

# The Voice of the Young Person

Australian Evaluation Society Conference

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# Who we are

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Shared service with Department of Families Fairness and  
Housing



# You adults need to stop and listen

Refocusing the lens

**Voice = empowerment + participation (+ empowerment)**



# Better Futures and Home Stretch

Victoria's new leaving care program for 16-21 year olds, providing support and financial assistance, this includes:

- Coaching for goal setting and life support
- Accommodation allowance
- Funding for achieving goals

*I was told I needed it or I would be homeless.*

*I wanted more opportunities to learn how to look after myself like cooking, cleaning, planning. They offered me all this plus more.*



# Lived experience in evaluation

**“Subjectivity can be both unpleasant and dangerous”**

Carolyn Ellis, 1992

Lived experience lies behind client voice and is what gives the client voice its unique perspective and authenticity.

All lived experiences are equal; the operations, the program sponsor, the user. Not all experiences are heard unless we are rebalance with equitable practice



# Capturing lived experience from state care

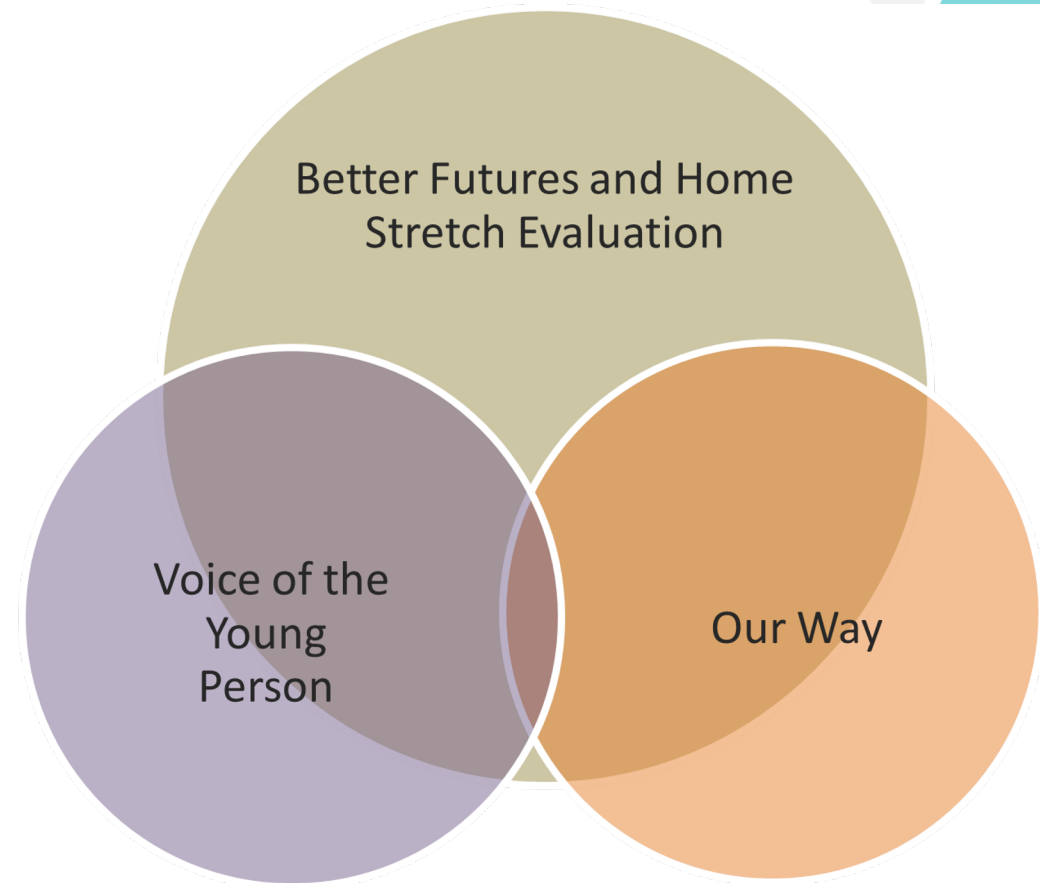
- **Children, not adults**
- **Pain, abuse and trauma**
- **Government as parents, with politics at play**
- **Research as a reinforcement of othering**
- **Being heard as a form of healing**



# The evaluation

A mixed methods, mid point evaluation

- ✓ Youth Advisory Group informed
- ✓ 52 young people interviewed
- ✓ 50 Carers surveyed
- ✓ 150 service providers and stakeholders interviewed and surveyed



# Scoping and contractual obligation

- **Contracts, briefing, time and resources**
- **Ways of doing things - credible practice' vs disruption**
- **Whose needs and viewpoints are centred?**





# Engagement best practice

1. Recognise the young person's agency
2. Respect and embed cultural safety
3. Create space and time
4. Build capability (reinvestment)
5. Support young people to make complaints, to self-advocate and take on leadership role
6. Listen well to young people.
7. Take young people's views seriously.
8. Demonstrate the difference that young people's participation has made.



# Product type & information need



**Voice = empowerment + participation (+ empowerment)**

# Reflections

Examine the processes that silence young people

Where could we be listening better?

Enable young people to understand their audience

How about us?

*Open for discussion/reflection*



# References

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