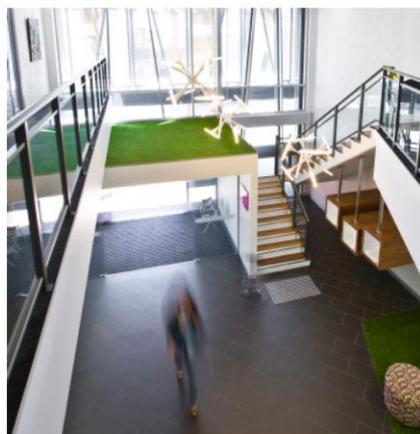
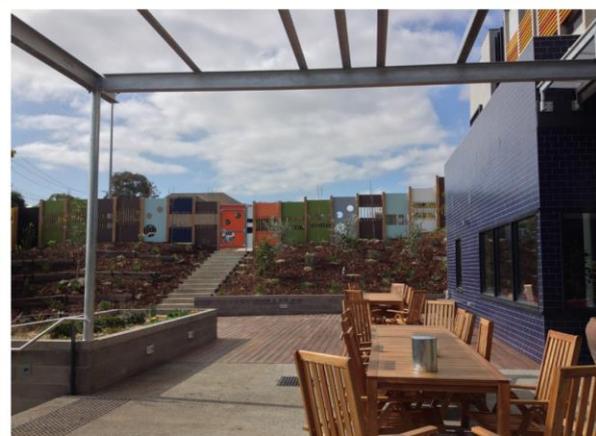




INTRODUCTION: THE FOYER FOUNDATION

Transforming lives for young people



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Foyer movement has been established in Europe and the UK for over 50 years and has now spread internationally, including in Australia where the Foyer Foundation has assisted in the establishment and development of Youth Foyers since 2008.

Foyers provide integrated learning and accommodation for young people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness with the aim of:

- reducing the number of young people cycling through the housing and homelessness system
- increasing the number completing education qualifications and gaining productive employment.

While there are programs in both the education and homelessness sectors that seek to support young people experiencing disadvantage with their education or accommodation across Australia, there are almost no fully integrated service models focused on education and employment outcomes. Stable housing in individual, self-contained units – as is provided by Foyers, allows young people to develop critical skills they need to lead fulfilling, independent and productive lives, while still offering a supported, congregate living environment.

For young people who are unable to rely on family support in this critical developmental stage, this model provides emotional support and guidance and the opportunity to build foundational skills. Foyers around the world have demonstrated positive outcomes in terms of improved educational attainment, increased employment opportunities and better housing outcomes for young people experiencing homelessness.

The Foyer Foundation functions to:

- Promote the Foyer model as a core offer of the homelessness service system for young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness nationally
- Support the development of quality Foyers through collaborative partnerships and access to tools and resources to support local Foyer development plans
- License operators, provide advice and training, and ensure ongoing quality assurance through a robust accreditation scheme
- Give a voice to alienated young people.

The Foundation has a long term commitment to have 30 accredited Foyers operating in Australia by 2030. Achieving that will see Foyers, where they operate, become a key part of an individual community's integrated youth pathways. Across the nation it will see the Foyer Foundation create a vibrant learning network to share best practice and innovation, supported by clever data collection and an accreditation process that builds capacity and demonstrates outcomes for funders.



WHAT IS A YOUTH FOYER?

Youth Foyers provide integrated learning and accommodation for young people who are homeless or at risk of experiencing homelessness. They offer them the time, personalised attention, mentoring, coaching and access to opportunities needed to develop education and training pathways that lead to sustainable employment.

Foyers are designed for young people who have the capacity to engage in education and training, but are prevented from participating due to a range of structural, institutional and personal barriers. They tackle the causes of a young person's housing need, whether it is family breakdown, disengagement from learning or lack of access to training or employment, providing holistic support enabling young people to thrive as they move to independence.

Many services for young people view those young people through the lens of their disadvantage. They see them as 'problems' to be solved or 'victims' in need of charity. Foyers adopt an 'asset' or 'capabilities' based approach to the development and support of young people. This approach represents a shift away from deficit, disadvantaged or problem-saturated thinking, towards **Advantaged Thinking** and acting. It is focused on identifying, developing and, most importantly, investing in the skills, capabilities and assets of these young people so that they can establish sustainable lives.

FIVE CORE FEATURES OF FOYERS

There are five core features of Foyers which distinguish them from other forms of supported youth accommodation. These cover five expectations: a 'Deal' with the young person, a 'home first' approach, the promotion of young people's talents and aspirations, access to networks and opportunities, and community connections.

A 'Deal'

A Foyer must provide a two-way, 'something-for-something' deal between the Foyer and the young person. The young person has to undertake to become engaged in education and/or employment and the Foyer has to undertake to source and provide the necessary support for the young person to meet their end of the deal. Both the young person and the Foyer must be able to enforce this deal.

Home First

While staying at a Foyers is time-limited, it provides a 'home first' approach for young people, providing the elements of a home that all young Australians need to thrive. The model must be holistic, and demonstrate service and support relationships that at a minimum include:

- An affordable, safe home
- Education and training
- Employment, including career search
- Living Skills
- Health and Wellbeing
- Connection to Community

Promotes talents and aspirations

Foyers move away from service models that focus on disadvantage. Instead, they seek to understand and promote the aspirations of young people and the development of young people's talents.

Provides networks and opportunities

Foyers recognise that for young people to reach their potential they need to be provided with a range of networks and opportunities to do so. Foyers need to demonstrate that they source and offer access to a range of opportunities that enable young people to meet their aspirations.

Community Resources

Foyers need to show that they are engaged with and work to ensure young people can access local community resources and networks. This includes local sporting, cultural and community groups.



THE NEED

Young people experience homelessness for a variety of reasons including leaving care, exiting the youth justice system and also because of issues such as family conflict and breakdown, family violence, personal and/or familial mental health issues and personal and/or familial drug and/or alcohol use. In the last ABS Census (2011), it was estimated that 105,237 people were homeless on Census night. Of these, 26,238 were young people aged 12–24. This figure is likely to underestimate the levels of youth homelessness.

Homelessness among young people leads to increased costs for State and Territory Governments not only in the provision of homelessness services but also in public housing, health services, police, justice and corrections, and child protection. Youth homelessness also adds significant costs to the Commonwealth through welfare payments, employment support programs and lost tax income. For the community, the cost lies in reduced civic participation, increased reliance on welfare services and a rise in crime. For the individual, homelessness leads to greater physical and mental health issues, fewer opportunities to undertake education, and therefore employment, and less capacity to participate in society.

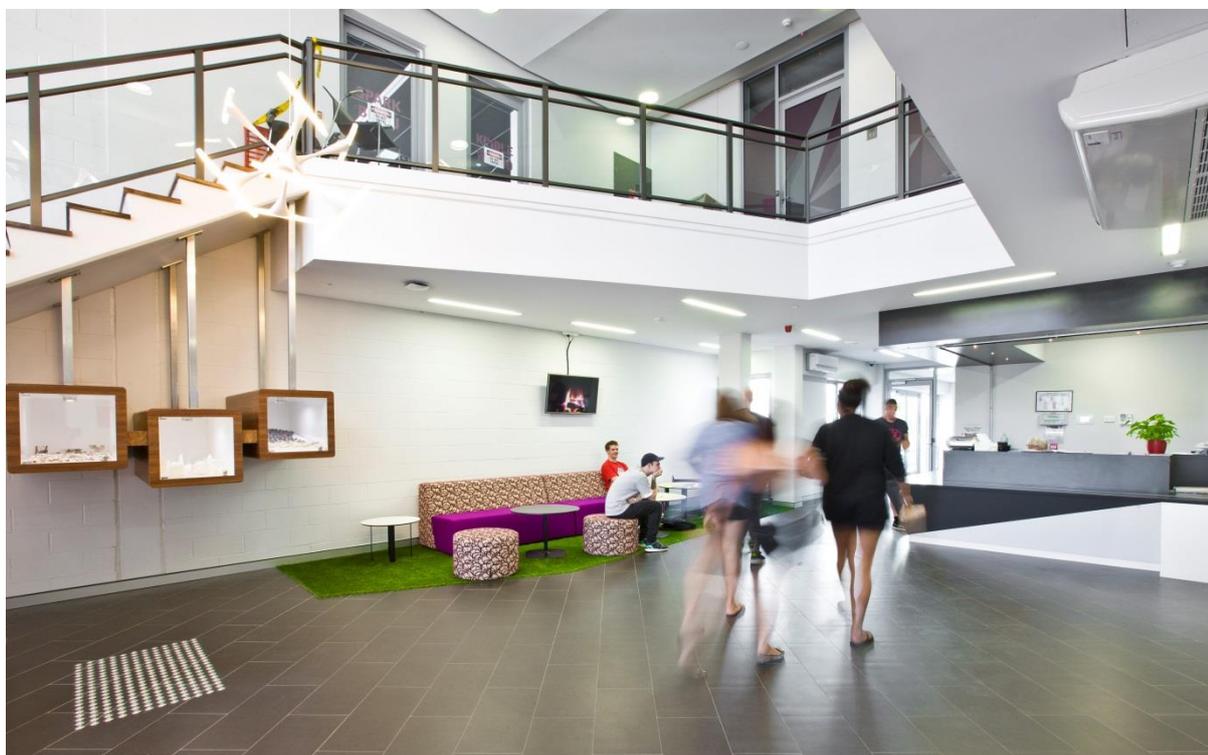
Based on rough estimates, the income support costs alone for a person on welfare payments from the age of 16 to retirement is approximately \$825,000 (in 2011 Dollar terms). By comparison, someone working and earning an average wage from the age of 16 onwards contributes approximately \$390,000 in income tax to the community, a difference of \$1.2 Million for one individual.

Young people experiencing homelessness experience multiple forms of disadvantage that can accumulate over the life course. Of particular concern is the very low rate of engagement in education. For example, of the 15–18 year olds using specialist homelessness services (SHS) in the last quarter of 2011 who reported their educational status (63% of those presenting), only 29% were enrolled in formal study or training. This

puts young people experiencing homelessness at a considerable disadvantage, as social exclusion is more than 2.5 times more prevalent among those without a Year 12 qualification than among school completers.

Young people experiencing homelessness churn through the SHS system at a high rate. BSL analysis of Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data found that nearly one-third (31%) of exits from the standard transitional housing services are internal transfers to other SHS funded short term temporary accommodation (e.g. generalist crisis facilities, refuges). These figures show the current model of homelessness support, generally designed to pick up a young person in a crisis, stabilise them and then move them on as quickly as possible, is not meeting the needs of young people. A different sort of intervention is required to prevent young people who become homeless from cycling through the homelessness service system and to support them to reach their potential.

While there are programs in both the education and homelessness sectors that seek to support disadvantaged young people with their education or their accommodation across Australia, there are almost no fully integrated service models focused on education and employment outcomes. Stable housing in individual, self-contained units – as is provided by Foyers, allows young people to develop critical skills for independent living, while still offering a supported, congregate living environment. For young people who are unable to rely on family support in this critical developmental stage, this model provides emotional support and guidance and the opportunity to build foundational social skills. Foyers strive to reduce homelessness among young people, and increase the number of young people completing educational qualifications and moving into stable employment. Foyers around the world have demonstrated positive outcomes in terms of improved educational attainment, increased employment opportunities and better housing outcomes for young people experiencing homelessness.



WHAT IS THE FOYER FOUNDATION?

The Foyer movement in the United Kingdom was largely driven by the formation of the Foyer Federation, the peak or network body for all accredited Foyers. The Federation supports the growth and development of Foyers in the UK, as well as providing accreditation and quality assurance for organisations wishing to become Foyers. Founded in the early 1990s, the Foyer Federation today is a community membership based organisation that develops innovative, transformational programmes and campaigns across the UK. It pilots, tests and replicates these programs within and beyond its network of members and uses the learning to advocate for innovative and responsive Government policies and programmes for young people.

The Foyer Foundation aims to do the same thing in Australia. It is a Company Limited by Guarantee with DGR status. It has a diverse Board of experienced individuals who are involved in community organisations that work to resolve youth homelessness and unemployment, government and the private sector across Australia.

The Foyer Foundation promotes the concept of youth foyers and supports the development of an Australian network of high-quality, locally based integrated Foyer projects bringing together a range of services specifically tailored to help individual young people discover and realise their aspirations.

The Foyer Foundation supports multi-level solutions that deliver better outcomes for young people.

1. It provides the following to agencies that operate or intend to operate Foyers in Australia:
 - a) Leading edge thinking on Foyer practice and service design;
 - b) Capacity building support and access to tools that assist in the delivery of good practice; and
 - c) The management of communities of practice that deliver ongoing quality improvement.

2. It provides the following to government, corporate and philanthropic agencies that fund the capital and recurrent spending requirements of operating or soon-to-be operating Foyers in Australia:
 - a) Research and policy development;
 - b) Aggregated national data on Foyer performance;
 - c) Nationally consistent processes for quality improvement;
 - d) Support in mobilising funding for the building and operation of new Foyers; and
 - e) Support in linking local, regional and national funding initiatives that target better outcomes for service connected young people.



Accreditation and Quality Assurance

The Foyer Foundation is also an accrediting body, having recently launched the Australian Foyer Fidelity Framework and Accreditation Scheme. Informed by the successful UK Foyer Federation Accreditation Scheme, accreditation is one of the ways of demonstrating how a Foyer is distinctive from other forms of youth housing and support. It provides a useful framework for the Foundation's work in advocating to Government to fund the building and operation of new Foyers and a useful guide for 'Foyer-like' projects who wish to join the movement.

Accreditation enables the Foyer Foundation to protect, develop, strengthen and promote the Foyer concept in Australia and equips the Foyer Foundation with important knowledge of the Foyer network's strengths and the local environments they operate in. It represents a dynamic approach to quality assurance, adapted to both external and internal requirements, and is the only quality assurance scheme that combines a Foyer ethos and Advantaged Thinking lens to help services develop and benchmark performance.

The Foyer Foundation has a long term vision to have 30 accredited Foyers operating in Australia by 2030. There are currently five accredited Australian Foyers, with five more undertaking the scheme in 2018.

Community of Practice

The Foyer Foundation Community of Practice (FF CoP) provides accredited Foyers with access to a national network to enable sharing of complementary expertise and to trial and refine effective, evidence-based service models which enable young people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness to transition to independent living. The FF CoP facilitates the 'cross-pollination' of ideas to enhance practice and ensure that learnings inform ongoing service adaption and continuous improvement. FF CoP members will provide mentoring and guidance to Foyers undergoing the accreditation process.

DEVELOPING FOYERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

The Foyer Foundation has already played a valuable role supporting the development of Youth Foyers in Australia. There are currently fourteen Youth Foyers operating across Australia, with five new Foyers under development.

Foyers are built and planned in partnership with local community organisations, typically a local partnership between an education institution such as a TAFE (on whose land the Foyer usually sits), a community housing provider (who usually plays a role in the construction and then the maintenance of the Foyer building and has tenancy agreements with each of the young residents) and a community services provider (who usually leads the project and manages the entry, pathway and exit of each young person who is resident). Diverse service partnerships should be established within the community to enable the Foyer to source the necessary support required by Foyer residents. These services will be external to the Foyer and will attend to the education, health, drug and alcohol, mental health, employment and social welfare needs and goals of Foyer residents.

A best practice Youth Foyer typically:

- is a modern, purpose built facility designed with between 40 and 100 bed-sit style apartments (20-25 square meters each) including a large amount of total floor space as carefully designed common space
- engages young people to stay in the Foyer for a limited period (up to 2 years is common), during which time they gain an employment related qualification, learn basic life skills and build connections with employers; and
- has a relationship with a TAFE College or similar education provider as a key partner.

Some Foyers also have single and two bedroom apartments to facilitate young parents completing their education and gaining employment. Each Foyer includes a large amount of total floor space as carefully designed common space, and is usually situated on TAFE or equivalent land where the land costs are minimal or non-existent. The location of the Foyer is critical for a number of reasons, including access to services, potential synergies with other projects and the potential for sustainable outcomes once residents leave the program.

Costs of construction of a 40 apartment Foyer are around \$8 million. Ongoing recurrent costs are around \$1.3m per annum for a similar sized Foyer. The best practice model as developed in Australia is that young people stay in the Foyer for no more than 2 years, during which time they gain an employment related qualification, learn basic life skills such as cooking, shopping and managing their own tenancy and have connections built with local employers and local professional mentors. The key social outcome that each Foyer is committed to is that at least 70% of young people leave the Foyer in stable education, employment and housing and then sustain those arrangements for at least 12 months.



THE PROPOSAL

The Foyer is an intense model with high benchmark outcomes but it shows what can be done in apparently intractable situations. The Foyer Foundation Board is looking for partnerships with the private sector, from philanthropists and corporations, to bring life to the vision of the Foyer Foundation that is outlined in this proposal. Join us with a commitment of funding for this important work that will allow those young Australians who currently live in challenging circumstances to thrive.

CONTACT

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