



Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project

# Youth Services Mapping

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## Executive Summary

### Introduction

Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project (GSLP) is a long-term evidence-based project that aims to lead a collaborative community initiative to improve the life chances and educational outcomes for the children and young people of Greater Shepparton, from conception to career.

The project arose as business and community leaders began focusing on the disconnect between the high numbers of disengaged youths and the inability to find work ready young people to fill employment roles.

The GSLP will include a range of programs, projects, initiatives and organisations some of which will be new, others will be about developing partnerships and others will aim to grow existing initiatives.

The 'Youth Services Mapping Project' is a component of the Lighthouse project's exploratory phase and consists of two broad parts. The first is to map the existing service providers and services for youth between the ages of 12 and 18 in the Greater Shepparton area. The second is to capture the service providers' insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the existing youth services and into the factors that enable and constrain service availability and access.

### Project Objectives

The objectives of the Youth Services Mapping Project are -

1. To identify and describe the existing service providers and services in Greater Shepparton for youth between 12 and 18 years.
2. To map the relationships between the existing service providers and services.
3. To identify duplication and gaps in the services and service data.
4. To gain insights from the service providers of the factors that enable and constrain service availability and access, and
5. To describe the strengths and deficits of youth services in Greater Shepparton.

### Project Scope

The broad scope of the services is those provided to youth between the ages of 12 and 18 years and includes – health, mental health, welfare, community, government, church, Indigenous, CALD, education (government and non-government funded), alternative education, post-secondary, skills and training, employment, and criminal justice. The geographical scope is the Shire boundary of the City of Greater Shepparton.

### Findings

#### Part 1- Mapping of Existing services

There are 39 youth service organisations providing 118 services targeted at 12 – 18 year olds in Shepparton. This does not indicate the total number as there are many organisations and services that young people utilise and that are not specifically targeted at their age group. In addition, schools, churches, employment services and community based services such as sporting clubs were not counted individually but do provide services to 12-18 year olds.

Specific Youth Services are minor service providers compared with general services eg medical services, community based services eg sporting groups with families emerging as by far the largest 'service providers' to young people in Shepparton.

The breakdown of the youth services is provided in the table below.

Category	Number
Case management/counselling	13
Disability	17
Drugs & alcohol	3
Education	18
Employment/careers	7
Family services	15
Housing	10
Legal	4
Mental Health	12
Personal development	16
Pregnancy support	4

In summary,

- Greater 80% of youth Services organisations are not-for-profits governed by a Board of community people. There is little overlap in Board membership.
- 22% organisations operate Statewide or Nationally with an additional 20% covering the Hume region.
- 50% of organisations are located on Wyndham and Welsford St in Shepparton.
- 10% organisations that provide services to young people are youth specialists.
- All organization provide less than 5 types of youth services.
- 40% of organisations provide only one type of youth service.
- Federal and State Government are the major funders of youth services.

## Part 2- Service Provider Insight

### *Relationship between Existing service providers and services (Obj. 2)*

#### Service Providers

- Structure has emerged in response to drivers and not designed. The major driver is funding and the structure is always changing in response to funding priorities and initiatives.
- There are a large number of formal & informal relationships e.g. MOU, Alliance that, in practice vary in how active they are with the linkages being flexible and their performance driven by informal personal relationships.
- In recent years funding has led to the emergence of centralised intake services that create formal linkages within a service type eg mental health, housing.
- The sector is complex and all respondents only have a limited understanding of the sector.

#### Structure of the Services

- Youth services favour face-to-face interface that is supported by other interfaces such as phone and social media.
- Except in a couple of services, young people have very little influence on the services that are offered. The funders are the key influencer on what services are offered.
- Services are delivered by paid staff with support from volunteers and rarely by young people themselves.
- Within organisations, there are functions such as intake processes that are standardised; across organisations there is some functions standardised where it has been mandated by the funder.

### *Duplication and Gaps (Obj 3)*

- No duplication of services was reported and this was supported by regular reference to unacceptably long waiting lists for services.
- The key gaps in services that were identified are –

- Preventative services – particularly in schools
- Youth mental health and residential
- Youth drug and alcohol detox facilities
- On-going positive, interested adult role models
- Transition or linking services eg between services and between primary and secondary school.

#### *Service access and availability (Obj. 4)*

The key factors cited as impacting on service access are -

- Requirement for parental involvement when the parents are absent or unable to support the young person.
- Organisations are not 'youth friendly' particularly if there are multiple forms to complete or staff are judgemental.
- Waiting lists for services often result in a young person giving up rather than accessing at a later date.
- Young people, parents and service providers being unaware of the services on offer.
- Individual is disengaged and so will not access any services.

The key factors cited as impacting on services availability are -

- Funding ultimately determines what services are available.
- Availability of qualified staff eg youth mental health staff and volunteers impacts the services provided.

#### *Strengths and deficits of Youth Services (Obj. 5)*

The people are the key strength that was identified for the sector. The people involved were described as determined, hard-working and dedicated even though they are doing a difficult job often on quite low pay.

There were three key deficit areas identified -

1. Linkages/structure
  - Organisations tend to operate as 'silos' not only within the sector but also with the rest of the community.
  - There is almost no sharing of business systems such as data systems, measurement, staff training, administration processes.
  - Poor linkages between the services and young people means that services are not where the young people are, they get missed at transition points in their lives and between services and are unaware of what services are available.
2. Competition for funding
  - The intense competition for funding has led to a culture of competition/lack of trust vs a culture of collaboration/goodwill.
  - The pressure to be successful to retain funding and the reality of the difficulty of achieving results with young people has led to a lack of transparency by funders and service providers.
  - Organisations have retreated to core business with the costs involved in collaboration being seen as not-core.
  - Funders are driving a trend to incorporate youth services into generalist larger organisations and putting pressure on smaller youth specialist organisations.
3. Imbalance in services on offer
  - There is a very strong emphasis on providing services to young people who are in crisis with very few preventative services being funded.

#### *Other Themes*

A number of other themes emerged from the interviews with the Service providers.

1. Funding

Although the total overall level of funding was not raised as an issue there was concern about the impact of rapid changes in funding priorities; changing providers on cost and cutting quality programs and the funding of short term initiatives. These funding issues were seen to limit the ability to achieve improved outcomes for young people, drive] under costing of projects and high workloads and the employment of lower qualified staff.

## 2. Performance Management

Performance is measured using outputs standards set by funder with very limited use of outcome measures. Evaluations tend to happen at the end of a contract with little use of continuous improvement.

## Background

The Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project (GSLP) is currently in the ‘exploring’ phase of a collective impact approach to improving the life chances for the children and young people of Greater Shepparton. The ‘exploring’ phase aims to develop a shared vision and goals between cross-sector partners and, as an evidence-based project, seeks to answer three key questions –

1. How children and young people in Greater Shepparton are faring on key developmental indicators?
2. What programs, services, community resources are already in place and working to positively impact on these development indicators?
3. Where are the opportunities/priorities to improve the life chances of children and as a consequence improve the social and economic wellbeing of Greater Shepparton?

The GSLP will include a range of programs, projects, initiatives and organisations some of which will be new, others will be about developing partnerships and others will aim to grow existing initiatives (see Appendix 1). Work has commenced and progress has been made towards answering the three questions that are part of the ‘exploring’ phase.

The released ‘*State of Greater Shepparton’s Children’s Report 2014*’ provides an excellent basis to understand how children and young people in Greater Shepparton are faring on key developmental indicators (see Ques 1 above).

The mapping of programs, services and community resources (Ques. 2) has commenced for the 0-12 years domain by the ‘Best Start and Communities for Children initiatives’.

The Youth Services Mapping project is a component of the Lighthouse project’s exploratory phase and consists of two broad parts. The first is to map the existing service providers and services for youth between the ages of 12 and 18 in the Greater Shepparton area. The second is to capture the service providers’ insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the existing youth services and into the factors that enable and constrain service availability and access (see Appendix 2).

The Advisory Committee for the Youth Service Mapping Project (YSMP) is the Youth Alliance (see Appendix 3) and it was this group that identified the value of having an initial workshop to enable youth service providers to hear about and have input into the design of the YSMP. A ‘Collaboration workshop’ was held in April 2015 to initiate the project with over 50 service provider organisations invited to attend (see Appendix 4).

Ultimately, the findings of the Youth Service Mapping project and other commissioned work will be used by the Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project to work with service providers, the community and University of Melbourne to create a priority action plan that improves the life chances of youth in Greater Shepparton.

## Project Objectives

The objectives of the Youth Services Mapping Project are -

1. To identify and describe the existing service providers and services in Greater Shepparton for youth between 12 and 18 years.
2. To map the relationships between the existing service providers and services.

3. To identify duplication and gaps in the services and service data.
4. To gain insights from the service providers of the factors that enable and constrain service availability and access, and
5. To describe the strengths and deficits of youth services in Greater Shepparton.

## **Project Scope**

The broad scope of the services is those provided to youth between the ages of 12 and 18 years and includes – health, mental health, welfare, community, government, church, Indigenous, CALD, education (government and non-government funded), alternative education, post-secondary, skills and training, employment, and criminal justice. The geographical scope is the Shire boundary of the City of Greater Shepparton.

## **Methods**

### **Part 1- Mapping of Existing Youth Services**

An initial list of service providers was developed from the invitation list to the Collaboration Workshop and from the Greater Shepparton Youth Services Directory (<http://www.greatershepparton.com.au/youth-services-directory>). A set of descriptors was developed and tested with the Youth Alliance and the attendees at the Collaboration Workshop. Feedback from those forums and from Fairley Foundation Executive Officer (Stephanie Exton) was incorporated. The final descriptors are provided in Appendix 2.

The basic data was initially collected from each of the service providers' web page and from their brochures and promotional material. Some gaps were able to be filled from the Commonwealth Family Relationships data base ([www.familyrelationships.gov.au](http://www.familyrelationships.gov.au)), the Victorian Department of Human Services directory (<http://humanservicesdirectory.vic.gov.au/Home.aspx>) and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits data base ([www.acnc.gov.au](http://www.acnc.gov.au)). The remaining information was collected at the face-to-face interviews (Part 2) or over the telephone.

Information was recorded into an Excel database to allow users to search and categorise the services and service organisations.

### **Part 2 – Service Provider Insights**

Social research methods were used to collect qualitative data through face-to-face interviews with service providers. These interviews were semi-structured and used laddering (Grunert and Grunert 1995) and convergent techniques (Dick 1998). Interview responses were recorded manually by the two interviewers, where possible, and then transcribed. Transcribed interview notes were cross-checked for accuracy, both in terms of relevance to the research and the transcription process (Patton 1990).

Convergent interviewing techniques are useful as they allow for the identification of similar and dissimilar patterns in reasoning on a topic. Laddering techniques (Grunert & Grunert 1995) allow for the systematic exploration of the reasoning underlying the perspectives of the interviewee.

Purposive sampling was used to identify suitable interview subjects because it enables the selective targeting of interviewees and hence ensures that a range of service provider contexts and views are explored (Patton 1990).

The interview process commenced with three semi-structured interviews with members of the Youth Alliance. This tested the interview approach and assembled background information on service sector. The remainder of the interviews were selected to ensure coverage of each of the identified sub-areas of the service sector; individuals who requested an interview and those that were specifically recommended to the research team.

Interviewing continued until no new perspectives emerged and recurring patterns and themes were identified. A limited number of follow-up interviews were conducted to test key patterns that were emerging. A total of 38 interviews were conducted.

## Findings

### Part 1: Mapping of Existing Services

#### Introduction

There were 39 service providers and 118 services identified targeting 12 -18 year olds in the categories of health, mental health, welfare, community, government, church, Indigenous, CALD, education (government and non-government funded), alternative education, post-secondary, skills and training, employment, and criminal justice within the Greater Shepparton area. This is not the complete number of service providers and services available to 12-18 year old young people in Greater Shepparton.

Firstly, and most importantly, the family is by far the major service provider to young people in the Greater Shepparton area. The majority of families provide, what the Youth Service sector would call, 'case management'. They identify issues in a young person's life, provide counselling and facilitate the young person to access the resources they need. It is only when the family can't provide appropriate 'case management' or can't provide a specialist service e.g. secondary education that the young person accesses the more formal service sector.

Apart from the family, there are many organisations and services that have no specified target age group and that are accessed by 12-18 year olds. In addition, there are categories of services such as sport that create important connections between young people and the broader community that were not a part of this study and are targeted at and widely utilised by 12-18 year olds. These services often provide a forum for awareness activities in areas such as health, mental health, drug and alcohol and justice even though their primary purpose is, for instance, sport.

Organisations such as individual churches, employment organisations and schools and their services have in the main not been separately identified and counted. This was because the type of structured services they provide were relatively standard across each group.

#### Data sources and availability

Data was not able to be collected for all the organisation and service descriptors (Appendix 2 for original list).

The service provider's websites and the data bases tend to provide generic, non specific information and this can make it difficult to distinguish between the different services and service providers. Respondents agreed that the general nature of the descriptions was often deliberate for a number of tactical reasons. Firstly, it allowed organisations to appear relevant in the sector and able to respond to the current focus of government funding initiatives. Secondly, it often represented the aspirations of the organisation to grow and provide a suite of services to young people and their families. The service provider websites also varied in their accuracy as they were not up-to-date with the new services and some service areas were indicated on websites that were not currently provided or at least, not in Greater Shepparton.

A large number of the organisations were very reticent to provide detailed information on a number of descriptor categories namely: organisation and specific service resources; client numbers;

deliverables/KPIs; intake criteria and specific linkages. There were three main reasons organisations provided for their reticence in providing the data.

The first cited was competition and competitive advantage. This attitude aligns with the conditions the sector operates under. Porter (1980) identified a number of factors that lead to rivalry between organisations which the youth services sector is experiencing, namely – short term funding cycles; rapid changes in a funder’s priorities; few funding sources; the ease that funders can move from one provider to another; declining funding availability and the large perceived need for services. Competition particularly impacted youth service providers’ preparedness to release resource, client number and intake information as this information was seen to provide an advantage in their ability to secure funding.

The second reason cited for not providing information was confidentiality. This consistently related to funder’s requirements for confidentiality of their expected deliverables/KPIs and their performance against those measures.

The final reason for not providing information was related to data accuracy given the amount of flexibility in service provision and the relationships that must occur in practice. Funders and specific programs often require certainty and clear boundaries around the service to be provided. However, for example, a staff member may be funded to provide housing assistance but a young person needing assistance is not only homeless but also has mental health issues, financial difficulties and is socially isolated. Experience shows that without addressing the related issues the young person is likely to remain at risk of homelessness and hence staff invest time in resolving these related issues. This means that the staff figures officially attached to specific services does not necessarily align with the staff figures in practice.

### Service Provider Organisations

The majority of the service provider organisations are from the not-for-profit sector. Almost all organisations are governed by a Board of community people and there is very little overlap of the Board members between organisations.

22% of service providers are Statewide or national organisations that, although large overall generally only provide a selection of their total services in the Greater Shepparton area. By far the majority of organisations are based in Shepparton and not in the surrounding towns with almost 50% of those with a ‘shop front’ being located close together in Wyndham and Welsford Streets.

All service organisations provide less than 5 specific types of services to young people with 37% providing only one type (e.g. mental health) of service. Although all the organisations provide services to young people between the ages of 12 and 18 most are not youth specialists. Organisations that do specialise on youth such as The Bridge Youth Service, Brayton, Berry Street, Headspace and Word and Mouth actively design their services and delivery methods to be appealing to young people. A number of organisations commented that they previously had specific services for the target audience but that they had now been absorbed into the more general services. There was evidence that some of these now generalist organisations are using youth specialists to increase the use of their services by young people.

Both the Federal and State governments were consistently provided as the key sources of funding with philanthropics, donations, parent organisations and social enterprises identified as providing additional funding and resources. The youth sector relies heavily on the generosity of volunteer time. Both paid staff members and other contributors provided volunteer time and as such the true cost of providing services is not accurately represented by the financial data.

The critical resource for the sector is its staff. Limited physical infrastructure is required except in the housing area.

## Services

There is a large number of services that are available to young people between the age of 12 and 18 although very few are specifically just for this age group. Many services have an upper age limit of 25 or are not age specific.

The majority of services are targeted at dealing with a specific issue e.g. housing or mental health with close to 35% of general counselling, general family or personal development services (see Table 1). All services are available to young people no matter what their cultural or religious background with a small percentage being targeted specifically at a group such as indigenous or newly arrived refugees. Overwhelmingly, the services are focussed on dealing with issues once they had become a problem for the young person with far fewer services able to be categorised as preventative.

<b>Type of Service</b>	<b>Number</b>
Case management/counselling	13
Disability	17
Drugs & alcohol	3
Education	18
Employment/careers	7
Family services	15
Housing	10
Legal	4
Mental health	12
Personal development	16
Pregnancy support	4
Sexual assault	3

Table 1: Number of different types of services

Almost every service primarily uses face-to-face interactions with young people with a supporting package of telephone, group and electronic interfaces.

Referral of a young person to a service is generally informal and, apart from the young person self referring, can occur by a range of support people such as family members, friends and professionals. It is only statutory services such as child protection, youth conferencing that require referral by a government entity. What services the young person is referred to varies and largely depends on the young persons needs and the awareness the support person has of the services and service organisations.

Access to the services is predominantly voluntary, depends on the intake process and on the assessed priority of need. The age of the young person influences the young person's ability to access a service without parental involvement. For many services, once a young person turns 18 they are considered to be an adult and don't need parental involvement. However, this is not standard and for some services such as the Centrelink independence allowance, the age requirement is older and for others such as ASCO, the age is lower.

Youth specialist service providers in particular increase access by providing outreach services that either locate themselves in organisations or at events where young people attend.

## **Part 2: Service Provider Insights**

The insights from the service provider interviews have initially been grouped to address Objectives 2 (Relationships), Objective 3 (Duplication and Gaps) and then additional themes that strongly emerged but that were outside the objectives. Following that are the insights that address Objective 4 (service availability and access) and Objective 5 (strengths and deficits of youth) of the project.

### **Relationships**

#### *Structure of the Service Sector*

Respondents indicated that the structure of the service sector had evolved in response to drivers such as funding initiatives, competition, personal relationships and not from an overall strategic plan or set of shared principles related to improving outcomes for young people. Examples of the adhoc nature of the structural development included the variety of intake approaches, lack of ability to share data, lack of collective approach to improvement and the range of approaches to measuring performance.

Although a large number of formal and semi-formal relationships between sub-sets of organisations (e.g. Alliances, MOUs and networks) have been established, respondents consistently said that relationships between organisations are driven by personal relationships. Organisations and staff are professional and caring to young people and want to have the confidence that the other organisation has a matching philosophical approach and will provide the service that is required. This was supported by the perspective that quick reference guides/service provider lists have limited value in practice. At an operational level, relationships are kept deliberately flexible so they can respond to a young person's needs. Due to the importance of personal relationships, at an operational level, referrals will follow a trusted colleague if they move from one organisation to another.

In practice, the formal arrangements between organisations are initiated for a range of reasons and vary considerably in their level of activity. The reasons given by the respondents for their formation included - organisations may deliver similar services e.g. education; be related organisations e.g. Catholic church; be partners under a shared funded program; fill a gap in an organisation's service offer or share a centralised intake service such as Child FIRST and Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO).

The emergence of centralised intake services was seen as one way of creating consistency, reducing costs and recognized as creating some institutionalized structure. There were concerns, however, with the appropriateness of central intake services for youth as they are standard by their nature and can require a number of intake steps to be completed. This was supported by evidence that other service providers are needing to assist young people to complete these intake processes.

No consistent approach emerged in the integration of youth services where individuals were placed in another organisation for say one day a week. There are examples of staff from one organisation sitting in the office of another for say half a day per week e.g. Headspace but this is not usual practice across service providers. In addition, the attitude to integration varied from very positive through to seeing this approach as problematic. Some specialist youth services are strongly integrated while others were quite resistant to integration. Where integration did occur successfully it was driven by a comfort with providing outreach services and a culture of 'go to where the kids are'.

The large number of service organisations and services is seen to create both challenges and opportunities. All respondents had a limited overall picture of the sector. This picture was directly related to the services the organisations offered or commonly used for their clients. Additionally, new entrants or those not closely involved commonly stated that the sector is very difficult to understand and navigate. The sessions held on different types of services (eg those run by the Greater Shepparton Network of Youth Services) were regularly mentioned as being very useful.

It was often stated that it was difficult to track the services a young person had already accessed and how effective they had been. However, the large number of service organisations and services does create choice for young people if they feel they have had a negative experience with a particular provider.

The structure of the youth services sector is not seen to be static and respondents felt that the smaller organisations are under significant funding pressure and are likely to disappear leaving fewer large, often Statewide/National, rather than local organisations. This trend was considered to be occurring in response to Government preference to deal with fewer larger service providers. Some respondents indicated concern over this trend as they saw it would mean services would be less flexible, would reduce the choice for young people and create organisations that are not as appealing to young people.

### *Structure of Services*

The structure of services is described below using the most common variables identified in the literature namely – client interface; level of client influence on the service offer; who delivers the service; level of standardisation (Medhurst 2013). The structure between delivery partners has been described under the previous section.

Face-to-face contact was regularly mentioned as being the most effective client interface when delivering services to young people and was included in almost every service. Youth focussed organisations put a great deal of effort in being appealing and welcoming to young people and encouraged their staff to move out of the office and deliver outreach services where young people are likely to frequent e.g. in the street, schools and at recreational activities.

For the majority of services, the level of client influence on the service offer is limited. Youth focussed organisations do use a range of methods e.g. surveys, youth advisory groups to include youth perspectives into the design of their services. However, the impact of the current funding model limits the level of influence by young people. Currently, the funder (primarily Government) determines what service areas will be funded and sets the standards for those services and then 'purchases' them from the service providers. This means that Government is the major influencer on what type of service is available. It is currently only the area of disability (which is transitioning to the NDIS) where the funds will be provided to the young person and there will be a transition from government to the young person as the major influence on the services that are available as they will become the primary purchaser.

Overwhelmingly it is paid service providers that deliver the services with volunteers supporting paid providers. There is limited service delivery by young people themselves.

Standardisation of different service components is primarily limited to those mandated by a central body e.g. Department of Health and Human Services and to intake processes.

The services that have a statutory or legislative basis e.g. child protection and secondary education tend to be standardised across the delivery organisations and across time. These services do vary, however in their use of other services to complement what they offer so that they meet the overall needs of the young person.

Government funders in particular mandate standard output measures (e.g. number of clients), service standards (e.g. appearance of facilities) and reporting requirements that all funding recipients must comply with.

The majority of organisations use a standard 'intake' process that not only addresses the issue the young person has identified e.g. housing but also 'diagnoses' the range of issues the young person is facing and then identifies the services to address each issue. Centralised intake services such as ASCO have emerged but the organisations not using these centralised intake services tend to have developed standard intake processes that are unique to each organisation.

A standard exit process for young people leaving services is not used. Exit occurs in a range of ways with the most common being driven by the young person themselves. Other exit approaches include - set number of allocated usage of the service being used; young person's age exceeds maximum and the service provider deliberately reducing the young person's dependence on the service.

Some organisations use a standardised approach to measuring the progress of the young person e.g. Outcomes Star, NAPLAN. The use of these measures is not widespread and not shared across organisations.

### Service Duplication & Gaps

Although, on the surface, there are services that appear to cover the same issues there was no overlapping or duplication of services reported by the respondents. This was supported by respondents regularly raising concerns about any delays a young person might experience in getting access to a service.

Gaps however, in service areas were identified. The first gap identified was preventative services. Many respondents mentioned the limited funding for preventative services such as drug awareness, resilience training, parent support and that funding for preventative services had actually reduced in recent years. Many people lamented the fact that the issues the young people faced could be reduced with preventative support.

A gap was identified in specialist youth mental health services primarily due to the difficulty in attracting specialist youth mental health workers into the area. This creates long waiting times or management by lower qualified mental health or general health services. In addition, there is a gap at the critical end of the mental health spectrum. This is described as being the difference between what a family or private practitioner can manage and when a young person is able to get access to hospital. In addition, there is no local residential mental health services available for critically ill non-adults.

A gap was identified in youth residential drug and alcohol detox facilities and therapeutic respite accommodation. This results in young people either being treated away from the Greater Shepparton area or in the case of drug and alcohol addiction, not getting treatment with a high likelihood that their behaviour will escalate resulting in justice issues. For those needing therapeutic respite, the young person stays in the dysfunctional family setting or becomes at risk of being homeless.

Good adult role models were regularly mentioned as critical to a young person operating successfully in the community. The paid youth services attempt to provide such a role model but they are unable to provide the one-on-one monitoring or the long term relationship that substitutes for parental guidance. There is a gap in providing this sort of mentoring relationship that focusses on building independence in a caring framework.

Engagement in school or employment were identified as key protective factors and key indicators of well being for a young person. Both schools and employment services, however are very limited in their ability to provide additional services that would prevent a young person becoming disengaged or assist those with limited parental support. These services are outside their core business and not what they are funded to deliver. There is a gap between the current level of service provision within the organization, the level of integration with other organisations and referral to services that are available.

Finally, young people are at risk of 'falling through the cracks' when they transition. The examples provided were – from years 6 to 7; from one school to another; when their family moves towns, in particular when families move interstate; from one service to another and from school to employment. Services that do provide a link across these transitions were regularly mentioned as missing and as being particularly valuable.

### **Additional Theme: Funding**

The respondents' comments on funding were focussed, not on the overall amount of funding available but rather on the impact that rapid changes to priorities, funding levels and which service organisations were funded. Financial cuts to what are seen as highly effective programs was also mentioned by a number of providers as causing issues particularly as highly effective programs rapidly become linked into existing programs. Finally, short term initiatives are not favoured as it can

be difficult to attract appropriate staff, they raise expectations of young people and make it challenging to deliver an impact.

Funding priorities, guidelines and reporting requirements were recognized as being key drivers of organisational behaviour and service provision. The competition for funding was also recognised as encouraging a culture of competition rather than collaboration and engender a lack of trust between organisations. This was supported by respondents consistently perceiving other service providers and services as competitors or referring to destructive competitive behaviour.

Due to the caring nature of people who work in this sector many people work above the hours and outside the scope for which they are paid. This means that the actual costs of projects is not accurately reflected. Furthermore because of the competition for funds organisations continue to strive to deliver more with less. As projects are already under-costed in real terms, continuation along this path will be counter-productive to the sector.

### Additional Theme: Clients

Young people were often described as 'engaged' and disengaged'. Young people who were considered to be engaged were either attending education regularly or were employed. In addition, they are likely to be involved with some sort of activity within the wider community e.g. sport. Disengaged young people were often referred to as 'invisible'. Not only physically because they are 'on a couch somewhere' but also psychologically because organisations and the community actively avoid them because of their behaviour.

Respondents saw the services to engaged youth and disengaged youth to be quite different. This was not only because of the differences in attracting the numbers of clients but also in the complexity of the issues the young person is facing. Many disengaged young people were described as being traumatised and having multiple issues, requiring a high level of staff skill and a more flexible view of what progress could be expected over a given timeframe.

### Additional Theme: Performance Measures

The performance measures utilized by the sector are primarily quantitative outputs eg numbers of young people serviced, sessions held and primarily determined by the funder. A limited number of organisations use client behavioural (outcome) measures to track progress, measure effectiveness of a service or to guide changes to services. The development and use of these outcome measures are not shared between the different organisations and given they are not funded externally it tends to be the larger National/Statewide organisations that have the resources to put them in place.

Sector-wide approaches led by funders such as DHHS have been tried before e.g. Outcomes Star but have failed to go beyond the pilot stage. The reasons respondents provided for the failure of the pilots to continue or for their organisation to adopt outcome measures included -

- There are other factors in a young person's life that have a far greater impact on their behaviour than the service they are providing.
- There is no funding to set up the systems and or to train staff.
- Implementation requires a significant change in culture.
- Nervousness of what the use of the measures would reveal.
- Have enough measures/standards that are already required by funders.

Although evaluation does occur, respondents identified that evaluation tended to be commenced towards the end of a service contract and not performed systematically nor with the data being used to improve services.

## **Access and Availability**

The availability of services is influenced by two key resource issues.

The first is the funding that is available for a given service. The Reliance on government funding does mean that the sector is particularly vulnerable when funding is reduced or priorities change.

Organisations with a broader funding base (eg social enterprises, corporate donations, parent organization) indicated greater confidence in their ability to continually supply important services.

The second is the appropriate personnel that is available. This relates to trained professionals eg mental health specialists and to volunteer time eg mentors, L plate driving support. No evidence of a coordinated sector wide approach to attracting and retaining trained professionals or volunteers was evident from the respondents.

Access to services by a young person or by some-one on their behalf was influenced by a number of factors.

- For some young people requiring parental involvement can be a barrier to accessing services because their parents are unable to assist due to issues they are facing or actively block access e.g. by taking the young person's financial support.
- Services are not youth friendly and so either deter a young person or lead them to give up trying to access the service. Examples respondents gave are – too many forms, no face-to-face assistance, staff attitude and the services are not available where they spend their time eg at school.
- If a young person is 'disengaged' then they will need greater support to access services and are extremely unlikely to access them on their own. In addition, respondents emphasized the complex interrelated needs a disengaged young person will be experiencing. For these young people accessing a service that only addresses one area of need will not be sufficient to ensure they continue to access that service.
- Delays in accessing services was often mentioned as resulting in a young person not accessing a service. A young person will often give up or retreat if they can't get assistance immediately or if they aren't linked into another service until the original one is available.
- Lack of awareness that services exist by a young person, parent or youth worker impacts on access. Webpages, check lists, data bases do assist but respondents said these were not enough given services do change, staff do move and what will actually work for any given young person is so unique.

## **Strengths and Deficits**

As with any sector the list of strengths and deficits is substantial and relate to the different levels within the sector ie individual service; individual organisation; sub-set of the sector; the sector as a whole. The following focuses on the strengths and deficits that were consistently raised as being relevant across the sector and that are impacting on the effectiveness of the sector to improve the

outcomes for young people in Greater Shepparton. It has a strong bias towards the deficits as the respondents focussed on the sector's deficits and, in the interviews, it was difficult to elicit the sector's strengths. This therefore does not indicate that the sector does not have any other strengths.

Only one strength of the sector emerged as a pattern across the interviews. Many respondents indicated that the sector has many high quality staff and volunteers who are very creative and determined to provide the services that young people require. There were a number of examples of quality service provision operating under quite difficult circumstances due to the complex issues faced by their clients. This dedication and determination was a clear strength of the sector.

A number of deficits emerged that are impacting on the effectiveness of the sector to improve the outcomes for young people in Greater Shepparton.

The effectiveness of linkages was raised consistently across the interviews. These linkages are about what the sector does together and what individual organisations do separately. The linkages can be between organisations, between the systems they use and between the services and the young person. The impact of the linkages not being ideal was described in many ways -

- Young people falling between the cracks as they moved from one service to another.
- Young people not accessing services because they are not provided where they frequent e.g. at school.
- Different operational systems used across the sector resulting in an inability to share data, a young person having to repeat intake information with organisation they deal with, services completely unaware of what other services an individual is accessing and the opportunity for a young person to manipulate providers.
- A lack of awareness of what services are available that would match the young person's needs.
- No overall measurement of a young person's development or improvement. This was an issue as improved outcomes for young people requires a number of factors to be in place but often a service only addresses one of those areas.
- Areas such as education, justice, health and large providers operating as 'silos' where they have their own language, performance measures, defined core business etc and this makes it hard to work collaboratively with them.
- Limited linkages with the rest of the community. This was seen as a concern as young people need to eventually become able to manage their own issues and access services/support from the rest of the community.
- The sector not actually being 'child focussed' as the sector would not relate to each other the way it does now if the decisions made were completely focussed on improving the outcomes for young people in Greater Shepparton.
- Missed opportunities to train staff and provide them with improved career paths so individuals can be attracted and retained in the region.

Competition for funding was consistently mentioned as impacting negatively on improving outcomes for young people in Greater Shepparton. The impact of competition was described as –

- Leading to a culture of competition and a lack of trust between organisations rather than collaboration and goodwill.

- Creation of silos where staff felt pressure to deliver the prescribed service and nothing more.
- Staff being over worked and unable to find the time to collaborate or attend sessions where they might learn new skills or meet other service providers.
- Trend to incorporating youth services into general services to create efficiencies.
- Pressure on the smaller organisations to survive and use an increasing percentage of time on securing funds.
- Lack of transparency around what resources are being used and what impact is being achieved.

The final deficit related to the spread of services on offer. This emerged in the interviews as service gaps and have been outlined earlier in the report.

## Conclusions

The Youth Services sector in Greater Shepparton is a sector under pressure. The sector has evolved over the years with little strategic planning focussing on improving the outcomes or young people. The sector is dealing with a classic wicked problem (Rittel 1973) where there are numerous stakeholders with different values and priorities; the problem is difficult to define and has multiple causes; there is no clear correct or incorrect responses and in fact can only be 'tamed' not solved.

The demand for services is high, competition for resources is high and the consequences of getting things wrong can be significant. The business model is highly dependent on government at a time when government resources are increasingly scarce.

The sector is dwarfed by the family and the general services that are provided to young people in Greater Shepparton. The work the sector does is often being the 'ambulance at the bottom of the cliff'. The intensity and urgency of the work, can lead the sector to feel they shoulder the responsibility to 'solve the problem' without looking at the potential role the family and the broader community can play.

Finally, the 12-18 year-old age group are different and do need 'youth friendly' services at least as a conduit to the other more specialist services or as a substitute for the essential role of a parent to guide and 'case manage' a young person as they transition to adulthood.

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## Appendix 1: Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project

Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project is a long-term evidence-based project that will engage parents, young people, citizens, community leaders, business, agencies, government, funders, thought leaders and academics.

The project arose as business and community leaders began focusing on the disconnect between the high numbers of disengaged youths and the inability to find work ready young people to fill employment roles.

Recognising that the intractable issues impacting on young people are bigger than any individual organisation or project, Lighthouse aims to lead a collaborative community initiative to improve the life chances and educational outcomes for the children and young people of Greater Shepparton, from conception to career.

It will do this by monitoring and improving the trajectory for all children so that more are ready for school, transition successfully to secondary school; are healthy and happy in their teens, complete year 12 and transition to work and post-secondary study.

Lighthouse is not a single program or initiative. It involves mapping the services and initiatives impacting on young people; identifying success stories, deficits and opportunities; and growing the community's appetite to bring about lasting change. It will involve collaboration and partnerships to grow existing initiatives, introduce and fund new initiatives and track and share data.

Based on a "collective impact" approach, the "burning platform" for change is the perceived disconnect identified by business leaders between the high numbers of disengaged youths and the inability to find work ready young people to fill employment roles. The percentage of disengaged school leavers not involved in work or study at all in Shepparton is 24.6 per cent compared to the State average of 15.4 per cent (*source: Community Indicators Victoria 2013, GV Primary Care Partnerships 2013*).

Lighthouse is working towards a whole of community strategic vision and goals based on a comprehensive understanding of:

- How children and young people in Greater Shepparton are faring on key developmental indicators
- What programs, services, community resources are already in place and working to positively impact on these development indicators
- Where are the opportunities/priorities to improve the life chances of children and as a result the social and economic wellbeing of Greater Shepparton.

### Who We Are

The Steering group:

Adam Furphy (Chair): Director J Furphy and Sons; Chair Regional Advisory Board, La Trobe University; Board member Goulburn Ovens TAFE; Member Ministerial Industry Advisory Board; Committee member Goulburn Valley Industry & Employment Taskforce; member Committee for Greater Shepparton.

Ross McPherson: Executive Chair McPherson Media Group; Deputy Chancellor University of Melbourne; Chairman Board of Trustees GV Hospital Foundation; Committee member Goulburn Valley Industry & Employment Taskforce; member Committee for Greater Shepparton.

Craig Marshall: CEO the Workgroup which includes social enterprises and collaborations supporting indigenous youth, disadvantaged youth, long term unemployed and the mentally ill; member Committee for Greater Shepparton.

Trish Quibell: Deputy Director, Hume Region, Berry St; Board member GMLLEN; Member Youth Alliance.

Sally Wright: Community Services Consultant - work includes project management and evaluation for Best Start; Steering Committee Member Communities for Children, member Committee for Greater Shepparton.

Anna Agati: Accountant MB +M Business Solutions.

Stephanie Exton: Executive Officer Fairley Foundation.

Executive Officer, Lisa McKenzie - Chair Lift-off Scholarship Fund; Chair Goulburn Murray LLEN Board member La Trobe University Shepparton Regional Advisory Board. Lisa is a former CEO of the Community Fund GV; EO of the Fairley Leadership Program; and newspaper Editor.

Community Champions support, advocate, and enable. They are:

Geoff Dobson former Mayor, Director GV Water, Director Shepparton Villages, Member Barmah National Park Joint Management Board

Professor Julian Wright Chair, Rural Health Academic Centre, Director of Medical Student Education and Professor of Medicine, Rural Health Academic Centre, The University of Melbourne

Sue Nalder Campus Director, La Trobe University Shepparton.

Lesley Hart, Director, Dawes & Vary Lawyers

Steve Rogers Principal, Mooroopna Primary School, Chair regional principal's forum.

David Tennant CEO, FamilyCare

Robert Stephens Deputy Director, NE Region, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria

Jennifer and Michael Small Department Education and Early Childhood Development

Adrian Appo OAM former CEO Ganbina; Board member Children's Ground

Andrew Fairley Chair, Sir Andrew and Lady Fairley Foundation; lawyer Holding Redlich; Chair Parks Victoria; Chair Equisuper

Gavin Cator CEO, Greater Shepparton City Council

These eminent Australians have agreed to be our Patrons:

Sidney Myer AO Yulgilbar Foundation

David Gonski AC Chancellor of the University of New South Wales and Chairman Investec Bank Australia & ASX Limited; author of The Gonski Review of education

Jeanne Pratt AC The Pratt Foundation

Terry Campbell AO Chairman Goldman Sachs Australia

Professor John Dewar Vice Chancellor, La Trobe University

Professor Glyn Davis AC Vice Chancellor, University of Melbourne

## **Funding & Support**

Current funding for the initiative:

- McEwen Foundation, via Equity Trustees – foundation funding up to five years.
- Sir Andrew and Lady Fairley Foundation - Research projects over three years. commencing 2013-2014. First year funded development of The State of Greater Shepparton's Children Report 2014.
- The Workgroup – In-kind support in form of office space, administrative costs and other overheads.
- Nous Consulting – Nous are providing pro-bono development of Lighthouse Strategic planning.

- Herbert Smith Freehills - Providing pro bono legal advice on the establishment of the organisation.
- Ten20 Foundation - Key partner for peer to peer learning; coaching and mentoring as part of the nation-wide Opportunity Child initiative.

### **Planning to Action**

The Lighthouse Project is moving from an initiating and planning phase to an action phase. The first milestone was the completion of the State of Greater Shepparton's Children Report 2014, undertaken in collaboration with GMLLEN, Best Start and Communities for Children.

Next steps:

1. Mapping activities in the youth sector commencing April 2015 with sector forum;
2. One Thousand Conversations - broad and deep community consultation to understand what is helping and hindering young people to realise their potential; Identify champions; create momentum. Commencing April 2015.
3. A Collective Action Plan to systematically address outcomes for our young people.

**Lisa McKenzie Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project [lmckenzie@gslp.com.au](mailto:lmckenzie@gslp.com.au) 0427 212 651.**

## **Appendix 2: Youth Services Mapping Project**

### **Background**

The Youth Services Mapping project is one of many existing and evolving pieces of work that are aimed at improving the life chances for the children and young people of Greater Shepparton. At the completion of the project in June 2015 the Youth Services Mapping project will have both written and verbal reports that will enhance the sector and community understanding of the breadth, strengths and deficits of services currently available to youth in the Greater Shepparton. Ultimately, the findings of this project and other commissioned work will be used by the Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project working with service providers, the community and University of Melbourne to create a priority action plan that improves the life chances of youth in Greater Shepparton.

### **Project Objectives**

The objectives of the Youth Services Mapping project are -

1. To identify and describe the existing service providers and services in Greater Shepparton for youth between 12 and 18 years.
2. To map the relationships between the existing service providers and services.
3. To identify any duplication and gaps in the services and service data.
4. To gain insights from the service providers of the factors that enable and constrain service availability and access, and
5. To describe the strengths and any deficits of youth services in Greater Shepparton.

### **Project Scope**

The services that will be considered are those provided to youth between the ages of 12 and 18 years and includes – health, mental health, welfare, community, government, church, Indigenous, CALD, education (government and non-government funded), alternative education, post-secondary, skills and training, employment, and criminal justice. The geographical scope is the Shire boundary of the City of Greater Shepparton.

### **Service and service provider descriptors**

The service descriptors will be both quantitative and qualitative and include: funding, services provided, clients engaged, deliverables and outcomes, perceived funding and service shortfalls and deficits and opportunities.

### **Project Activities**

1. Initial workshop with Shepparton area service providers
2. Confirmation of notes and recommendations from the initial workshop
3. Desktop research and initial quantitative data
4. Interviews with providers and collation of data
5. Report of interim findings
6. Follow-up interviews/desktop – if required
7. Draft final report.
8. Final report

### **Project Contacts**

Project manager: Lisa McKenzie,

Principal Consultant: Fiona Johnson, Fiona.johnson23@bigpond.com, 0419 130 719

## **What is - Service providers and Services.**

### Organisation Descriptors

1. Name
2. Address/phone number/web address
3. Chief Executive Officer
4. Resources
  - a. Funding, sources and timeframe
  - b. Staff
  - c. Infrastructure e.g. accommodation
5. Clients - demographics
6. Programs e.g. Drug & alcohol; accommodation; mental health.

### Service Descriptors

1. Program
2. Name
3. Governance
4. Delivery organisation/s
5. Key contact/s
6. Resources
  - Funding and timeframe
  - Staff
  - Infrastructure
7. Clients
  - Demographics (this includes geographic and cultural information)
  - Number
8. Services provided – including delivery method
9. Services goals, deliverables, targets, KPIs and outcomes
10. Accessibility and intake criteria
11. Exit pathway
12. Service linkages
  - Referrals
  - Partnerships

## Appendix 3: Greater Shepparton Youth Alliance

*Committed to improving and supporting youth engagement in education and training*

**History:** The Shepparton Youth Alliance was established in May 2014 to commence early discussions in preparation for the closing of the Youth Connections program. The Youth Connections programs has for the past 5 years provided support to young people with emerging and complex needs to engage with education or training.

With the program ceasing on 31 December the alliance is seeking a coordinated, collective approach to keeping vulnerable young people at school and supported transitions to further education and or employment.

**Mission:** Keeping young people effectively engaged in education and or further training to reduce vulnerability of exclusion to economic and social participation.

**Vision:** To improve skills, employment opportunities and quality of life for young people in Greater Shepparton

### **The Alliance membership currently consists of:**

- Australian Government Department of Human Services -Carmel Shellie
- Youth Services (Youth Connections providers)
  - The Bridge Youth Service -Sharon Hensgen-Smith
  - Berry Street- Trish Quibell
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
  - Denise Kotsikas – Youth Pathways and Transitions
  - Jennifer Small – Senior Advisor
  - Nick Bamford – Team Leader Student Support Services Officers
- Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project– Lisa McKenzie

### **Terms of reference:**

The Youth Alliance is a strength based, strategic conversation group committed to improving and supporting youth engagement in education and training.

The strategic decision making forum;

- Seek input and support from local partners and stakeholders
- Leverage alternative funding sources including philanthropic funding to further the goals of the alliance
- Undertake service mapping as a planned strategy to prioritise intervention priorities
- Champion issues and strategies related to young people and school engagement and employment
- Monitor and understand relationships beyond the sector (ie. business and industry)
- Advocate for the establishment of proactive community support systems that will lead to positive change for young people.

The group is guided by the following principles:

- Early intervention
- Vulnerable young people require support to remain engaged in school
- Vulnerable young people require support transitioning into secondary school and onto employment and training
- Community collaboration to ensure collective impact
- Enabling and facilitating leadership, innovation and aspiration

- Independent evaluation

#### FUTURE PARTNERS

Future membership for representation could include:

- CoGS
- Koorie
- Education providers - Government & Non-Government and including TAFE / Universities
- Job Service Providers (advisory)
- GMLLEN
- Other agencies eg Ganbina, Kildonan, PCP, Headspace??

#### STAKEHOLDERS

- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Health
- Department of Justice
- Victoria Police

#### NETWORKS

- Network of Youth Services (NOYS)
- It Takes A Village (Youth)
- GV Industry & Employment Taskforce
- It Takes a Village

#### PARTNERSHIPS

- GV Primary Care Partnership [PCP]
- Child FIRST
- Child and Youth Area Partnerships
- Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project

#### PROJECTS

- DHS (Services Connect pilot)
- School Focused Youth Services SFYS

#### Definitions for the purpose of this collaboration

**Vulnerable Young People** are defined as people aged 12 – 18 whose capacity to participate makes them at risk of disengaging from school or have disengaged from school and are facing issues that affect their health and wellbeing.

**Early School Leavers** refers to young people who exit or who are disengaged from the education and training system prior to 17 years of age.

**Collaboration** refers to a high level commitment, mutual trust, equal ownership and achievement of a common goal.

**Collective Impact** refers to the commitment of a group of individuals from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem, using a structured form of collaboration. The concept of collective impact hinges on the idea that in order for organizations to create lasting solutions to social problems on a large-scale, they need to coordinate their efforts and work together around clearly defined goals.

## Appendix 4: Collaboration Workshop Agenda

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> April

### The Connection, The Causeway, Shepparton

#### Purpose

- To introduce the Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project, the Youth Alliance and the Youth Services Mapping project.
- To consider the need for collective action to support youth in Shepparton.
- To gather input and support for the Youth Services Research Project.

<b>9.30</b>	Coffee	All
<b>10.00</b>	Welcome	Adam Furphy, Chair Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project
<b>10.10</b>	Introductions	All
<b>10.25</b>	What is the Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project?*	Lisa McKenzie Trish Quibell
	Who are the Youth Alliance?*	
	Questions and feedback	
<b>10.40</b>	For youth - What is? What do we hope for?	All
<b>11.10</b>	What is the Youth Services Mapping Project?*	All
	For organisations and services - What is?	
	Questions and feedback	
<b>11.40</b>	Why we haven't achieved what we hope for	All
<b>12.20</b>	Next steps	Lisa McKenzie
<b>12.30pm</b>	Lunch	

\* Paper provided in meeting pack

