



We believe in young people.

Executive Summary

Foyers are an exciting earning and learning service that invests in young people aged 16 to 24 who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. As part of the international Foyer movement, Foyers in Australia are based on the proven concept that ending youth homelessness can be achieved through education, training and sustainable employment.

What is a Foyer?

Widely considered internationally to be best practice in youth housing support, Foyers provide integrated learning and accommodation for young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, who face a range of structural, institutional and/or personal barriers to economic and community participation. Foyers offer 1:1 support, mentoring and access to opportunities that enable young people to develop independent living skills, access and maintain education, training and/or employment and to positively engage with their local communities.

Based on the UK model developed in the 1990s, the first Australian Foyers emerged in in the early 2000s. Australian Foyers are now established in all states and territories, with the exception of the Northern Territory. Each Foyer supports between 10 to 98 young people, using varying accommodation models including congregate, dispersed and mixed accommodation options.

There are currently 11 accredited Foyers across Australia including South Australia's only Foyer, Foyer Port Adelaide. Now in its twelfth year of operation, Foyer Port Adelaide accommodates 23 young people and has supported more than 240 young South Australians.

A national movement

The development and growth of the Foyer movement in Australia is coordinated by the Foyer Foundation, a national organisation that also supports and manages formal accreditation. The Foundation's goal is to achieve 50 Foyers by 2030, and the Foundation is well on the way to achieving this with nine Foyers currently undertaking accreditation in 2023, and a further 33 communities in various stages of planning throughout the country.

A new Foyer will aim to achieve national accreditation within two years of opening. The accreditation framework is underpinned by eight quality standards, which will provide the framework for the development of Foyer's.

- Advantaged Thinking Philosophy
- Physical Environment
- Community Balance
- Integrated Offer & the Deal
- Staffing and Support
- Mainstream and Community Partnerships
- Governance and Management

- Learning and Impact

By providing greater independence and sustainable outcomes for young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness and through investment in a well-functioning and inclusive community, the development of additional Foyers accords with the South Australian Government's housing, homelessness and support strategy *Housing Future 2020-2030*. Applicable, achievable key outcomes include:

- Strategy 3: Create housing pathways to enable people to access housing and services as their needs change.
- Strategy 4: Prevent and reduce homelessness through targeted and tailored responses.

The Foyer Philosophy: Advantaged Thinking

Advantaged Thinking invests in young people's potential, creating sustainable solutions and practices that build for both the present and the future. It promotes strengths rather than deficits and recognises that working towards a young person's dreams and ambitions is just as important as meeting their immediate needs. An Advantaged Thinking approach recognises that all young people have a vital contribution to make to the social and economic life of our communities and society, and they should have access to the opportunities and networks that facilitate this social and economic participation.

Positive thinking and action replace deficit or problem-saturated thinking by re-directing resources to make a positive investment. By making a positive investment in young people, the approach focuses on developing their assets, and co-creating opportunities.

In essence, Advantaged Thinking challenges us to re-think the way we see young people and the actions and approaches we take to work with them.

For more information, refer to Colin Falconer & YOUR Housing, *Adventures in Advantaged Thinking*:

<https://www.foyer.net/resources/adventures-in-advantaged-thinking->

[Appendix 1: The Seven Tests of Advantaged Thinking](#)

Foyers: The Physical Environment

Self-contained 2-bedroom apartments and several indoor and outdoor communal spaces. The Foyer will be a vibrant and welcoming living and working environment that promotes cultural safety, inspires social connection, and strengthens independence.

The building design will utilise natural light and air flow and facilitate movement and communication between workers and young people. Collaborative workspaces will bring workers and young people together, reducing power imbalances and increasing capacity for cooperation and co-creation. Private spaces will also be available for confidential conversations and one-on-one engagement.

Furnished apartments will feature a shared kitchen, lounge and laundry and two secure bedrooms with study nooks and ensuites. Young people will be invited to go 'starter kit shopping' with a Foyer peer to purchase essential items to make the apartment their own. While it is typical for purpose-built Foyers to have one-bedroom apartments, sole occupancy living does not reflect the true housing options available for most young people and discourages them from exploring share housing in the future.

A range of communal spaces will include:

- a large open plan kitchen that has multiple cooking appliances for training purposes,
- a shared gathering area that includes a large dining table and lounge, games table and console and library,
- small meeting rooms that can be adapted to purpose, such as a green screen room or space for music lessons,
- an outdoor green space with seating, shade and veggie pods,
- a conference room,
- commercial tenancies aligned with the Foyer purpose.

Community Balance

The resident community will be comprised of young people aged between 17 - 23 who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and demonstrate a readiness and willingness to be involved in the Foyer offer.

A well-balanced community would include a good mix between age groups, culture, identities, support needs and education and/or employment aspirations. For example, around 25% of young people at Foyer Port Adelaide are First Nations and 15% are from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Balance within the community will be safeguarded through a rigorous application process including attendance at information sessions and interviews with those successful reflecting a community that is diverse and thriving, with support that caters to the skills, needs and aspirations of each young person.

An Integrated Offer and 'the Deal'

Foyer's integrated service offer will engage young people and provide development opportunities that encourage and enable them to be:

- **Positive Tenants:** Supporting young people to develop the skills and knowledge to manage and maintain their own tenancies.
- **Work Ready:** Providing young people with opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge to explore and/or positively engage in meaningful education, training, and employment pathways.
- **Financially Capable:** Supporting young people to develop their skills and knowledge on consumer awareness and confidently manage their day-to-day expenses and future finances.
- **Lead Healthy Lifestyles:** Providing young people with opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge to explore and/or engage in activities which promote positive physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual health.
- **Be Active Community Members:** Providing young people with opportunities to have fun, strengthen social connection, engage in community activities and build civic awareness.

A key component of Foyer's integrated offer is the provision of the Foyer 'Deal'. The Deal is a two way 'something – for – something' agreement that outlines commitments between the Foyer and young person. During the interview stage young people will be asked to commit to an overarching Foyer Deal, which will then be individually tailored upon move-in and the completion of a Stay

Strong Plan. Throughout their time at the Foyer, 'The Deal' will be regularly revisited to hold both parties to account.

By signing the Deal, shared values, principles and expectations are communicated and agreed upon. As such, it is not a transactional contract shaped around punishment, but a dynamic agreement that demonstrates investment in the Foyer offer. Young people are primarily responsible for engaging in their identified Stay Strong Plan goals, while Youth Transitional Workers (YTW) are responsible for promoting a welcoming, safe environment that facilitates access to opportunities and resources to enable young people to meet their aspirations.

Essential details of the integrated offer and deal include:

- Development of Stay Strong Plans, which are strength-based and invest in the whole person.
- Working 1:1 to support young people with developing their skills to become and/or maintain their independence through integrated housing, living skill, education, training and/or employment opportunities.
- Offering a range of experiences to build community and enhance independent living skills via a monthly activities calendar, based on the needs and interests of the current Foyer community.
- Offering regular opportunities for young people to have their voices heard and contribute to program practice development, for example participating in the Offer Committee, Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), and being part of working groups and advisory committees.
- Sourcing and promoting volunteering and civic engagement opportunities.
- Alumni and Mentoring program (external partnership).

The Foyer Support Team

Young people at Foyer are supported by a skilled and passionate employee team committed to investing in young people's skills and aspirations. As well as their level of experience, employees will be selected for their unique qualities, skills and commitment to an Advantaged Thinking approach.

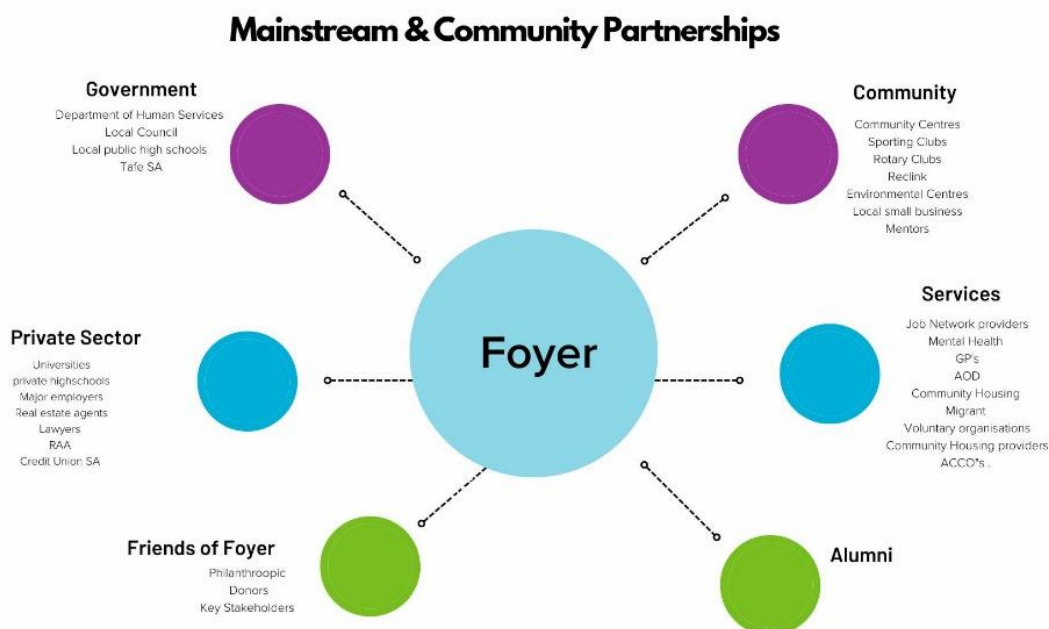
Workers will proactively source community networks and opportunities, and regular training opportunities will be provided to enhance employees' skills and capacities.

Community Partnerships

Community strength is defined by its residents' health and their sense of belonging. Diverse, strong and effective community partnerships are essential for the Foyer to deliver real-world opportunities for young people and increase young people's sense of belonging and active citizenship.

Partnerships will be sought that meet young people's self-identified needs and goals, for example around delivering employment opportunities, driving lessons, sport or educational scholarships.

Learning and Impact



Foyer's core philosophy is based on a commitment to continuous improvement and innovation achieved through lived experience co-production and targeted professional development opportunities.

Integral to the Foyer approach is a focus on outcomes, data collection and service delivery to improve outcomes for young people. Foyer Thebarton's impact data will align with the Foyer Foundation's National Impact Framework and will include housing, education outcomes, and employment outcomes.

Mechanisms for feedback will include community forums, directed communication, focus groups and an open-door policy with the leadership team. In addition, young people will be provided with opportunities to participate in the St John's Youth Services Reconciliation Action Plan Committee, LGBTIQ+ Working Group and the Multicultural working group.

Conclusion

Foyers are unique because they provide stable and safe accommodation for up to two years, with integrated wrap-around services, including education and employment pathways. The Foyer approach identifies that there is a strong relationship between education attainment and employment outcomes. There is ample evidence to suggest that higher levels of educational attainment can lead to greater outcomes in health, civic engagement and lower rates of crime.

St John's Youth Services is keen to present Foyers as a solution and action to meet the four overarching areas for action as outlined in the SA's Youth Action Plan 2023-2026. It is envisioned three metropolitan Foyers with 40 young people at each Foyer, Central, Northern Suburbs and Southern Suburbs and two Foyers in country areas with 15 young people in each, one in Mt Gambier and one in Whyalla.

This solution focussed approach will enable over 150 young people per annum to break the cycle of homelessness, being safe and connected to education, employment and community.

The message below is from a young person who has resided at Foyer Port Adelaide. Before moving into Foyer Port Adelaide, they were experiencing homelessness, connected to the youth Justice system, and not in education or employment. They have now completed their education, have a fulltime job and are deeply connected to community.

Thanks to your support I have taken advantage of a fully equipped gym, altitude room, sauna, Jiu Jitsu, boxing, kickboxing, mixed martial arts and exclusive fighter training classes, - mentored by the Head Coach - A former Kickboxing World Champion. I have showcased my potential and been warmly welcomed into the tight knit community and family that is The Gym.

Beyond the time/travel commitment, gruelling workouts, and physical strength I have gained since beginning my training, I am now a more confident, assertive young man who has learnt to control his emotions better and built stamina I utilize every day in my mechanics apprenticeship, independent living, and relationships.

With a little more time, hard work, support from my community, and opportunities like those SJYS & AFG have made possible for me I hope to one day accomplish my dream of fighting professionally and proudly representing everybody who invested in my vision and journey. So, thank you SJYS and AFG, I will be forever grateful for you helping me take the first step.

Sincerely, The next champion

Appendix 1: The Seven Tests of Advantaged Thinking

THE 7 TESTS OF ADVANTAGED THINKING

Each test helps us identify strengths in others, connect with new people and build on existing relationships.

1 TALK

I will choose positive language when describing people and steer clear of pigeonholing and stereotypes.



2 UNDERSTAND

I will always try to learn about someone's strengths over their weaknesses.



3 WORK

I will look beyond problems and deficits to develop new ideas and build on a person's strengths and best qualities.



4 INVEST

I will focus resources on enabling young people to thrive as well as helping them to cope.



5 BELIEVE

I will dream as big for young people experiencing homelessness as I do for myself or my family.



6 INVOLVE

I will always put young people at the centre of their solutions and use their experiences to empower them.



7 CHALLENGE

I will actively campaign for Advantaged Thinking and hold Disadvantaged Thinking to account.

