach to providing services for young people.

The service continuum below is viewed as one which describes interventions for a particular group(s) relative to the timing of that intervention and/or the potential harm or disadvantage that may occur without such intervention



*Adapted from: Framework for understanding Services Department of Premier and Cabinet (2005) Better Outcomes for Disengaged Young People, presentation for Local Government, as reproduced in Staying Connected: solutions for addressing service gaps for young people living at the Interface: a report commissioned by the Interface Councils in Metropolitan Melbourne.*

Wyndham City Council is the largest provider of early intervention youth services in Wyndham. During the 2014/15 financial year, 31,125 young people used Council's services. The role of Wyndham City Council in the Youth Services sector is complex and encompasses the following aspects:

**Leader**

We develop innovative models of planning, and service delivery to facilitate and support local business and community networks to achieve greater outcomes for young people in the municipality.

**Service Provider**

We use a place-based approach and broader community strengthening initiatives to deliver a range of primary and early intervention services and activities to young people and their families in their local neighbourhoods.

**Partner**

We work in partnership with a range of stakeholders including young people, agencies and schools to build a strong local youth service system that values and supports young people in Wyndham.

**Advocate**

We advocate on behalf of young people and youth agencies to support the provision of youth services that respond to the local needs in Wyndham.

**Facilitator/Broker**

Wyndham Youth Services plays a key role in information dissemination and in connecting local service providers through the facilitation of networks and the maintenance of information sharing systems.

## Sector Planning and Coordination

Wyndham Youth Services works in partnership with a range of community support services, agencies, schools and young people to plan and facilitate effective and coordinated services for young people in the municipality. This may be achieved through direct service delivery and the provision of information and transitional support services for young people.

## 4 The City of Wyndham

### 4.1 Local Context

The City of Wyndham is currently experiencing substantial population growth, as a result of its status as a designated growth area and subsequent extensive urban development. Between 2001 and 2011 Wyndham was the fastest growing municipality in Australia, adding almost 79,000 new residents<sup>1</sup>. As of June 2014, the population was 199,715 and it is estimated to increase by 91% to exceed 384,000 by 2036.

Wyndham's youth population is projected to continue to increase over the next 18 years, in line with population growth of Wyndham. It is estimated that the youth population will substantially reach 44,605 by 2021 and will exceed 57,000 by 2031.

The growth in the number of young people places enormous pressure on Council to deliver adequate services and in particular early intervention and prevention programs in a current and contemporary manner. Parents, peers, school, the community and particularly government have a key role in ensuring support is available for young people to help them through these challenging years.

### 4.2 What young people in Wyndham value

To understand the needs of young people living in Wyndham and how to address them, it is important to understand the factors that contribute to young people living successfully in their communities. Adolescence is a time of significant emotional, physical and intellectual change, with potential for fluctuations in health and wellbeing. Parents, peers, school and community in general are important for all young people and play a significant role in young people's perceptions of themselves and their health development.

Wyndham City Council regularly engages with young people to ensure that services and programs meet their needs. Extensive consultation was undertaken as part of the development of the Wyndham Youth Plan. Most young people who participated in the consultation indicated that people in their community, including family members, teachers, neighbours and community workers and sporting teams, supported them to make great decisions about their lives. Seventy-five per cent (75%) of young people said that their neighbourhood was 'youth friendly' and 50% felt that their community accepted and supported people from diverse cultural backgrounds, sexual orientation and abilities. The majority of young people believed that Wyndham is a youth friendly city and that this was a positive aspect of their community.

Young people also identified several key issues that were of concern to them. These were:

---

<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012, *Regional Population Growth 2011*, cat. No. 3218.0, ABS, Canberra



- Bullying;
- Drug and alcohol abuse/misuse;
- Mental health;
- Access to public transport; and
- Limited access to support services.

## 5 Response to Key Questions

### 5.1 What do you think of the draft vision?

Consistent with the United Nations Convention On The Rights Of The Child, the best interests of the young person should underpin the development of this vision and the policy. This needs to be a key driver of any changes to the service system.

The vision needs to recognise and acknowledge that young people make a positive contribution to the Victorian community. The vision has an issue based focus rather than a strength or asset based approach. It needs to empower young people by acknowledging them as active citizens with a right to participate in all aspects of community life.

The draft vision could also be strengthened by acknowledging the importance of providing a strong universal system as a mechanism for preventing disadvantage. The draft vision and ensuing policy should be underpinned by the premise that an integrated and accessible service system is integral to supporting young people to reach their potential.

#### Recommendations

1. That the vision and ensuing policy be underpinned by the principles of the United Nations Convention On The Rights Of The Child.
2. That the vision and policy be driven by a strengths and assets-based approach, recognising and acknowledging that young people make a positive contribution to the Victorian community and have the right to participate in all aspects of community life.

### 5.2 What do you think of the draft objectives?

The objectives cover a breadth of issues that are all relevant to ensuring that young people have access to a strong system of supports. Research shows that the greatest level of need for young people requiring support is at the early intervention and secondary level. While the draft objectives make mention of young people who are 'disadvantaged, disengaged or face particular challenges', there is a need to strengthen this approach through acknowledging that many young people can be supported to build their strengths to avoid disengagement and to develop skills to manage the particular challenges that they face.

Adequate funding across the early intervention, secondary and tertiary level of services is essential to ensuring an effective service system that is able to support young Victorians - this needs to be recognised in the objectives.

Consideration should be given to not using the term ‘no matter’ in the objective as this frames difference as a deficit. Words such as participation, access and rights would reflect a more proactive and strengths- based approach.

The objectives could be strengthened through a focus on the development of a strong evaluation framework and evidence base to inform future policy. The draft objectives are not measurable or quantifiable which may make the evaluation process challenging.

### **Recommendations**

3. That the objectives be strengthened to acknowledge that many young people can be supported to build their strengths to avoid disengagement and to develop skills to manage the particular challenges that they face through funding early intervention services.
4. That the State Government develop more measureable objectives, underpinned by a strong evaluation framework and a commitment to using evidence of effective practice to inform future policy.

### **5.3 What do you think should be done to improve educational opportunities for young people?**

The policy directions of the State Government to implement a range of strategies to develop “The Education State” provide an important framework for improving educational opportunities for young people. Links between the youth policy and The Education State directions are critical and consistent “joined-up” approaches are required.

Increased flexibility in funding models that support innovative approaches to enable all students to access learning environments that meet their needs is required. This includes providing financial support and incentives to schools for them to develop strategies to support students that are at risk of disengaging.

### **Recommendations**

5. That the State Government create links and consistent approaches between the policy directions of The Education State directions and the youth policy.
6. That the State Government consider developing flexible funding models that encourage and support schools to develop innovative approaches to prevent students from disengaging from learning.

#### **5.3.1 Student Resource Packages and equity funding**

The current Student Resource Package (SRP) that is administered by the Department of Education and Training enables student-based funding, including both the core student learning allocation and the equity funding, to follow students that transfer between schools if they move prior to the census date. This means that young people who transfer schools after the census date do not have access to the full suite of supports. The current funding arrangements should be modified to ensure that

funding (core student allocation and equity based funding) follows students regardless of where they are located in the education system.

Equity funding should be targeted towards assisting the most disadvantaged students. This includes better recognising the impacts of concentrated disadvantage within a school and factoring this into the model.

### Recommendations

7. That the State Government reviews and modifies current funding arrangements in particular Student Resource Package (SRP) and equity funding.

#### 5.3.2 Alternative school settings and models

Young people who experience difficulties in adjusting to mainstream school environments require access to locally based alternative school settings and programs which are able to accommodate their educational, behavioural, and/or social needs. Alternative settings should be delivered using a collaborative approach with a range of community based services. The aim of these approaches would be to re-engage young people by providing a holistic support program that explicitly targets some key 'Essential Learning Strands', leading into the attainment of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and Vocational Education Training (VET) certification.

Young people living in out-of-home care face particular difficulties in engaging in mainstream educational programs. A number of models have been found to be effective, such as Anglicare Victoria's TEACHaR program, which was awarded the 2015 Robin Clark Award. Expansion of such programs to the west is important to increase access to education for the most vulnerable young people.

### Recommendations

8. That the State Government increases the provision of alternative and innovative education programs, focussed on engaging the most vulnerable young people in education and learning. This includes increasing the availability of alternative school settings and increasing access to existing innovative programs, particularly those that focus on young people in out-of-home care settings.

#### 5.4 What do you think should be done to improve training opportunities for young people?

Young people face a number of challenges in accessing training and maintaining their commitment to complete their courses, particularly those who cannot live at home due to family violence or other protective concerns. These young people face a range of challenges in accessing training and require financial and other support to participate and remain engaged. The high costs of utilities and rental make it difficult for young people to be able to afford to study fulltime. Increased

flexibility and financial support for young people who cannot live at home while completing their education and training is necessary.

The strategies of the State Government to review TAFE funding and private training organisations are welcomed. We believe that these actions will assist to improve access to training for young people, particularly the most disadvantaged. As part of this process, consideration needs to be given to assessing the eligibility criteria for access to funded TAFE courses. The limitation of only being able to access two fully funded TAFE or adult community education courses limits a young person's ability to move between courses as they identify which pathway best suits their needs. It is unrealistic to expect that young people will always know which course will meet their needs at the point of enrolment.

### **Recommendations**

9. That the State Government considers increasing funding to support young people who are unable to live at home to engage in training and education.
10. That the State Government develops more flexible approaches to enable young people to access funded TAFE courses.

## **5.5 What do you think should be done to improve employment opportunities for young people?**

Young people in Melbourne's west continue to experience higher than average levels of unemployment and underemployment compared to young people in other areas of Melbourne. This disparity highlights the need to develop effective systems of support to enable young people to make successful transitions into work. This is exacerbated in Wyndham, where local employment opportunities and access to public transport are limited.

A number of programs and strategies have been found to be successful, including:

- Programs that facilitate relationships between education providers, business and community based agencies to equip young people to meet the requirements of the workplace;
- Supporting the growth of micro businesses and investing in innovation and networks of regional incubators.

### **Recommendations**

11. That the State Government invests in innovative employment programs and services that facilitate improved collaboration between employers, education and training providers and young people, to increase opportunities and equip young people to develop employment skills.

## 5.6 What do you think should be done to improve the mental health of young people?

### 5.6.1 Integrated and holistic service system

Improving the mental health of young people requires a holistic and integrated response, taking account of the multiple factors that influence health and wellbeing. Many young people who have a mental illness also experience a range of issues including poor physical health, failure to achieve academically, drug misuse or dependency, homelessness or risk of homelessness, and increased risk of law-breaking behaviour.

Early intervention services and secondary/tertiary youth mental health providers play important roles in supporting young people with mental illness. Early intervention youth services such as those provided by local Government and Anglicare Victoria's youth programs provide services that serve to reduce the prevalence of mental illness in young people, as well as supporting improved health, social and economic outcomes for these vulnerable young people.

The following service responses have been identified as critical to provide an integrated and responsive service system:

- *Increase the capacity of early intervention youth service providers:* Recreation and social activities play an important part in helping young people when they experience mental health challenges. Funding should be made available to extend established early intervention youth services to be better able to support young people and their families with a broad range of social, life skills and leadership programs, including outreach services, after school and weekend programs;
- Strengthen the capacity of the youth mental health service system to provide specialist assessment and consultation support to early intervention services and schools to assist them to identify young people with emerging or existing mental ill-health issues.
- *Strengthen the capacity of agencies providing early intervention mental support for both young people and their families:* It has been demonstrated that significant long term change is made when services are able to work with young people and their parents/significant others and the earlier this support is provided the more likely that change is able to be sustained.
- *Fund a single 'youth triage' intake and assessment point:* Provided by secondary and tertiary youth mental health providers, this service would be able to support young people with complex needs, including alcohol and other drug issues, tailored to adolescent and young adult-specific needs and culture.

### 5.6.2 Enhance the relationship between secondary/ tertiary and early intervention providers to ensure that young people receive a seamless system of support.

Navigating the mental health system can be daunting for early intervention service providers, young people and families. Enhancing relationships between secondary/ tertiary and early intervention providers will enable that young people to move easily through the support system. This could be achieved through a range of programs and initiatives including:

- The development of youth specific mobile multidisciplinary teams in growth areas that provide young people who are socially isolated and have limited transport options with access to a range of services and providers in their local communities.
- Facilitation of local networks which include both tertiary and early intervention service providers to support the development of integrated referral systems.

### Recommendations

12. That the State Government strengthens the existing tertiary and secondary youth mental system.
13. That the State Government increases the capacity of early intervention youth service providers.
14. That the State Government enhance the relationship between secondary/tertiary and early intervention providers to ensure that young people receive a seamless system of support.

## 5.7 What do you think should be done to tackle alcohol and drug issues for young people?

### 5.7.1 A continuum of care and integrated service system

A continuum of care, facilitated by an integrated service system is required to support young people with alcohol and other drug issues on their journey to recovery. Specialist alcohol and other drug service providers have identified the following critical elements of an effective service response:

- Client centred services;
- Services that are designed to meet the unique developmental needs of adolescents, taking into account the different stages of adolescence from early adolescence to young adulthood;
- Accessible and flexible treatment programs, such as outreach services;
- Services that are able to adapt to the complex needs of young people and their families;
- Range of programs and strategies across the spectrum from prevention, education and information to early intervention programs and treatment services;
- Services that encourage and engage families;
- Holistic support system that is able to provide comprehensive and integrated treatment approaches, bringing together multi-disciplinary teams and a range of services, such as schools, mental health services, medical services, dental services and employment skill/training services.

### 5.7.2 Services in growth municipalities

There is a critical lack of appropriate local services for young people that are affected by drugs and alcohol in growth municipalities. In particular, Wyndham has no local detox and rehabilitation

programs will enable young people to heal in an environment that is connected to their existing support networks. There is also a lack of outreach support services and counselling programs.

### 5.7.3 Education programs for young people

The provision of education programs for young people is fundamental in enabling them to make informed lifestyle choices. Education programs can be delivered by both education settings and early intervention youth services and should include information about:

- The dangers of binge drinking and alcohol abuse.
- How to maintain a healthy diet and prepare healthy, simple meals.

### Recommendations

15. That the State Government funds the development of an integrated, multi-disciplinary service system, that is able to provide holistic and developmentally appropriate services for young people with alcohol and other drug issues, and their families.
16. That the State Government funds community based detox and rehabilitation programs, outreach services and family support in growth municipalities.
17. That the State Government expand the availability of education programs for young people, focussing on binge drinking and alcohol abuse and the importance of healthy lifestyles.

## 5.8 What do you think should be done to improve housing for young people?

### 5.8.1 Expansion of the Youth Foyer Model to growth areas

Evidence suggests that mental health disorders (particularly depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorders) are increased by the experience of homelessness. Many young people experiencing homelessness have both mental health and alcohol and other drug problems and actively avoid services or struggle to access them. A coordinated approach which incorporates a range of mental health and drug and alcohol services is required to ensure that these young people are able to secure more stable housing, engage in education and training and seek assistance with their health concerns.

The rapid growth in Wyndham has resulted in a significant lack of appropriate support services for young people experiencing homelessness, including supported housing and health and other support services, when compared to other parts of metropolitan Melbourne<sup>2</sup>.

The Victorian Education Youth Foyer provides an effective model for supporting young people in a holistic manner. The development of such a model in Wyndham would enable vulnerable young people to continue their education in safe and secure housing.

### 5.8.2 Accommodation options for young people at risk of homelessness

Increasing accommodation options for young people will help to ensure that those that are at risk of homelessness are supported. These options could include:

---

<sup>2</sup> H3 Wyndham, Health Housing & Homelessness in Wyndham Information Kit, November, 2013

- Accommodation with accompanying supports for young people leaving detention;
- Accommodation with accompanying supports for young people in education, vocational training and for those transitioning into the workforce;
- Support for families/individuals who are hosting young people through ‘couch surfing’ arrangements in the form of respite care, material support, assistance with transport, as well as professional advice and counselling;
- Accommodation options for young people leaving out-of-home care;
- Funding for local agencies to provide leaving care case management support for this cohort to assist with the implementation of their leaving care plans.

### **5.8.3 Strengthen the capacity of young people to sustain independent living arrangements**

Providing young people with access to support to enable them to sustain independent living arrangements will ensure that they have an increased ability to contribute positively to both the social and economic aspects of their community. This could include:

- Utilising the learnings from the Western Region Youth Housing Readiness Advisory group to reduce the likeliness of young people leaving care and entering into homelessness;
- Funding outreach workers to provide case management support for young people in transition from homelessness;
- Fund programs focussed on increasing the skills and capacities of young people to engage in shared housing; and
- Provide practical financial support for young homeless people (15-25 years) to assist them in obtaining the necessary items to establish a household.

### **5.8.4 Early intervention programs to engage with young people experiencing homelessness.**

Consideration should be given to strengthening the capacity of early intervention youth service providers to provide opportunities for young people experiencing homelessness to participate in a range of social, recreational and life skills programs.

#### **Recommendations**

18. That the State Government extends the Victorian Education Youth Foyer to growth municipalities.
19. That the State Government fund more flexible accommodation options for young people at risk of homelessness, particularly those in out-of-home care and kinship care.
20. That the State Government strengthen the capacity of early intervention programs to engage with young people experiencing homelessness.



## 5.9 What do you think should be done to tackle discrimination of young people?

Many young people in our community report that have experienced discrimination. Discrimination can occur in many forms in a variety of settings. The experience of discrimination can have a detrimental impact a young person's mental health, psychological development and capacity to negotiate and transition to adulthood. It can also be a barrier to social inclusion, as it can diminish a young person's sense of connection and belonging to their community, with the potential to result in marginalisation and isolation. This in turn, can diminish a young person's participation in education, employment and social activities.

The following are effective strategies for tackling discrimination of young people:

1. *Provide young people with information and education about their rights:* this could be achieved through the development of community education campaigns and education programs delivered through schools;
2. *Engage young people in youth led anti-discrimination programs:* Young people should be considered as significant champions of social cohesion and inclusion. Developing youth-led anti-discrimination programs will ensure that programs are meaningful for young people and will have maximum impact. These programs could be incorporated into both the education sector and the early intervention youth sector;
3. *Support young people to develop a sense of community connectedness by strengthening early intervention youth programs:* Early intervention youth services are well placed to support young people to connect with and engage in their community through the provision of social activities, leadership opportunities and support for life skill development. The development of a sense of belonging and connectedness to community for young people is an essential element of social cohesion. Programs which promote a positive sense of self and a strong sense of identity are important in fostering the connections of young people to their community.

Early intervention youth services should be strengthened to ensure that marginalised young people have easy access to services and programs that foster and promote active citizenship. Anglicare Victoria's youth drop in program "The Garage" has been supporting Wyndham's young people in this way for over 15 years. The program model invites local youth service providers to meet young people in a drop in space that the young people feel they own. In this way, young people are provided with access to youth workers and support (local program information, Life skills programs, barista training and so on) on their terms and when they are ready to access.

### Recommendations

21. That the State Government funds and develops programs that focus on educating young people about their rights and engaging them in youth led anti-discrimination programs.
22. That the State Government support young people to develop a sense of community connectedness by strengthening early intervention youth programs.

## 5.10 What do you think should be done to improve public transport for young people?

Public transport provides an independent means of travel for young people. It is often the only available option for young people under the age of 18 and for those who don't have a drivers licence and/or access to a car. Good access to public transport has the potential to decrease the risk of social exclusion by providing increased access to education, employment, recreation and other support services. In 2012 Wyndham City Council and the Youth Task Force (a youth volunteer group) developed a partnership to advocate for the transport needs of young people. This advocacy strategy addressed many issues, some of these are articulated below.

### 5.9.1 Ensure that public transport is affordable

The cost of public transport can be a barrier for young people, particularly those that are experiencing disadvantage. The development of a youth concession for young people experiencing disadvantage would enable them to have better access to public transport which would increase their ability to engage in employment and education.

### 5.9.2 Develop integrated transport plans in growth municipalities

The development of an 'integrated transport plan' for growth municipalities that address walking, cycling, and community transport, as well as connectivity between mainstream public transport modes will enable young people to get to jobs, education, services and recreation. This integrated plan should also encompass demand-responsive transport options in very low density areas to meet specific local needs.

### 5.10.3 Increased accountability for transport providers

A reporting system should be developed which requires the Public Transport Victoria to report to Parliament each year about their service delivery, and in particular address the following questions

- What has been done in regards to increasing bus frequency to twenty minute intervals in the outer suburban areas of Melbourne?
- What new routes have been introduced in the outer suburban areas of Melbourne?

### Recommendations

23. That the State Government develop funding models that makes public transport affordable for all young people.
24. That the State Government develops integrated transport plans in growth municipalities.
25. That the State Government increases accountability for transport providers in meeting the needs of young people.

## 5.11 Other comments

### 5.11.1 Ensuring strong policy alignments

The State Government has recently released a raft of new policy initiatives including The Roadmap to Reform and The Education State Consultation Paper. The new Youth Policy should clearly articulate how it intersects and aligns with these and other key Government initiatives to ensure that the service system is developed in a cohesive and effective way.

### 5.11.2 Developing a stable service system

Young people require a stable service system. Consideration should be given to the provision of long term funding for initiatives, it is difficult for young people to understand how to navigate the system when it is constantly changing in line with shifting Government priorities.

### 5.11.3 Clarifying roles and responsibilities

Information should be included in the policy about the role of State Government and their responsibilities in achieving the objectives of the policy. The role of stakeholders and partners and the responsibilities of other tiers of Government should also be clearly articulated to support the development of collaborative working relationships.

### 5.11.4 Engaging with young people to support the implementation and evaluation of the policy

The implementation of the policy should include opportunities for meaningful engagement of young people in both the implementation and evaluation of the policy. Consideration should be given to the critical role that local Government could play in facilitating consultations with young people.

### 5.11.5 Impact of rate capping on growth municipalities

Keeping pace with the rapid growth and development across Wyndham is an ongoing challenge. Council is committed to providing services and infrastructure to ensure that all young people have access to the support services that they need.

The proposed plan to cap rates and developer contributions will severely impact upon the funding available for Council to continue to provide the infrastructure and services required to ensure that all young people have access to facilities and services.

## Recommendations

26. That the State Government articulates how new Youth Policy intersects and aligns with other key Government initiatives, particularly The Education State and The Roadmap to Reform.
27. That the State Government engages with young people to support the implementation and evaluation of the policy.
28. That the State Government consider the impact of rate capping on growth municipalities and its continued capacity to deliver prevention and early intervention services for young people.