

Strong Youth

STRONG COMMUNITIES



A proposal for a partnership approach to reducing disadvantage for young people aged 9 to 18 in rural Victoria (Loddon, Buloke, Gannawarra)

Our challenge

OUR YOUNG PEOPLE ARE DISENGAGING AND LACK OPTIMISM

1. Young people in Loddon, Buloke and Gannawarra, are disengaging from school and lack optimism for their futures, which costs governments now, and will impact on the strength of our rural communities in the future.
2. Data shows that our region has over 1000 dependent children in over 600 families earning less than \$650 per week and **over one third** of all young people in the region:
 - » **have low wellbeing**, with lower than average scores on optimism, self-esteem, happiness and absence of sadness ¹
 - » **leaving/ left school early**, which impacts on their income and life chances.
3. **The COVID-19 pandemic is magnifying these issues.** A survey ² of 3408 children and young people up to age 18 in Australia found 28% of the households they live in experienced **job loss or reduced income** during the pandemic, delaying payments for essential household costs, such as mortgage, rent or utility bills (22%), health care and prescription medicines (16%) and even food their family needed (28%).
4. **Anecdotal evidence from our partnership suggests there has been a significant increase in risk taking behaviours** including drugs and alcohol, exacerbated by boredom, unsure futures, and a culture of nihilism is emerging among our young people.

THE HIGH COSTS OF DISADVANTAGE YOUNG PEOPLE IN RURAL AREAS

5. Solutions to disadvantage and disengagement for this age group are poorly researched, and the services they need poorly planned. But the costs are enormous, for example:
 - » a NSW study of costs of **servicing children and young people** has shown the cost to State and Federal government (mainly in welfare support and health care) of the 1 000 most vulnerable children and young people to the age of 40 (\$2.5M) is 15.9 times higher than that for the total under 25-year-old population (\$143k). ³

¹ Unpublished data for Loddon and Buloke. Gannawarra are yet to undertake the MDI

² Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne (2020) *Child Health Poll. COVID-19 pandemic: Effects on the lives of Australian children and families*. <https://www.rchpoll.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/nchp-poll18-report-covid.pdf>

³ Using linked service data across child protection, housing, justice, health, education, mental health, alcohol and other drug, and commonwealth (welfare MBS and PBS) services (Taylor Fry 2019).

- » Any given yearly cohort of **students leaving early** contribute to a lifetime social loss of \$23.2 billion, mostly related to lower earnings, but also costs of crime and marginal tax burden (Lamb et al 2017). The lifetime economic cost to Australian governments or the taxpayer is \$12.6 billion (Lamb et al 2017) ⁴
- » In Scotland **youth work has been found to return £7 for every £1 invested**.⁴⁸

YOUNG PEOPLE CANNOT ACCESS THE SUPPORT THEY NEED

6. **Prevention will reduce** the costs of negative outcomes now and protect our community's strength (participation in the labour market, community and leadership) in the future.
7. We need to ensure the supports are in place to ensure young people have the four foundations for healthy and successful lives:
 - » **connection to broader community mentors, services and organisations** that help provide additional resources, mentoring, information and emotional support
 - » **quality education services** that give them the skills and aspiration to set up pathways for financial independence and successful careers
 - » **financial and practical support for their families (of any make-up)** (including income, employment, health, human, justice, emergency services) that ensure they are able to provide support and opportunities
 - » **supportive families (of any make-up) and close networks** that help develop the life-long healthy habits, skills and resilience that provide the springboard for moving confidently out into the world ⁵.
8. Young people in disadvantaged families in rural areas face a double disadvantage. Their families have fewer resources to support them, and the areas in turn have fewer resources to compensate, due to an acute lack of access to the services including:
 - » **the internet/digital connectivity and digital literacy**, which is low in disadvantaged rural households ⁶, and the number one issue reported by the region's young people⁷
 - » **primary health, mental health, sexual and women's health, specialist health, and disability services** ⁸
 - » **education services** (inability to provide full curriculum, worse facilities, etc) ⁸
 - » **recreation activities** (including to suit different young people's needs), the second biggest issue reported by the region's young people ³
 - » **absence of a holistic youth work model**, with a agencies consultation in Loddon suggesting a deficit of specific youth services, youth workers, counselling, youth spaces, ways for young people to have a voice, alternative school programs, school holiday events, public transport, and crisis accommodation ³.

⁴ Lamb S, Jackson J, Walstab A & Huo S (2105) *Educational opportunity in Australia 2015: Who succeeds and who misses out*. Mitchell Institute: Melbourne

⁵ Modified from The Health Foundation (2018) *A place to Grow: Exploring the future health of young people in five sites across the UK*. <https://www.health.org.uk/publications/a-place-to-grow>

⁶ Thomas J, Wilson CK & Park S (2018) Australia's digital divide is not going away. *The Conversation*. March 29, 2018

⁷ Conversation Caravan (2019) *Loddon Shire Youth Strategy 2019. Engagement Summary. August 2019*.

⁸ Pope J (2019) The role of infrastructure in addressing regional disadvantage in Victoria. https://www.infrastructurevictoria.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Background-paper_The-role-of-infrastructure-in-addressing-regional-disadvantage.pdf

Our solution

A MODEL FOR A SYSTEM OF YOUTH SUPPORT

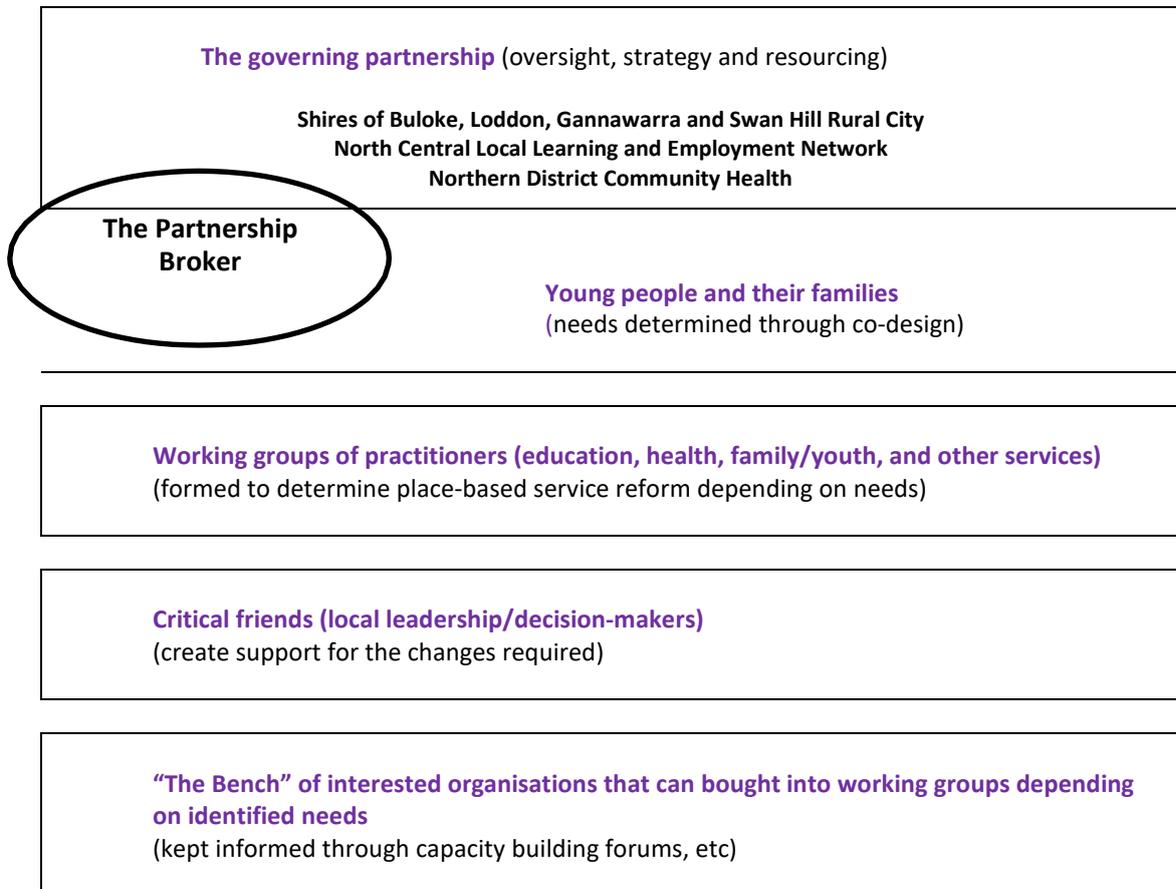
We are proposing to develop a framework and tools (model) for a place-based youth support system.

The model will outline a method and tools for:

- » **creating a partnership between the State government, local government, education, health and others, and**
- » **employing a skilled broker/facilitator for:**
 - working with young people and their families to determine their need (codesign)
 - building collaborations to address those needs through system reform (coordinated multifactorial activity)
 - working with community organisations to create new opportunities.
- » **Ensuring the model can be scaled to any area (flexible) and sustained over time.**

PROPOSED GOVERNANCE

The model will engage youth people and their families to determine needs, the organisation's involved in youth support to consider reform, and will create an authorising environment for change:

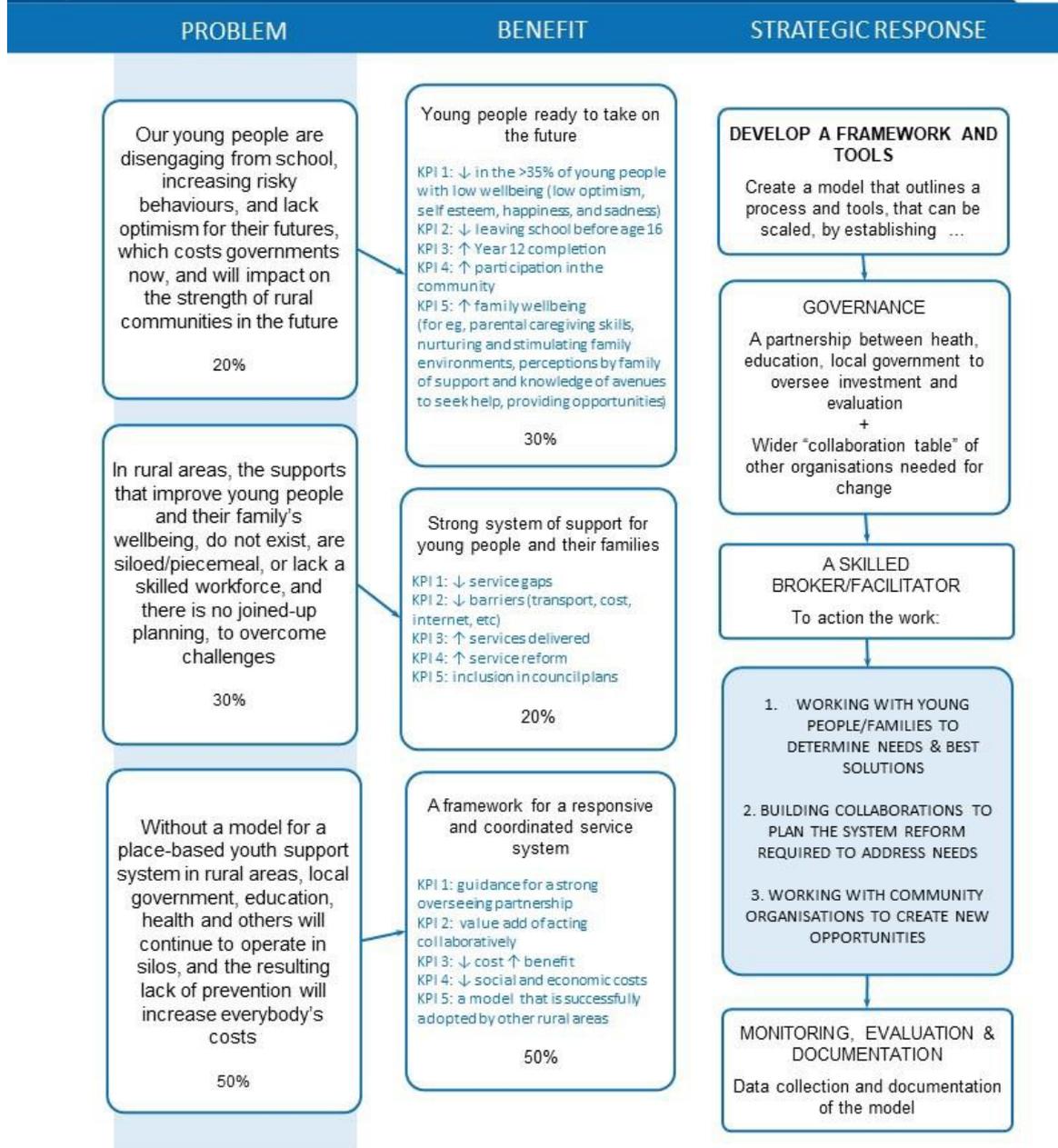


Investment Logic Map (plan on a page)

Loddon, Buloke, Gannawarra Partnership

Strong families, strong communities (young people 9-18)

INVESTMENT LOGIC MAP
Program



Investor: Loddon, Buloke, Gannawarra Partnership
Facilitator: Jeanette Pope
Accredited Facilitator: -

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