

# 3 BROWN STREET YOUTH DROP IN SPACE

AN INTEGRATED MODEL OF YOUTH SERVICE DELIVERY

TANGENTYERE COUNCIL ABORIGINAL CORPORATION  
& ALICE SPRINGS YOUTH ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES





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# SHARED VISION

Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation (TCAC) and Alice Springs Youth Accommodation and Support Services (ASYASS) strongly believe that young people are the future, and the continued strength of our communities depends in large part on how we raise our next generation.

Our joint mission is to create a community where young people are treated equitably and have appropriate access to goods and services that will allow them to live safely and comfortably as valued and respected members of our society. We believe there is a shared responsibility for all parts of society – the Government, the NGO sector, the business sector and the wider community, to ensure that all young people receive the supports they need to develop to their full potential, and to ensure that their human, social and economic rights are promoted and respected within the community.

Our vision for 3 Brown Street is of a best practice friendly and welcoming youth drop in space, which provides “no barriers” free and equitable access to a range of multi-faceted services to all young people. This one stop drop in space will work at primary, secondary and tertiary support levels, offering a range of integrated and culturally appropriate activities, programs and services to a diverse range of young people through a highly integrated model of support. It will be a safe and respectful space, where kids can be kids in a supported environment which facilitates positive change, focuses on strengths, increases wellbeing and provides opportunity for choice.

## Guiding Principles:

- Recognising the rights of children and young people (YP) as paramount
- Ensuring that the best interests, rights, needs and views of YP are central to our work
- All YP have the right to access good quality environments, positive activities and support, to ensure that they have the opportunities to grow and develop to their full potential as contributing members of their community
- Commitment to a collaborative integrated approach to planning, resourcing and co-ordination in service delivery
- Ensuring that young people participate in planning their own pathways to success
- Service delivery continually evaluated and subject to rigorous feedback mechanisms in order to ensure both effectiveness and service delivery is tailored to the views of YP
- Commitment to high levels of cultural safety and appropriateness in all aspects of service delivery, and gender specific approaches to service delivery where needed
- Adherence to a Code of Ethics for all youth workers which sets out a strong ethical framework for practice and engagement
- Emphasis on service delivery that is informed by the principles of Harm Minimisation including: Harm Reduction, Demand Reduction and Supply Reduction

## Deficit vs. Strengths Based Perspectives

It is an unfortunate fact that young people in Alice Springs are often viewed as a ‘problem’ that must be solved. Such a view is referred to as a ‘deficit approach’ and is by no means exclusive to the Central Australian context. Jeffs and Smith (1999) identified that politicians in the United Kingdom talk about young people in three ways: as thugs, users and victims. As thugs they steal cars, vandalize property, attack older (and sometimes, younger) people and disrupt classrooms if and when they attend school. As users they take drugs, drink and smoke to excess, get pregnant in order to jump the housing queue and, hedonistically, care only for themselves. As victims they can’t find work, receive poor schooling and are brought up in dysfunctional families.

Such perspectives are both simplistic and misleading. They stigmatise young people, and as such are highly alienating. One of the key issues facing the youth of Alice Springs is simply a lack of positive and accessible evening activities. Our integrated model addresses this after hours service gap, and engages young people in a safe and culturally appropriate environment before returning them home. This is important since a key issue in Alice Springs is that of young people wandering the streets of the town centre simply due to boredom, leading to contextual vulnerability and risk.

Deficit approaches focus on avoiding undesirable social outcomes, identifying and managing perceived risks, and what could go ‘wrong’ with young people. TCAC and ASYASS reject such approaches. We have a joint commitment to a solutions based approach, based on engagement with YP which is grounded in respect, focussing on their assets, aspirations and capabilities through a strengths based (rather than deficit based) perspective.

## A Solutions Based Approach

TCAC and ASYASS believe that the key to these solutions lies in the long term provision of strategically co-ordinated service delivery, which is tapered across four essential components to address often the highly complex needs of YP:

1. Prevention –primary service delivery is a fundamental and core component of our integrated model, recognising that investment in universal services which provide access to opportunities for positive engagement diverts YP from the need for secondary supports. Passive education, role modelling, the use of cultural elders, employment, education and training opportunities, provision of food and facilities to shower and wash clothes, as well as daily access to a range of safe, fun and healthy activities such as sports, music, art and digital access which are aimed at increasing wellbeing, self-esteem and resilience prevent the escalation of vulnerabilities in this at risk population. Importantly, they also provide them with opportunities to relax, have fun and enjoy themselves in a safe and positive environment, opportunities which they may not otherwise enjoy access to.
2. Secondary – targeted supports form a second key component of our integrated model, recognising that for many YP there is a need for tailored and individual support to address barriers to change. Such support at 3 Brown Street will include mentorship through Tangentyere Youth Engagement program (YEP),
3. Tertiary – crisis intervention support. At times YP face critical moments and highly vulnerable circumstances in their life, and a third essential component of our integrated model is the provision of intensive and highly structured systems of support during such times. These include referrals to the Tangentyere Intensive Family Preservation Service (IFPS) through the Territory Families FACES program, referrals to CAYLUS and/or TCAC Alcohol Harm Minimisation Individual Support Program for ongoing casework support related to AOD issues, referrals to Tangentyere Domestic Violence Specialist Children's service and provision of both Emergency Relief and Crisis Accommodation at ASYASS refuge for YP for whom a safe place of residence/accommodation cannot be located.
4. Post Intervention – forms the fourth component of service delivery, recognising that YP who have faced critical situations need well planned and structured approaches to ensure that they are reintegrated at secondary and primary levels. Our integrated model of service delivery will ensure that the need for further crisis intervention is highly diminished through referral back into early intervention casework support, and re-engagement at secondary and primary levels.

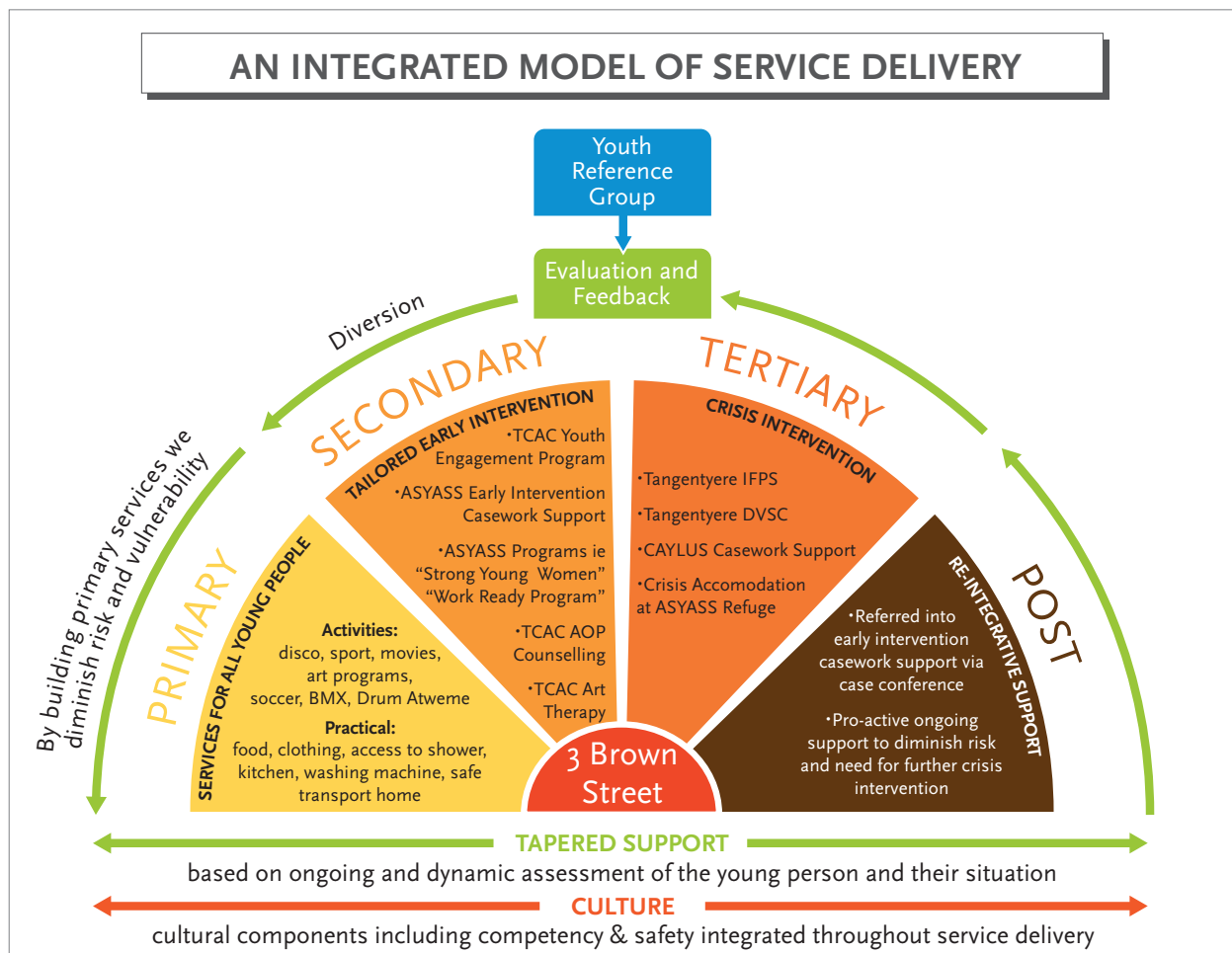


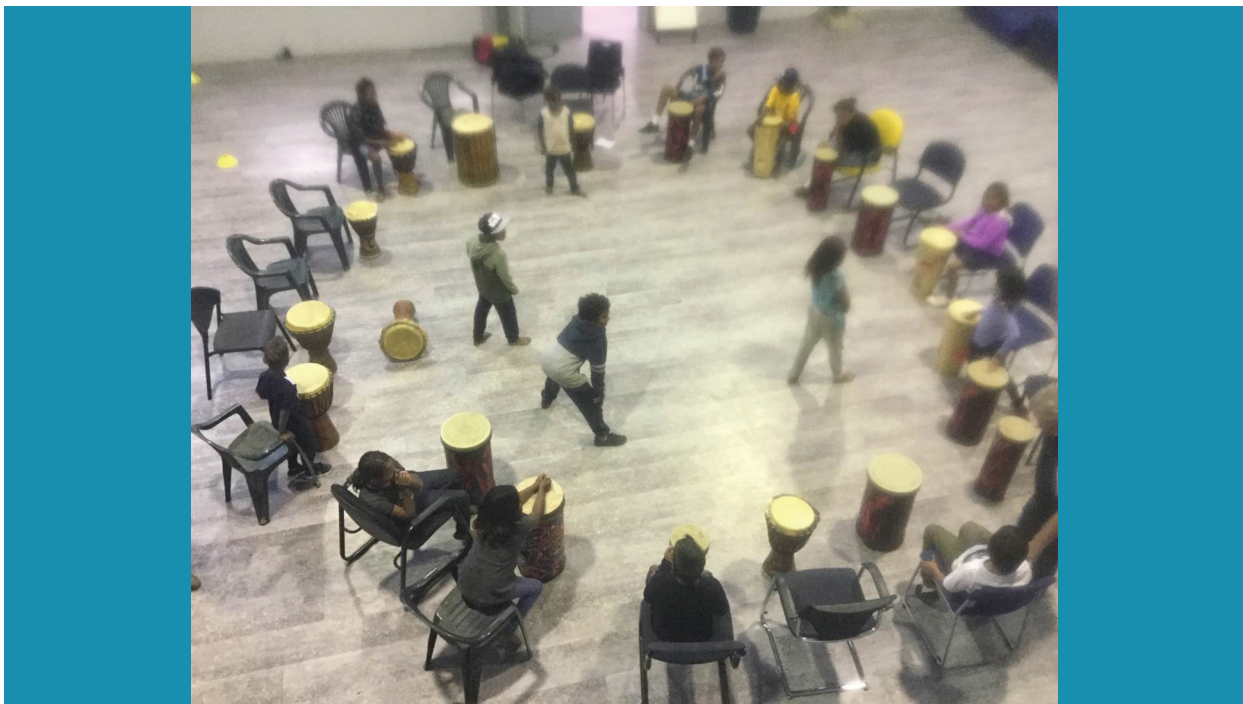
Diagram 1: A model of support across a needs based continuum

## Rationale for Integration:

Clear policy trends both internationally and within Australia identify that effective youth services are based on prevention, partnership, service integration, holistic care and strengths based participation. Integration enables greater coordination of programs, avoidance of duplication, resource information and skill sharing, and cross-sectoral understanding of needs and gaps. In Australia, the importance and value of integrated service delivery has been highlighted in a range of Council of Australian Government (COAG) reports including “Protecting Children is Everyone’s Business: A National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020” and “National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions 2009”.

Our highly integrated approach to our delivery of youth services at 3 Brown Street allows for tapered supports based on an ongoing and dynamic assessment of an individual young person’s needs and situation. Through the provision of primary services we will prevent many YP tracking into the secondary phase of delivery, and will also divert YP from the secondary phase back into the primary. Soft messaging and passive education underpin both primary and secondary service delivery. Post crisis intervention the provision of secondary services will reintegrate YP avoiding the need for further crisis intervention.

By offering highly integrated and complementary services and activities co-located at 3 Brown Street, TCAC and ASYASS will offer a structured and co-ordinated response to the needs of YP in Alice Springs. Roles and responsibilities have been clearly defined and joint policies and operating procedures are being developed to ensure seamless integration of services, and both organisations will draw on their collective knowledge and experience to deliver best practice services in a spirit of co-operation and working together.



# OPERATIONAL OVERVIEW

3 Brown Street Youth Drop In Space will provide a single physical location around which youth activities and services can be operationally coordinated during consistent and extended hours of operation. Using a “no wrong door” strategy, this friendly and welcoming space will provide ease of access to YP to simply ‘drop in’ or engage more formally in a range of structured activities and programs at their own pace.

The co-located and collaborative youth service provision between TCAC and ASYASS will be flexible and actively seek to respond to both the needs of YP and the community. Both organisations have proven track records in the provision of youth services, and have excellent and long standing relationships both with YP and the wider community. In particular our services have trusted relationships with a very large number of YP in Alice Springs, which is vital as youth work is essentially relationship based.

Note that whilst this is a location based approach to engagement, there is also significant scope for assertive outreach throughout the program. This will include outreach onto Town Camps by 5x TCAC Community Youth Workers (existing positions), ASYASS Resource Centre staff through casework support, and TCAC Youth Engagement Program staff during daytime hours. Whilst 3 Brown Street is already a venue that is very well known to many of the YP of Alice Springs, staff will work hard to ensure that YP are familiar with the scope of the service, through information sharing and promotion materials, outreach into schools and other youth venues, and by engaging YP on the street to let the know about our services and to encourage them to attend.

## Areas of support:

TCAC and ASYASS recognise that every YP is different, and as such it is essential that service delivery be tailored to their individual needs. Our integrated model of service delivery will ensure that the needs of all YP across the social work domains are met with timely and appropriate responses along a continuum of service provision.

We recognise that there are a multitude of barriers to growth faced by the YP within the context of Alice Springs. These include:

- Low school attendance
- Low levels of employment for older YP
- Lack of positive role models
- Low self-esteem and lack of confidence
- Lack of life skills
- Lack of training and employment pathways
- Mental Health issues
- Disenfranchisement, alienation and social isolation
- Intergenerational and personal trauma and grief and associated affect (negative somatic responses)
- Experience of abuse and/or neglect
- Exposure to and risk of AOD usage
- Financial difficulties and low income
- Health issues including sexual health
- Housing including homelessness/housed homelessness and chaotic home environments leading to a failure to recognise home as a safe place
- Exposure to and risk of engaging in lateral, familial, domestic and other forms of violence

- Previous or ongoing contact with the criminal justice system
- Cultural heritage and identity issues related to unresolved acculturative stress through imbalance between traditional law and cultural knowledge and gravitation towards modernity

Such complex barriers require matched responses, and TCAC and ASYASS believe that multi-agency approach offering resource sharing, and joined up strategies and responses will lead to long term and sustainable solutions.

Our vision for 3 Brown Street as a friendly and welcoming youth drop in space relates not only to our engagement with YP but also our engagement with other service providers through a genuine interagency approach. We will actively encourage and welcome other youth service providers to use and access the space, and we are already in agreement with three providers on this: Yappa Styles, Saint Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre and Clontarf Academy and we are in current discussions with other providers including MHACA and Red Dust Role Models.

\*NB our definition of homelessness reflects not only those sleeping rough but extends to those living in temporary accommodation with no ongoing security of tenure; and to those who are unsafe at home (the housed homeless).

## Target Age Group

There will be the capacity and flexibility to utilise the service for all YP ages of 10 to 17, based on developmental factors and client risk assessment.



## Staffing

We will operate within best practices guidelines in terms of our ratio of staff: number of young people using a minimum 1 staff member: 10 young people depending on activity and risk assessment. Ratios will be flexible and there is scope for employing more staff on any particular evening in response to the needs of the YP and the ways that they are accessing the service, as well as particular needs of the community.

A detailed overview of staffing is included in the separate attachment "Staffing and Hours of Service."

## Hours of Service

Research strongly indicates that consistency in hours of operation is a key component of an effective Youth Drop In service, and we have both the organisational commitment and capacity as well as a proven track record to deliver this to the young people of Alice Springs. Whilst there is always the need for further services, we believe that our hours of operation offer excellent value for money both in terms of reach and effectiveness.

For a full breakdown of hours of service please see separate attachment "Staffing and Hours of Service".

## Outreach

Whilst 3 Brown Street drop in space is a location based approach to engagement, there is also a significant amount of assertive outreach within the integrated model:

- Daytime hours: outreach for follow up support onto Town Camps by 5x TCAC Community Youth Workers (existing positions), ASYASS Resource Centre staff through casework support, and the TCAC Youth Engagement Program staff during daytime hours

(existing staff). Actively seeking referrals of vulnerable young people (for example, by schools, NTPOL or Supportlink)

- Whilst 3 Brown Street is already a venue that is very well known to many of the YP of Alice Springs and will therefore be "vouched for", staff will work hard to ensure that both the service sector and YP are familiar with the full scope of the service through information sharing and promotion materials, outreach into schools and other youth venues. By working in collaboration with other services within the local service system, we will ensure that eligible young people can be readily referred to our service by others
- After Hours: there will be times where it will be necessary to engage YP on the street to let them know about our services and to encourage them to attend. At times making ourselves accessible to vulnerable young people will require reaching out to within the spaces YP occupy, rather than waiting for them to make initial contact, particularly with young people who may be disengaged or disengaging from family or usual community structures. This flexibility will mean that we can respond to the changing dynamics of local youth culture and adapt to local need. For example, if a new site becomes a place where vulnerable young people are hanging out, we will make contact with them there
- Assertive Outreach: there will be times when we will need to take active steps to maintain the engagement of vulnerable young people who have been identified as being most in need of our service through the provision of consistent and assertive follow-up, particularly in situations of high risk or need. For some young people, maintaining their engagement and building a trusting relationship will occur only through a protracted period of consistent low-key outreach





# KEY DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THE MODEL

## The Importance of Culture

A key distinguishing feature of our solution based approach and integrated model is a strong commitment to integration of cultural components in our service delivery, including high levels of cultural safety and competency. TCAC is a proud Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation, and our well established youth services are trusted by community members and YP for their high level of cultural competency. We have a strong commitment to the employment of local Aboriginal staff, valuing this as core feature of any culturally competent service. We recognise that cultural safety includes the imperative that the physical spaces of 3 Brown Street provide high levels of YP ownership through culturally safe and proud design.

We also recognise that culture forms an integral part of an Aboriginal YP's identity, and recognition of its importance in terms of potential impact on overall wellbeing is therefore vital. As Bamblett et al (2012) state:

*"Good cultural connection can be seen as a measure of well-being for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Aboriginal YP know who they are according to how they relate to their family, community and land. Maintaining this connectedness in social relationships provides young people with a positive environment for growth. As with all young people, Aboriginal young people need to be strong in their identity"*

TCAC and ASYASS strongly identify that "It's very important to instil these cultural values in these kids and make them aware of the importance of their culture so that it adds to their self-esteem, it adds to their confidence. They can use those, then, as a basis for their own personal development." (Nelson & Allison, 2000) In line with this, as well as ensuring that we have a high percentage of Aboriginal youth workers, we will employ Cultural Elders to engage YP at 3 Brown Street in culturally appropriate and specific youth activities. This will support YP in a way that encourages development of their cultural identity, recognising that Elders have a critical role to play in education and maintenance of culture.



## Young People at the Centre

The research identifies that a key component of any best practice youth model is ensuring YP are active participants in program design. We will set up a range of feedback mechanisms that strongly encourage YP to articulate their needs and shape relevant responses, and tailor service delivery in line with the ideas and critical feedback of the YP. Through this strategy, as well as by supporting the implementation of innovative youth-led initiatives, we will aim at empowering all YP to get involved and take ownership of our youth services.

Youth voices must be given the space and time to emerge. Our structured support for youth-led initiatives will include a combination of:

- Group projects seeking feedback and ideas on service delivery through specific activities or projects including competitions
- Seeking individual feedback as part of a commitment to continuous quality improvement
- Formation of and regular meetings between Youth Co-ordinator and a highly representative Youth Reference Group
- As part of the participatory evaluation of the program in collaboration with the Northern Institute at Charles Darwin University

## The Physical Space

TCAC and ASYASS have a vision of 3 Brown Street as a best practice youth drop in space, and our commitment to this vision includes the physical attributes of the space itself. We will provide the following at 3 Brown Street:

- A welcoming and youth friendly reception area
- Large spaces for activities such as discos/BMX/soccer
- Smaller spaces for shared activities such table tennis/digital access/Xbox/arts and crafts
- Spaces for specialist services such as AOD counselling
- Outdoor spaces to "chill out" and for BBQ
- Filtered WiFi access for all YP
- Showers/laundry/kitchen facilities accessible to the YP

It is worth noting that TCAC have a current application for Community Benefit Funds which will further enhance the outdoor spaces at 3 Brown Street. Architectural plans which were drawn up through extensive consultation with the young people themselves form the basis of this pending application, which will increase both the usability and cultural safety of the physical spaces.

## Provision of Food

We recognise that access to nutritious food is a barrier for many YP, and have a firm commitment to ensuring such access for all YP entering our service. This will include:

- Provision of healthy snacks and meals to participants
- Access to cooking and nutrition programs
- Setting up of a “food bank” that can be accessed as needed by YP

## Comprehensive Model of Transportation:

TCAC and ASYASS have developed a comprehensive model of transportation, recognising provision of safe transportation both to and from 3 Brown Street as a vital part of our duty of care to YP. Our model incorporates both the provision of access to nutritious food and safe transport to the venue and back home to the YP place of residence. Transportation to the venue will be provided daily by our Town Camp based Community Youth Workers (existing positions), and on any given evening/night where we receive reports of YP in town wanting transportation to 3 Brown Street we will outreach to these YP using our youth buses.

Staff will use multiple buses to ensure safe transport home, and this strategy will also be supported by TCAC Night and Youth Patrol. TCAC Night and Youth Patrol have objectives that align with Community Safety and Wellbeing; and Children and Schooling as outlined by the Commonwealth Government Indigenous Advancement Strategy. Collaboration with Night and Youth Patrol is a natural synergy and maximises the outcomes of both services.

An integrated feature of our model is that in circumstances where no safe place can be located for the young person to be dropped, Central Intake will be notified and crisis accommodation will be provided at the ASYASS youth refuge. Beds will be held at this location specifically for this purpose.

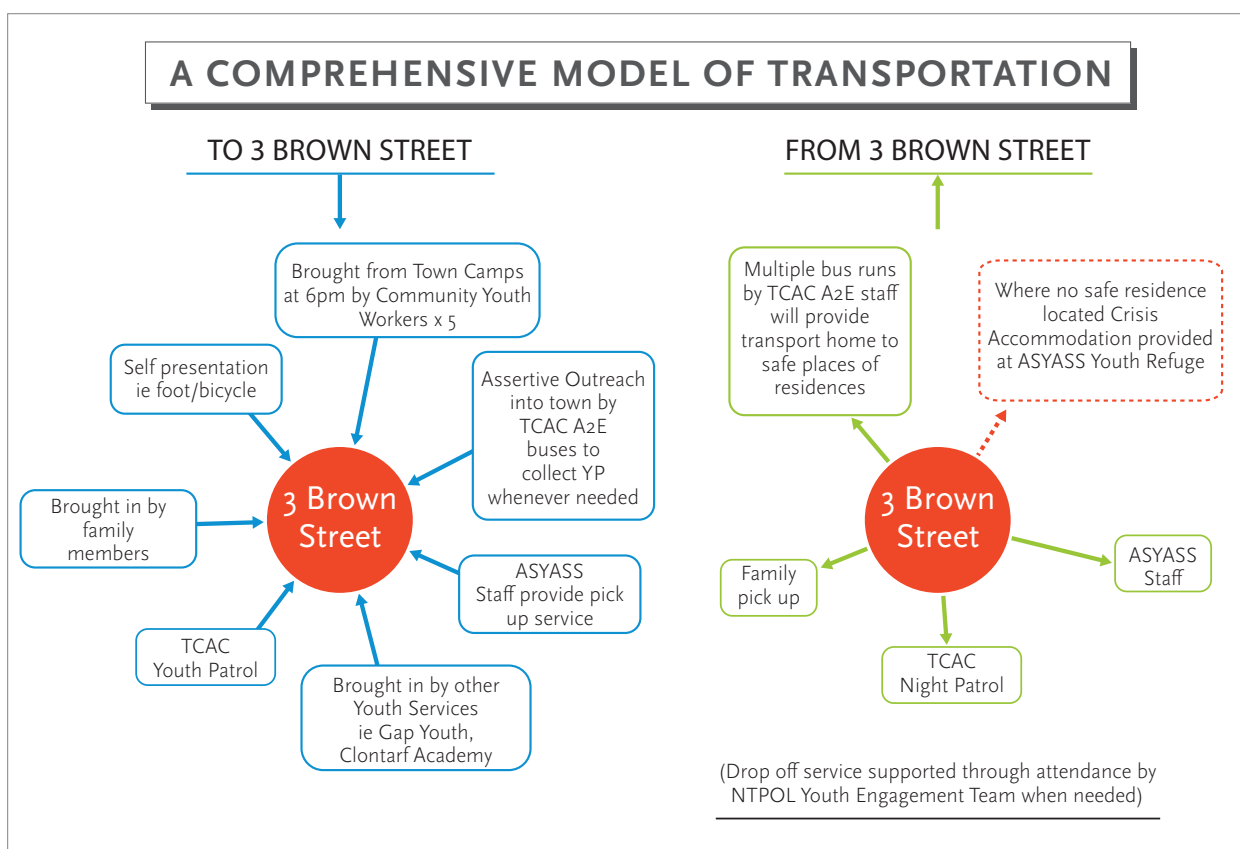


Diagram 2: Safe Transportation to and from venue increases equity of access and forms a key component of our Duty of Care

## Mentoring

Research confirms the value of lengthy and meaningful mentoring relationships. Young adults who have mentors, particularly those at-risk are more likely to report engaging in productive and beneficial activities than youth without a mentor. Our model integrates a mentoring aspect to service delivery through:

- Employment of young Aboriginal workers within our youth program
- TCAC Youth Engagement Program (YEP) – employs 2x youth mentors in roles targeted at the most disengaged YP within the community in a range of positive activities including training and education
- ASYASS workers have a strong mentoring role to play in their engagement with YP

We will also look to develop a model of youth mentorship that gives YP opportunities for training and leadership through TCAC CDP placements within existing A2E programs such as Drum Atweme, BMX, Soccer and our Town Camp based community youth work with 5-12 year olds.

## Research and Evaluation

TCAC and ASYASS recognise the imperative for organisations in the Territory to engage in the delivery of programs that reflect an “evidenced based policy and practice” (EBPP) framework. EBPP has a focus on research utilisation and evaluation (Cherney and Head, 2010). Research utilisation and the adoption of services models considered as being best practice in and of itself is useful but presents challenges for organisations working outside the scope of a mainstream evidence base. EBPP outlines the fidelity and adaption dilemma which is a concept that is particularly relevant in the delivery of programs to groups of people where there are a unique set of social, environmental and cultural circumstances (Cherney and Head, 2010).

To an extent it appears tempting to import models from interstate (or overseas) because they are evidence based. Transplanting service models ignores the unique social and environmental context that exists in the Territory. Developing an evidence base for local solutions or utilising a participatory action research model for adapting evidence based programs is the key to appropriate practice. The recognition of the need for an evidence based and the importance of the concepts of fidelity and adaption has led TCAC to collaborate with the Northern Institute at Charles Darwin University in the development, implementation and operation of a participatory evaluation for human services delivery by TCAC. Our approach to evaluation has been structured as a collaborative and iterative process. This evaluation methodology considers service delivery from the perspective of a range of stakeholders and looks at evidence including the qualitative and quantitative.

From the perspective of TCAC, ASYASS and the Northern Institute evaluation needs to consider not only effectiveness but also the processes undertaking the work.

Additionally TCAC can support the work of the Northern Institute through the engagement of local Aboriginal Researchers, these researchers can help to contextualise and interpret the work of the evaluation. The work of evaluation will include the review of data, documentation, interviews and the facilitation of stakeholder forums. TCAC, ASYASS and the Northern Institute will ensure that any research that is undertaken has approval from the Central Australian Human Research Ethics Committee (CAHREC) meaning that the resultant work will be of the highest possible standard (ethically, academically and professionally) and can contribute to the overall understanding of the Territory Government.

It is also important to note that EBPP helps to underpin a range of concepts that will support the development, implementation and operation of a best practice model including: (1) Communication; (2) Capacity; (3) Competency; (4) Compatibility; (5) Commitment; (6) Collaboration; (7) Creativity (Adaption); (8) Compliance; and (9) Champions. In this respect the champions are stakeholders including personnel, clients and external stakeholders who can help to drive the process of developing a best practice model. The evaluation of the program will seek to consider these key components of EBPP.

## Workforce - Training and Development

TCAC and ASYASS are committed to the ongoing development of a skilled and professional youth sector and investment in our workforce, and we strongly support the development, implementation and operation of a model of ‘Continuing Professional Development’ (CPD) for all personnel employed as part of this program. TCAC and ASYASS will ensure that a CPD plan will be developed in collaboration with each individual worker that aligns with program requirements and individual aspirations.

CPD includes access the accredited and unaccredited training, team meetings, performance appraisals and professional supervision. For workers requiring additional study support TCAC and ASYASS will support their accessing programs including ‘Preparing for Tertiary Success’ a course offered by Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Education (BIIITE). Additionally TCAC and ASYASS have investigated a range of accredited training options including the Certificate IV in Community Services offered by Charles Darwin and the Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs offered by RMIT. It is hoped that the acquisition of qualifications will allow TCAC and ASYASS to support personnel to become registered with the Australian Community Workers Association (ACWA). Professional staff including Social Workers will be supported to gain and maintain professional accreditations with their respective professional bodies. Both TCAC and ASYASS provide opportunities for personal study leave and access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). EAP is for workers requiring additional support with issues impacting upon their work.

Both organisations also recognise the relevance of a range of training and development strategies and the expertise of a wide range of training providers to meet individual staff and the organisation's needs. This includes on-the-job training, internal or external courses, support for undertaking research or project work, attendance at conferences or seminars, and networking, coaching and mentoring programs.

Additionally the Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group has been funded to develop a Cultural Safety Training Package. This package will incorporate reflective practice and considerations of power and privilege. By combining Cultural Safety and Cultural Competency our workers are better able to avoid generalisations based upon factors such as race, culture and gender. Young people will be approached in a respectful manner as individuals with an identity shaped by a range of social, environmental and cultural factors.

## Staff Support, Care and Supervision:

TCAC and ASYASS recognise the essential importance of staff care and supervision, and have comprehensive youth specific policies and procedures including a rigorous youth specific induction for new workers. We have a firm commitment to staff supervision, professional development, and Work Health and Safety policies and related procedures. Other existing policies in this area include:

- Staff professional development policy
- Staff employee assistance policy
- WHS policy (covering, for example, staff personal safety when working after hours)
- Incident reporting policy (covering, for example, occurrences which posed a risk to workers or clients on-the-job)
- Pro-active self-care

## Tapered Support with Individualised Support Plans

Support will be offered to all YP across the social work domains, and tapered to the individual needs of the YP through a dynamic needs assessment. Whilst at point of initial contact passive strategies may be used to engage with young people who are considered vulnerable but who are not requesting help, whenever appropriate and timely more direct offers of support will be made clear.

At secondary and crisis driven levels support will be further tapered to meet the individual needs of the YP. Currently both TCAC and ASYASS have rigorous case management systems including needs, risk and safety assessments, case planning, case review and closure, data management, as well extensive experience in the use of these systems. Work is already in process to consolidate these tools and approaches in order to provide a streamlined and consistent service using a joined up approach (for an example see: TCAC ASYASS Client Intake Process Flowchart in appendices).

TCAC currently use the Signs of Safety Framework which was originally conceived as a framework for working with families within the context of Child Protection as evidence based way of exploring a YP's current situation as well as their readiness, motivation and capacity to change. Used skilfully this framework provides a basis for engagement and assessment that gives voice to the needs, aspirations and barriers to change for YP from a strengths based and youth centred perspective,. Strategies within a case planning framework can be identified with the YP themselves, with clear goals set as a precursor to motivational support. These strategies to address barriers to change are set out in an individualised support plan with clear steps to positive trajectories with measurable indicators. This approach can relate to wide range of issues and barriers, including AOD use, school engagement, anger management etc.

Bamblett et al (2009) have provided change measures specific to Aboriginal young people and these have been adopted into TCAC's youth assessment framework:

- Living arrangements
- School attendance
- Absconding behaviour
- Relationship with friends, family and extended family
- Relationship with workers
- Self Harm Behaviour
- Substance Abuse
- Anger Management
- Knowledge of culture
- Connection to culture
- Aboriginal Identity
- Self Confidence
- Presence of Aboriginal role models

## The Core Importance of Primary Services

It is important to note that TCAC and ASYASS recognise that engaging YP in range of healthy and accessible primary services aimed at all YP is a core and integral part of our overall model. Not only do they provide a soft entry point to the drop in service and provide a range of safe and positive activities building self-esteem and confidence, they also play a key role in diverting YP from the need for secondary supports.

Our primary activities and programs also provide equity of access in youth services, and provide opportunities for YP to have fun, relax, hang out with friends, laugh and enjoy themselves that they may not otherwise have. The value of this in terms of individual and collective wellbeing and pride through a sense of inclusion and social belonging cannot be overstated.

Within our integrated model these activities and services often run concurrently will include:

- Cookery and access to kitchen
- Shower and laundry facilities
- Sports including soccer, BMX, skateboarding, table tennis, basketball and pool
- Movies and Xbox
- Digital access
- Music – vocal/rapping instrumental ie guitar/drumming and electronic ie garage band/keyboard etc
- Discos
- Dance
- Fashion
- Arts and Crafts
- Hairdressing and make up

We work hard to ensure that we tailor activities to the wishes of the YP themselves and TCAC and ASYASS are proud of our proven track record in the provision of a wide range of culturally appropriate primary services in which all YP are universally welcomed.

## Rights and Responsibilities For Clients

TCAC and ASYASS recognise that young people have the right to participate in decisions that involve and affect them. We also recognise that young people require the security of reliable guidance and boundaries, as well as the freedom to determine their own destiny. This approach supports a young person's push for independence and for self-determination. The young person has rights to privacy and to be the architect of their own planning for their lives. They also have the right to a service which recognises their vulnerabilities due to their stage of development and possibly due to the impacts of past experiences, and which acts in their interests in guiding them while not dictating to them. This approach views YP as part of the solution rather than a problem.

Our model incorporates this through the use of a Rights and Responsibilities form (see appendix), creating a structure both to the freedoms and boundaries that all YP accessing the service can expect. This best practice approach focuses on developing the young person's personal resources to make and sustain positive connections in their own life, and that planned support can stabilise a young person's situation and allow space for positive engagement and change to occur.

## Working with Key Stakeholders

TCAC and ASYASS recognise the need for a strong interagency approach to the provision of youth services across the sector. We recognise the necessity of the NGO and Government Departments working in close and positive partnership. We have a proven track record

of working with a wide range of service providers and key stakeholders, and adopt a flexible approach to meeting the priorities and needs of the wider community, recognising the importance of this in the wider youth context.

We are committed to an inclusive approach, recognising that all sectors of the community share a responsibility and have a contribution to make and that it is by working together we can achieve better outcomes for the young people of Alice Springs.

## The Role of the Family

TCAC and ASYASS believe that YP should not be viewed in isolation to their family and their community, and that our youth services have an important job in helping young people maintain, or re-build, family and community connections.

This will be an area of focus of work with all young people, and we will be highly cognizant of the fact that we must avoid working with young people in a way which reinforces disruption of such connections. We realise that in the Central Australian context, whilst most young people recognise and place high value on the importance of family, many of the most vulnerable and "at risk" YP will be highly disengaged from their parents and caregivers. Some YP may have good reason for not being at home, or no longer recognise their caregivers authority to challenge their behaviours due to cultural reasons. In these cases, careful assessment of the issues (including risk and safety) is essential, and the need of the young person for emotional and physical safety is paramount.

That said, families where it is unsafe to have contact with any member are rare. Most parents and carers are doing their best, despite some needing help to cope with difficult life circumstances. Our integrated model allows for this circumstance, with family support an option through a FACES referral to TCAC Intensive Family Preservation service. Consent for such a referral will be sought from the YP to empower them in decision making.

Many YP are also cared for in Kinship Care arrangements, and due to the demographic of such carers it is commonplace that Kinship Carers find in adolescence that they are now less able to meet a young person's needs. In such circumstances a referral with consent could be made to TCAC Kinship Care program to provide carer support including peer to peer support, and assessment to be formally approved as a Kinship Carer.

Re-establishing familial connections may not happen quickly, but it will remain a focus of our youth services, with the idea of 'being in touch with family' normalised for young people engaged in our programs. This focus will include "family times", when parents/caregivers will be invited to 3 Brown Street, to increase peer to peer support networks, but also to gain their perspective and understanding around the situation of the YP.



## Duty of Care to Young People

TCAC and ASYASS have a strong commitment to best practice and policy implementation in our duty of care to YP including:

- Conducting ongoing needs and risk assessments dynamically including formal assessment where appropriate (this will depend on situation of YP and activities accessed within the overall service)
- Being alert to signs of distress or harm
- Maintaining confidentiality wherever possible
- Recognising at times our Duty of Care to YP overrides confidentiality
- Timely and appropriate responses, including immediate response including meeting mandatory reporting requirements where there are concerns around safety or wellbeing of YP
- Making referrals to specialist services such as medical services where needed including follow up
- Supporting the family to support the family where appropriate and possible

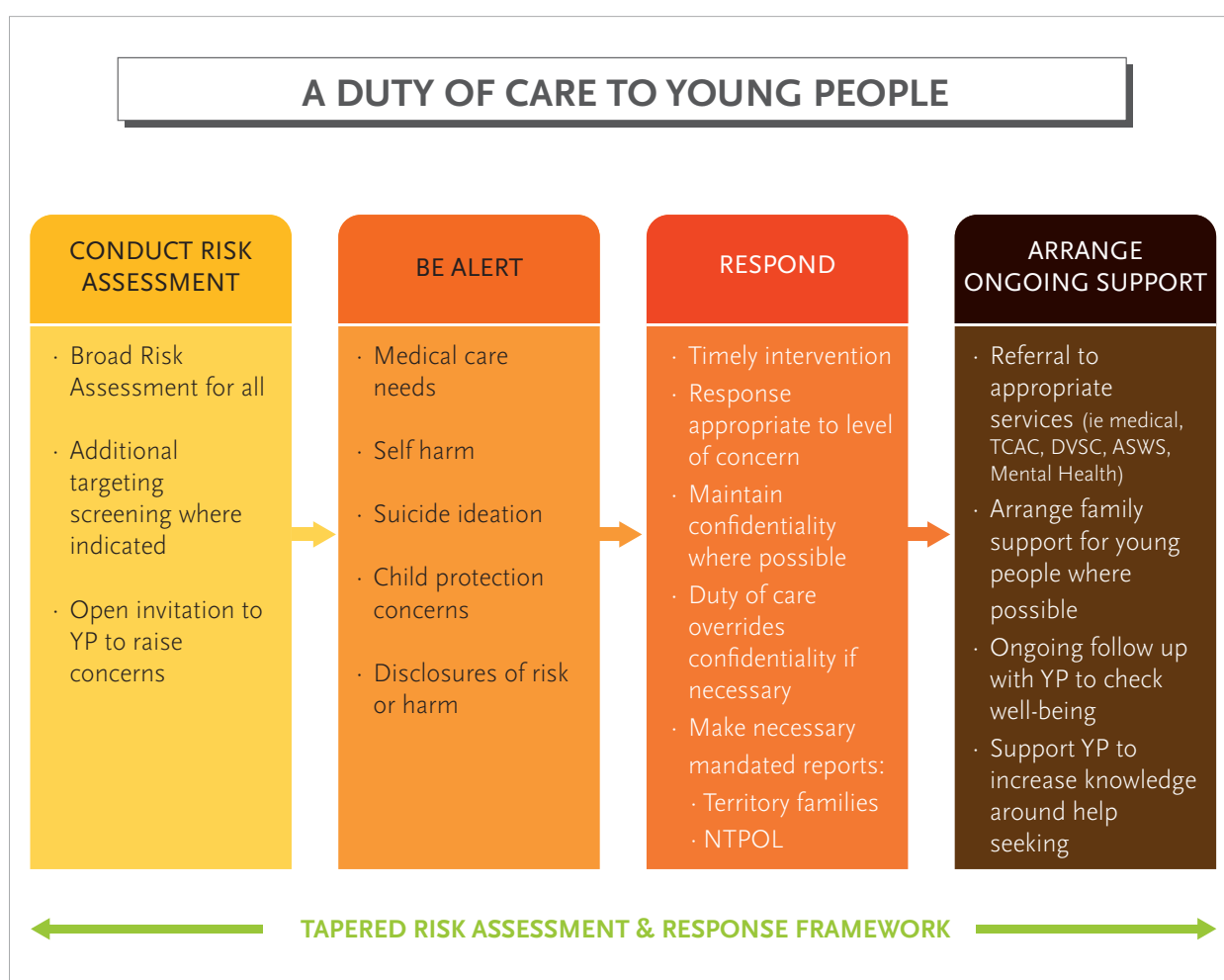


Diagram 3: Ongoing and dynamic risk assessment forms a vital cornerstone of Duty of Care



# SUMMARY

The new and innovative collaborative partnership between TCAC and ASYASS offers an exciting and cogent new approach to youth engagement, activities and support based on best practice. We believe our solution based approach driven by our highly integrated model of service delivery will deliver long term and sustainable outcomes both for the young people of Alice Springs and the wider community.

By providing an integrated suite of activities and programs at Primary, Secondary, Tertiary and Post level, we are able to comprehensively and flexibly respond to the needs of young people whatever their situation in life, and ensure that support where needed is tailored to their individual needs.

We believe that young people have the right to quality services, and we are confident in our capacity to provide value for money services of the highest quality to young people, using skilled and highly motivated staff to deliver an integrated model with a commitment to cultural safety, and to listening to the voices of young people at its core.

We are proud to work with the young people of Alice Springs and would consider it a privilege to provide them with opportunities to engage in positive activities and experiences which they may not otherwise have, and in doing so empower them and support them to reach their full potential as valued and contributing members of the community.

We believe our integrated model of service delivery offers a new way forward and a new way of thinking, one which offers quality, effectiveness and outstanding value for money.



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# APPENDICES

# CODE OF ETHICS

Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation and Alice Springs Youth Accommodation and Support Services Youth Workers are strongly committed to ethical practice in their work with young people. This ethical practice is defined by the following principles:

1. **PRIMARY CLIENT** Youth workers are clear that the interests of the young people they work with always come first. Where conflict exists between obligations to more than one young person, the youth worker should always try to find solutions that minimise harm, and continue to support the young people involved.
2. **CONTEXT** Youth workers work alongside young people in their social context. A wide range of contexts impact on young people's lives, including culture, family, peer group, community and society. Youth work is not limited to facilitating change within the individual young person, but extends to the context in which the young person lives.
3. **PROMOTES EQUALITY** Youth workers' practice promotes equality for all young people, regardless of factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, disability, location or socio-economic status.
4. **EMPOWERMENT** Youth workers presume that young people are competent in assessing and acting on their interests. The youth worker advocates for and empowers young people by making power relations open and clear; by holding accountable those in a position of power over the young person; by avoiding dependency; and by supporting the young person in the pursuit of their legitimate goals, interests and rights.
5. **DUTY OF CARE** The youth worker avoids exposing young people to the likelihood of further harm or injury, and is aware of the safety of others.
6. **PREVENTING CORRUPTION** Youth workers and youth work agencies will not advance themselves and their interests at the expense of young people, and will act to prevent corruption.
7. **A TRANSPARENT RELATIONSHIP** The role and expectations established between the youth worker and the young person, and the resulting relationship, will be respectful, open and truthful. The interests of other stakeholders will not be hidden from the young person.
8. **CONFIDENTIALITY** Information provided by young people will not be used against them, nor will it be shared with others without their permission. Young people should be made aware of the limits to confidentiality, and their permission sought for disclosure. Until this happens, the presumption of confidentiality must apply.
9. **COOPERATION** Youth workers will seek to cooperate with others in order to secure the best possible outcomes with and for young people. Youth workers will respect the strengths and diversity of roles other than youth. Knowledge Youth workers have a responsibility to keep up to date with the information, resources, knowledges and practices needed to meet their obligations to young people. Knowledge Youth workers have a responsibility to keep up to date with the information, resources, knowledges and practices needed to meet their obligations to young people.
10. **KNOWLEDGE** Youth workers have a responsibility to keep up to date with the information, resources, knowledges and practices needed to meet their obligations to young people.
11. **SELF-AWARENESS** Youth workers are conscious of their own values and interests, and approach difference in those with whom they work with humility and respect.
12. **BOUNDARIES** The youth work relationship is a professional relationship, intentionally limited to protect the young person. Youth workers will maintain the integrity of the limitations of their role in the young person's life.
13. **SELF-CARE** Ethical youth work practice is consistent with preserving the health and well being of youth workers.
14. **INTEGRITY** Youth workers are loyal to the practice of youth work, not bringing it into disrepute.

## Commentary

1. **PRIMARY CLIENT** This principle is at the core of the youth work relationship, because it keeps us mindful of who we are there for. Youth workers answer to a range of people: funding bodies, peers, management committees, parents, communities. But youth workers are clear that of all the interests out there, the interests of the young people we work with always come first. Many professionals that work with young people do not consider the young person as their primary client, but instead see them as one of many stakeholders. That's okay; it just means they are not a youth worker. For example, a high school teacher's work entirely revolves around young people. Whilst they are concerned with the wellbeing of young people, the focus of their work is to teach the curriculum. Similarly, a family worker may work with families that have teenage children and be concerned with the needs and interests of those young people, but they will be equally mindful of the needs and interests of the parents, younger children etc. Their primary concern is not only for the young people with whom they work. But young people need to know that there is at least one professional role that they can rely on to always put their interests first. This is the space that youth workers fill. As youth workers, we may find ourselves in situations where we are working with two or more young people who are in conflict with each other. In these situations, we should aim to meet

the needs of each of the young people involved. If this creates a conflict of interests that cannot be resolved, the youth worker should look for a solution that meets the needs of all of the young people, such as referring one or more of the young people to another youth worker or agency.

2. **CONTEXT** Youth workers are agents of change in a variety of ways, both with individual young people, and also with the systems in society that can cause or contribute to the problems that young people face. Youth workers work alongside young people in their context. This means youth workers recognise the impact of that context when working. Context includes things at all levels: place, culture, family, peer group, community, society. In working alongside young people, the youth work approach ensures that youth workers play a facilitation role, rather than viewing young people as passive recipients of services.
3. **PROMOTES EQUALITY** All forms of discrimination have a negative impact on those who experience them, including of course young people. Also, because of their age and social standing, young people's rights are often not protected. This can include their legal, civic, economic, social, cultural, political and human rights. Youth workers work to protect the rights that young people have, and to support them when they experience any form of discrimination. Youth workers also advocate for and facilitate young people receiving the rights they are due. Under Human Rights and Equal Opportunities legislation, all young people have the right to be treated in a fair and appropriate manner, regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion, disability or sexual orientation. This impacts directly on the youth worker's approach to young people. Regardless of a youth worker's personal beliefs, we have a responsibility to treat all young people fairly and equally, and to respond to young people on the basis of their need in the best way possible. As youth workers we need to be very clear that there is no use dealing with a young person in isolation. Young people (like all of us) are shaped, influenced, contained and to some extent controlled by the contexts in which they live. Young people are part of communities and of the broader social context. This cannot be denied in our approach to working with young people. It would be short sighted to think that young people can be worked with in isolation, ignoring the complex myriad of influences all around them.
4. **EMPOWERMENT** The term 'empowerment' has become a bit of a buzz word, and as a result its meaning is sometimes not clear. This principle clarifies what empowerment means in ethical terms, and what it means for us as youth workers. It focuses our attention to being accountable to young people. In this context, 'empowerment' also refers to young people's ethical and responsible action. If a young person is empowered, has independence and participates in society, they are able to take control of their experiences and make informed decisions. They can own their identity and pursue the lives they choose. They are able to participate in the decisions that impact their lives, whether that be day to day experiences, or the decisions that are part of being an adult citizen, such as input into services, or who runs the government. Youth workers work to advocate for and facilitate that empowerment, independence and participation. In the first sentence, the word 'presume' is important; we presume that young people are competent in assessing and acting on their interests. It may be that an individual young person is not a good judge of their interests. They may have a mental illness, or be in some emotional distress. We may find out about these sorts of things as we assess the situation, but the presumption at the outset is that young people know what they are doing. It is with this assumption that we go into every situation; we need to regularly assess the assumptions we hold about young people's competency in assessing and acting in their own interests.
5. **DUTY OF CARE** Both legally and ethically, duty of care is a shared responsibility between the youth worker and the agency. "Duty of Care" recognises that sometimes we can do more harm than good by intervening in a situation: that intervention carries some risk with it. As youth workers we can get a bit fired up with our passion to help people, to get things moving, or to use the skills and resources we have at our disposal. Sometimes this might not be the best thing. When we are running an activity, making a referral, or engaging a young person in a program, we have a responsibility to make sure that the activity, referral or program is generally safe, and that it is safe for this particular young person. We need to be confident that there will not be further harm resulting from their involvement. Our risk assessment and risk management needs to be thorough. Equipment needs to be well maintained, and staff need to be suitably trained and supported. Duty of care also involves being aware of the safety of ourselves and others. If a youth worker has strong reason to believe that a young person may be planning to harm themselves or someone else, we have a duty to act on this information. Duty of care means that youth work agencies have to exercise care in the employment of staff, whether paid or voluntary, full time or part time. Abuse of young people is not rare, and we must be careful about who is given access to the young people we work with. Proper investigation needs to be made into people's work and criminal histories, even when they are volunteers.
6. **PREVENTING CORRUPTION** This principle encourages youth workers to keep ourselves honest in terms of our motivations and rewards. This may involve financial gain, but also includes other things such as power, profile, emotional security, personal identity, agency reputation and so on. This doesn't mean we need to act entirely selflessly with regard to the needs and interests of young people. It doesn't mean that youth workers shouldn't do well out of their youth work roles. But this cannot be at the expense of young people, so that young people don't do as well out of the youth work relationship as they would otherwise, or that their needs are compromised in any way.
7. **A TRANSPARENT RELATIONSHIP** We don't deceive young people, either by saying things that are untrue or by not saying things that they have a right to know. This means that in initial meetings with young people, youth workers must be clear about what they can and can't offer. This applies to various areas of practice, agency

policy and the law. Whilst being open and truthful, workers should be mindful of issues of confidentiality, disclosure, health and safety, who the worker works for and what the agency is funded or contracted to provide. We also have a role in explaining to young people the nature of other stakeholders relationships to them, and the expectations this may place upon them.

8. **CONFIDENTIALITY** Young people provide youth workers with lots of private information about themselves, including their names, personal stories about themselves, their families and so on. Even where we think it might achieve good outcomes, we don't give the identifying details of the young people we work with to anyone else - including police, schools, Centrelink, or other agencies - because this information is private and given in confidence, and continues to belong to the young person. If a youth worker believes there is a good reason why a young person's private information should be shared, we must first make the young person aware of why we believe it would be useful or important to give their private information to others, and the young person's permission must be sought and given. In accordance with National Privacy Principles we presume that young people expect us to keep their information confidential, even if that is about where they were or who they were with. Perfect confidentiality is of course not possible or even desirable: there are always limits. One such limit to confidentiality is when we learn that a young person may be at risk of harming themselves or others. We need to know and understand these limits ourselves in line with the requirements for mandatory reporting, and communicate and clarify them to young people at the onset of our relationship with them. This might include organisational policies about sharing information between workers within the one agency.
9. **COOPERATION** Ethical youth work practice involves a commitment to co-operative partnerships with relevant service providers, in order to collectively achieve positive outcomes in the best interests of young people. Collaborative interagency approaches enable a young person a greater range of choices in terms of support networks and access to a range of information, skills and resources to meet a variety of needs. No single program or agency is capable of looking after every need a young person has. Youth workers are one role in a young person's life, but they are not the only one. Other roles are important to ensure young peoples' needs are met holistically. Collaboration and cooperation also enables us to expand our networks to current information and available resources. Working in deliberate isolation increases the risk of dependency-based relationships, and denies young people the right to choice, and to their fair share of available resources.
10. **KNOWLEDGE** It is essential for youth workers to maintain a high level of competence through an ongoing commitment to training and professional development, and to being informed and skilled in relation to 'best practice' in youth work. This is a standard requirement for most professions.
11. **SELF-AWARENESS** As youth workers, we understand that we are people too, with our own histories, beliefs, ideologies and experiences. We understand that these things can impact on our practice. Realising this, youth

workers take into account the diversity of values and interests that young people may present with. We recognise that our own values may be different to theirs, and we respond to these differences in non-judgemental ways. Respect and dignity are crucial to being able to accept these differences between ourselves and the young person, whilst also recognising that universally accepted concepts of human rights must not be compromised in doing so. Building self-awareness is something we must invest time and energy into. This comes through things like self examination and critical reflection, regular supervision, and taking part in training and professional development opportunities that challenge and extend us.

12. **BOUNDARIES** Youth work is founded in relationships. It is the strong, respectful, trust-based relationships between youth workers and young people that allows youth workers to do our jobs. Youth workers must recognise that the relationship between ourselves and a young person is a contracted relationship. Such contracted relationships have boundaries and limits. These boundaries are influenced by a range of factors, such as the law, organisational policies and procedures, as well as being grounded in a thorough understanding of adolescent development. For example, the relationship between a youth worker and a young person must always be non-sexual. Furthermore, youth workers should be mindful of how much personal information we share about ourselves, and the way we talk about things like relationships, or drugs and alcohol. It is also not the youth worker's role to rescue a young person from their situation. These boundaries ensure that the relationships we have with young people, and the subsequent service or intervention provided is not compromised. This consideration is particularly important when we are working with young people who may have less access to knowledge, resources, and skills than we do.
13. **SELF CARE** Youth workers need to prioritise the practice of self-care: of looking after ourselves as a means to ensuring that we have long and positive careers, enabling us to continue to provide high quality services to young people. There are benefits for the youth worker from practicing appropriate levels of self care; and equally there are benefits for the young people we work with. The care of a youth worker is a shared responsibility between the youth worker themselves and the organisation they are employed by. Because of this, self care often involves raising relevant issues in supervision, team meetings etc.
14. **INTEGRITY** By continuing to portray youth work in a professional manner, youth workers will be mindful not to act in ways that can bring our roles and profession into disrepute. Youth work is an essential role in the community, and its continued support by the community is dependent on the conduct of its practitioners. Youth workers are aware of our own roles and the expectations that this places upon us from ourselves, other stakeholders, and from young people.



# RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CLIENTS

You have the right to raise any problems you have in a safe and protective environment whilst at the service.

You are encouraged to be responsible in exercising your individual right to follow through with complaints that are important to you. You will be protected from any reprisal and victimisation that may occur as a result of making a complaint.

You have the right to confidentiality and privacy.

You have the right to secure, safe, comfortable and affordable accommodation. You are responsible for respecting the safety, security and comfort of others.

You have the right to be treated with respect.

You are responsible for treating others with respect. You have the right to be heard and understood.

You are responsible for hearing and understanding others. You have the right to make mistakes.

You are responsible for the mistakes that you make.

You have the right to make your own decisions and choices.

You are responsible for the decisions and choices that you make.

You have the right not to be abused (physically, emotionally, verbally or sexually).

You are responsible for not abusing others (physically, emotionally, verbally or sexually). You have the right to be accepted no matter what your circumstances are.

You are responsible for accepting others regardless of their circumstances. You have the right to be yourself.

You are responsible to yourself.

You have the right (if you choose) to appropriate, timely and practical assistance that is planned with you and offered in response to your needs and goals.

You have the right to receive the benefits of well-planned, efficient and accountable service management.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood my rights and responsibilities for this service.

Client name and signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# CLIENT INTAKE PROCESS FLOWCHART

