The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia (MYAN)

Response to the Australian Government's Discussion Paper: Reforming Australia's Settlement Grants Programs

October 2026

About MYAN

The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia (MYAN) is the national peak body representing the rights and interests of children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Established in 2007 as a response to the unique challenges faced by multicultural youth, including newly arrived young people settling via the Humanitarian Program, MYAN plays a crucial role in informing policy and enhancing service delivery to foster an inclusive society that values diversity and promotes equitable opportunities for all young people living in Australia.

MYAN collaborates with young people, government, non-profit organisations and community stakeholders to strengthen policy and service delivery for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. This national role connects lived experience, specialist practice and policy development and informs MYAN's recommendations on the future design of settlement grants programs.

Key aspects of MYAN's work with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds:

- Advocacy and policy: MYAN advocates for the rights and interests of young people in federal policy, including education, employment and mental health. MYAN's policy work is informed by its Youth Council, state and territory partner network, and National Policy Alliance, which comprises 350 members across the youth, settlement and migration sectors nationally.

- Youth Participation: We facilitate opportunities for young people with lived experience of forced migration to have their voices heard and influence decision-making (e.g., via our national youth advisory groups and FUSE youth leadership summit).

- Settlement Support: MYAN developed the National Youth Settlement Framework, which remains the only tool of its kind globally used to support the specific needs of newly arrived young refugees and migrants.

- Capacity Building: We provide training and resources for organisations and individuals working with refugee and migrant youth.

This submission draws on an extensive evidence base developed through MYAN's national policy and practice work, existing research, previous policy submissions, consultation activities, and ongoing conversations with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, state and territory partners, Youth Transition Support (YTS) providers and other specialist and community organisations. It is also informed by MYAN's National Youth Settlement Framework. Together, these sources provide lived-experience, service-delivery, research and system-design evidence about what young people need from an integrated settlement grants model. Where recommendations rely on consultation findings, provider experience or MYAN-developed models, the submission identifies that evidence transparently and distinguishes it from external research and government data.

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MYAN acknowledges and pays respect to the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people. We also acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the various lands on which MYAN partners operate across the country and pay our respects to all Elders past and present. We work towards reconciliation with and self-determination for the First Peoples of this country.

1. Executive Summary

MYAN welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Australian Government's consultation on reforming settlement grants programs. MYAN supports an integrated grants model where it makes services easier to navigate, strengthens continuity across settlement pathways and improves economic participation, social connection and youth outcomes. Integration must not, however, dilute specialist youth capability, funding or accountability. The reformed model should retain a protected, permanent and adequately funded youth pathways stream, establish a nationally coordinated children's settlement framework, and embed explicit child- and youth-specific safeguards across service design, eligibility, commissioning, delivery, workforce capability, governance and outcomes. These safeguards are necessary to ensure equitable access across cohorts and locations, preserve specialist multicultural youth and community-based capability, strengthen coordination with education, employment and mainstream systems, and assess value for money through sustained settlement outcomes rather than program consolidation or rapid employment placement alone.

The priority recommendations below address the discussion paper's three design areas: an integrated service model that protects specialist child and youth pathways, equitable, needs-based access across cohorts and locations, and coordinated, accountable delivery that supports long-term outcomes and value for money. Section 7 sets out the complete 12 actions for government.

- Retain a protected and permanent youth pathways stream with minimum non-negotiable safeguards: dedicated youth funding, protected specialist functions, nationally consistent standards, needs-based access and youth-disaggregated accountability.
- Establish a nationally coordinated children's settlement framework, co-designed with children, families, child-rights organisations, settlement providers and mainstream systems, and aligned with existing child, family, education, health and settlement frameworks.
- Preserve specialist multicultural youth practice, including relationship-based casework, youth-specific brokerage, education transition support, social connection, family-aware practice, bicultural and peer roles, flexible outreach and settlement-informed employment support.
- Strengthen coordinated pathways across the full settlement journey through consistent workers, culturally safe assessment, tell-it-once approaches, warm referrals, shared pathway planning and formal transition protocols across humanitarian, settlement, education, employment and mainstream services.

- Strengthen education and school-based settlement pathways, including school-based liaison functions, early learning and school commencement support, education retention and progression, and recognition of belonging and age-appropriate development as foundations for later participation.
- Integrate employment services around safe and sustainable pathways by requiring differentiated support, workplace-rights education, mentoring, employer engagement, post-placement support and performance measures that reward job quality, education continuity and sustained progress rather than rapid placement alone.
- Fund social connection, belonging, wellbeing and family-responsive support as core settlement functions, including peer connection, mentoring, leadership, civic participation, qualified interpreting, whole-of-family support, confidential specialist pathways and responses that reduce parentification.
- Guarantee equitable access across cohorts and locations by allocating resources according to demographic need, settlement data, service gaps and regional context, while ensuring young people in metropolitan, regional and remote areas can access the same youth-specific quality standards.
- Commission collaboration and protect specialist and community-based providers through equitable tender timeframes, proportionate compliance, consortium development support, fair subcontract terms and transparent assessment of specialist and community capability.
- Provide adequate multi-year funding and build workforce capability, including paid entry and progression pathways for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds into the settlement, youth and community services workforce.
- Embed meaningful youth co-design and accountable governance through paid youth advisory mechanisms, direct youth input into commissioning and evaluation, and clear reporting back on how youth input changes decisions.
- Measure participant outcomes, equity and access, and system performance through youth-disaggregated indicators covering education, safe and sustained employment, belonging, wellbeing, service access, completed referrals, partnership continuity and reduced duplication.
- Support continuous improvement through MYAN's national stewardship, implementation guidance, workforce development, shared tools and standards, youth participation, ecosystem mapping and monitoring.

2. Young People in Australia's Migration and Humanitarian Programs

MYAN analysis of Department of Home Affairs settlement data for the 2025–26 financial year shows that young people aged 12–24 comprised 25 per cent of entrants in the Humanitarian visa stream, 27 per cent of entrants in the Family visa stream and 8.5 per cent of entrants in the Skilled visa stream. Children aged 0–11 also made up a significant share of entrants across migration streams, comprising 22 per cent of entrants in the Humanitarian Program, 12.5 per cent in the Family stream and 40 per cent in the Skilled stream. These figures reinforce the need for the integrated model to include visible child-specific settlement outcomes and supports, rather than assuming that children's settlement needs are captured through family- or adult-focused service design (MYAN Australia 2026e).

These figures are consistent with earlier migration and settlement trends showing that young people represent a substantial share of new arrivals across multiple visa pathways, not only the Humanitarian Program. The data demonstrate that youth settlement is a significant and enduring component of Australia's migration landscape and that demand for developmentally appropriate support should be anticipated in program design and funding. While not every young person will require the same type or intensity of assistance, the scale of the cohort reinforces the need for a visible, well-resourced and nationally coordinated youth settlement sector that can respond across education, employment, family, wellbeing and community transitions.

Child and youth settlement

Child and youth migration requires a distinct settlement lens because it sits at the intersection of migration, adolescence and early adulthood. A developmentally informed approach to settlement recognises that children do not experience settlement as a single or uniform process. Their needs vary significantly across developmental stages, yet settlement systems have often treated children as a homogeneous group or primarily through the lens of their parents. This risks overlooking critical developmental needs that influence long-term wellbeing, participation and belonging.

During early childhood (0–5 years), rapid brain development makes children particularly sensitive to the impacts of disrupted routines, trauma, parental stress, and limited access to early learning. For refugee and migrant children, lower participation in early childhood education represents both a developmental inequity and a breach of their rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In the middle years (6–11 years), children are developing greater independence, social competence, and identity while adapting to new school environments, learning English, and often assuming language and cultural brokering roles within their families. These experiences require tailored, age-appropriate supports rather than generic settlement responses.

Adolescence (12–24 years) presents another distinct developmental phase. For young people aged 12–24, settlement occurs alongside critical transitions through adolescence, school, further education, employment, family responsibilities, identity development and community participation. Their outcomes are shaped not only by individual aspiration and resilience, but also by the accessibility and responsiveness of schools, TAFEs, universities, youth services, health services, employers and community organisations. Australia's National Youth Settlement Framework (NYSF) provides an established foundation for this age group.

A complementary framework to the NYSF should address the current gap for children from birth to age 11. Grounded in children's rights and developmental evidence, it should adopt a whole-child approach that recognises the interconnected physical, cognitive, social, emotional and cultural dimensions of development. It should also centre children's voices and lived experiences through co-design, child-led feedback and measurable wellbeing outcomes to strengthen nationally coordinated settlement practice across sectors.

Implication

Embedding a developmentally informed, rights-based framework across settlement systems would support consistent, age-appropriate responses from birth to adulthood, strengthen cross-sector coordination, and improve children's wellbeing and settlement outcomes. It would also ensure children's experiences and voices inform policy, practice and accountability, helping all children settling in Australia to thrive. A child-focused framework aligns with current cross-departmental efforts across DSS, Health, Education and Home Affairs, and provides an opportunity to strengthen nationally coordinated child and family settlement responses alongside the NYSF.

3. MYAN Australia Overarching Position and Principles

MYAN supports an integrated grants model in practice where it makes settlement services easier for clients to navigate, reduces duplication, strengthens continuity across settlement pathways and delivers improved economic participation, social connection, wellbeing and youth outcomes. Integration must not, however, dilute specialist youth capability, dedicated funding or accountability. The model should therefore retain a protected youth pathways stream, preserve specialist multicultural youth practice and apply explicit child- and youth-specific safeguards across program design, commissioning, delivery, governance and outcomes. A dedicated youth pathways stream is not simply an age-based service category. It is an early-intervention mechanism that supports long-term participation and self-reliance by responding to needs during critical developmental, education, employment and settlement transitions. Youth settlement should be understood as a long-term developmental and systems process of inclusion, participation and wellbeing, rather than a short period of arrival support or a narrow measure of early employment.

The principal risk of integration is that youth needs become less visible within broader adult, family, or employment outcomes. Without explicit safeguards, specialist youth practice may be replaced by generalist casework, funding may shift towards short-term job placements, education pathways and social connection may be undervalued, trusted worker relationships may be disrupted, and smaller specialist providers may be excluded from larger contracts. The program architecture, funding streams, performance framework and governance arrangements should each be tested against these risks before implementation.

Providers participating in an October 2026 consultation convened by MYAN Australia and the Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA) also cautioned that integration should not narrow the broader settlement function to employment, social connection and youth outcomes alone. Health, mental health, housing, family support, language access, disability support and service navigation remain essential settlement domains. The integrated model should preserve these functions and avoid turning SETS into an employment program by default (MYAN Australia and Settlement Council of Australia 2026).

Integration should make children more visible, not less. Children aged 0–11 should not be treated only as dependants within family or adult-client records. The integrated model must retain child-specific assessment, participation, safeguarding, referral pathways, data collection and accountability so that children's settlement needs, outcomes and rights are recognised across family, early learning, school, health, housing and community systems.

4. Response to Question 1: Service Design

How could settlement support services achieve strong economic participation, social connection and youth outcomes? Consider: • How can an integrated model provide seamless support for clients with needs across multiple streams? • How should the new program be set up to ensure client outcomes are aligned with the Refugee and Humanitarian Entrant Settlement and Integration Outcomes Framework? • How do settlement services and grants contribute to successful settlement outcomes, and how are these defined and measured?

Service Model

Settlement support services can achieve stronger economic participation, social connection and youth outcomes through an integrated, but not generalist, model that retains a protected youth pathways stream and connects young people seamlessly across settlement, education, employment, health, housing, family and community systems. The model should combine a consistent trusted worker, needs-based and strengths-based assessment, graduated support, structured referrals and handovers, specialist multicultural youth practice and accountable partnerships with mainstream services.

Outcome Framework

Alignment with the Refugee and Humanitarian Entrant Settlement and Integration Outcomes Framework should be achieved through youth-specific measures that recognise

developmental stages and track education, safe and sustainable employment, belonging, wellbeing, self-agency, community participation and confidence navigating systems. Successful settlement should be measured through both immediate progress and longer-term outcomes, including whether young people can access and benefit from services, sustain trusted relationships and move towards their own aspirations without repeated assessment, referral gaps or loss of support.

4.1 Retain a Distinct Youth Pathways Stream

Young people navigate adolescence and early adulthood at the same time as they adjust to a new language, education system, labour market, community and cultural environment. Their settlement journeys may also involve disrupted education, identity formation, discrimination, unfamiliar systems and significant responsibilities within their families. Without developmentally appropriate support, these intersecting pressures can contribute to early disadvantage and longer-term disengagement. A dedicated youth pathways stream is therefore not simply an age-based service category. It is an early-intervention mechanism that supports long-term participation and self-reliance (Department of Home Affairs 2022).

In a consultation convened by MYAN Australia and the Social Policy Group (SPG) in September 2026, Settlement Engagement and Transition Support program (SETS) providers consistently described Youth Transition Support as filling a gap that broader family-based settlement services cannot always address. Providers reported that young people's needs and aspirations can become secondary to those of the primary applicant or family unit within general settlement programs. They described dedicated youth funding as enabling specialist casework and tailored leadership, education, employment, social connection, camps and school-holiday activities that would otherwise be difficult to sustain.

Youth pathways must remain a distinct, visible and adequately funded stream within any integrated settlement grants model. The stream should use YTS as the core specialist youth settlement model while retaining the broader settlement engagement, wellbeing, family, community connection, service navigation, social participation and belonging functions currently delivered through SETS Youth. It should preserve YTS expertise in education pathways, vocational exploration, career planning, employment preparation, labour-market navigation, employer engagement and sustained education-to-employment coaching. This capability should remain embedded within holistic youth settlement practice and be complemented by specialist economic participation services where additional support is required.

Integration can improve coordination only where youth-specific expertise, relationships, funding and outcomes are explicitly protected. This should be achieved through a ring-fenced youth allocation that is separately costed, separately reported and unable to be redirected to adult, family or general caseload pressures without prior government approval. Grant agreements should specify minimum youth service functions and require separate reporting of youth expenditure, staffing, activities and outcomes, including youth-disaggregated

measures for education, belonging, wellbeing, participation and safe, sustainable employment (MYAN Australia 2026b) (MYAN Australia and Social Policy Group 2026).

Integration must preserve and adequately fund the core elements of effective youth settlement practice: relationship-based support with a consistent worker, youth-specific casework and brokerage across education, training, employment, housing, health, legal, family and community systems, education transition support, employment preparation before job placement, group work, peer connection, leadership opportunities, family and intergenerational work, bicultural, peer and lived-experience roles, specialist multicultural youth workers and flexible outreach that responds to practical barriers and local needs. The stream should also fund culturally responsive orientation to Australian language, education, workplace and civic systems, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, workplace rights, Australian labour laws and supported introductions to schools, TAFEs, universities, employers and community organisations. Dedicated resources should cover coordination and brokerage with these partners rather than treating collaboration as an unfunded expectation.

Evidence from the 2022 Youth Transition Support evaluation, together with evidence gathered by MYAN from state and territory partners and YTS providers, demonstrates that effective youth settlement practice combines individual case support and mentoring with education assistance, employment preparation, digital literacy, life-skills development, driving support, social connection, civic participation, arts, sport and wellbeing activities. These functions are mutually reinforcing and should be retained within a dedicated youth pathways stream rather than fragmented across separate service systems. The evaluation and provider evidence also show that youth-specific capability depends on staff with expertise in settlement, cultural displacement, trauma, adolescent development and intersectional identities.

4.2 Protect and Fund Effective Youth Settlement Practice

4.2.1 Relationship-based early intervention and practical brokerage

SETS providers consulted by MYAN and SPG emphasised that relationship-based youth work is itself an early-intervention mechanism. Young people often disclose concerns during transport, camps, school-holiday activities, outreach, or ordinary conversations rather than in formal appointments. These settings allow trust to develop over time, create opportunities to identify emerging needs before crisis and make it more likely that young people will seek help when difficulties arise. Drawing on this frontline evidence, the youth pathways stream should fund the staff time, transport, outreach and group activities required to sustain trusted relationships, not treat them as incidental recreational costs.

Assessment should document each young person's strengths, aspirations and interests alongside barriers and support needs. This information should guide pathway planning, service intensity and opportunities in education, employment and community participation,

but should never determine whether the young person is eligible for support. Eligibility should remain needs-based, while planning should be strengths-based and future-focused.

The youth pathways stream should provide a graduated service offer with four clearly defined levels:

- Accessible information and navigation: Plain-language, multilingual and youth-friendly information that helps a young person understand available services, eligibility and next steps. For example, explaining local education, employment or health options.

- Connective support: Short-term assistance to connect a young person with a settlement or mainstream service. For example, this may include arranging an appointment, making a referral with registered partners or accompanying the young person to an initial meeting.

- Coordinated casework: Ongoing support for a young person whose needs span several systems, with a consistent worker coordinating a shared plan across education, employment, health, housing, family and community services.

- Intensive support: Frequent, flexible and higher-touch assistance where complexity, instability or risk is high. For example, active crisis coordination, intensive advocacy and sustained follow-up across multiple services.

Young people should be able to move between these levels as their circumstances change and re-enter the program when settlement needs recur, without unnecessary reassessment or loss of continuity. MYAN and SPG consultations confirmed that education, employment, social connection, family relationships, wellbeing and settlement are interdependent rather than separate pathways. Providers explained that social connection can build the confidence needed for education or employment, family pressures can affect school participation, transport can determine access to training, and mental health or experiences at school can undermine progress elsewhere. The youth pathways stream should therefore operate as a holistic pathway capable of coordinating support across these domains, rather than becoming a narrow stream that refers young people elsewhere whenever their needs cross into education, employment, wellbeing or social participation.

The integrated model should enable young people to move between education, training, employment, community participation and wellbeing supports without repeated intake processes, referral gaps or loss of trust. A young person should be able to access another program stream or specialist service without losing their consistent youth worker, restarting assessment or being required to repeat their story. The youth worker should remain responsible for continuity, coordination and follow-up while the receiving service delivers its specialist intervention. Employment outcomes for young people cannot be separated from education continuity, social connection, confidence, family context, experiences of racism or exclusion, and access to culturally safe support (MYAN Australia and Social Policy Group 2026) (MYAN Australia 2026b).

A youth pathways stream should fund practical, interest-led opportunities that connect learning, social participation and economic participation. This could include supervised driving support, personal finance and workplace-rights education, entrepreneurship programs with small, safeguarded seed grants and mentoring, vocational tasters in hospitality, beauty services, digital work, woodwork, metalwork and trades, and supported work experience linked to accredited education and training. Activities should be co-designed with young people, connected to recognised pathways and accompanied by appropriate safeguarding, careers guidance and follow-up.

Evidence from the MYAN and Social Policy Group consultation and MYAN's National Policy Alliance survey indicates that practical brokerage is often what turns a pathway plan into a real opportunity. Participants identified driving lessons and licence costs, transport, accredited short courses, course fees and materials, equipment, digital access, work clothing, identification documents and emergency relief as expenses that can block participation for young people with little independent income or families already under financial pressure. The youth pathways stream should retain flexible brokerage funding, with proportionate safeguards, so specialist workers can remove immediate barriers to education, training, employment and community participation rather than offering advice or referrals that a young person cannot act on (MYAN Australia and Social Policy Group 2026) (MYAN Australia 2026b).

Digital access should also be treated as a practical participation cost, not an optional extra. Flexible brokerage should be able to cover devices, connectivity, digital literacy support and supported access to online systems where these are necessary for education, employment, health care, government services or social connection (MYAN Australia 2020).

4.2.2 School-Based Settlement Support And Education Transitions

The integrated model should enable specialist settlement providers to place newcomer student and family settlement liaison officers in primary and secondary schools, school clusters and, where appropriate, early learning-to-school transition settings with significant numbers of newly arrived migrant and refugee children and young people. This support should be available across the full school-age cohort, not only older adolescents, recognising that settlement needs can emerge from early learning participation, school commencement, movement between primary and secondary school, transitions from Intensive English Centres or other language-support settings into mainstream schooling, and later pathways into training, further education and employment. Schools and early learning interfaces are often where settlement, wellbeing and participation needs first become visible, yet children, young people and families may face fragmented pathways across education, settlement, health, community and employment services.

SETS providers consulted by MYAN and SPG reported that school-based outreach can reduce practical barriers because support is available where children and young people already

spend time. They also emphasised the value of the worker being independent from both the school and family systems, which can create a trusted and confidential space for students and families to raise concerns. Settlement liaison functions should include culturally responsive orientation, family engagement, early identification of settlement-related barriers, supported school commencement, liaison across early learning, primary, secondary and language-support settings, warm referrals, and coordinated planning through key education transitions. These roles should complement, not replace, teachers, wellbeing staff, Multicultural Education Aides, school engagement officers, early childhood educators or existing caseworkers, by adding specialist settlement expertise and brokerage across systems.

SETS practitioners consulted by MYAN identified the transition from Intensive English Centres and other language-support settings into mainstream schools as a point where young people can fall through gaps. Participants reported that students may move from environments with substantial specialist support into mainstream settings with higher academic demands, reduced language and settlement assistance, and possible experiences of racism or bullying. The integrated model should identify this transition in the youth settlement journey map, maintain youth settlement support across the move, and require coordinated planning between language programs, receiving schools, families and specialist youth workers. School-based outreach and follow-up should continue until the young person is safely engaged and able to access appropriate academic, wellbeing and anti-racism support.

The MYAN–SCOA consultation also identified uneven access to youth-specific Adult Migrant English Program classes. Providers reported that, where age-appropriate classes are unavailable, young people may learn alongside parents or much older adults and lose opportunities for peer connection, friendship and developmentally appropriate learning. These gaps are more acute in regional areas. The integrated model should therefore coordinate with the Adult Migrant English Program and education providers to expand youth-specific language learning options and ensure that language pathways support both learning and social connection (MYAN Australia and Settlement Council of Australia 2026).

4.3 Align Outcomes With Young People's Settlement Journeys

MYAN consultations identified providers already delivering SETS and YTS within the same organisation as practical examples of effective integration. Participants reported that internal referral pathways, shared organisational knowledge and direct communication between workers can reduce navigation burden, repeated disclosure and delays in accessing support. These models show that integration can improve continuity and pathway outcomes when youth-specific roles, funding, expertise and accountability remain distinct and complementary within the organisation.

Alignment with the Refugee and Humanitarian Entrant Settlement and Integration Outcomes Framework should be achieved through a youth-specific outcomes map that connects the framework's domains to young people's developmental stages and transition points. Common

measures should include education engagement and completion, progression into training and safe employment, confidence navigating systems, access to health and housing support, belonging, supportive relationships, community participation and self-agency. The model should record both immediate progress and longer-term outcomes, recognising that education retention, language development and social connection may be necessary precursors to economic participation.

Although pre-arrival orientation sits outside the scope of this discussion paper, an integrated settlement grants model should align with and reinforce existing First Nations content in the Australian Cultural Orientation Program (AUSCO) and onshore settlement orientation. Shared guidance should support continuity from pre-arrival information to locally led, experiential learning after arrival, clarify the complementary roles of settlement providers, schools and First Nations partners, and enable effective approaches already developed by providers to be shared and strengthened nationally.

The integrated program should enable settlement providers to partner with schools, training providers, and employers to remove practical barriers to participation and create flexible pathways. This may include access to driving education, financial capability learning, conversational English and social connection activities, multilingual learning support, culturally diverse arts and physical activities, vocational tasters and flexible arrangements for young people balancing education with significant family responsibilities. Flexibility must protect young people's education, safety, and employment rights and should not normalise reduced schooling or place responsibility for family income on young people.

MYAN cautions against overly narrow or short-term employment measures for young people, particularly those still in school, training, early settlement, or family transition periods. The MYAN and SPG consultation reinforced that youth settlement must remain developmental and aspirational rather than becoming an employment-placement program. Providers noted that some newly arrived young people have worked from an early age overseas or experienced disrupted education. For these young people, being able to attend school, develop friendships, and experience adolescence safely may itself represent significant settlement progress. The integrated model should therefore recognise education participation, recovery from disruption, confidence, belonging and age-appropriate development as legitimate outcomes and foundations for later economic participation.

5. Response to Question 2: Targeting and Access

How can services ensure support is accessible, equitable and directed to those with the greatest settlement needs? Consider: • How should the program respond to the needs of different client cohorts and locations? • What factors should guide service delivery in regional and remote areas?

Eligibility

Services can ensure support is accessible, equitable and directed to those with the greatest settlement needs by using nationally consistent, needs-based eligibility combined with developmentally appropriate, culturally safe and locally responsive delivery. The integrated model should provide flexible entry, continuity and re-entry based on unmet need rather than rigid visa, age, citizenship or time-since-arrival rules, including concurrent youth support where families are receiving Humanitarian Settlement Program assistance.

Delivery

It should respond to intersecting barriers through specialist multicultural youth practice, qualified interpreting, outreach, confidential support, human alternatives to digital delivery and accountable partnerships with mainstream services. Equity should be measured not only by eligibility or referral, but by whether diverse young people can reach, understand, remain engaged with and benefit from the support they need.

Funding

Funding should be allocated using settlement and demographic data, service gaps and local conditions, with additional resources for regional and remote areas to support transport, outreach, blended delivery, local partnerships and access to specialist capability.

5.1 Use a Needs-Based Approach to Eligibility and Access

MYAN's response to the ANAO audit on the management of SETS funding, together with MYAN's 2026 consultations with SETS providers, indicates that current eligibility settings leave some vulnerable children and young people without access to settlement support, particularly where eligibility is determined by visa category, age or a fixed period since arrival. Providers frequently respond by supporting ineligible young people through other funding sources or informal arrangements, especially where mainstream services cannot meet their needs. The reformed program should adopt nationally consistent, needs-based eligibility settings that recognise delayed and recurring settlement needs and the extended transition to adulthood experienced by many young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds (MYAN Australia 2026a) (MYAN Australia and Social Policy Group 2026).

The program should respond to young people's current settlement needs and transition points rather than relying only on visa category, settlement duration, location or apparent participation in school or work. Some young people may appear settled because they speak conversational English or are enrolled in education, while still lacking the academic or workplace language, institutional knowledge, networks and confidence needed to navigate education, employment and other systems independently. Eligibility and assessment should therefore examine functional access and current support needs rather than treating conversational English, school enrolment or initial service participation as evidence that settlement support is no longer required. Eligibility for the youth pathways stream should be nationally consistent and ordinarily cover ages 12–24, with flexibility to continue or extend

support where migration has interrupted education, identity development or the transition to independent adulthood (MYAN Australia 2026b).
The MYAN and SPG consultation identified the transition between the Humanitarian Settlement Program and youth settlement support as a practical access gap. Participants reported that young people may need education, employment, social-connection or confidential youth support while their family is still receiving HSP assistance and should not be required to wait for a fixed program transition. The integrated model should allow concurrent youth pathways support where unmet need is identified, with clear role definitions to prevent duplication. Eligibility and continuation should be determined by settlement need and transition stage rather than program sequence, citizenship, visa category or an arbitrary period since arrival.

Within the youth pathways stream, service responses should be differentiated for adolescents aged 12 to 17 and young adults aged 18 to 25, with flexibility for older young people experiencing interrupted transitions. Younger participants may require stronger school engagement, family support, safeguarding and foundational life skills, while young adults may require greater emphasis on tertiary education, vocational pathways, employment, housing, financial capability and independent navigation of services. Age-responsive delivery should remain individually tailored and avoid assuming that chronological age alone determines a young person's capabilities or needs.

The broader program design should also differentiate children aged 0–5 and 6–11. It should identify age-appropriate outcomes and support for early learning, starting school, language development, family support, safety, participation, health and belonging. The new program should also avoid using one youth outcome set for all children and young people.

MYAN's 2023 national youth consultations found that young people are most likely to miss out where specialist youth settlement support is unavailable, where their needs span multiple service systems, or where mainstream services are not culturally safe, developmentally appropriate or equipped to respond to settlement-related barriers. This includes young people in regional and smaller communities, those with disrupted or non-linear education pathways, young people experiencing language barriers, racism or discrimination, and those who lack trusted relationships or knowledge of available services. Young people may technically be eligible for mainstream assistance while remaining unable to access or benefit from it without settlement-informed youth brokerage. (MYAN Australia 2023).

5.2 Address Intersectional Vulnerability

An intersectional approach is essential because young people's settlement outcomes are shaped by the combined effects of age, migration history, gender, sexual orientation, disability, language, religion, socioeconomic circumstances, family responsibilities, location, racism and access to services. These factors do not operate in isolation and may be reinforced

by institutional policies, practices and service systems, compounding barriers to education, employment, safety, wellbeing, belonging and community participation.

The integrated model must ensure that every young person, including those least likely to self-present or fit within a single service category, can access the tailored and age-appropriate support needed to achieve optimal settlement outcomes. This requires mainstream services to build youth, cultural and settlement capability and to work in funded, accountable partnership with specialist multicultural youth, settlement, disability, health, education, family and community organisations. Mainstream systems bring scale and access to universal services, while specialist organisations contribute trusted relationships, cultural safety, lived-experience knowledge and targeted expertise. Both are necessary to identify intersecting needs early, coordinate effective responses and prevent young people from falling through service gaps.

Trauma-informed wellbeing and mental health support should be integrated into youth settlement pathways through culturally relevant, youth-friendly and strengths-based services, with clear standards for identification, referral, information sharing, safeguarding and follow-up. Settlement workers should not be expected to provide clinical mental health treatment unless they hold the appropriate qualifications and role authorisation. Their intended role is to notice emerging wellbeing concerns, engage young people and families in culturally safe and non-stigmatising ways, explain available supports, obtain informed consent, make warm referrals, follow up to confirm access and engagement, and contribute settlement expertise through secondary consultation with clinical, education and wellbeing partners.

Mainstream mental health providers should receive funded capacity-building in refugee and migrant youth practice, while specialist multicultural youth and settlement organisations should be resourced to provide engagement, brokerage, secondary consultation and continuity across systems. This function should be understood as part of the broader youth settlement ecosystem: no one organisation should be expected to deliver every intervention, but each funded partner should have clearly defined responsibilities, referral pathways and performance indicators. A referral should not be treated as successful unless the young person can safely access, understand and remain engaged with the support offered, and contract measures should test whether identification, referral, follow-up and secondary consultation are completed in practice.

Providers in the MYAN–SCOA consultation reported that trauma-related mental health, developmental and disability needs may not be identified during initial settlement and can become visible later, including through schools. This reinforces the need for flexible re-entry, later assessment and sustained school–health–settlement pathways. Program settings should allow support to intensify when needs emerge and should fund specialist consultation, family engagement and completed referrals rather than assuming that early screening has identified all relevant needs (MYAN Australia and Settlement Council of Australia 2026).

- Age and developmental stage: Settlement support should reflect the distinct needs of adolescents and young adults, including identity development, safeguarding, education transitions and the move towards independence. Chronological age alone should not determine readiness or support intensity.
- Refugee, humanitarian and asylum-seeker backgrounds: Pre-arrival displacement, trauma, visa-related uncertainty and interrupted access to essential services can create complex and recurring settlement needs that require culturally safe, trauma-informed and strengths-based responses.
- Disrupted education: Young people who have missed schooling, arrived at an older age or moved between education systems may require tailored assessment, intensive English support, tutoring and flexible pathways into mainstream school, alternative education, TAFE, university or employment.
- Language and system-navigation barriers: Limited English proficiency and unfamiliarity with Australian services, laws and institutions can affect access and informed decision-making. Qualified interpreters, translated information, bilingual workers, plain language and supported navigation should be core program features.
- Racism and discrimination: Racism can intersect with migration history, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic circumstances and location to compound barriers to education, employment, wellbeing, belonging and trust in services. It should not be understood only as interpersonal prejudice: racism may also be embedded in institutional policies, curricula, disciplinary practices, staff capability and reporting systems. MYAN's *Racism in Schools Policy Paper* identifies systemic racism, fragmented responses and inconsistent accountability as continuing barriers in Australian education settings. The integrated model should require anti-racist practice, culturally safe and accessible reporting, appropriate support and follow-up after incidents, capable workforces, collaboration between settlement providers and schools, and accountability for both individual responses and institutional change. Outcomes should measure whether young people feel safe, respected, believed and able to participate, as well as whether incidents are reported and resolved (MYAN Australia 2026c).
- Gendered experiences: MYAN research identified that young women and young people from Women at Risk households may experience elevated safety concerns, caring responsibilities, limited access to social support and gender-specific barriers to education, employment, health care and participation. Gender-responsive options, safe service environments and choice in workers should be available.
- Diverse sexual orientations and gender identities: Research undertaken by MYAN identified that LGBTQI+ young people from refugee and asylum-seeker backgrounds may face intersecting discrimination, safety and privacy concerns, reduced family or

community support and barriers to culturally safe settlement, health, and social services. Support should protect confidentiality, enable safe disclosure and provide trusted specialist referral options.

- Disability: Young people with disability may encounter overlapping accessibility, language, cultural and service-navigation barriers. The integrated model should coordinate effectively with disability supports, including Inclusive Employment Australia, while retaining youth and settlement expertise.
- Caring responsibilities and parentification: We know that many young people undertake interpreting, service navigation, sibling care, appointment support or financial responsibilities for family members. Services should assess the effect on education and wellbeing, provide qualified interpreters and direct support to parents and carers, and avoid treating young people as substitutes for adult services.
- Family and intergenerational pressures: Differences in settlement pace, cultural expectations and familiarity with Australian systems can create tension within families. Family-aware support should strengthen communication and protective relationships while respecting young people's agency, privacy and safety.
- Regional and remote settlement: Thin service markets, limited specialist support, transport and digital barriers, privacy concerns and restricted education and employment options can intensify disadvantage. Place-based delivery should guarantee specialist capability, outreach and funded pathways to services unavailable locally (MYAN Australia 2024).
- Digital exclusion: Digital-first and crisis-response systems can intensify existing barriers for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds where they lack devices, connectivity, digital literacy, English confidence, private space, translated information or trusted support to navigate changing service systems. Online delivery should supplement, rather than replace, face-to-face, telephone, interpreter-assisted and outreach support, and the integrated model should build capacity for rapid, youth-specific responses during future disruptions (MYAN Australia 2020).
- Young people outside narrow eligibility windows: Needs may emerge or recur during adolescence, school-to-work transitions, family stress or early adulthood. Eligibility should be needs-based and allow flexible duration, re-entry and continuity beyond rigid visa, age or time-since-arrival limits.

5.2.1 Youth-Centred, Family-Aware, And Safe Support

MYAN and SPG consultations described effective youth settlement practice as youth-centred within a family-aware model. Young people require their own worker, goals, confidentiality and space so their aspirations are not absorbed into family priorities. Providers participating in the MYAN–SCOA consultation also emphasised that young people should be offered a

separate intake or assessment from their parents and, where appropriate, their own worker because they may not feel safe or comfortable disclosing concerns in a whole-family assessment. At the same time, youth workers and family settlement workers should be able to collaborate where changing family roles, intergenerational expectations, caring responsibilities, family reunification or education and career decisions affect the young person's pathway. Family involvement should be guided by the young person's safety, consent and developmental needs and should never replace access to confidential, individually focused support (MYAN Australia and Settlement Council of Australia 2026).

Program design should recognise and respond to parentification, where newly arrived young people assume developmentally inappropriate adult responsibilities within their families, including interpreting sensitive health, legal or financial information, navigating services, attending appointments, supporting siblings, providing care and contributing financially. These responsibilities may affect education, wellbeing, identity development, social participation and pathways to employment. The integrated model should reduce inappropriate reliance on young people by guaranteeing access to qualified interpreters and translated information, providing family navigation and casework directly to parents and carers, assessing caring responsibilities and their impact on the young person, coordinating respite and specialist support where needed, and protecting the young person's privacy, education and transition goals.

Services should use whole-of-family assessment and planning, offer parents and carers culturally responsive orientation to Australian systems, arrange professional interpreters before appointments, provide separate and confidential opportunities for children and young people to discuss their own needs, and establish referral systems to family support, carer support, health, legal and financial counselling services. Providers should agree with each family on age-appropriate roles and review whether interpreting, caring and system-navigation burdens have reduced over time. This approach recognises young people's strengths and contributions while ensuring that responsibility for communication, advocacy and service navigation remains with appropriately funded adults and professionals.

MYAN's 2025 National Policy Alliance Launch Report identifies family violence and intergenerational conflict as issues that can intersect with settlement, housing, financial insecurity, mental health, cultural expectations and access to support. Drawing on these workshop findings, the integrated model should ensure that young people can seek confidential, culturally safe and youth-appropriate assistance without relying on family members or community representatives to disclose or interpret sensitive information.

Settlement providers should have clear safeguarding protocols, trained workers and formal referral pathways to specialist family violence, legal, housing, health and recovery services. Referral systems should include agreed roles and responsibilities, consent-based information sharing, warm handovers, follow-up to confirm engagement, and escalation pathways where safety, housing or legal risks remain unresolved. A referral should not be treated as complete

unless the young person has safely reached, understood and remained connected with the specialist support required.

These specialist referrals should sit alongside, not replace, ongoing settlement support. Providers should maintain support for the young person's education, employment, community participation and longer-term settlement goals while specialist services respond to immediate safety, legal, housing, health or recovery needs. Family engagement should be used where it is safe, appropriate and supported by the young person's informed consent, but should not be treated as the default response where a young person has privacy or safety concerns.

5.3 Ensure Regional And Remote Access

Funding allocation should be informed by settlement and demographic data, regional service availability and the number and needs of young people in each location. Government should fund a national mapping of the youth settlement ecosystem to identify service gaps, duplication, referral pathways and workforce requirements. This evidence should support differentiated place-based models: regional approaches may require outreach, community capacity-building, intensive individual support and blended online and face-to-face delivery, while metropolitan approaches may require stronger coordination across complex service systems. Both models should allow individual and group support, flexible intensity and varying periods of engagement according to need.

Providers in the MYAN–SCOA consultation described current Youth Transition Support coverage as geographically limited, including no YTS delivery in Western Australia and gaps in smaller states and territories. They viewed reform as an opportunity to extend access nationally, provided expansion does not dilute specialist youth capability or impose a metropolitan delivery model on large regional jurisdictions. National commissioning should map current coverage, identify underserved jurisdictions and fund locally viable outreach, hub-and-spoke and partnership models that bring support to where young people live (MYAN Australia and Settlement Council of Australia 2026).

Digital and hybrid delivery should expand access rather than become a default that creates hidden exclusion. Young people should retain access to early and ongoing human support, interpreters, translated information, telephone and face-to-face options, and assistance with online tasks where digital literacy, English proficiency, device access, privacy or confidence navigating government systems is limited.

5.4 Social Connection, Belonging And Bridging Social Capital

Social connection and belonging are essential settlement infrastructure for children and young people and foundations for education, employment, wellbeing and self-reliance. Newly arrived young people may experience separation from established relationships, limited local networks, language barriers, racism and difficulty finding culturally safe places to participate.

These conditions can reduce confidence, help-seeking and engagement with education, employment and services. The integrated model should fund social connection as a core youth settlement function, proactively identify isolation and measure young people's reported belonging, safety, supportive relationships and participation.

MYAN Youth Advisors identify learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and connections to Country as important to understanding Australia and developing an informed sense of belonging. Australian pre-arrival and settlement orientation programs have increasingly incorporated First Nations histories, cultures and contemporary realities, and many providers have developed valuable local approaches. The integrated model should build on this established practice by ensuring that First Nations learning is consistently available, youth-responsive and connected to broader settlement, belonging and civic participation outcomes. This learning should be strengths-based, age-appropriate and designed to build respect, counter misinformation, and create opportunities for reciprocal connection rather than being treated as an optional cultural activity.

The added value of the integrated model would be to move from variable provider practice to a nationally supported approach that retains local First Nations authority. Providers should be resourced to establish or deepen partnerships with local Traditional Custodian organisations, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, Elders and First Nations educators. National guidance should set expectations for access, cultural safety and youth-friendly delivery, while local partners determine appropriate content, protocols and forms of engagement.

A dedicated youth pathways stream should fund a layered social-connection offer that turns participation into purposeful pathways towards trusted relationships, language practice, mentoring, education, employment and community participation. This should include low-barrier drop-in activities, peer groups, conversational English opportunities, sport, arts and cultural activities, volunteering, mentoring, leadership programs, school-holiday activities, community orientation, civic participation and supported introductions to clubs, libraries, councils, employers, training providers and cultural or faith communities. Activities should be sustained, culturally safe and connected to young people's aspirations rather than delivered as isolated events.

SETS providers consulted by MYAN Australia and the Social Policy Group reported that restrictive eligibility and reporting rules can weaken mentoring and social-cohesion activities by preventing former participants, citizens, peer leaders, and young people from the wider community from joining group programs. The youth pathways stream should permit mixed-cohort participation where it has a clear settlement purpose, such as peer mentoring, leadership, community connection or bridging social capital. Funding and reporting rules should distinguish direct settlement clients from participating peers while recognising the contribution of both groups to belonging, confidence and reciprocal community connection.

Addressing loneliness and social isolation should be a core function of the youth pathways stream, particularly for newly arrived young people who may be separated from established

friendships, extended family and familiar community networks while also navigating a new language, education system and social environment. Persistent isolation can undermine wellbeing, confidence, help-seeking, education engagement and pathways to employment. Funded responses should include early identification of isolation, proactive outreach, peer connection, trusted adult mentoring, youth-led groups, sport, arts, volunteering, civic participation and supported links to both cultural communities and the broader community. Success should be measured through young people's reported sense of belonging, safety, supportive relationships and participation, not simply attendance at activities.

Services should identify loneliness and isolation through culturally safe assessment, outreach and ongoing review, rather than waiting for young people to self-identify or present in crisis. Providers should have funded time to maintain contact, introduce young people to suitable groups and mentors, accompany them into unfamiliar settings and follow up after initial participation. Schools, councils, youth services, sporting and arts organisations, cultural and faith communities, employers and settlement providers should share responsibility for creating accessible pathways into participation, with specialist multicultural youth organisations supporting cultural safety and trusted engagement.

Youth settlement programming should include accessible social connection and mentoring opportunities delivered through trusted community partnerships. Conversation clubs can support informal English practice, friendship and confidence without treating home languages as a barrier. Community mentoring should be available to young people seeking additional adult guidance, including those separated from parents or other support figures.

For some boys and young men who arrive in Australia without their father or another trusted male caregiver, access to a consistent and appropriately supported male mentor may provide an additional source of guidance, connection and positive role modelling. Similarly, girls and young women should have access to safe, culturally responsive and appropriately supported mentoring that strengthens confidence, leadership, identity development, wellbeing and aspirations, particularly during transition years when they are navigating education, family expectations, community participation and pathways to adulthood. Mentoring should remain voluntary and needs-based, avoid assumptions about gender or family structure, and use trained, screened mentors, culturally safe matching, clear boundaries, supervision and referral pathways. Peer-led activities, cultural dance, sport, arts and volunteering can further strengthen belonging, leadership and bridging social capital.

5.5 Youth Participation, Co-Design, And Shared Governance

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds should be recognised as partners in the design, implementation, governance and evaluation of the integrated model, not only as service users or occasional consultees. MYAN and Monash University's value paper on meaningful partnership with young people finds that participatory approaches can reduce duplication, make better use of existing strengths and resources, improve program

responsiveness and increase young people's engagement, ownership and willingness to promote the resulting initiative. Young people hold essential knowledge about the barriers, strengths, transition points and service experiences that shape settlement outcomes. Their participation can therefore improve the relevance, accessibility, cultural safety and accountability of the integrated model and identify unintended barriers that may not be visible to government or providers.

Co-design should continue throughout the life of the program rather than ending once the model is approved. Consistent with MYAN and Monash University's value paper, meaningful partnership requires adequate time and resourcing, clarity and transparency about scope and expectations, deliberate sharing of power, and active inclusion of diverse young people whose experiences may otherwise be overlooked.

The integrated model should fund young people to participate in national and local governance, service planning, accessibility testing, commissioning reviews, evaluation and continuous improvement. Participation mechanisms should include paid youth advisory groups, youth-led research and evaluation, culturally safe consultations, accessible complaints and feedback processes, and direct youth representation within governance structures. Providers should challenge assumptions about young people, clearly explain which decisions participants can influence, demonstrate how youth input changed decisions, and report back on what changed, what did not change and why.

Participation must be accessible to young people with different language, literacy, disability, geographic, cultural, gender, visa and settlement experiences. Services should use interpreters, bilingual and peer facilitators, translated and plain-language materials, flexible online and face-to-face options, appropriate safeguarding and practical supports such as transport, technology and remuneration. Language-affirming practice should enable young people to use their strongest language to understand information, express complex views and influence decisions.

MYAN should have a formal national role in supporting this work by developing participation standards and tools, building provider capability, convening diverse youth advisory mechanisms and ensuring that local youth experience informs national program improvement. Embedding meaningful youth participation in this way will strengthen service design, improve trust and access, support better outcomes and provide value for money by identifying problems early and directing resources towards approaches that young people can and will use.

6. Response to Question 3: Service Delivery and Outcomes

What service delivery approaches would best support long-term settlement outcomes and value for money? Consider: • How can coordination between settlement services, mainstream services and employment programs, particularly Workforce Australia and Inclusive Employment Australia, be strengthened to support the Government's economic and

community participation priorities? • How can duplication be reduced and client pathways improved? • How can better collaboration be embedded and incentivised within an integrated program? • To what degree should settlement grants be delivered by organisations with established links in local communities? Why? How should national consistency be balanced against community responsiveness and social capital?

Long-term settlement outcomes and value for money will be best supported through specialist, place-based and relationship-based delivery within a nationally consistent framework. Services should be delivered by trusted organisations with multicultural youth capability and funded to provide coordinated pathways, a consistent worker, warm handovers and active brokerage across settlement, education, employment, health, housing and community systems. Collaboration should be built into commissioning through multi-year funding, shared planning, clear organisational responsibilities and incentives for completed referrals, sustained engagement and reduced duplication. Employment services should reward safe and sustainable progress rather than rapid placement, while regional and remote delivery should receive additional resources for outreach, blended delivery and access to specialist support. Value for money should be assessed through long-term youth outcomes and system performance, including education and employment progression, belonging, wellbeing, equitable access, partnership continuity, reduced repeated assessment and avoided crisis intervention.

6.1 Service Delivery Principles And Specialist Local Providers

Settlement grants should be delivered by organisations that can demonstrate both specialist capability and established, accountable relationships with the communities they serve. For young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, formal service availability does not necessarily translate into effective access. MYAN's consultations show that young people may not know where to seek support, may be reluctant to approach unfamiliar institutions, or may disengage where services are not culturally safe, youth-friendly or responsive to settlement-related barriers. Trusted local organisations can identify emerging needs earlier, engage young people who do not self-present, support families to understand available services and maintain contact across education, employment and community transitions.

Government should assess "trusted relationships" and "specialist capability" through fair, transparent and proportionate evidence, rather than relying only on organisational scale or the volume of administrative data a provider can produce. Relevant evidence could include community governance or advisory structures, sustained relationships with refugee and migrant youth and families, bicultural and multilingual workforce capability, youth and settlement practice expertise, formal referral partnerships with schools, health, employment, legal, family and community services, participant feedback, youth-reported safety and belonging, completed warm referrals, workforce supervision and safeguarding arrangements, and demonstrated outcomes for young people over time. Assessment should recognise qualitative evidence, community testimony, lived-experience leadership, partnership records

and case-based outcome evidence alongside quantitative reporting. Criteria should not inadvertently favour large organisations simply because they have more data systems, broader contract histories or dedicated grant-writing capacity. Smaller specialist, refugee-led, ethno-specific and youth-led organisations should be able to demonstrate impact through evidence that is appropriate to their role, size and community context.

Specialist multicultural youth organisations bring capabilities that generalist services may not hold, including developmentally appropriate youth work, cultural safety, settlement-informed practice, bicultural and multilingual engagement, family-aware approaches, and expertise in education and employment transitions. Their trusted relationships with young people, families, schools, cultural communities and local services support disclosure, continuity and successful warm referrals. These capabilities should be treated as core service infrastructure and funded accordingly, rather than assumed to be available through informal advice, unpaid partnership work or referral alone.

Evidence from the YTS evaluation and MYAN's consultations indicates that specialist, place-based delivery strengthens navigation, aspiration-led planning, confidence, local networks and sustained engagement. These outcomes depend on a skilled and stable workforce, continuity of trusted relationships and funded partnerships with local organisations. Drawing on these findings, the integrated model should protect specialist multicultural youth capability and assess value for money through pathway quality, sustained engagement and avoided service failure.

SETS providers consulted by MYAN and SPG raised concern that integrated tenders may disadvantage smaller specialist organisations that cannot demonstrate delivery breadth across SETS, YTS and Economic Pathways to Refugee Integration (EPRI), despite holding trusted relationships and specialist capability. Drawing on this evidence, commissioning should allow joint tenders, consortia and directly funded specialist roles, with realistic contract sizes and proportionate administration. Where subcontracting is used, agreements should protect specialist organisations from insecure or marginal roles by specifying adequate funding, timely payment, fair overheads, decision-making participation, intellectual property arrangements, data access, access to outcome data, recognition of their contribution to outcomes, clear dispute-resolution processes and limits on transferring financial, compliance or delivery risk to smaller partners.

These are practical conditions for equitable partnerships and should be included in commissioning guidance, grant agreements and contract management. MYAN brings a national, youth-specific perspective to the design of integrated settlement services. The model should include the service architecture required to make mainstream systems accessible and effective for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds: specialist multicultural youth brokerage, continuity across education and employment transitions, meaningful youth participation and strong local partnerships. Value for money will be

achieved not simply by consolidating programs, but by preventing disengagement, failed referrals and repeated intake through coordinated, relationship-based support.

6.2 Coordinated Client Pathways And Systemic Referral Pathways

An integrated model should use a nationally consistent youth settlement journey map to identify key transition points, likely barriers, service responsibilities and opportunities for early intervention from first contact through education, training, employment and community participation. Locally adapted versions should be developed with young people and providers to reflect available services and referral pathways. The journey map should guide service planning and accountability without imposing a linear pathway or limiting a young person's ability to re-enter support when needs recur.

The youth settlement journey map should operate as a modular implementation and continuous-improvement tool, not as a fixed or linear service pathway. Providers and partner organisations should be able to engage with the components relevant to their responsibilities and capacity, while remaining accountable to a common national framework. The map should be tested and updated through implementation evidence, young people's feedback and provider experience, with assumptions reviewed as settlement patterns, service systems and community needs change.

An integrated program should move beyond incidental, ad hoc or relationship-dependent warm referrals and establish a systemic referral pathway approach. Each young person should have a consistent point of contact, supported by shared or mutually recognised assessment, consent-based information sharing and joint pathway planning. Referrals should be governed by agreed protocols that specify who is responsible for identifying need, initiating referral, sharing information with consent, confirming access, following up engagement and escalating unresolved barriers. A referral should not be counted as complete unless the young person has reached, understood and remained connected with the relevant service where further support is required.

The MYAN–SCOA consultation confirmed that coordination requires more than goodwill and referral protocols. Providers identified the need for timely service-planning information, consent-based data sharing, shared plans, clear information flows and organisation-level processes that can survive staff turnover. These functions require funded staff time and dependable information infrastructure. At the same time, mainstream services must remain accountable for being accessible, culturally safe and responsive. Settlement providers should support access and provide settlement expertise but should not be expected to compensate indefinitely where health, education, employment, disability or other mainstream services do not fulfil their responsibilities (MYAN Australia and Settlement Council of Australia 2026).

The new model should require formal referral pathway agreements, including Memoranda of Understanding or equivalent partnership protocols, between generalist SETS providers, specialist SETS functions and relevant mainstream services. These agreements should clarify

the distinct roles of generalist settlement providers, specialist children and youth workers, trauma-informed wellbeing and health services, education providers, family support, legal, housing and employment services. Generalist providers should not be expected to hold every specialist capability, and specialist providers should not be left to receive referrals without funding, authority or access to relevant pathway information. Clearer role definition would reduce duplication, prevent young people and families being repeatedly reassessed, and ensure that specialist children, youth, trauma and health expertise is engaged early rather than only after crisis or disengagement.

Where a young person has multiple or complex needs, one funded lead provider should hold primary responsibility for the pathway, including coordinating assessment, maintaining the shared plan, convening partners, monitoring follow-through and ensuring that no gap in accountability emerges. The young person should also have a nominated youth pathways coordinator or trusted worker who remains their consistent contact and advocates across systems. This role may sit within the lead provider or an identified partner, but it should be clearly defined and should not duplicate case management. Partner services should retain responsibility for delivering their specialist interventions, sharing relevant information with consent, attending joint reviews and completing agreed actions and detailed handovers. Funding agreements should define decision-making authority, escalation processes and accountability for unresolved service gaps so that collaboration does not depend on goodwill alone.

A regional practitioner in the MYAN and SPG consultation described young people becoming overwhelmed when expected to open multiple doors to find help and emphasised the value of one trusted door that connects them with the services they need. This does not mean one generalist worker delivering every intervention. It means a stable youth settlement relationship that coordinates access to distinct education, employment, health, housing and family expertise, follows up referrals and remains accountable for the overall pathway. The integrated model should use this one-door principle to simplify navigation while preserving specialist capability.

Consultation findings indicate that young people often fall through gaps not because they have no contact with services, but because responsibilities are fragmented across education, employment, health, housing, legal, settlement and community systems. Those at particular risk include young people whose needs emerge after formal settlement periods, those with disrupted education or non-linear pathways, young people with intersecting identities or privacy and safety concerns, those referred to mainstream services without settlement-informed brokerage, and young people in regional, rural and outer-suburban areas with limited transport, digital access or specialist support.

Unclear roles, weak referral follow-up, limited cultural safety and the absence of a trusted coordinating worker can leave young people repeatedly assessed, referred without support or expected to navigate complex systems alone. The integrated model should respond through

flexible entry and re-entry, confidential specialist pathways, a consistent coordinating worker, active brokerage and completed handovers. Successful access should be measured by whether a young person reaches, understands and benefits from the required service, rather than by whether a referral was made (MYAN Australia 2023).

The integrated model should identify and actively support transitions from intensive English programs into mainstream education, between school, alternative education, TAFE, university and employment, following disengagement from education or work, and between youth and adult services. Transition planning should begin before eligibility or service arrangements change and should include a consistent youth worker, consent-based transfer of relevant information, joint planning with the receiving service, a completed handover and follow-up until the young person is safely engaged. Movement into an adult service should not automatically end access to developmentally appropriate youth settlement support where an ongoing need remains. These transition protocols should also apply between the Humanitarian Settlement Program, settlement grants services and the youth pathways stream, with clear responsibility for initiating referrals and following up where engagement does not occur (MYAN Australia 2026b).

Coordination should be embedded across the entire settlement journey, linking pre-arrival orientation and the Humanitarian Settlement Program with settlement grants, the Adult Migrant English Program, schools, education and training, Workforce Australia, Inclusive Employment Australia, health, housing, and other mainstream services. MYAN's consultations with young people, SETS providers and partner organisations show that needs often emerge or change at transition points, and that fragmented eligibility, assessment and referral arrangements can leave young people repeating their circumstances or losing support between programs. The integrated model should therefore establish shared pathway protocols across these systems, with clear entry and re-entry points, mutually recognised assessment where appropriate, consent-based information sharing, named responsibility for handovers and follow-up, and youth settlement brokerage to help young people understand and remain engaged with the services they need.

SETS providers consulted by MYAN reported that referral relationships are often dependent on individual workers and can disappear when staff leave. The integrated model should require organisation-level handover and collaboration protocols that define referral responsibilities, documentation, consent, response timeframes, escalation and follow-up. These protocols should be maintained in grant agreements, partnership plans and shared service maps so that continuity does not depend on personal relationships alone.

6.2.1 Employment System Integration: Workforce Australia And Inclusive Employment Australia

Coordination between settlement, youth, education and employment systems should operate through funded partnerships linking schools, TAFEs, universities, youth services, Workforce Australia, Inclusive Employment Australia, health, housing, family support, councils and multicultural community organisations. The youth pathways stream should provide the settlement-informed brokerage that enables young people to understand, enter and remain engaged with these systems, while each mainstream partner retains responsibility for delivering its specialist service and completing agreed actions.

The Australian Government's evaluation of EPRI provides direct evidence for the design of the integrated model. The evaluation found that approaches appeared more effective when they combined employer support, strong connections with the settlement sector, flexibility in responding to participant needs, career planning, emotional support, and paid opportunities. These findings support an employment pathway that integrates settlement-informed brokerage, tailored preparation, employer engagement, and practical work experience rather than relying on referral to mainstream employment services alone. (Whereto Research 2024).

Coordination with Workforce Australia, Inclusive Employment Australia and the Remote Australia Employment Service should support a differentiated employment pathway. Brief or digital assistance should be used only where a young person has been assessed by an appropriately trained youth settlement or employment worker as able to self-manage, understands the service requirements, has the language, digital access and confidence to participate, and is making progress without additional risk of disengagement. Assessment should consider settlement stage, age and developmental needs, English proficiency, digital access, education history, caring responsibilities, disability, trauma or wellbeing concerns, housing and financial stability, experiences of racism or discrimination, confidence navigating systems and access to family or community support. Where these factors indicate barriers, or where progress stalls, the young person should move quickly to targeted or intensive support without restarting intake, repeating their story or losing access to culturally safe youth and settlement expertise.

Targeted support should provide youth-specific coaching, career planning, job-readiness assistance, workplace-rights information, mentoring, education and training pathways, and local employer connections. Intensive, wraparound support should remain available where young people face complex or intersecting barriers and should be delivered with trusted multicultural youth and settlement organisations. Digital delivery should always have a human alternative, including telephone, face-to-face, interpreter-assisted and outreach options, where online systems are inaccessible because of language, literacy, disability, device access, connectivity, privacy, confidence or safety concerns. Young people should be able to move between levels of support without losing cultural, youth or settlement expertise (Whereto Research 2024).

MYAN's position is that mainstream employment systems often require settlement-informed youth brokerage to be accessible and effective. SETS providers consulted by MYAN and SPG

identified practical support needs including English and digital skills, licences and recognised qualifications, career exploration, applications and interview preparation, workplace exposure, professional networks, recognition of overseas skills and experience, and education about wages, tax, superannuation, Australian Business Number obligations, workplace rights, discrimination and exploitation. Specialist workers should provide or coordinate this support, engage employers and remain connected through referral and placement. Employment outcomes should be safe, appropriate and sustainable, support career progression and not come at the expense of education or longer-term vocational development.

Social enterprises should be recognised as legitimate pathways within targeted and intensive employment support. The EPRI evaluation supports the value of models that combine tailored participant support, employer engagement, practical experience and links with settlement services. Refugee-led, migrant-led and community-led enterprises can provide culturally safe work experience, mentoring, workplace learning, wraparound support and bridges to open employment. Commissioning should enable their participation through appropriate contract sizes, capability-building and formal partnerships, while applying the same expectations for job quality, workplace rights, paid participation and progression as other employment pathways.

Integration with Workforce Australia and Inclusive Employment Australia should address both young people's readiness and the practices of employers and employment providers. Partnership requirements should include culturally safe onboarding, inclusive recruitment, anti-racism capability, recognition of multilingual skills and overseas experience, workplace-rights education, suitable job matching and post-placement support. Providers should not be rewarded for placements that expose young people to unsafe work, exploitation, underemployment or repeated cycling through insecure jobs (MYAN Australia 2026d).

Employment-related support should not be constrained by uniform service time limits. Language acquisition, qualification recognition, recovery from disrupted education and progress through settlement-related barriers may extend beyond standard program periods. Reviews should be based on a young person's engagement, progress and circumstances rather than elapsed time alone, and should trigger adjustment or escalation of support rather than automatic withdrawal.

6.3 Embed And Incentivise Collaboration

The EPRI evaluation also highlights the importance of flexible program design and reliable implementation data. The integrated model should permit providers to tailor the sequence and intensity of employment, training, language, wellbeing and settlement supports to individual circumstances, while operating within a common program logic and outcome framework. Data definitions, collection requirements and reporting systems should be established from commencement so that participation, intermediate progress, employment quality, retention and value for money can be assessed consistently across providers.

Performance and payment settings for employment partners should reward sustained engagement, education and training progress, improved confidence and work readiness, suitable job matching, employment retention and young people's experience of service quality. They should recognise the additional time required to address settlement-related barriers and should not incentivise rapid placement at the expense of education, safety, job quality or longer-term vocational development. Safeguards should prevent providers from selecting only participants who are easiest to place, discouraging young people from continuing education or training, or counting insecure, unsafe, exploitative or unsuitable work as a successful outcome. Performance measures should consider participant-reported job quality, workplace safety, suitability of hours, pay and conditions, connection to career goals, education or training continuity, and retention at agreed intervals after placement.

Employment-service contracts and quality standards should require frontline staff to demonstrate youth practice, cultural safety, trauma-informed and anti-racist capability, effective use of interpreters, and understanding of settlement and migration experiences. Workforce diversity and relevant lived or community experience can support service quality and should be recognised as valuable but should not be treated as proof of quality by itself. Quality assessment should also consider relevant qualifications, ongoing supervision, safe practice, safeguarding, demonstrated cultural intelligence, participant feedback, youth-reported safety and trust, and evidence that staff can apply youth, cultural and settlement expertise in practice. Young people should also have access to culturally safe, youth-friendly and age-appropriate complaints processes and confidential post-placement support where discrimination, exploitation or unsafe work is disclosed.

The integrated model should distinguish coordination from collaboration. Coordination organises referrals, responsibilities and information flow across existing services. Collaboration requires partners to jointly plan, share expertise and resources, solve service gaps and remain accountable for common youth outcomes. Funding and governance arrangements should support both functions through joint planning, clear decision-making authority, shared outcome measures and mechanisms for resolving gaps that no single service can address.

Collaboration should be a funded program requirement rather than an unfunded expectation. Grant agreements should support dedicated coordination time, partnership governance, joint service planning, shared local service mapping, secondary consultation, cross-sector workforce development and regular pathway reviews. Performance measures should reward shared outcomes, successful warm referrals, sustained engagement and reduced repeat assessment rather than competition for client attribution.

The MYAN–SCOA consultation also highlighted community capacity-building, local network development and mainstream-service cultural capability as essential but often poorly visible and inadequately funded functions. Providers argued that community leaders, youth advisers and smaller community organisations need practical resources to participate in partnership

models, and that Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments should clarify their complementary roles where short-term state or local grants currently fill service gaps. The integrated model should therefore fund community capacity-building and cross-sector capability as legitimate program functions and establish cross-government planning mechanisms that reduce gaps, duplication and reliance on temporary funding (MYAN Australia and Settlement Council of Australia 2026).

In the MYAN and SPG consultation, SETS providers reported that competitive tendering and client-volume incentives can discourage information sharing and referral to the service best placed to respond. The integrated model should remove incentives to retain clients solely for attribution purposes and introduce shared-outcome arrangements that recognise each provider's contribution to a pathway. Collaboration measures should include appropriate referrals, completed handovers, reduced duplication and maintained cross-organisational partnerships, supported by funding for coordination rather than competition for the same client outcome.

Collaboration and service continuity also require longer funding cycles, adequate indexation, proportionate administration and adequate transition time before the integrated model commences. Short-term and late-confirmed funding undermines workforce retention, disrupts trusted relationships with young people and communities, delays agreements with local partners and limits long-term planning and innovation. Implementation arrangements should retain skilled YTS and SETS Youth practitioners, preserve established education, employer and community partnerships, and ensure current participants continue receiving support without reassessment, transfer gaps or loss of their trusted worker. Funding agreements should provide multi-year certainty, resource evaluation and partnership coordination as legitimate program costs, streamline reporting and communities-of-practice requirements, and provide accessible training on compliance systems. Reporting arrangements should capture the complexity of youth settlement work through common indicators, qualitative evidence, case studies and youth-reported outcomes rather than relying on administrative data alone (MYAN Australia 2026a) (MYAN Australia 2026b).

6.4 Regional And Remote Delivery

MYAN's 2024 regional settlement submission emphasised that regional settlement must be planned around realistic local service capacity, including education, employment, housing, health, transport, digital access and social connection infrastructure. For young people, these are not peripheral issues: where training, work, health care, transport, housing or culturally safe social participation are unavailable or difficult to reach, regional settlement becomes less sustainable and young people may disengage or relocate despite wanting to remain connected to place and community. The integrated model should therefore treat regional access as a retention and equity issue, with funding for outreach, brokerage, transport, blended delivery, housing navigation and local partnership development (MYAN Australia 2024).

MYAN's 2023 national youth consultations identified particularly acute gaps in regional and smaller communities, including limited specialist settlement and youth services, shortages in health and education infrastructure, restricted training and employment options, transport and digital barriers, and reduced opportunities for social connection. These conditions can lead to missed early intervention, disengagement and pressure on young people to relocate to metropolitan areas. Regional delivery should therefore be planned as a youth settlement ecosystem, with guaranteed access to specialist capability, outreach, local coordination, blended delivery and funded pathways to services that cannot be provided locally.

Regional and remote delivery should guarantee the same youth-specific service standard available in metropolitan areas, using outreach, blended delivery, local partnerships and funded access to specialist services where local service markets are thin.

The MYAN and SPG consultation provided a practical example of how regional outcomes can be constrained by the absence of local opportunities rather than a young person's motivation or readiness. A regional practitioner described young adults who wanted to undertake barbering training but could not access the course because it was offered only in another town approximately 150 kilometres away. The example demonstrates why navigation and goal planning are insufficient where the necessary pathway does not exist locally. Regional commissioning should fund transport, brokerage, outreach, blended training or partnerships that bring viable education and employment opportunities within reach, and outcome measures should account for structural barriers beyond the young person's control.

6.5 National Consistency With Local Responsiveness

National consistency should define the minimum quality of support every young person can expect, while local flexibility should determine how services are organised and delivered in response to community needs, infrastructure and service capacity. Implementation should be staged and scalable, with clear minimum requirements from commencement and planned investment in workforce, coordination, data, governance and community capacity over time. Providers should be able to begin with functions that reflect their existing strengths and local infrastructure, but government should set milestones for progression towards the full model and ensure that staged implementation does not entrench lower service quality in smaller or less-resourced locations.

Place-based delivery should change how the service system organises capacity and partnerships, not the quality of support available to an individual young person. Regardless of location, young people should have access to a personalised assessment, a consistent coordinator or trusted worker, developmentally appropriate and trauma-informed practice, peer connection, and supported links to education, employment and community services. Regional and metropolitan models may use different infrastructure to achieve these outcomes, but both should be accountable to the same national youth service standards.

As the national peak body, MYAN should support the integrated model to establish nationally consistent youth settlement principles, outcomes and safeguards while enabling place-based partnerships to respond to state and territory systems, local community priorities, labour markets and education contexts.

MYAN's existing National Youth Settlement Framework (NYSF) provides a ready-made foundation for achieving national consistency while retaining local responsiveness. Rather than developing a new youth framework, the Government should draw on and invest in this established national architecture to set consistent youth-specific principles, outcomes, service standards, workforce capabilities and expectations for youth participation across the integrated program. This should be complemented by the proposed nationally coordinated children's settlement framework, aligned with the NYSF but designed to address the distinct rights, developmental stages and settlement needs of children aged 0–11. Delivery should remain locally adaptable, enabling providers to respond to community demographics, regional service systems, education and employment opportunities, and the relationships and social capital held by trusted local organisations. MYAN can support national stewardship of the framework, including implementation guidance, workforce development, shared learning and monitoring of youth settlement outcomes.

All providers and partners in the integrated model should be accountable to common youth-specific quality standards covering culturally safe and trauma-informed practice, strengths-based assessment, child safeguarding, informed consent, privacy, data protection, interpreter use and ethical participation by young people. These standards should apply regardless of whether support is delivered by a settlement provider, mainstream service, educational institution or community partner, with proportionate quality assurance and remediation where standards are not met.

The MYAN and SPG consultation reinforced the importance of younger workers and people with lived experience in building trust and designing responsive services. Participants also cautioned that qualification and experience requirements can exclude young people from paid roles even where they hold valuable settlement, language, cultural and peer expertise. Consistent with MYAN and Monash University's value paper on meaningful partnership, the national workforce capability strategy should include supported entry pathways, paid traineeships, mentoring, recognition of lived experience and proportionate role requirements, together with safeguarding, supervision and professional development. Young people should be able to progress from participant and peer-leadership roles into paid program delivery, governance and evaluation positions.

MYAN's 2025 National Policy Alliance Launch Report identifies specialised multicultural youth training, mandatory youth capability, cultural safety and workforce development as priorities for stronger service systems. These priorities are consistent with evidence from the Youth Transition Support evaluation and MYAN's consultations that effective youth settlement depends on specialist workers, trusted relationships and sustained organisational capability.

Drawing on this evidence, the integrated model should include a funded national workforce capability strategy covering multicultural youth practice, cultural safety, trauma-informed and anti-racist practice, adolescent development, interpreter use, safeguarding, education and employment transitions, family engagement and cross-sector collaboration. The strategy should set minimum capability requirements for settlement and mainstream providers, support specialist organisations to deliver training and secondary consultation, recognise bicultural and lived-experience expertise, and monitor workforce development and continuity through commissioning and quality assurance.

6.6 Outcomes, Accountability, And Value For Money

SETS providers consulted by MYAN and SPG warned that youth priorities could disappear within merged outcomes and reporting requirements. Participants noted that a provider might satisfy broad SETS or employment indicators without demonstrating progress for young people, particularly in education, belonging, wellbeing, social participation or longer-term development. The integrated model should therefore retain separate youth funding allocations and require youth-disaggregated outcomes that cannot be substituted by adult, family or immediate employment results.

Stakeholders consulted by MYAN have emphasised that the outcomes framework, performance indicators, data definitions, and reporting requirements should be developed and tested as part of the design of the integrated model, rather than imposed after program settings have been determined. Government should co-design these measures with young people, settlement providers, specialist multicultural youth organisations, mainstream partners and evaluation experts. The process should test whether proposed indicators are meaningful, feasible and culturally safe, whether they capture developmental and long-term progress, whether data can be collected consistently, and whether payment or performance settings create unintended incentives to prioritise easily counted outcomes or lower-needs participants. Draft measures should be piloted before full implementation and reviewed after commencement using provider experience, youth feedback and service data.

The integrated model should include crisis-response capacity so that providers can rapidly adapt support during disruptions such as public health emergencies, housing shocks, family crisis or sudden changes to education and employment access. This includes flexible brokerage, multilingual communication, outreach, digital inclusion support and clear escalation pathways, rather than relying on ordinary referral processes during periods of heightened need (MYAN Australia 2020).

6.6.1 Youth Progression And Long-Term Outcomes

For young people, value for money should be assessed through sustained progression and avoided service failure, not only immediate job placements or unit cost per participant. The outcomes framework should be participant-led and measure progress across the domains relevant to each young person's circumstances, aspirations and agreed goals rather than

applying an identical outcome set to every participant. Participant outcomes should include practical, academic and workplace English-language progression, education and training engagement, retention and completion, transitions between learning settings, suitable and sustained employment, job quality, financial security and progression, confidence navigating education, employment, health, housing, legal and community systems, knowledge of rights and services, wellbeing, belonging, social networks, community participation and progress towards participant-defined aspirations. Service quality measures should capture whether young people feel safe, respected, listened to, culturally understood and involved in decisions.

System outcomes should examine completed handovers, engagement with receiving services, continuity through transitions, re-entry when needs change, reduced repeated assessment and storytelling, and fewer unresolved transfers between services. Provider performance should focus on factors within a provider's reasonable control, while shared outcomes across settlement, education, employment, health, housing and other systems should not be attributed to one provider alone. Government should combine quantitative data with participant feedback and longitudinal follow-up at appropriate intervals, including three, six and 12 months (MYAN Australia 2026b).

Data should also include access, unmet need, referral completion, disengagement and outcomes, including children receiving support through family-based services who may not currently appear as named clients. Collection must remain safe, lawful and proportionate.

Stakeholders consulted by MYAN emphasised that youth outcomes should measure progression along the settlement journey, not only final endpoints. For young people adapting to new systems, recovering from disrupted education or building confidence and independence, apparently small steps may represent substantial progress. Relevant indicators may include developing a résumé, obtaining a licence, joining a club, improving English or digital skills, progressing through education or training, expanding supportive networks, contributing to group activities and taking steps towards safe employment.

Repeated voluntary participation can also provide meaningful evidence of belonging and safety. For example, a young person who continues returning to an after-school sport or community program may be demonstrating trust, connection and a willingness to participate, rather than attending only to receive material assistance. These indicators should be interpreted alongside the young person's own aspirations and used to recognise capability, contribution and sustained engagement without turning participation into a compulsory or simplistic attendance target.

SETS providers consulted by MYAN and SPG criticised reporting that counts the number of young people engaged without examining whether support produced lasting change. Participants recommended longitudinal measurement at appropriate intervals, such as three, six and 12 months after engagement, covering progress towards the young person's aspirations, education and employment transitions, independence, belonging, social connection and community participation. The integrated model should combine these youth-

reported and developmental outcomes with measures of equitable access, referral completion, reduced duplication and sustained collaboration between providers.

6.6.2 Equity, Collaboration And System Performance

Measures of success

The integrated model should measure equity, collaboration and system performance as explicit indicators of success, not only individual client outcomes. Measures should examine who is reached and who remains excluded, including young people with disrupted education, disability, caring responsibilities, complex family circumstances, privacy or safety concerns, regional or outer-suburban barriers, delayed settlement needs and low likelihood of self-referral. Success should also be assessed by whether providers maintain formal and effective partnerships with schools, TAFEs, universities, councils, youth, health, housing and employment services, use coordinated care or pathway plans where young people have multiple needs, complete warm handovers, reduce duplication and repeated assessment, and maintain partnership continuity when individual staff change. Commissioning and performance measures should also test whether providers receive and use adequate funded time for coordination, brokerage, secondary consultation and joint planning, rather than expecting collaboration to occur through goodwill or unpaid work.

Short-term outcomes

Short-term outcomes should show whether the integrated model is changing young people's access to support and the way services work together. These outcomes should include increased awareness of services, timely access to culturally safe assessment, completed referrals rather than referral attempts alone, reduced duplication, fewer repeated intake processes, clear identification of unmet need, coordinated support where needs span multiple systems, and young people reporting that they understand the pathway and know who is responsible for follow-up. The MYAN and SPG consultation identified collaboration and reduced duplication as outcomes in their own right. Government should therefore measure whether partnerships survive staff turnover, whether young people receive coordinated rather than overlapping support, whether handovers are completed, and whether providers share responsibility for common outcomes. These measures should be used alongside client outcomes to test whether integration is changing service-system behaviour rather than simply combining programs under one contract.

Long-term outcomes and continuous improvement

Long-term outcomes should show whether the integrated model improves equity and system performance over time. Government should monitor where young people disengage or fail to progress across the service pathway, including awareness of services, initial access, assessment, referral completion, sustained engagement and successful transition. Data and youth feedback should identify whether barriers relate to location, language, racism, digital access, transport, service capability, privacy, eligibility or lack of follow-up. Long-term system outcomes should include reduced hidden exclusion, stronger cross-sector collaboration,

improved access for young people whose needs emerge later, fewer repeated assessments, more completed referral pathways and better evidence about where service gaps remain. These findings should inform continuous improvement, commissioning decisions, workforce development and updates to implementation guidance.

Government should collect and report data that allows outcomes for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to be understood by age, location, language, migration or refugee background and other relevant characteristics where appropriate, safe and lawful. Data should be used to identify access gaps, test whether service quality is equitable, inform continuous improvement and hold the integrated model accountable for youth outcomes without compromising privacy or creating barriers to disclosure.

The integrated model requires a funded national youth settlement system function, not only local service delivery contracts. This function should provide the architecture needed to keep youth settlement visible, consistent and accountable across jurisdictions while enabling local organisations to deliver place-based support. Peak bodies play a critical role in this architecture by convening providers across jurisdictions, streamlining the exchange of practice knowledge and coordinating structured opportunities to identify emerging issues, share effective approaches and strengthen implementation nationally. Without this function, knowledge exchange can remain fragmented, dependent on individual relationships or limited to organisations with sufficient capacity to participate.

Government should fund an experienced organisation or consortium to coordinate a national Youth Pathways Community of Practice and related stewardship functions. Selection should be transparent and based on demonstrated expertise in multicultural youth settlement, national Community of Practice facilitation, workforce development, youth participation and continuous improvement, supported by a clear and evidence-informed operating model. The function should connect and strengthen existing expertise rather than centralise service delivery or privilege one provider model. As the recognised national youth-specific peak for migrant and refugee young people, MYAN is well placed to support this function through its national network, policy and practice expertise, stewardship of the National Youth Settlement Framework and established relationships with young people, specialist providers and state and territory partners. MYAN's role should be to support implementation rather than replace local delivery (MYAN Australia 2026b). This should include:

- advising government on youth-specific program design and commissioning
- supporting implementation of the National Youth Settlement Framework
- convening a national community of practice
- building workforce capability across settlement and mainstream systems
- developing shared tools, service standards, referral pathway guidance and outcome measures
- supporting youth participation, recruitment and leadership pathways
- coordinating youth input into governance and evaluation

- monitoring implementation risks and emerging gaps through national mapping and provider intelligence and
- translating evidence from young people and local services into continuous program improvement.

A funded national system function of this kind would create consistency, accountability, shared learning and stronger implementation support, while allowing specialist, community-based and place-based organisations to remain responsible for locally responsive service delivery.

Governance should include a national steering group with government, MYAN and independent specialist expertise, a cross-sector community of practice spanning settlement, education, employment, health and community services, and a paid youth advisory mechanism with a defined role in decisions. Responsibilities, reporting lines, escalation pathways and conflict-of-interest arrangements should be explicit. Monitoring findings and stakeholder feedback should be used to update implementation guidance and the youth settlement journey map.

MYAN's 2025 National Policy Alliance Launch Report provides practice evidence that the issues shaping youth settlement are interconnected across racism, family and intergenerational relationships, regional disparities, mental health, education, employment and youth leadership. The Alliance brings together young people, service providers, policy stakeholders and partners across jurisdictions to share evidence and develop coordinated responses. Drawing on this experience, the integrated model's governance should maintain structured links across these policy and service areas rather than treating youth settlement as the responsibility of one portfolio or provider network.

7. Recommendations

MYAN recommends that the Australian Government take the following 12 actions:

1. Retain a protected and permanent youth pathways stream with minimum non-negotiable safeguards.

- Provide dedicated national youth funding that is separately costed, separately reported and cannot be substituted by adult, family or employment expenditure.
- Protect specialist multicultural youth functions, including youth-specific casework, brokerage, education transition support, social connection, family-aware practice, outreach, youth participation and settlement-informed employment support.
- Apply nationally consistent youth-specific standards, using the National Youth Settlement Framework as the foundation for service quality, safeguarding, workforce capability and youth participation.
- Use nationally consistent, needs-based eligibility, ordinarily covering ages 12 to 25, with flexible duration and re-entry where needs emerge or recur.

- Require youth-disaggregated accountability across funding, access, service delivery, outcomes and public reporting.

2. Establish a nationally coordinated children's settlement framework.

- Co-design the framework with children, families, child-rights organisations, settlement providers and mainstream systems.
- Define child-specific settlement outcomes, responsibilities, practice standards, participation mechanisms, referral pathways and safe data measures across developmental stages.
- Align the framework with the National Youth Settlement Framework and existing child, family, education, health and settlement frameworks so it strengthens coordination rather than duplicating established architecture.

3. Preserve and fund specialist multicultural youth practice.

- Fund relationship-based casework, consistent workers, bicultural and peer roles, outreach, mentoring, education transition support, social connection and settlement-informed employment brokerage.
- Use the National Youth Settlement Framework to establish common youth-specific service, safeguarding and practice standards.
- Require settlement and mainstream providers to demonstrate youth, cultural, trauma-informed and anti-racist capability.

4. Establish coordinated pathways across the full settlement journey.

- Connect pre-arrival services, the Humanitarian Settlement Program, settlement grants, the Adult Migrant English Program, schools, education and training, Workforce Australia, Inclusive Employment Australia, health, housing and other mainstream systems.
- Require shared pathway protocols, clear entry and re-entry points, culturally safe assessment, consent-based information sharing, warm handovers and named responsibility for follow-up.
- Fund youth settlement brokerage so young people can understand, access and remain engaged with the services they need.

5. Strengthen education and school-based settlement pathways.

- Fund formal partnerships between settlement providers, schools, TAFEs, universities and training providers.
- Pilot settlement-provider-employed newcomer student and family liaison officers in school clusters with significant numbers of newly arrived students.

- Protect education retention and progression as foundations for long-term economic participation.

6. Integrate employment services around safe and sustainable pathways.

- Require differentiated employment support, including career planning, workplace-rights education, mentoring, work experience, employer engagement and post-placement support.
- Reward education and training progress, suitable job matching, job quality and retention rather than rapid placement alone.
- Support social enterprises and trusted multicultural youth and settlement organisations as pathways to work, while addressing discrimination and exploitation.

7. Fund social connection, belonging, wellbeing and family-responsive support as core youth settlement functions.

- Invest in peer connection, mentoring, leadership, sport, arts, volunteering, civic participation and culturally safe community engagement.
- Require proactive identification of loneliness, isolation, mental health needs and barriers to belonging.
- Provide qualified interpreting, whole-of-family support and confidential specialist pathways that reduce parentification and respond safely to family violence or intergenerational conflict.

8. Guarantee equitable access across cohorts and locations.

- Allocate funding using migration and settlement data, youth population, service gaps, regional conditions and local labour-market and education contexts.
- Guarantee the same youth-specific quality standard in metropolitan, regional and remote areas through outreach, blended delivery, local partnerships and funded access to specialist services.
- Monitor who is reached, who remains excluded and where young people disengage across the pathway.

9. Commission collaboration and protect specialist and community-based providers.

- Enable joint tenders, consortia, realistic contract sizes and directly funded roles for smaller specialist, refugee-led, ethno-specific and youth-led organisations.
- Require transparent funding, decision-making participation, data access and recognition of specialist contributions where subcontracting is used.

- Remove incentives that discourage appropriate referrals and fund coordination, shared planning, completed handovers and reduced duplication.

10. Provide adequate multi-year funding and build workforce capability.

- Fund workforce continuity, coordination, evaluation, community capacity, partnership development and proportionate administration as legitimate program costs.
    - Use equitable tender timeframes, proportionate compliance requirements, consortium development support, fair subcontract terms and transparent assessment of specialist and community capability.
- Implement a national workforce capability strategy covering multicultural youth practice, cultural safety, adolescent development, trauma-informed practice, safeguarding, interpreter use and cross-sector collaboration.
- Support specialist organisations to deliver training, secondary consultation and shared learning to mainstream partners.
    - Invest in paid entry and progression pathways for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to join the settlement, youth and community services workforce. These pathways should include recognised training, mentoring, supervision, safe professional boundaries and career progression, with role design and remuneration recognising multilingual, bicultural and lived-experience capability. Young people's expertise should be valued through paid roles and leadership opportunities, not through unpaid participation or repeated personal disclosure.

11. Embed meaningful youth co-design and accountable governance.

- Fund diverse young people to participate in national and local governance, service planning, commissioning, evaluation and continuous improvement.
- Require providers to show how youth input influenced decisions and to report back on what changed, what did not change and why.
- Establish a national steering group, cross-sector community of practice and paid youth advisory mechanism with clear responsibilities and escalation pathways.

12. Measure participant outcomes, equity and access, and system performance.

- Participant outcomes: Track young people's progress in education, training, safe and sustained employment, aspirations, independence, belonging, wellbeing, social participation, confidence navigating systems and reduced need for crisis support at appropriate intervals, including three, six and 12 months.
- Equity and access: Monitor who is reached, who remains excluded, who disengages and where access barriers occur, using safe and proportionate disaggregation by age,

location, language, migration or refugee background and other relevant characteristics.

- System performance: Measure completed referrals, warm handovers, partnership continuity, reduced repeated assessment, reduced duplication, coordinated pathway planning and whether young people reach, understand and remain engaged with referred services.
- Continuous improvement: Use youth-reported, qualitative and quantitative evidence to identify gaps, adjust commissioning, strengthen workforce development and improve implementation over time, supported by MYAN's national stewardship, ecosystem mapping, shared tools and standards, monitoring and continuous improvement role.

8. Conclusion

MYAN supports an integrated settlement grants model where it makes services easier to navigate, strengthens continuity and improves economic participation, social connection and youth outcomes. Integration should not proceed at the expense of specialist youth capability, dedicated funding or accountability. A successful model will retain a protected and adequately funded youth pathways stream, establish nationally coordinated support for children, apply needs-based and developmentally responsive access, preserve specialist and community-based providers, and embed meaningful youth participation across design, governance and evaluation. It will connect settlement, education, employment, health, housing, family and community systems through funded partnerships, consistent workers, completed handovers and clear responsibility for follow-up. Its value should be judged through sustained education and employment progression, belonging, wellbeing, equitable access and reduced service failure, not program consolidation or rapid job placement alone. The ultimate test of reform is whether every child and young person can enter through one trusted door, retain access to specialist support and progress towards their aspirations without being lost between programs.

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