



# Home Stretch WA Rollout

## Youth Engagement Plan - Equal Partners

*Version date: December 2022*

This Youth Engagement Plan (the Plan) has been co-authored by Lived Experience Consultants (Consultants) from the Home Stretch WA Community of Practice, led by Anglicare WA, and provides a platform for ensuring that young people remain as the centre of planning and implementation of Home Stretch in Western Australia (WA).

The purpose of the Plan is to make sure all stakeholders understand how young people will be involved in the Home Stretch WA rollout. It details how young people will contribute to and shape the program as it rolls out across the state.

The Plan is a living document and will adapt over time to ensure input and direction is coming from a diverse group of young people with lived experience of the care system, so it is current and credible.

The Plan will be developed and maintained by members of the Community of Practice under the guidance of the Consultants and young people participating in the Youth Advisory Group.

The Plan will be shared between the Department of Communities (Communities), young people working in the Community of Practice, young people involved in Home Stretch WA governance groups, and those being supported by Home Stretch WA providers.

The Plan will be reviewed at a minimum of every 12 months, or earlier where it is identified that a change must occur.

Note: The Plan will be viewed in conjunction with the Home Stretch WA Communications Strategy and will inform the Communications Strategies used by the Home Stretch WA Community of Practice.

## Background

Home Stretch is a program that helps young people leaving out of home care at 18, transition to independent living by providing extended support and resources until the age of 21.

Communities is currently implementing the State Government's commitment made in January 2021, to expand Home Stretch into a permanent, state-wide program.

The Home Stretch WA expansion builds on the success of the Home Stretch WA Trial<sup>1</sup>, delivered by Anglicare WA, which the State Government has supported since 2019.

## **A commitment to Aboriginal young people and their families**

Aboriginal people have a fundamental right to self-determination. Wherever possible, Aboriginal led organisations should deliver the Home Stretch WA program for Aboriginal young people and their families.

Every Aboriginal community and their circumstances are unique in WA. Local Aboriginal young people, families and community leaders are best placed to determine the right approach to delivering the program in their community.

Communities commits to ensuring the voices of Aboriginal young people, families, community leaders and elders are elevated into everything we do in the Youth Engagement Plan. We also commit to the vision that young Aboriginal leaders should be nurtured and invested in.

## **Core values of youth engagement**

In April and again in October 2022, young people from the Home Stretch WA Youth Advisory Group and Consultants employed by the Community of Practice, reviewed and provided feedback on the Plan. Their guidance was used to rewrite the Plan and restructure it to better represent the voice of young people.

The young people leading in this review process wanted the Plan to represent their voice and be a strong and empowering vision for all young people. To achieve this, they have created a set of core values to guide the way youth engagement is practiced throughout the staged roll out of the Home Stretch WA program.

## **Empowerment - Young People are equal partners and will help communicate Home Stretch WA**

Home Stretch WA recognises young people as equal partners in this work and values their lived experience, alongside the learned experience of experts and policy makers. This means that decision making is shared, and young people must have representation in all levels of governance of the project and oversight of the Community of Practice.

Where there is young people's participation, whether employed or as a service user in the program, an attitude of empowerment must be upheld by all stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2018, the State Government committed to a trial of a Western Australian model of Home Stretch. Information about the Home Stretch WA model, including key elements and early results of the trial, can be found in the Anglicare WA Home Stretch WA Trial Report 2021. Online at <https://www.anglicarewa.org.au/who-we-are/research#investing>

Young people are at the centre of the program and the roll out must reflect this.

## **Accountability - Home Stretch WA delivers on its promises and will continuously improve with the voice of young people**

The Home Stretch WA model was designed with young people and represents our agreed vision for improving the support systems for young people leaving out of home care (care leavers) across WA.

Young people must be allowed to hold the out of home care system, decision makers, Home Stretch WA providers and the Community of Practice accountable to their commitment.

- Young people must be able to hold the care system accountable to the State Government's commitment that Home Stretch WA will be a permanent program and a choice for all eligible care leavers.
- Young people can hold Home Stretch WA providers accountable to delivering the program with integrity so young people engaging receive the full benefits and supports of the program.
- Young people are part of evaluating Home Stretch WA and deciding what success looks like for care leavers. This will ensure stakeholders understand the importance of their decision making and the impacts it will have on those young people leaving care now and into the future.

## **Transparency - Young people are informed and have access to information about Home Stretch WA and the rollout**

Communities must provide ways for young people to easily access information about the Home Stretch WA program, including how it works and how it is being rolled out. As a result, young people will be able to accurately communicate to other young people about the program.

Information should be shared by all stakeholders involved, that respects, values and recognises young people's ability to guide Home Stretch in WA. This means:

- Acknowledging the skills and knowledge young people with lived experience offer in decision making about what works for care leavers.
- Providing young people with access to relevant information that helps them participate in decision making in meaningful ways.
- Listening to feedback and input from young people and sharing back to them how their input has changed the system.

## **Commitment from Communities**

Communities is committed to engaging and consulting with young people and Aboriginal communities to expand the Home Stretch WA program across the State.

This will include a commitment to the actions and strategies that are outlined in this document.

Young people will be involved at all stages of the rollout, including as part of the Community of Practice being delivered by Anglicare WA, and projects such as mapping of the leaving care service continuum and localisation of Home Stretch WA in three regional areas.

## Methods of engagement and communication

Consultation and engagement with young people who have been in care needs to have a trauma<sup>2</sup> informed approach. A trauma informed approach will be adapted by Communities and any organisation engaged as part of the roll out. This includes, but is not limited to, Home Stretch WA service providers, Consultants and other organisations such as local governments, if applicable.

Where young people are asked to use or share their story, or to draw on their lived experience to provide guidance and support to the rollout; there must be a recognition that this involved the young person using their lived experience for work purposes and where possible they should be appropriately remunerated for their time. This can be provided through gift vouchers that compensate for their time and expertise.

It is also important that there is recognition and attention paid to the emotional cost of drawing on lived experience, and the potential impact it may have on the wellbeing of young people. Young people must be given information about the details of activities they are invited to attend and the level of influence they will have in decision making.

Consultation sessions should be undertaken in environments that promote the safety and accessibility of young people of all abilities and cultural backgrounds. Where young people are likely to be asked to draw on their own lived experience, the facilitators of the session should also provide opportunities for young people to debrief and process their own responses to using their lived experience.

Young people employed by the Community of Practice are paid as Lived Experience Consultants, with their role classified through the Mercer Index as Level 3.1 under the Social, Community, Home care and Disability Services Award (SCHADS). This is in recognition that the level of skill and experience needed to fulfil the duties of the role, and act as lived experience consultants and generate youth led activities and solutions is higher than would be expected from other consultation activities.

## Youth engagement and the Community of Practice

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<sup>2</sup> Young people in care are some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Many have experienced neglect or other forms of abuse. This trauma can have an ongoing impact on their physical and mental health regardless of how well they are looked after while in care. Often, while in care, young people may have had negative experiences due to the trauma they experienced. When they leave care, young people can find it hard to get a house or gain employment, and often don't have access to a family safety net.

The Plan describes the activities that young people will be involved in, and how they will be involved. It places young people at the centre and driving the agenda for youth participation. The activities may change over time to reflect different needs and priorities, however they must always be consistent with the expressed needs of young people involved in Home Stretch WA.

The Community of Practice has established a foundation for this approach by employing young people with lived experience and ensuring their involvement is offered at every level of practice, planning, policy, governance, and implementation.

As an equal partner, young people are included in all activities of the Community of Practice. They are valued for their contribution and capacity to bring the members of the Community of Practice together to achieve the vision and shared goals for Home Stretch in WA.

## Priority actions and activities

The priority actions and activities have been developed by the Community of Practice Consultants to help influence, lead and support the state-wide roll out of Home Stretch WA.

In developing these actions and activities, the Consultants reviewed the findings and recommendations from the Anglicare WA Home Stretch Trial Report (2021), details in the previous version of the Youth Engagement Plan and looked at the current state of the Home Stretch WA rollout.

The Consultants have also drawn on their lived and learned experiences with the out of home care system to identify the critical activities that are most important to ensure young people have a voice in the Home Stretch WA rollout.

The following represents the priority actions and activities that have been agreed by young people.

### Workforce Development

**Young people to guide the Home Stretch WA rollout through their involvement in recruitment of service provider staff, developing and delivering training, co-creating practice resources and involvement in reflective practice forums.**

- Community of Practice Consultants and young people with lived experience of participation in a Home Stretch WA program will assist Home Stretch WA providers with recruitment of Transition Coaches, Staying On Facilitators and Coordinators. Young people sitting on recruitment panels helps create a culture of youth empowerment and mutual respect in a Home Stretch WA team. This will be achieved in the following ways:
  - The Community of Practice will involve young people in a process of creating and updating position descriptions, selection criteria and interview schedules for each of the core job roles of a Home Stretch WA service. These will continue to

- be shared and used by providers and made available through the Home Stretch WA website.
- The Community of Practice will provide support and training to young people with lived experience to learn how to participate in recruitment panels in a professional manner. This will include helping them to understand privacy, professional boundaries, recruitment processes and procedures, and their role on a recruitment panel.
- Home Stretch WA providers must try to involve appropriately skilled and trained young people in all their recruitment processes, unless there are significant barriers that prevent this from occurring.
- Young people's participation would typically include reviewing applications, refining or adapting interview questions, and then sitting on interview panels. Young people's involvement should not be tokenistic, and their perspective will be considered in equal balance to at least two other panel members.
- Consultants will support the development and facilitation of training to Home Stretch WA providers and other relevant stakeholders. Through the support of the Community of Practice team, Consultants will be supported to become competent in developing their training and facilitation skills. This will be achieved in the following ways:
  - There will be flexibility in young people's involvement and each young person must be provided access to training and support around their lived experiences and how to use them safely. This must reflect a trauma-informed approach which supports and empowers young people to use their lived experience safely in the workplace and acknowledges there is always an emotional cost for doing so.
  - Enabling young people to co-facilitate training will bring together learned experience and lived experience to support the development of Home Stretch WA teams.
  - The materials involved in training will be made readily available to the Consultants and where amendments need to be made, these will be reviewed and done so in collaboration with young people and Lived Experience Consultants
- Lived Experience Consultants will be involved in facilitating reflective practice activities and group sessions delivered by the Community of Practice. The role of Lived Experience Consultants in these sessions will:
  - support Home Stretch WA providers to deliver quality services to young people,
  - provide opportunities to deepen the knowledge of providers about each of practice approaches and the experiences of young people
  - consult with young people around specific issues related to service delivery or practice; and
  - support innovation and encourage new ideas or ways of working to emerge.

## Continuous Improvement

**Young people must hold a permanent and ongoing role in supporting the continuous improvement of Home Stretch WA model, particularly where changes to the model are required.**

- Young people in regional areas must be involved in guiding how Home Stretch WA works for them in their region. Regional providers, and particularly Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, should consult with young people in their communities to ensure that the service offered is working for them in their community.

- Prior to any significant changes to the Home Stretch WA model, the Youth Advisory Group and the Lived Experience Consultants must be consulted and involved in decision making.
- Young people must maintain a representative voice through the Lived Experience Consultants on the Home Stretch WA Guiding Panel, with access to all Action/Issues Registers that track model adaptations and changes to policy or practice.
- Young people involved in the Home Stretch WA Steering Group can provide advice and support to the Steering Group but should not act as representatives or on behalf of young people participating in Home Stretch WA services unless they regularly attend the Youth Advisory Group or are asked to do so by other young people.
- Where decisions are being made that have broad reaching implications about the service offer, efforts must be undertaken to ensure there are a diverse range of perspective and experiences heard and included. This includes ensuring there is more than one Lived Experience Consultant involved in consultation.
- Home Stretch WA providers must work with the Community of Practice to create pathways and opportunities for young people to have their ideas, feedback and concerns elevated into the continuous improvement of the Home Stretch WA Model. This includes opportunities to bring ideas to the Youth Advisory Group.

## Youth Participation

**Young people have been at the centre of the Home Stretch WA model development. Throughout this process, the voice of young people has had a profound presence and will continue to do so with state-wide rollout of the program. It is important to continuously champion the importance of youth participation and the value of lived experienced.**

- The Community of Practice will employ Lived Experience Consultants who have recent lived experience of transitioning from the out of home care system. The function, structure and responsibilities of Lived Experience Consultants was co-designed by young people.
- The Community of Practice will employ 1 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) of Lived Experience Consultants to work in the Home Stretch WA Community of Practice, with a preference for a balance of part time and casual young people. Part time roles will be for a maximum 12 month period, however, they may be able to reapply for a second term and will be expected to hold leadership roles.
- Young people must be over 18 and under 26, to be employed in a part-time role.
- Consultants must be selected through the formal recruitment process developed by young people. Aboriginal people with a lived experience of care will be offered culturally safe and appropriate pathways to be supported to connect and apply.
- It is important to recognise that in their advocacy work, Lived Experience Consultants are not directly representative of any organisation, including Anglicare WA and the Community of Practice. The Consultants are employed to hold a position that will find ways to connect with other young people with a care experience and communicate their diverse range of experiences and perspective. While the role is representative, it is understood that the Lived Experience Consultants cannot represent all experiences of care.
- Consultants will hold an independent voice from the management of the Community of Practice backbone team and their direct employer Anglicare WA. Consultants will be equally employed to hold the Community of Practice backbone team accountable and

have access to external supports through CREATE WA to help deal with any conflicts of interest or concerns that arise.

- Consultants must be respected and valued for their lived experience. The concept of paid Lived Experience Consultant roles is relatively new to the out of home care system in WA; however, it is well established in other areas like youth mental health.
- The Consultants are professional and should be treated as a credible source of knowledge and information on leaving care. While their own lived experience of care provides them a critical foundational knowledge, they are not defined by this experience. Consultants are employed with the expectation they will bring other skills, knowledge, strengths and talents to their work, and will be offered support and opportunities to use these skills and develop longer term career pathways.
- Consultants will meet regularly as a group and maintain a regular online communications channel, to collaborate and support each other, and the Community of Practice team.
- Consultants will be represented at all governance groups and have access to the minutes and other resources from sessions they cannot attend. This includes the Steering Group, Expert Panel, Pulse meetings for Home Stretch WA providers and Working Groups under the Community of Practice. In doing this, young people involved in groups and other meetings will be supported in strong decision-making having context to reference.
- Consultants will work with the Community of Practice and Home Stretch WA providers to lead youth engagement activities. The following activities have been prioritised from recommendations of the Home Stretch WA Trial Youth Advisory Group, and are now more clearly defined by the Consultants:
  - The Community of Practice will initiate and convene a metropolitan Youth Advisory Group to provide a regular platform for young people with lived experience of Home Stretch WA services. Consultants will help oversee and facilitate the group. This will be a channel for real-time feedback on Home Stretch WA as it rolls out across WA.
  - The Community of Practice will support regional locations to develop local strategies and opportunities for Youth Participation or the establishment of Advisory Groups that can later connect or join with the metropolitan Youth Advisory Group.
  - The Community of Practice will develop an accessible and youth-friendly pipeline for feedback and consultations that supports young people to be heard. This is to be co-designed with the Consultants and young people to ensure participants in the Home Stretch WA program feel confident and safe in providing feedback directly to their support workers as a first option. Improvements will be made where needed. Diverse methods of feedback relay are encouraged (social media, online meetings, websites, surveys, face-to-face and phone calls).

## **Communicating Home Stretch WA to young people**

**Young people will lead the development of a range of resources and channels for Home Stretch WA to be communicated to other young people. This will include the co-creation of colour schemes, style guides and graphics for Home Stretch WA to encourage consistency between service providers and support better communication of the program to young people transitioning from care. It is hoped the creation of a strong and colourful logo will improve familiarity and trust with**



**young people and distinguish Home Stretch WA as being distinct from the child protection system.**

- Consultants have led the development of a logo, colour scheme and style guide for the Home Stretch WA Community of Practice. This style guide will be used in all content created by the Community of Practice and for Home Stretch WA providers to utilise in their service.
- As part of supporting the establishment of Home Stretch in remote communities and regions, local Aboriginal young people and community should be consulted and engaged around the appropriateness of using the resources developed by the Community of Practice as part of the program being implemented by local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.
- Lived Experience Consultants will be involved in creating youth-friendly resources that communicate Home Stretch WA and help young people understand what is offered in the program and how it works. These resources will be across multiple mediums and could be in the form of face to face information sessions, flyers, fact sheets, brochures, animations, illustrations and other relevant materials. Additionally, the youth advisory group will be consulted on the development and design of resources, and how they are communicated and made accessible.
- Social media is an important medium for communicating to young people. The Community of Practice will establish social media channels that will be used to communicate the core service offer to young people across WA. Consultants will help contribute relevant content for the social media accounts and ensure it is appropriate and engaging for young people.
- A calendar of upcoming and future Home Stretch WA youth engagements and activities that young people can participate in should be developed. This will ensure young people are invited and able to be involved at every opportunity.
- Lived Experience Consultants will schedule a regular meeting, providing a forum to collaborate and work on their own priorities and projects that form part of this plan.
- To hold accountability of youth engagement and activities being included in the Home Stretch WA rollout, service providers, Communities and other relevant stakeholders should be provided copies of the Youth Engagement Plan and commit to working collaboratively to implement the strategies and activities listed within it.
- When young people or Lived Experience Consultants are asked to use their identity or lived experiences to communicate about Home Stretch, they must be supported to do this training and support through the Community of Practice and their Home Stretch WA provider. This will ensure that they can use their lived experience safely, with awareness and choice about how their story is used and how it might impact them. Consultants will also be supported to undertake Speak Up training through CREATE WA.
- When Consultants and other young people use their lived experience for Home Stretch WA engagements, activities and meetings, they will be offered an opportunity to prepare for the event and debrief after. This supports their health and wellbeing to ensure they are empowered by their experience and not negatively impacted. It is important that all staff involved in Home Stretch WA and working alongside the Consultants receive training and support around trauma informed approaches to work, and understand the benefits and costs associated with lived experience when working in advocacy roles.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

**Young people are involved in different levels of the monitoring and evaluation of Home Stretch WA. Consultants to have the opportunity to develop and contribute tools and resources to do so. The Consultants' involvement will assist in maintaining model integrity and support in practice data.**

- The Community of Practice will provide young people the opportunity to monitor and evaluate the progress of Home Stretch WA rollout. This will be achieved by:
  - Lived Experience Consultants will assist in developing a method or tool to support providers to reflect on the integrity of their Home Stretch WA service against or as part of the Home Stretch WA model integrity framework. Young people and Lived Experience Consultants will assist service providers as they reflect on the quality and strengths of their service and identify any gaps or challenges.
  - Young People and Lived Experience Consultants must be involved in the development of the monitoring and evaluation framework as part of the independent evaluation of Home Stretch WA, and to be present in meetings that develop the tools and measures to be used, and the insights and findings where appropriate.
  - Young people should be involved in collecting and analysing outcomes data shared by Home Stretch WA providers as part of the Independent Evaluation. This can be either through the independent evaluation or through Lived Experience Consultants supporting activities of the Community of Practice.
  - Young people must help define how success will be measured for Home Stretch in WA, and how this information will be collected. Capturing young peoples' voices from the regions will help guide what success will look like in their locality. Consultants should be invited to assist in running activities with young people participating in the program to collect stories and information about their experiences. Young people will be further engaged in the review of the identifying themes and write up.
  - There must be clear and effective procedures developed for young people to be informed of their progress and review or access the outcomes data and information that is collected about them.

## **Aboriginal Culture and Community**

**The voice of young Aboriginal people is prioritised, elevated, and valued in all areas of the Home Stretch WA rollout.**

- Aboriginal ways of sharing and communicating are used to capture the voice of young Aboriginal people to ensure their voice is heard and considered in the roll out of Home Stretch WA.
- Incorporating the knowledge, voice, and connection of young Aboriginal people in all levels of program rollout can be achieved by their involvement in:
  - development and review of the Aboriginal Cultural Framework/Guidelines by the Home Stretch WA Community of Practice and Yorganop,
  - co-design or model adaptation where improvements and model amendments are to be made to better support Aboriginal families and communities,
  - mapping of the leaving care service continuum project,
  - communications about the program,
  - providing a regional lens to the rollout (including the out of home regional perspective); and

- participation in decision-making (where appropriate).
- Adhering consistently with the principles of *Nitja Nop Yorga Ngulla Mia* when a young Aboriginal person is unable to attend a meeting or session.
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations will be supported to engage with Aboriginal young people with lived experience the regional rollout to help develop an appropriate and culturally safe version of the Home Stretch WA model.