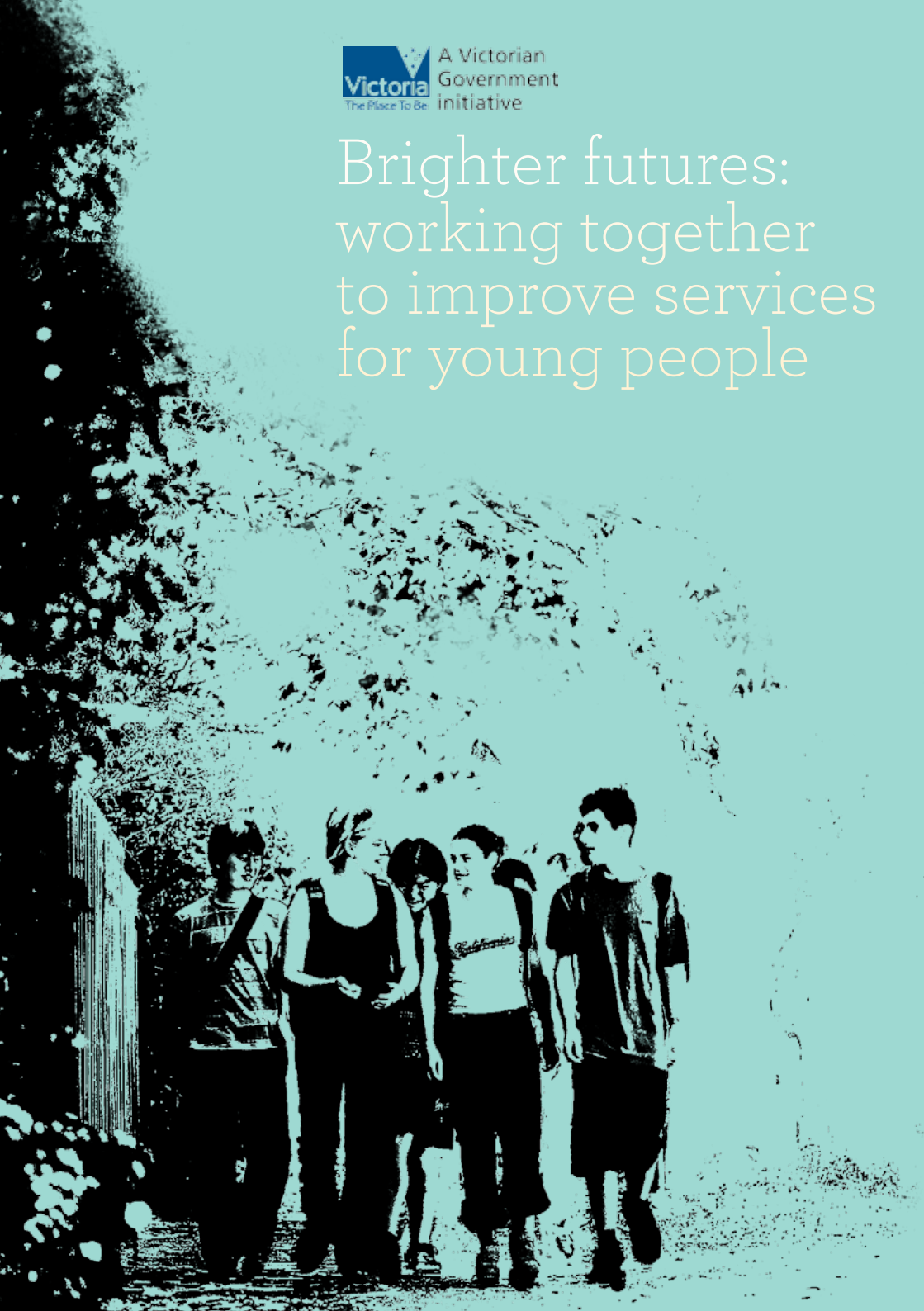




A Victorian
Government
Initiative

Brighter futures: working together to improve services for young people



The Victorian Government is committed to helping all young Victorians reach their full potential. This means ensuring all young people have access to the support they need to stay connected with their education, families and community.

The majority of young Victorians are building happy, healthy and fulfilling lives. However, some young people still face significant barriers to achieving their potential and can sometimes struggle to get the assistance they need to overcome these barriers.

Supporting Victoria's youth services to meet the challenge

There are many services in place to support young people experiencing problems, a large number of which are funded by the State Government and delivered by community or state government agencies. These services do great work in supporting young people in need, and many are leading or are involved in implementing innovative initiatives to improve outcomes for young people.

However, despite the excellent work taking place on the ground to support individual young people, there is a clear need to further support services to ensure:

- A greater focus on early intervention
- Consistent approaches to assessment and referral across the range of sectors working with young people
- Clear entry points into the right youth services at the right time, including tailored education options

The opportunity we have

The Victorian Government wants to create a system where:

- Young people at risk of experiencing problems are identified early and referred to the support they need
- Service delivery is tailored to meet the needs of individual young people and their families
- There are clear points of access to the service system
- Young people receive holistic support
- Key agencies across youth support, justice, homelessness, mental health and education work collaboratively to achieve agreed outcomes and goals for individual young people and their families
- Education options are available that provide young people with a pathway to employment or further education

Brighter Futures

The Victorian Government has committed to testing a range of resources and approaches aimed at improving the way services to young people aged 10-18 are delivered across sectors, to develop a cohesive youth service response. Government is investing \$11 million over three years to design and test the best ways of improving this system, with the aim of aligning delivery of services against the following two goals:

- Improving engagement with education and training, leading to an increase in the completion of Year 12 or equivalent, and
- Reducing the escalation of social, individual and behavioural problems for individual young people

The initiative will have a strong emphasis on the importance of education and assisting students to stay in or return to school or training. Teachers are often the first people to notice that young people are struggling and need extra support. Being able to create a system that enables teachers, community services and police to work together more effectively is essential to ensure all young people are able to access the support and education they need.

Strong collaboration

Achieving a cohesive response to the needs of young people and their families will rely on close collaboration across a range of sectors, agencies and

departments. Strong local service planning and partnerships are vital to make sure services are delivered in a way that meets the needs of the local community.

Demonstration Projects

The Government will work with education providers, youth and family services, homelessness services, health and mental health services, police, and local government in seven demonstration sites to:

- Identify the needs of young people who are disengaged from education, family and community and develop a plan to address these needs
- Test new approaches to organising service delivery to ensure coordinated and holistic support is provided to young people and their families
- Trial resources to better support assessment, referral and assistance to young people
- Provide advice on options for improving the service system

The projects will be established in multi-Local Government Areas (LGAs) sites in early 2011 and funded through to mid-2013. They will build on the work of the Better Youth Services pilots, and will be governed by a local, cross sectoral committee involving senior representatives from local agencies, education and training providers, and key Government departments. These governance arrangements will build on existing networks and coordination mechanisms.

The demonstration projects will be established in the following groupings of LGAs:

- Greater Geelong, Queenscliff and Surf Coast
- Yarra Ranges, Maroondah and Knox
- Frankston and Mornington Peninsula
- Swan Hill, Gannawarra, Buloke and Mildura
- Greater Bendigo, Central Goldfields, Mount Alexander, Campaspe, Macedon Ranges and Loddon
- Ballarat, Hepburn, Moorabool, Pyrenees, and Golden Plains
- Wyndham and Hobsons Bay

Secretariat

A whole of government Secretariat will be established to develop policies and resources to support the work taking place in the demonstration projects. The Secretariat will also evaluate local approaches and provide advice to Government on options for improving the service system.

Opportunities for involvement

- A statewide external advisory group involving peak bodies will be established
- Local governance committees will establish mechanisms for youth and community participation in demonstration projects
- Service providers will play a key role in planning and delivery of demonstration projects through participation in governance committees
- All key stakeholders will be invited to participate in evaluation of the work

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