



Melbourne Citymission
Building Inclusive Communities



**(Youth) Homelessness Prevention and Early
Intervention Policy and Service Delivery:
Developing coherent answers to difficult questions?**

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Building Inclusive Communities

Towards a policy framework for homelessness prevention, early intervention and timely intervention

Discussion paper prepared for
Victorian Office of Housing, DHS **May 2009**

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Aim of presentation

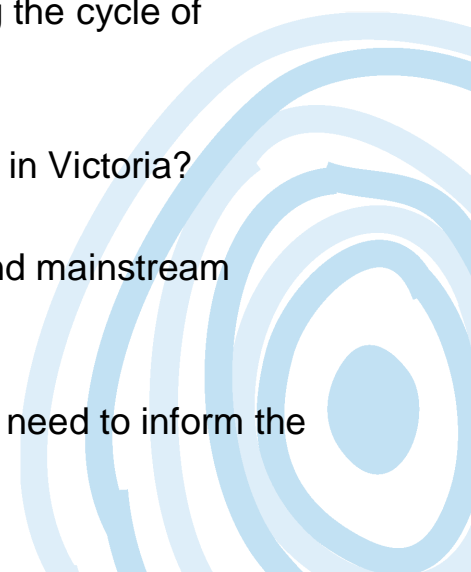
Inform discussion about a policy framework for (youth) homelessness prevention, and early intervention policy, programs and service responses.



Homelessness 2020 Strategy: Discussion paper

Key Questions: Homelessness Prevention and Early Intervention.

1. Should responsibility for the prevention of homelessness sit primarily with mainstream services?
2. How can mainstream services and specialist HSS work more effectively together in early intervention?
3. How are mainstream services and specialist HSS responsible for breaking the cycle of homelessness and in which ways?
4. Where should the major focus of specialist HSS be over the next 10 years in Victoria?
5. What are the possible mechanisms for integration of the specialist HSS and mainstream services? How should integration be monitored?
6. Are there any further early intervention and prevention considerations that need to inform the *Homelessness 2020* strategy?

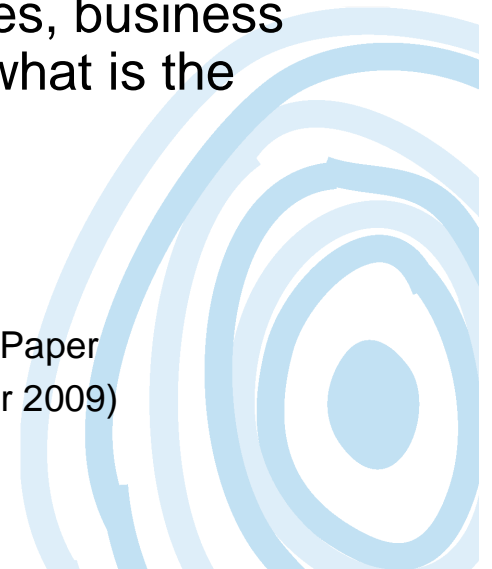


Key questions -Prevention

Who is responsible for the prevention of (youth) homelessness?

- What government department(s) (State/Federal/Local) should be responsible for homelessness prevention? Why? How?
- Is there a role for individuals, families, communities, business philanthropy in homelessness prevention ? If so what is the role? If not why not?

(Adapted from: **Homelessness 2020 Strategy** A Discussion Paper
Victorian Office of Housing Department of Human Services, October 2009)

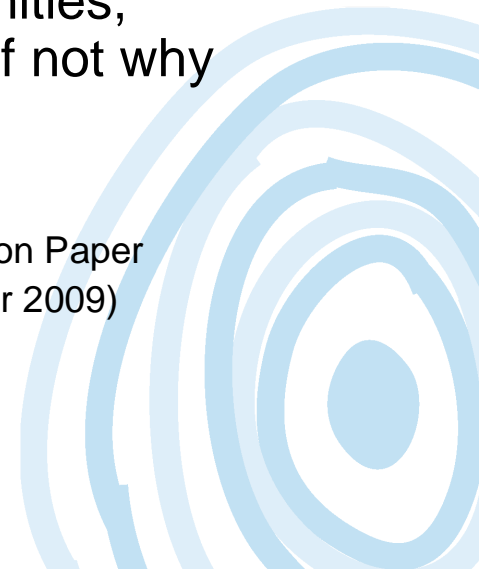


Key questions- Early Intervention

Who is responsible for intervening early in the (young people's) homelessness process?

- What government departments (State/Federal/Local) should be responsible for homelessness EI ? Why? How?
- Is there a role for individuals, families, communities, business philanthropy? If so what is the role? If not why not?

(Adapted from: **Homelessness 2020 Strategy**: A Discussion Paper
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What is homelessness?

Defining homeless experience

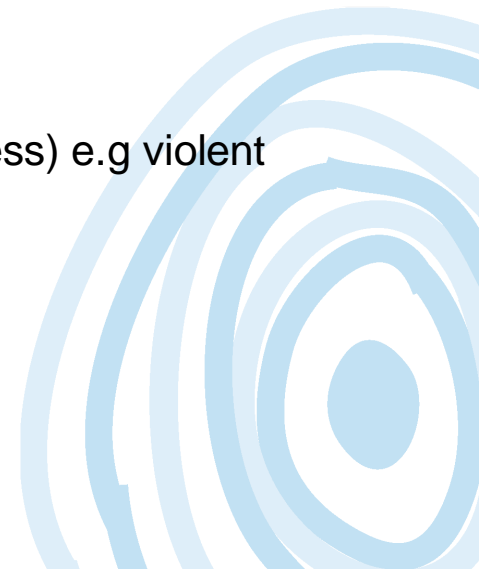
It is both a condition/state and an experience that encompasses:

- **Housing status**
 - Rooflessness or
 - insecure tenure and/or
 - sub-standard accommodation
- **A process rather than an episode**
 - pathways into, through and out of
 - often non linear pathways
 - length of time homeless can have a positive and negative impact
- **An experience of “Home” less ness**
 - a sense of displacement
 - disrupted foundations for:
 - > building and maintaining social/institutional connections and belonging
 - > maintaining basic material/economic and practical support
 - > receiving emotional support from family and friends;
 - > maintaining personal security and safety



Youth Homelessness: Causes, Reasons, Triggers

- **Structural causes** (e. g housing affordability)
- **Individual Causes** (e.g personal mental illness)
- **Reasons** (nominated or identified by homeless individuals/families or service providers; .should not be mistaken for cause)
- **Triggers** (event or episode that immediately preceded homelessness) e.g violent episode)



Individual/familial causes

- Individual family conflict (separation, trauma, step/blended family, etc.)
- Personal or parental drug and alcohol abuse
- Personal or parental mental illness
- Family violence
- Learning/social issues
- Personal trauma
- Unemployment/ under employment

- Combinations of the above....



Structural/systemic cause(s)

- **Housing affordability** (access, availability of housing)
- **Poverty and income support** (e.g wages, taxation, income support policies)
- **Employment/ unemployment/ under/employment** (e.g. industrial relations policy, training and higher education policy)
- **Education and equity** (e.g. funding distribution to public schools)
- Gender relations and violence (e.g. policing and legislation sentencing around violence)
- **Family forms and relationships** (e.g. employment and family support esp for single parent families)
- **Planning and infrastructure in local areas** (e.g public transport, public amenities in areas of concentrated disadvantage)



Context: How has youth homelessness early intervention and prevention been understood in Homelessness sector?

To date:

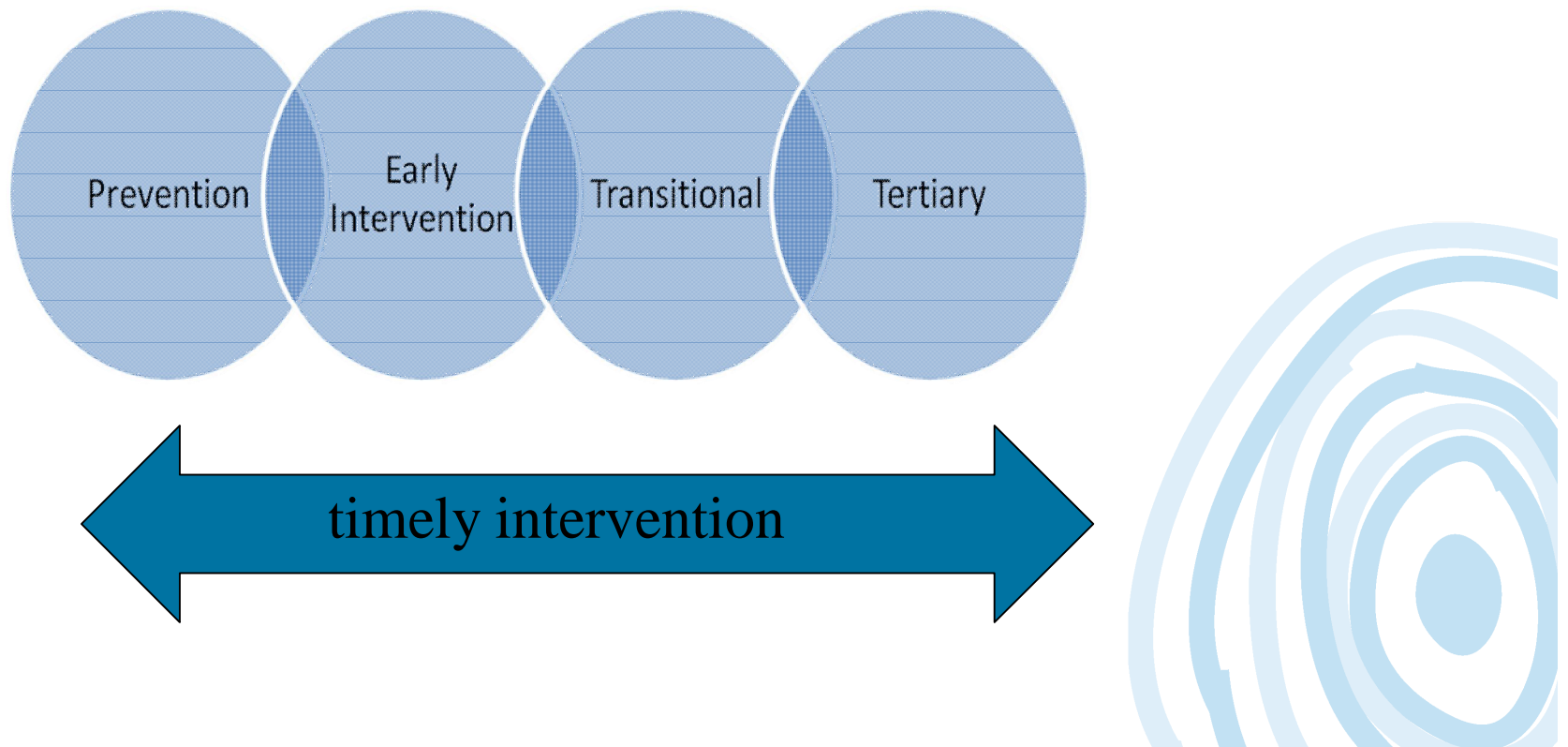
- **Conflation of terms** prevention and early intervention
- **Focused on key individual level causes** of youth homelessness
 - > family breakdown
 - > education breakdown
- **synonymous with specific programs** (Reconnect, Parent and Adolescent mediation). Specific programs and practices have substituted for policy



Towards a framework for youth homelessness early
intervention policy.....

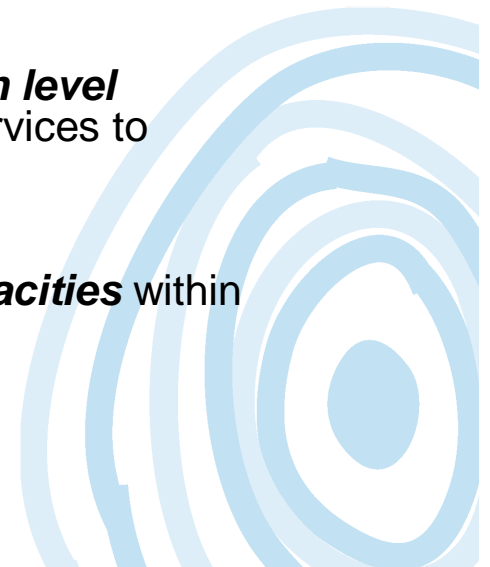


Youth homelessness intervention continuum



Homelessness Prevention

- Aims to **reduce or end homelessness** by preventing its occurrence
- Prevention should **focus on key structural and systemic causes** of homelessness:
 - **Housing affordability (e.g. Tax Policy; Public/Social Housing Models and Stock)**
 - **Poverty and income support (e.g. CRA; Youth allowance etc)**
- **Whole of population focus and/or targeted at disadvantaged populations/disadvantaged areas**- should form part of prevention of social exclusion/ promotion of social inclusion
- **Population level Prevention** is aimed at developing **population level protective factors**, (e.g. universal parenting skills programs; services to facilitate engagement of young people in schools)
- Focuses on **strengthening protective factors or building capacities** within
 - Communities
 - Families
 - Children/and/or young people
 - Singles



Homelessness Prevention

- Programs/activities/ projects/services largely **sit outside homelessness service system** (Health, Schools, TAFE, Universities, Centrelink etc)
- **Government Departments**
 - Federal (FaHCSIA; DEEWR; DOHA)
 - State (OoH; DIIRD; DEECD; DPCD; DoJ; DHS DoH)
 - Local (Planning; Public Health; Community Services)



Early intervention –the focus of youth homelessness policy and programs



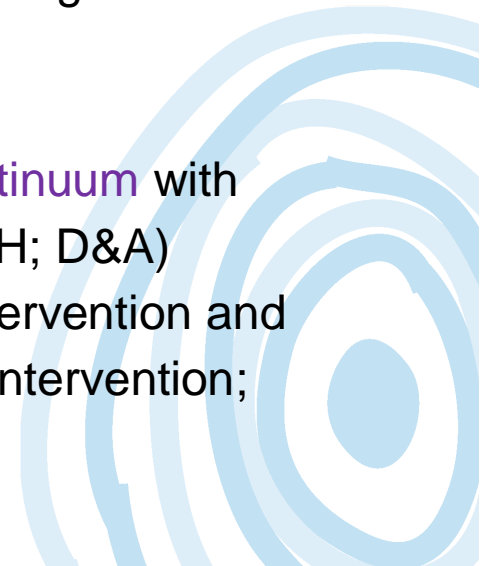
Youth homelessness EI -focus of Youth homelessness Service Delivery

- Target specific populations and individuals within those populations:
 - those 'at risk of homelessness'; newly homeless;
 - not long term homeless
- Aims to:
 - assist people to avoid long term/ chronic homelessness
 - prevent homelessness at the individual/familial level
 - minimize effects of homelessness
- Focused on individual/familial level factors



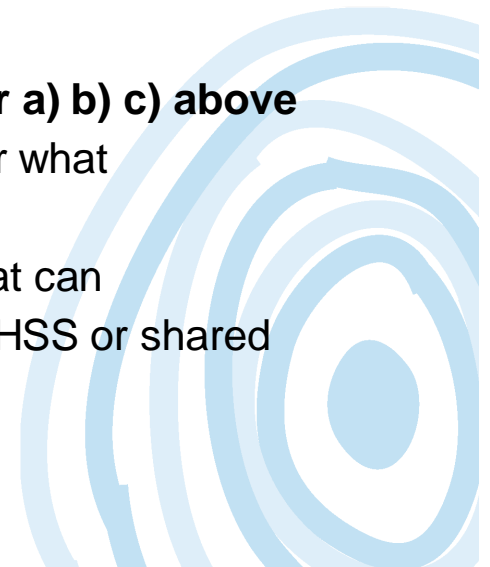
Components of a youth specific homelessness early intervention policy

- Articulate the relationship between the concepts of **social inclusion and exclusion and youth homelessness**
- Recognise **distinct life stage** and characteristics of youth (16-25)
 - Should target identified sub-populations of young people at risk or newly homeless as well as those further along the homelessness continuum
 - Articulate a rationale for the role of the family and other social supports in policy and programmatic responses in programmatic response
- Articulate a **model of the homelessness intervention continuum** with reference to models outside of homelessness field (e.g MH; D&A)
 - be explicit about the relationship of time to early intervention and differentiate between early intervention and timely intervention;



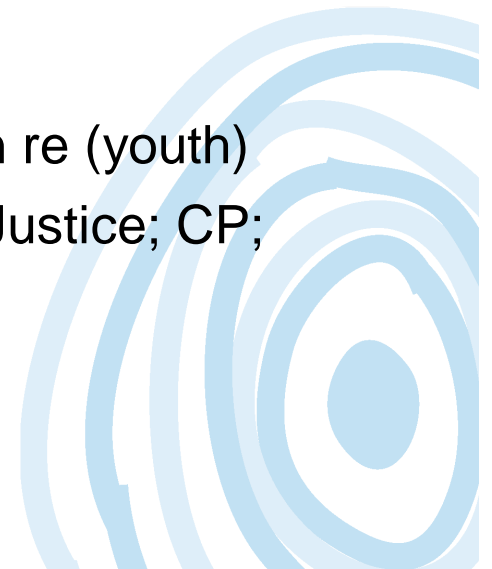
Continued

- Based on evidence about cause, pathways, geographic distribution and data from other related youth sectors articulate what early interventions are:
 - a) the core early intervention programs and service responses **provided by the homelessness sector**; (e.g. direct impact on housing status)
 - b) the **shared early intervention responses** jointly provided by the homelessness and other relevant sectors; (e.g. exiting statutory services)
 - c) the early interventions responses that are **the sole responsibility of other sectors** (e.g. personal mental illness).
- **Articulate the relationship between housing and support for a) b) c) above** identifying who has primary case management responsibility for what components of the response.
- Identify and **develop service models with funding streams** that can accommodate programs that are the prime responsibility of the HSS or shared responsibility between HSS and other sectors.



The components of a youth homelessness early intervention policy response

- Articulate key **policy and programmatic outcomes** based approach (housing & social inclusion) over nominated time periods
- Establish targets and indicators for relevant government departments
- Identify approach to improve routine data collection re (youth) homelessness across government (esp MH; D&A Justice; CP; DEECD)



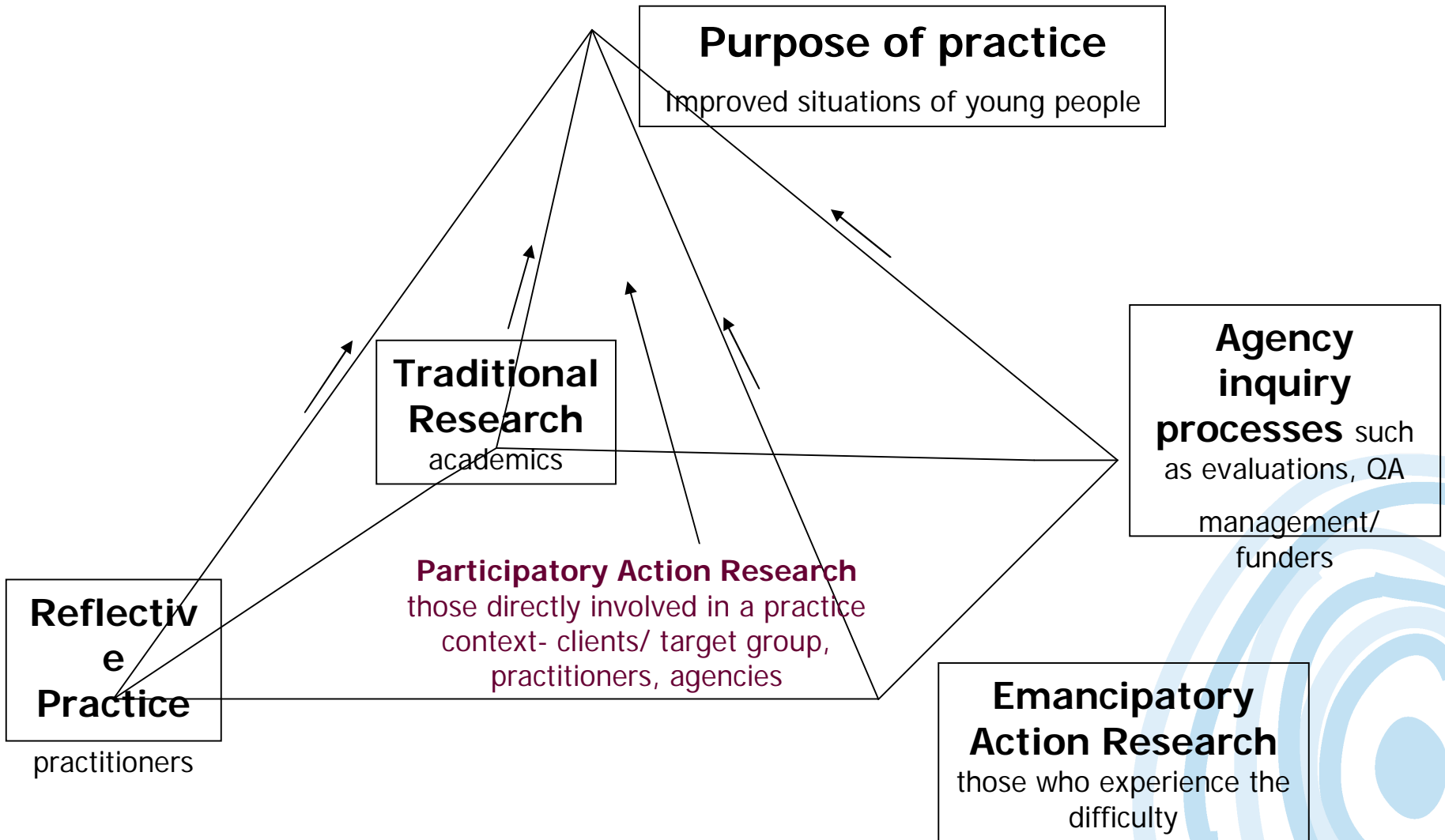
Youth homelessness early intervention programmatic response- some examples

- Youth housing policy and programs (e.g social housing) –(OoH)
- No exit into homelessness policy with cross-department programs:
 - > Statutory service provision (OoH-DoJ; OoH-CP)
 - > Mental health/ Drug and alcohol (OoH- MH; D&A;H)
- Targeted educational support to homeless/disadvantaged Students (Fee waivers; flexible participation; etc) (DEECD; DIIRD)
- Alignment of family mediation services (FRMP, Reconnect) (OoH- FaCHSIA)
- Alignment of housing/support with
 - JSA services to homeless young people
 - Youth Compact-transitional support



Complimentary approaches to inquiry

Who is central to the inquiry process? (who decides what the research question is and what was found out)



- A range of service models (including hubs/precincts) to address:
 - scope of issues in varying geographical locations
 - Differing pathways into and through homelessness
- Pooled funding to enable cross-departmental program development and service delivery



Where should homelessness EI occur?

- Where should homelessness EI responses be delivered?
 - > particular places (communities, neighbourhoods, regions) with high concentrations of disadvantage
 - > particular service types/ platforms
 - > universal services (schools, TAFE, hospitals, **community health**)
 - > mainstream services
 - > targeted homelessness services?



Workshop questions

- What is identified as early intervention at the program and practice level?
- What is identified as early intervention at the policy level?
- What specific interventions are used at what points in time and why?
- What is the role of the specialist homelessness service system in the context of homelessness?
- What is the role of the specialist homelessness service system in relation to early intervention approaches taken by allied services?

